



CHAPTER V

WOODCRAFT

CAMP FIRE YARN

NO. 14

STALKING

How to Hide Yourself - How to Learn Stalking

Games in Stalking

WHEN YOU WANT TO OBSERVE wild animals, you have to stalk them, that is, to creep up to them without them seeing or smelling you.

A hunter keeps himself entirely hidden when he is stalking wild animals. So does the war scout when watching or looking for the enemy. A policeman does not catch pickpockets by standing about in uniform watching for them. He dresses like one of the crowd, and as often as not gazes into a shop window and sees all that goes on behind him reflected as if in a looking-glass.

If a guilty person finds himself watched, it puts him on his guard, while an innocent person becomes annoyed. So, when you are observing a person, don't do so by openly staring at him, but notice the details you want to at one glance or two. If you want to study him more, walk behind him. You can learn just as much from a back view—in fact more than you can from a front view—and, unless the person is a Scout and looks round frequently, he does not know that you are observing him.

War scouts and hunters stalking game always carry out two important things when they don't want to be seen.

One is—they take care that the ground, or trees, or buildings, behind them are of the same colour as their clothes.

And the other is—if an enemy or a deer is looking for them they remain perfectly still without moving while he is there.

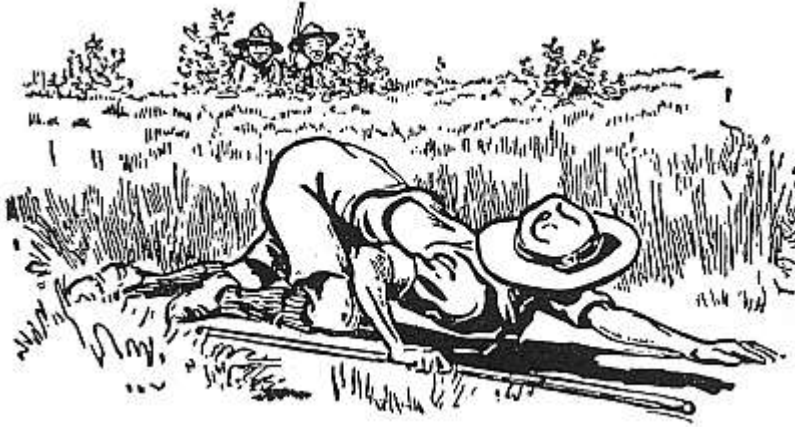
In that way a Scout, even though he is out in the open, will often escape being noticed.

Choosing the Background

In choosing your background, consider the colour of your clothes. If you are dressed in khaki, don't go and stand in front of a whitewashed wall, or in front of a dark-shaded bush, but go where there is khaki-coloured sand or grass or rocks behind you—and remain perfectly still. It will be very difficult for an enemy to distinguish you, even at a short distance.

If you are in dark clothes, get among dark bushes, or in the shadow of trees or rocks, but be careful that the ground beyond you is also dark—if there is light-coloured ground beyond the trees under which you are standing, for instance, you will stand out clearly defined against it.

In making use of hills as look-out places, be very careful not to show yourself on the top or sky-line. That is the fault which a tenderfoot generally makes.



TOMMY THE TENDERFOOT No. 8

TOMMY'S STALKING

"Keep up your end when you're stalking your foes."
(It might read in two ways as Tommy now knows.)

Slow Motion

It is quite a lesson to watch a Zulu Scout making use of a hilltop or rising ground as a look-out place. He will crawl up on all fours, lying flat in the grass. On reaching the top he will very slowly raise his head, inch by inch, till he can see the view. If he sees the enemy on beyond, he will have a good look, and, if he thinks they are watching him, will keep his head perfectly steady for a long time, hoping that he will be mistaken for a stump or a stone. If he is not detected, he will very gradually lower his head, inch by inch, into the grass again, and crawl quietly away. Any quick or sudden movement of the head on the sky-line would be very liable to attract attention, even at a considerable distance.

At night, keep as much as possible in low ground, ditches, etc., so that you are down in the dark, while an enemy who comes near will be visible to you outlined on higher ground against the stars.

