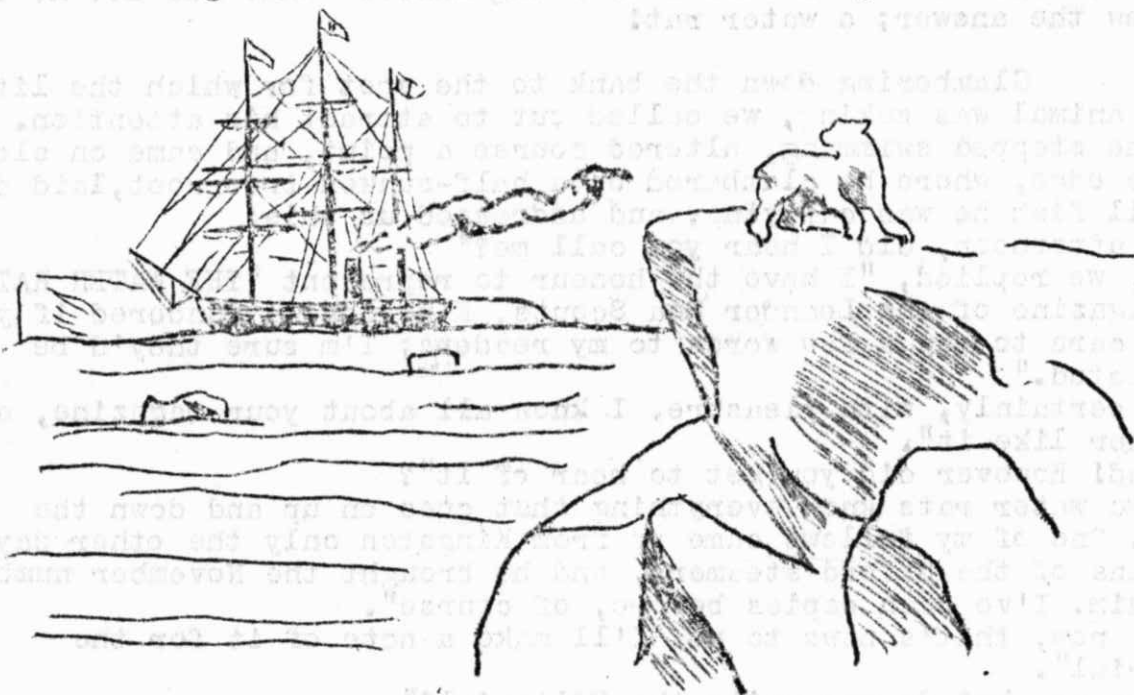


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Editorial & Publishing Office - 59 Eden Street,  
Kingston. Phone - Kingston 2687



CHRISTMAS AT SEA - 1878.

EDITORIAL.FROM ONE RAT TO ANOTHER.

The river Thames in its upper reaches is always beautiful. It was so when we visited Abingdon a few days ago, in spite of the December look of everything. The water flowed, placid and slow, between its low winding banks, vivid green from recent rains, its silver surface returning a shimmering image of the naked trees nearby, the fleecy clouds red-tinged by the dipping sun, the pale crescent of an early moon, watery as though with long immersion in the limpid depths. A biting wind swept over the flat countryside, but its chilly message was amply compensated by the sight of a dozen or so distant white sails scudding across the landscape. Here, apparently, was an enthusiastic local yacht club.

We sat on the handrail of a small weir, listening to its miniature thunder as the beauty of the scene sank into our soul. Father Thames, centuries old yet everlastingly young, you lay a powerful spell upon your adoptive sons! All at once a fresh sound fell upon our attentive ears, our eyes caught a movement on the ruffled surface of the water, and we perceived a small animal swimming across the river towards us, a wide arrow head of ripples spreading out behind it, its little paws threshing the water for all the world like the twin screws of a big liner. What was it? At once we knew the answer; a water rat!

Clambering down the bank to the spot for which the little brown animal was making, we called out to attract his attention. At this he stopped swimming, altered course a point, and came on slowly to the edge, where he clambered on a half-sunken tree root, laid down a small fish he was carrying, and addressed us this:

"Good afternoon, did I hear you call me?"

