

CAMP FIRE YARN NO. 1

SCOUTS' WORK

Peace Scouts - Kim - Boys of Mafeking

I suppose every boy wants to help his country in some way or other.

There is a way by which he can so do easily, and that is by becoming a Boy Scout.

A scout in the army, as you know, is generally a soldier who is chosen for his cleverness and pluck to go out in front to find out where the enemy is, and report to the commander all about him.



But, besides war scouts, there are also peace scouts—men who in peace time carry out work which requires the same kind of pluck and resourcefulness.

These are the frontiersmen of the world.

The pioneers and trappers of North America, the colonists of South America, the hunters of Central Africa, the explorers and missionaries over Asia and all wild parts of the world, the bushmen and drovers of Australia, the constabulary of North West Canada and of South Africa — all these are peace scouts, real *men* in every sense of the word, and good at scoutcraft:

The colonists, hunters, and explorers all over the world are all scouts. They must know how to take care of themselves.

They understand how to live out in the jungle. They can find their way anywhere, and are able to read meanings from the smallest signs and foot tracks. They know how to look after their health when far away from doctors. They are strong and plucky, ready to face danger, and always keen to help each other. They are accustomed to take their lives in their hands, and to risk them without hesitation if they can help their country by doing so.

They give up everything, their personal comforts and desires, in order to get their work done.



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They do it because it is their duty.

The life of the frontiersmen is a grand life, but it cannot suddenly be taken up by any man who thinks he would like it, unless he has prepared himself for it. Those who succeed best are those who learned Scouting while they were boys.

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Scouting is useful in any kind of life you like to take up. A famous scientist has said that it is valuable for a man who goes in for science. And a noted physician pointed out how necessary it is for a doctor or a surgeon to notice small signs as a Scout does, and know their meaning.

So I am going to show you how you can learn scoutcraft for yourself, and how you can put it into practice at home. It is very easy to learn and very interesting when you get into it.

You can best learn by joining the Boy Scouts.

The Adventures of Kim

A good example of what a Boy Scout can do is found in Rudyard Kipling's story of *Kim*.

Kim, or, to give him his full name, Kimball O'Hara, was the son of a sergeant of an Irish regiment in India. His father and mother died while he was a child, and he was left to the care of an aunt.

His playmates were all native boys, so he learned to talk their language and to know their ways. He became great friends with an old wandering priest and travelled with him all over northern India.

One day he chanced to meet his father's old regiment on the march, but in visiting the camp he was arrested on suspicion of being a thief. His birth certificate and other papers were found on him, and the regiment, seeing that he had belonged to them, took charge of him, and started to educate him. But whenever he could get away for holidays, Kim dressed himself in Indian clothes, and went among the natives as one of them.

After a time he became acquainted with a Mr. Lurgan, a dealer in old jewelry and curiosities, who, owing to his knowledge of natives, was also a member of the Government Intelligence Department.

This man, finding that Kim had such special knowledge of native habits and customs, saw that he could make a useful agent for Government Intelligence work. He therefore gave Kim lessons at noticing and remembering small details, which is an important point in the training of a Scout.

Kim's Training

Lurgan began by showing Kim a tray full of precious stones of different kinds. He let him look at it for a minute, then covered it with a cloth, and asked him to state how many stones and what sorts were there. At first Kim could remember only a few, and could not describe them very

accurately, but with a little practice he soon was able to remember them all quite well. And so, also, with many other kinds of articles which were shown to him in the same way.

At last, after much other training, Kim was made a member of the Secret Service, and was given a secret sign—namely, a locket or badge to wear round his neck and a certain sentence, which, if said in a special way, meant he was one of the Service.

Kim in Secret Service

Once when Kim was travelling in the train he met a native, who was rather badly cut about the head and arms. He explained to the other passengers that he had fallen from a cart when driving to the station. But Kim, like a good Scout, noticed that the cuts were sharp, and not grazes such as you would get by falling from a cart, and so did not believe him.

While the man was tying a bandage over his head, Kim noticed that he was wearing a locket like his own, so Kim showed him his. Immediately the man brought into the conversation some of his secret words, and Kim answered with the proper ones in reply. Then the stranger got into a corner with Kim and explained to him that he was carrying out some Secret Service work, and had been found out and was hunted by some enemies who had nearly killed him. They probably knew he was in the train and would therefore telegraph down the line to their friends that he was coming. He wanted to get his message to a certain police officer without being caught by the enemy, but he did not know how to do it if they were already warned of his coming. Kim hit upon the solution.