By squatting low in the shadow of the bush at night, and keeping quite still, I have let an enemy's scout come and stand within three feet of me, so that when he turned his back towards me I was able to stand up where I was, and fling my arms round him.

Silent Walking

A point also to remember in keeping hidden while moving, especially at night, is to walk quietly. The thump of an ordinary man's heel on the ground can be heard a good distance off. A Scout or hunter always walks lightly, on the ball of his feet, not on his heels. This you should practise whenever you are walking by day or by night, indoors as well as out, so that it becomes a habit with you to walk as lightly and silently as possible. You will find that as you grow into it your power of walking long distances will grow—you will not tire so soon as you would if clumping along in the heavy-footed manner of most people.

Keep Down-Wind

Remember always that to stalk a wild animal, or a good Scout, you must keep downwind of him, even if the wind is so slight as to be merely a faint air.

Before starting to stalk your enemy, then, you should be sure which way the wind is blowing, and work up against it. To find this out, wet your thumb all round with your tongue, and then hold it up and see

which side feels coldest. Or you can throw some light dust, or dry grass or leaves in the air, and see which way they drift.

Using Disguise

The Red Indian scouts, when they wanted to reconnoitre an enemy's camp, used to tie a wolf's skin on their backs and walk on all fours, and prowling round the camps at night, imitating the howl of a wolf. Also, when peeping over a ridge or any place where their head might be seen against the sky-line, they put on a

cap made of wolf's-head skin with ears on it so that they might be mistaken for a wolf, if seen.



A native of Australia stalking emus, with an emu skin over him. He carries a boomerang in his hand and a spear between his toes.

In Australia, the natives stalk emus—great birds something like an ostrich—by putting an emu's skin over themselves, and walking with body bent and one hand held up to represent the bird's head and neck.

Scouts, when looking out among grass, often tie a string or a band round their head, and stick grass in it, some upright, some drooping over their face, so that their head is invisible.

When hiding behind a big stone or mound, they don't look over the top, but round the side of it.

PATROL PRACTICES IN STALKING

Demonstrate the value of adapting colour of clothes to background by sending out one boy about 500 yards to stand against different backgrounds in turn, till he gets one similar to his own clothes. The rest of the Patrol will watch and notice how invisible the boy becomes when he gets a suitable background. A boy in a grey suit, for example, standing in front of dark bushes is quite visible, but he becomes less so if he stands in front of a grey rock or house. A boy in a dark suit is very visible in a green field, but not when he stands in an open doorway against dark interior shadow.

Demonstrate the effect of movement. Place Scouts in fair concealment (shrubs, etc.), and show how difficult it is to spot them until they move.

Practise quick rushes from cover to cover; crawling along ditches and behind ridges, and from bush to bush.

Try stalking in the dusk. Some of the games given could be played in twilight or in darkness. Do not begin with absolutely black night.

GAMES IN STALKING

Scout Hunting

One Scout is given time to go out and hide himself, the remainder then start to find him. He wins if he is not found, or if he can get back to the starting-point within a given time without being touched.

Message Running

A Scout is told to bring a note to a certain spot or house from a distance within a given time. Other “hostile” Scouts are told to prevent any message getting to this place, and to hide themselves at different points to stop the dispatch carrier getting in with it.

To count as a capture, two Scouts must touch the message runner before he reaches the spot for delivering the message.

Deer Stalking

Patrol Leader acts as a deer—not hiding, but standing, moving a little now and then if he likes.

Scouts go out to find him and each in his own way tries to get up to him unseen.

The moment the Patrol Leader sees a Scout he directs him to stand up as having failed. After a certain time the Patrol Leader calls “time”. All stand up at the spot which they have reached, and the nearest wins.

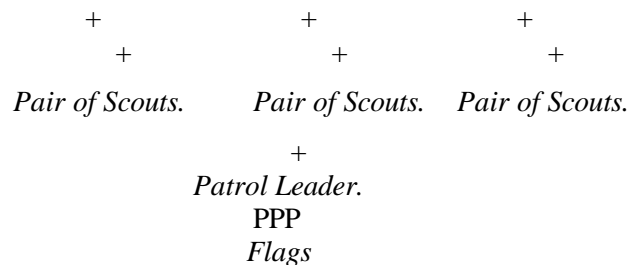
The same game may be played to test the Scouts in stepping lightly— the umpire being blindfolded. The practice should preferably be carried out where there are dry twigs and gravel lying about. The Scout may start to stalk the blind enemy at 100 yards’ distance, and he must do it fairly fast—say in one minute and a half—to touch the blind man before he hears him.