"Yes", we replied, "I have the honour to represent "THE WATER RAT", the magazine of the Leander Sea Scouts, Kingston. I wondered if you would care to say a few words to my readers; I'm sure they'd be interested."

"Why, certainly, with pleasure. I know all about your magazine, and I rather like it".

"Indeed! However did you get to hear of it"?

"Oh, we water rats know everything that goes on up and down the river. One of my fellows came up from Kingston only the other day, by means of the Oxford steamers, and he brought the November number with him. I've seen copies before, of course".

"Well, now, that's news to me. I'll make a note of it for the Editorial".

"Excuse me, but do you write the Editorial?"

"Why, yes, I have that honour".

"Then, sir, I'm more than proud to meet you", and he extended a moist paw, at the same time paying us a personal compliment which modesty forbids us to repeat.

"But what do you really think of the Magazine as a whole, its style, outlook, features, the articles and stories in it? Your opinion would be most useful to us in guiding our policy".

"You flatter me! Well, if you want my real opinion, I'm afraid I can't quite class the "WATER RAT" with NASH'S or the PALL MALL. Considering, however, that all your talent is amateur, I don't think there's a better magazine anywhere on the river. Personally, of course, I should like to see more about the river in it, the real, grassy-banked, bullrushed, water-rat river, but I suppose your space is limited".

"Well, limitation of space isn't the only difficulty; we can't seem to get hold of anyone who really knows much about it. Now, suppose, sir, that you were to contribute a short article, How would that do?"

"Oh, I don't know. It's very nice of you to ask me, of course, but.....well, we'll see! And now, if you don't mind, I must be off, or the missis will be wondering where I've got with the tea".

"Good-bye, then", we replied, rising stiffly from the damp grass, "it's been a real pleasure to talk to you. Come down to Kingston some day, and look us up. Boathouses Nos. 3 and 4, you know".

"Yes, certainly, I may do that. Thanks for the invite. So-long". And so saying, he picked up the fish which was destined for the family tea, splashed into the water, and disappeared among the rushes near the edge. Hardly was he lost to view, however, when there came a little squeak, and he re-appeared, calling to attract our attention, "There's one thing I forgot. You might wish all your readers everything of the best at Christmas for me, will you, and good prospects for next year!"

These good wishes we heartily echo.

THE SUB EDITOR.

#### HCW A SAILOR SPENDS HIS CHRISTMAS.

Most of us in England think of Christmas as a holiday to be spent if possible with our family, or at least amongst our friends. I wonder if you have ever considered how a sailor spends his Christmas, probably hundreds of miles from home and friends. I have spent the last seven abroad, four of them actually at sea, one in Boston, one in Alexandria, and the last in Port Augusta. The ones I spent at sea were just like any other day, except that the crew had a tot of rum each and the officers a bottle of whisky between them. Other than that we had to keep watch and watch and do all the routine work of the ship.

Now let me tell you of a Christmas in port. On Dec. 5th 1926, we left Bona in N. Africa bound for Boston, Mass., with a cargo of iron ore. We had the usual winter N. Atlantic crossing, heavy seas running and sleet squalls the whole time. Most of us never got more than our oilskins and seaboots off the whole passage. It took us eighteen days to get to the Nantucket lightship and then we could not see it! It was just the traditional Banks fog, and it turned to

ice as soon as it settled on anything. We spent two whole days looking for the Pilot cutter, and when at last we found it, Christmas morning had dawned. We finally moored up about four bells in the forenoon. A photograph of the ship would have made a lovely Christmas card, the whole ship had a coat of ice about nine inches thick. We were out of fresh provisions, so the cook started preparing our lunch of pea soup, salt pork, dried potatoes and a duff.

Then came one of "Father Christmas' Angels" in the material form of the Pilot's wife. She had come down on a sleigh, drawn by a pair of horses with the family, looking like a couple of teddy bears all rolled up in furs, to take Daddy home for Christmas. But she had not forgotten us; she had brought a carcass of mutton and two huge Christmas puddings, and when the Old Man wanted to pay her, she wouldn't hear of it, and said she only hoped someone was doing the same for her boy who was on a boat in London. And all the payment we could persuade her to take was a bottle of "Johnnie Walker" the Customs hadn't found.

