

THE GAME OF SCOUTING

By William "Green Bar Bill" Hillcourt

To an outsider, Scouting must at first appear to be a very complex matter. If it were only possible to swing the gates of Scouting wide open to him and show him from a vantage point in one immense view the full panorama of the Scout Movement! Under the open sky he would see gathered hundreds of thousands of wide awake, red-blooded boys, busily occupied with self-appointed tasks, practices expected and required of real Scouts, ranging from the sending of signals with flags from hill-top to hill-top, to lighting a fire by primitive means—all living, breathing, absorbing Scouting.

The boys swarm around him, and as one of them runs by he asks him: "Tell me, what *is* Scouting?"

As the boy passes, his smile and his answer come back: "Scouting is *fun!*"

He bends over a boy who seems to have forgotten his surroundings, completely absorbed in preparing a simple outdoor meal, and asks the same question.

And the boy answers as he looks up wonderingly:
"Scouting is *adventure!*"

A bunch of Scouts, led by one of their number, comes running and, as they draw near, their answer sings out: "Scouting is *comradeship!*"

Thus the boys define their own activity, their game. And GAME—*that* is the word.

Scouting As a Game

To a boy *Scouting is a game*, a magnificent game, full of play and full of laughter, keeping him busy, keeping him *happy*.

That is the strength of Scouting! A boy becomes a Scout for the sheer fun there is in it.

The *action* in Scouting appeals to the boy's impulse to be doing something. The meetings, hikes and camps are essentially periods of activity. Even the code of Scout conduct is presented to him in terms of action—"Be Prepared," "Do a Good Turn Daily." In fact, the basic principle in Scouting is "Learning by *Doing*." There is nothing negative in it. There is no "Go up in the attic and see what Johnny is doing and tell him he mustn't!" There are no "Don'ts." Scouting does not say "Don't rob bird's nests," but "Find out about birds." It does not say "Don't cut down trees," but instead

"Help save the trees." That is talking boy language—stimulating, not prohibiting.

There is *adventure* in Scouting. There is adventure in tackling a job alone—all by oneself, or with the gang. There is adventure in finding Good Turns to do every day. There is adventure in pioneering, exploring, outdoor living.

There is *companionship* and *fellowship* in the Patrol, the natural unit in Scouting. There is always present an *urge to achieve*. A harder task, a higher rank always looms ahead; there is distinction to be gained.

Scouting in a Nutshell

Here, then, is Scouting in a nutshell: *A game for boys under the leadership of boys with the wise guidance and counsel of a grown-up who has still the enthusiasm of youth in him.* A purposeful game, but a game just the same, a game that develops *character by practice*, that trains for citizenship—through experience *in the out-of-doors*.