In India there are a number of holy beggars who travel about the country. They are considered very holy, and people always help them with food and money. They wear next to no clothing, smear themselves with ashes, and paint certain marks on their faces. So Kim set about disguising the man as a beggar. He made a mixture of flour and ashes, which he took from the bowl of a pipe, undressed his friend and smeared the mixture all over him. He also smeared the man's wounds so that they did not show. Finally, with the aid of a little paint-box which he carried, he painted the proper face marks on the man's forehead and brushed his hair down to look wild and shaggy like that of a beggar, and covered it with dust, so that the man's own mother would not have known him.

Kim disguised the man as a beggar, with a mixture of flour and ashes.

Soon afterwards they arrived at a big station. Here, on the platform, they found the police officer to whom the report was to be made. The imitation beggar pushed up against the officer and got scolded by him in English. The beggar replied with a string of native abuse into which he mixed the secret words. The police officer at once realized from the secret words that this beggar was

an agent. He pretended to arrest him and marched him off to the police station where he could talk to him quietly and receive his report.

Later Kim became acquainted with another agent of the Department—an educated native—and was able to give him great assistance in capturing two officers acting as spies.

These and other adventures of Kim are well worth reading because they illustrate the kind of valuable work a Boy Scout can do for his country in times of emergency if he is sufficiently trained and sufficiently intelligent.

Boys of Mafeking

We had an example of how useful boys can be on active service, when a corps of boys was formed in the defence of Mafeking, 1899-1900, during the South African War.

Mafeking, you may know, was a small, ordinary country town out on the open plains of South Africa. Nobody ever thought of it being attacked by an enemy. It just shows you how, in war, you must be prepared for what is *possible*, not only what is *probable*.



Here is a map of South Africa. If you look carefully, you will find Mafeking and many other places mentioned in this book.

When we found we were to be attacked at Mafeking, we ordered our garrison to the points they were to protect—some 700 trained men, police, and volunteers. Then we armed the townsmen, of whom there were some 300. Some of them were old frontiersmen, and quite equal to the occasion. But many of them were young shopmen, clerks, and others, who had never handled a rifle before.

Altogether, then, we only had about a thousand men to defend the place, which was about five miles round and contained 600 white women and children and about 7,000 natives.

Every man was of value, and as the weeks passed by and many were killed and wounded, the duties of fighting and keeping watch at night became harder for the rest.

The Mafeking Cadet Corps

It was then that Lord Edward Cecil, the chief staff officer, gathered together the boys of Mafeking and made them into a cadet corps. He put them in uniform and drilled them. And a jolly smart and useful lot they were. Previously, we had used a large number of men for carrying orders and messages, keeping lookout and acting as orderlies, and so on. These duties were now handed over to the boy cadets, and the men were released to strengthen the firing-line.



The boys of Mafeking did excellent service. They were gathered together into a cadet corps, put into uniform and drilled.

The cadets, under their sergeant-major, a boy named Goodyear, did good work, and well deserved the medals they got at the end of the war.

Many of them rode bicycles, and we were thus able to establish a post by which people could send letters to their friends in the different forts, or about the town, without going out under fire themselves. For these letters we made postage stamps which had on them a picture of a cadet bicycle orderly.

I said to one of these boys on one occasion, when he came in through a rather heavy fire:

“You will get hit one of these days riding about like that when shells are flying.”

“I pedal so quick, sir, they’ll never catch me!” he replied.

These boys didn’t seem to mind the bullets one bit. They were always ready to carry out orders, though it meant risking their lives every time.

Would You Do It?

Would any of you do that? If an enemy were firing down this street, and you had to take a message across to a house on the other side, would you do it? I am sure you would—although probably you wouldn’t much like doing it.

But you want to prepare yourself for such things beforehand. It’s just like taking a header into cold water. A fellow who is accustomed to diving thinks nothing of it—he has practised it over and over again. But ask a fellow who has never done it, and he will be afraid.

So, too, with a boy who has been accustomed to obey orders at once, whether there is risk about it or not. The moment he has to do a thing he does it, no matter how great the danger is to him, while another chap who has never cared to obey would hesitate, and would then be despised even by his former friends.

But you need not have a war in order to be useful as a scout. As a peace scout there is lots for you to do—any day, wherever you may be.