About five bells, ten of us were playing poker in the saloon with all the doors and port shut. The door from the pantry opened quietly and we heard a drawl. "Gee, what a fug! Say, what's the gang doing tonight?" It was the Padre to the Missions to Seamen. He invited us all to a bun fight and concert at the Y.M.C.A. All hands and the cook from our ship turned up, and also the crews of every other English ship in Boston. They gave us tea (with fresh milk), mince pies, jellies, trifles, fruit and cake. We could eat as much as we could get outside of. There must have been about twenty nippies waiting on us, and all from the home country. After that came the concert, not the organised affair such as you get at the Albert Hall, but just the sailors and officers themselves. We had all sorts; Mates, Cabin boys, Firemen, Trimmers, with mouth organs, accordions, Community singing, and we even had four chief engineers doing a Hieland Reel. The last item on the programme was Father Christmas with a present for every one of us, a pair of heavy socks to wear inside seaboots, a woolly muffler or a pair of mittens. Then we sang "Auld Lang Syne", and off to our ships. If anyone had said he hadn't enjoyed himself he would have been denounced as a liar, or even thrown in the drink.

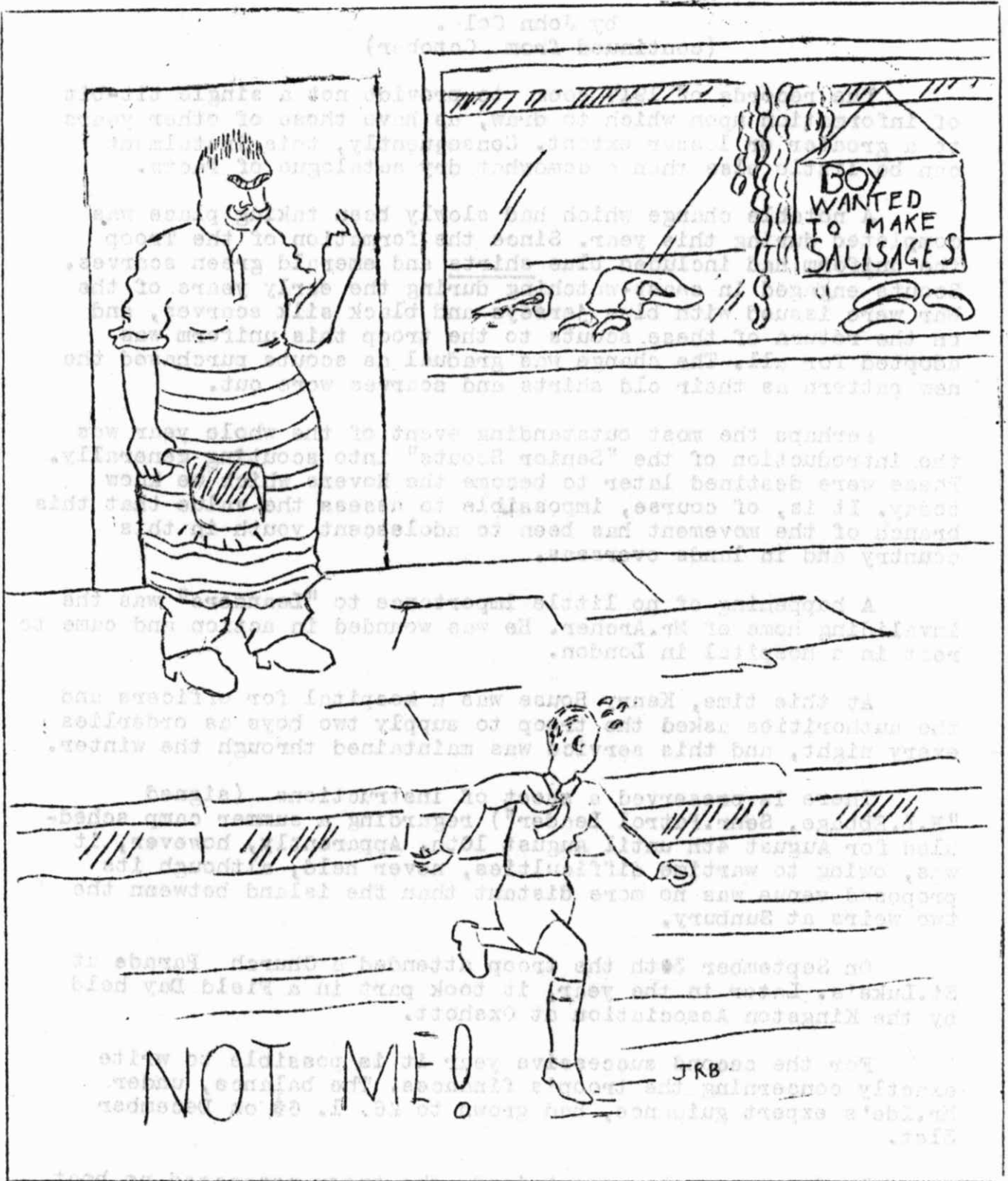
We had had a most wonderful evening, and it had been arranged and supplied by the English people in Boston, the Americans whose own boys were at sea, the Missions to Seamen and the Y.M.C.A. The other two Christmasses I spent in port were the same, everyone tried to make us forget we were in a foreign country, and get us to feel at home.