Flag Raiding

Two or more Patrols on each side.

Each side forms an outpost within a given tract of country to protect three flags (or at night three lanterns two feet above ground), planted not less than 200 yards (100 yards at night) from it. The protecting outpost will be posted in concealment either all together or spread out in pairs. It will then send out Scouts to discover the enemy’s position. When they have found out where the outpost is, they try to creep round it out of sight, till they can get to the flags and bring them away to their own line. One Scout may not take away more than one flag.

This is the general position of a Patrol on such an outpost:—



Any Scout coming within fifty yards of a stronger party will be put out of action if seen by the enemy. If he can creep by without being seen it is all right.

Scouts posted to watch as outposts cannot move from their ground, but their strength counts as double, and they may send single messengers to their neighbours or to their own scouting party.

An umpire should be with each outpost and with each Scouting Patrol.

At a given hour, operations cease, and all assemble at the given spot to hand in their reports. The following points might be awarded:—

For each flag or lamp captured and brought in..... 5 points

For each report or sketch of the position of the enemy's outposts up to 5 points

For each report of movement of enemy's Scouting Patrols..... 2 points

The side which makes the biggest total wins.

NOTE: For games such as the above—usually called *Wide Games*, because they are played in open country—some method of “killing” or “capturing” is often needed. A strand of wool—a different colour for each side—or a piece of 1 in. gauze bandage can be worn round the arm, visible between elbow and shoulder. When broken, the victim goes to an umpire to get a new “life” in order to continue in the fun. It is important that the smallest Scout should have as good a chance as the heftiest.

Ambushing

The Troop splits up into two parties, one of which goes out in advance and hides in bushes, etc., by the roadside. The other party follows, and calls out those Scouts whom they can see *without leaving the road*. They continue as long as desired; one party alternately hiding and seeking.

At first, time should be given *for* the hidiers to arrange themselves; later they should be able to do so quickly. Opportunity can always be taken when someone drops out for the rest of the party to get under cover as quickly as possible, so that when he returns the party has disappeared as if by magic. This always causes fun.

Stalking and Reporting

The umpire places himself out in the open and sends each Scout or pair of Scouts away in different directions about half a mile off. When he waves a flag as the signal to begin, they all hide, and then proceed to stalk him, creeping up and watching all he does. When he waves the flag again, they rise, come in, and report each in turn all that he did, either by handing in a written report or verbally, as may be ordered.

The umpire meantime has kept a look-out in each direction, and, every time he sees a Scout, he takes two points off that Scout's score. He, on his part, performs small actions, such as sitting down, kneeling, looking through glasses, using handkerchief, taking hat off for a bit, walking round in a circle a few times, to give Scouts something to note and report about him. Scouts are given three points for each act reported correctly.



Try these stalking methods. Cling as close to the ground as possible.

It saves time if the umpire makes out a scoring card beforehand, giving the name of each Scout, and a number of columns showing each act of his, also a column for minus marks for Scouts who expose themselves.

Spider and Fly

A bit of country or section of the town about a mile square with its boundaries described is selected as the web, and an hour fixed at which operations are to cease.

One Patrol (or half-Patrol) is the “spider”, which goes out and selects a place to hide itself. The other Patrol (or half-Patrol) starts a quarter of an hour later as the “fly” to look for the “spider”. They can spread themselves about as they like, but must tell their leader anything that they discover.

An umpire goes with each party.

If within the given time (say, about two hours) the fly has not discovered the spider, the spider wins. The spiders write down the names of any of the fly Patrol that they may see. Similarly, the flies write down the names of any spiders that they may see, and their exact hiding-place.



It takes much time and patience to stalk close enough to wild animals to be able to study their habits without disturbing them.