J.E.J.

---

HAVE YOU SENT IN YOUR ORDER FORM FOR NEXT YEAR'S "WATER RAT"?

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THE HISTORY OF "LEANDERS".

by John Cole.

(continued from October)

The records of 1917 seem to provide not a single tit-bit of information upon which to draw, as have those of other years to a greater or lesser extent. Consequently, this instalment can be little else than a somewhat dry catalogue of facts.

A notable change which had slowly been taking place was completed during this year. Since the formation of the Troop the uniform had included blue shirts and emerald green scarves. Scouts engaged in coast-watching during the early years of the War were issued with blue jerseys and black silk scarves, and on the return of these scouts to the troop this uniform was adopted for all. The change was gradual as scouts purchased the new pattern as their old shirts and scarves wore out.

Perhaps the most outstanding event of the whole year was the introduction of the "Senior Scouts" into scouting generally. These were destined later to become the Rovers which we know today. It is, of course, impossible to assess the value that this branch of the movement has been to adolescent youth in this country and in lands overseas.

A happening of no little importance to "Leanders" was the invaliding home of Mr. Archer. He was wounded in action and came to rest in a hospital in London.

At this time, Kenry House was a hospital for officers and the authorities asked the troop to supply two boys as orderlies every night, and this service was maintained through the winter.

There is preserved a sheet of instructions (signed "E.L. Ebbage, Senr. Patrol Leader") regarding a summer camp scheduled for August 4th until August 10th. Apparently, however, it was, owing to wartime difficulties, never held, although its proposed venue was no more distant than the island between the two weirs at Sunbury,

On September 30th the troop attended a Church Parade at St. Luke's. Later in the year, it took part in a Field Day held by the Kingston Association at Oxshott.

For the second successive year it is possible to write exactly concerning the troop's finances. The balance, under Mr. Ide's expert guidance, had grown to £6. 1. 6½ on December 31st.

As far as can be ascertained, the troop possessed no boat other than the "banana" dinghy; the canvas boat and the Teddington gig having been broken up. (Continued on page 199.)

THE FINDING OF STEPHEN.

In these matter-of-fact days the mention of anything appertaining to the supernatural is greeted with a supercilious smile or a suspicion of one's sobriety. None, however, can accuse my friend Aloysius Speller, D.Sc., of drunkenness, for he is a lifelong abstainer, and he saw these things as well as I. But I wander, so here is my tale, and I leave you to draw your own conclusions.

I was sitting in Aloysius Speller's drawing-room, having been summoned by him on the telephone. Aloysius was a Doctor of Science, six feet two in height, well-built and afraid of nothing on this earth or, I have very good reason to believe, from any other place. He was fortunately well endowed with money and had no need either to toil or spin, but he made it his hobby to investigate anything dealing with the supernatural. In short, his interest in life was ghosts.

It was this uncanny hobby of his that was responsible for my presence in his drawing-room. He had received, so he informed me, a visit from a gentleman from Bedford, who had the unpleasant experience each night of hearing screams, having the doors of his house flung open, and his furniture thrown about the room. Aloysius had promised to go down to investigate, and asked if I had nothing better to do, if I would care to go and give him a helping hand?

As the outcome of this interview I found myself the following morning helping to load his powerful car with the paraphernalia that he considered necessary to bring peace once more to this home in Bedford. There were coils of wire, a camera, a ball of string, boxes and jars of heaven knows what, and last but by no means least, a basket containing Shah, his beautiful blue Persian cat.

Arriving at Bedford we stopped at the "George" for lunch and enquired the way to Bury Knowle, the name of the house to which we were going. We found that the mention of Bury Knowle aroused the curiosity of mine host and was the cause of much whispering and nudging amongst the other occupants of the lounge.

After a good lunch we set off again and about five miles out of Bedford, we turned into a drive and passing through the ornamental gates came to a fine old Tudor mansion. This, it appeared, was our destination, and dismounting from the car, we climbed the steps leading up to the front door, where Aloysius rang the bell. The door was opened by the owner of the house, Mr. Randolph Cowley, who apologised for the absence of the butler, explaining that all the servants had left, and he had sent Mrs. Cowley away to some relatives as the uncanny happenings in the house were getting on her nerves.

He showed us where the garage was, and having put the car away we went into the smoking room where a blazing fire and refreshments awaited us. Our host was a stoutish man of about sixty. His hair was tinged with grey, and I judged him to be connected with a bank or the Stock Exchange. I was wrong, however, for he informed us later that he was a director of an Insurance Company. Whatever else he was, he certainly seemed worried.

Aloysius broached the reason of our visit and as he had understood at their previous interview that the trouble all occurred in one particular room, he suggested going to the actual scene of the happenings. We were taken to a large room at the back of the house, used as a library. It had French windows opening on to the garden, in the centre of which was a lily pond. The walls of the room were lined with lovely old oak panels and against the centre of one of the walls stood a massive antique bureau. The room was lighted by electricity,

Having made a general survey of the room, Aloysius turned to Mr. Cowley and requested him to tell us just what happened. In a hesitating, self-conscious manner he informed us that at about midnight, there was usually a noise of furniture being over-turned, accompanied by heartrending shrieks as of a woman in intense anguish. Although the French windows were securely fastened every night they were always found open in the morning, and the bureau that I have mentioned as standing against the wall was thrown across the room. This was the only piece of furniture that was touched.

Aloysius then enquired into the history of the house, asking whether anyone had ever met a violent death in this room. Mr. Cowley, however, had not heard of any such case, but told us that when the house was occupied by previous tenants many years ago, their small son Stephen had mysteriously disappeared, and although everything had been done to find him, all efforts had been in vain. The loss of her child had so affected the mother that she had drowned herself in the lily pond.

Aloysius then set us to work and we cleared the room of all its furniture with the exception of the bureau, which we left in its original position. After securing the French windows we fixed up the camera and a flashlight together with an ingenious arrangement across the floor so that anyone entering the room would be instantly photographed, for although my friend did not rule out any idea of the supernatural, he said that it was always best to look for a natural cause first. Having completed these arrangements we left the room and closed the door. Aloysius sealed it with cotton and sealing wax in such a manner that any one opening the door must break the cotton.



It appeared that Aloysius had requested that he and I be left alone in the house for two nights, so after showing us our bedrooms and where to find everything, our host left us and went to a hotel at Bedford. We found that the house boasted a billiard room, and Aloysius suggested that we should make use of it until bed-time, as there was no need to set a watch that night. He hoped the camera would solve our problem. We turned in, and at about half past one in the morning, I was wakened with a start by the most unearthly shriek it has ever been my lot to hear, accompanied by the sound of smashing furniture. I arose and went into Aloysius' bedroom, but he told me to go back to bed and leave the investigation till the morning. He gave me, however, a loaded revolver for use in case of emergency. The terrible noises continued for an hour, when all became quiet and I fell asleep again.

Having found the necessary things in the kitchen we had a good breakfast and then went to make our examination. The seal on the door was intact, so Aloysius broke it and we entered the room. Sure enough the French windows were open again, and the bureau thrown over. Taking the plate out of the camera we rigged up a dark room and developed it, but found it to be unexposed. Aloysius calmly informed me that the only thing to do was for both of us to stay in the room that night and see for ourselves what happened. Noticing my obvious reluctance to this scheme he explained that he had certain methods of protecting us from attack by any human or inhuman agency, and asked me to go to the garage and fetch his paraphernalia from the car.

On my return I found that Aloysius had placed two chairs in the centre of the room, around which he had arranged a series of blue lights connected with a battery, so that they formed a five-pointed star. Between the lights he sprinkled the floor with certain herbs and vinegar. We were to sit in the centre of this star and Aloysius impressed upon me that whilst within it no spirit could reach me, but if I once stepped outside the Star he would not answer for my safety. He also rigged a switch so that we could illuminate the room without leaving our position.

At eleven o'clock that night we entered the room to keep our vigil. We both had revolvers in case our visitors proved human, and Aloysius also brought with him Shah, his blue persian cat, for as he explained, cats are very sensitive to the supernatural and give early warning of the approach of any unnatural form or body. We also had each an electric torch. After warning me to keep silent and whatever happened not to step outside the star, Aloysius picked up Shah and nursed him in his lap.

I think I must have dozed for I suddenly found Aloysius shaking me to draw my attention to the actions of Shah. The cat

was quivering with excitement and purring loudly. Jumping down to the floor he walked to the French windows and commenced scratching at the glass in an endeavour to get out. Without any warning the doors flew open with a bang, giving us an unbroken view of the lily pond, from the centre of which rose a shapeless mist. Shah, with his tail erect, stalked majestically to the edge and although usually detesting water, stepped into the pond and commenced swimming around. Fearing that the animal would drown I rose to go to its rescue, but Aloysius seized my wrist, forcing me back into the chair.

In the meantime the mist from the pond was gathering into a slender column and floating towards the open French windows. Giving an unearthly shriek it entered the room and assumed the form of a distracted woman with her long hair streaming behind her. Rushing to the bureau she threw it aside as though it were a matchbox and sobbing bitterly, tore frantically at the wall in front of which had stood the bureau. Then, as if realising that she could not achieve her object, whatever it was, she turned her attention to us, making gestures as though appealing for our help. Finding that we did not respond she flew into a terrific rage and darted at us as if intent to destroy. Try as she would, however, she proved powerless to cross the limits of our protecting star, which only maddened her the more. My hair stood on end and I felt as though an electric current was trickling through my scalp. If Aloysius had not firmly grasped my arm I am sure I should have bolted from the room there and then. This manifestation lasted in all about an hour, and then the woman drifted back to the lily pond and disappeared as a mist.

Aloysius switched on the light. We closed the French windows and commenced to examine that portion of the wall which had so attracted our mysterious visitor, Aloysius running his hand over the beading, accidentally pressed a knob and a panel slid back. I switched on my torch and was going to see what we had found, but Aloysius restrained me until he had placed a chair in the gap to prevent the panel from closing again and so trapping us. Then stepping through, we came to a flight of stone steps leading to an underground chamber which had evidently been used in olden times as a hiding place. At the bottom of the steps lay the skeleton of a boy. We had found Stephen, and had seen the spirit of the distracted mother trying to reach her son. At the moment of our discovery, I felt a damp form brushing against me and for the moment was paralysed, but plucking up courage I glanced down and to my great relief found it to be the dripping form of Shah, who had evidently managed to struggle out of the pond.

The skeleton was reverently buried in the churchyard and presumably the spirit of the poor mother found peace, for she never again disturbed the occupants of Bury Knowle.

THE GREAT CLOCK.

Can you tell the time by the stars? One of Shakespear's characters remarks:- "An't be not four by the day I'll be hanged, Charles' Wain is over the new chimney". Most Scouts are familiar with the PLOUGH, or Great Bear, better known to Americans as the Dipper, and called by our great-great-grand-parents Charles' Wain, or the Churl's Waggon.

An arrow passing through the Pointers, or two chief stars of the Plough in the direction of Cassiopea (the constellation like a great "W") will point to the POLE STAR, round which the Heavens appear to revolve in 24 hours, owing to the Earth's rotation in the opposite direction.

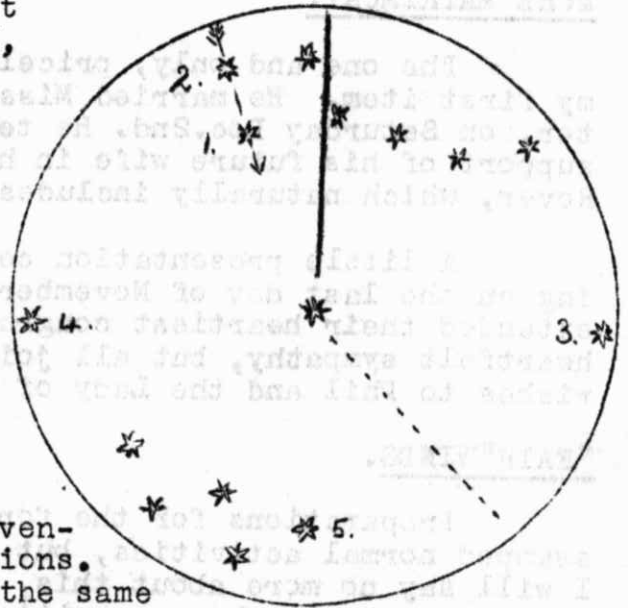
Look out at intervals on the same evening and observe the change of positions. Look out again the next evening at the same times. The stars will appear to have come back to the same places. NOT EXACTLY. Owing to the Earth's journey round the Sun, the stars gain 3 minutes 56 seconds daily. (call it 4 minutes). Each month they gain TWO hours, and so on. For instance on April 23rd when star time indicates 10 p.m. we deduct 2 hours; the real time is 8 p.m.

For a clock hand imagine a line drawn from the Pole Star and between the two stars next to the Pointers.

On March 23rd each year the position at midnight is as shown. At 6 p.m. the line will be half-way down on the left; at Noon it will hang straight down; at 6 p.m. it will be half-way up on the right. This is Sidereal or star-time. Star time and Solar or Clock time coincide on March 23rd, after then the stars gain on the clock. To tell clock time we must count the months and days since March 23rd and deduct the time gained from the apparent star time. (When star time is less than the time gained, we borrow an extra 24 hours.)

Suppose that on December 30th, star time is 3 p.m. (see dotted line) Nine months and seven days have passed; the gain is 18 hours and 28 minutes, (say half an hour) 3 plus 24 are 27, from which we deduct 18½. The time is 8. 30.

STAR NAMES. 1. Dubhne, and 2. Merak, in the Great Bear.  
3. Vega, is the chief star of LYRA, the Harp.  
4. Capella, the chief star of AURIGA, the charioteer.  
5. Schedar, the chief star of CASSIOPEA, the chained lady.  
The Little Bear hangs by its tail from the Pole Star.  
DRACO, the dragon lies between the two Bears.



ROVER NOTES.MORE MATRIMONY.

The one and only, priceless, Philip Day provides me with my first item. He married Miss O'Freeth at Caxton Hall, Westminster, on Saturday Dec. 2nd. He tells me that he has the full support of his future wife in his ambition to become the perfect Rover, which naturally includes the ideal husband.

A little presentation ceremony took place after the meeting on the last day of November, at which the single members extended their heartiest congrats., the married blokes their heartfelt sympathy, but all joined in offering their very best wishes to Phil and the Lady of his Heart.

"FAIR" WINDS.

Preparations for the forthcoming Fun Fair has somewhat swamped normal activities, but as I am not the Publicity Manager I will say no more about this, except possibly to commend those energetic people who are putting in so much additional time on the production of an excellent one-act play, which alone should be worth the entrance fee.

A.J.L.

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A BOOT BOX.  
 (continued from last month)

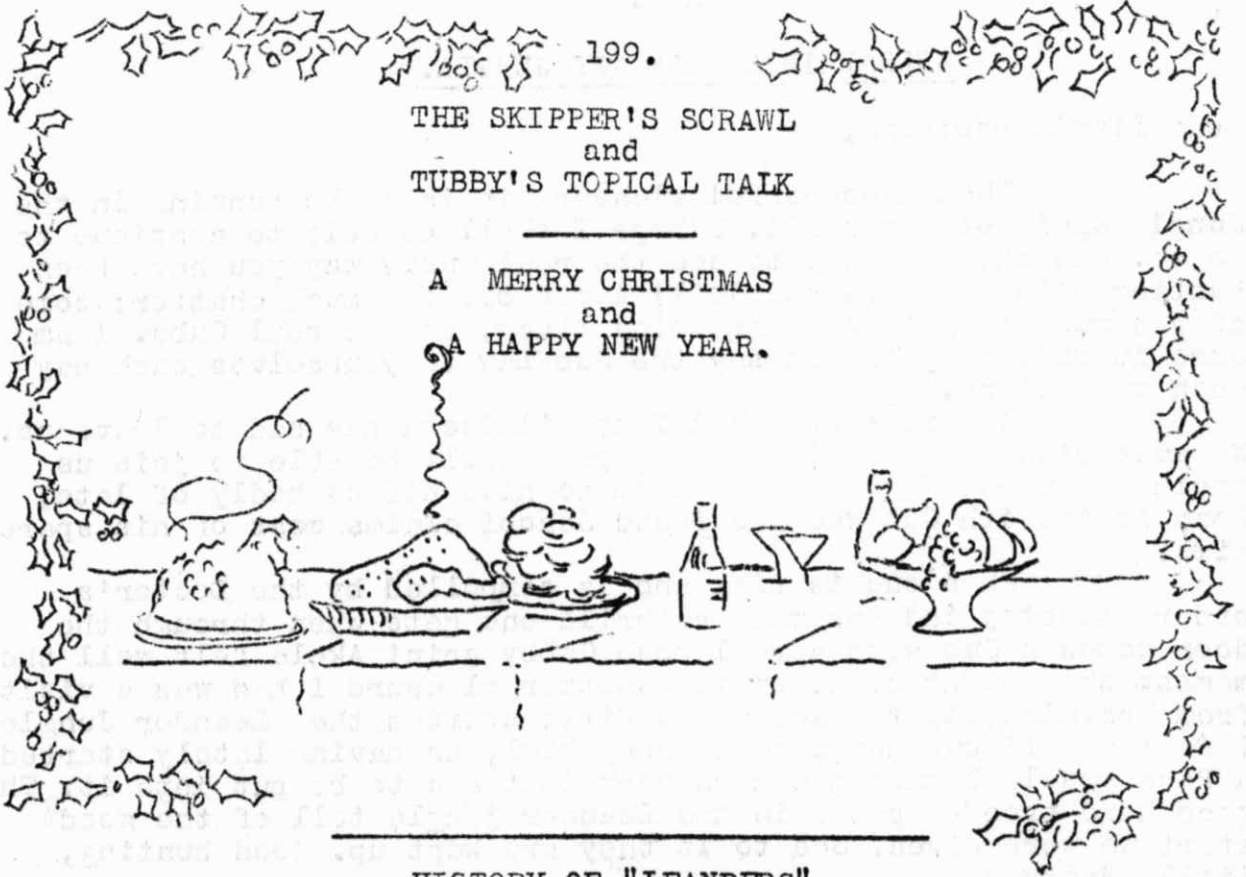
This month we will deal with the finishing-off of the boot box. The first thing is to sand-paper it well all over, having the paper round a piece of wood to prevent rubbing off the sharp edges of the work. Next, we must decide on the method of staining we want it finished in. The best and most serviceable is, I think, a rich brown; for this we want some Burnt Umber in oil. Put a small quantity in a clean 1 lb. jam pot, and add a little Turpentine or gold size and thin down with turps, brush this over the wood with the grain, the thinner the stain the lighter the shade will be. Let it stand overnight to dry and harden off, then rub over lightly with a piece of worn sand-paper to take off the roughness caused by the grain of the wood coming up. If it has dried too light, give another coat of stain, but if the colour is to your liking, we will give it a coat of Hard Oak Varnish to finish it off. When it is dry fix a piece of lino on the top of the lid.

If you have any questions to ask, I shall be pleased to answer them if you address letters c/o The Editor.

A.K.B.

THE SKIPPER'S SCRAWL  
and  
TUBBY'S TOPICAL TALK

A MERRY CHRISTMAS  
and  
A HAPPY NEW YEAR.



HISTORY OF "LEANDERS".  
(contd. from page 192)

Headquarters were still at the Druid's Head.

For the first time a definite record of patrols appears (although, doubtless, many old "Leanders" remember details of them long before this year). Familiar names come to light: There were Beavers, Otters, Seals, Seagulls and Storks.

Troop constitution was approximately as follows:-

Allen M.	Downs, G.	Pike J.
Barnett, W.	Felton, A.	Potten, F.
Baldwin, E.	Green, H.	Richardson, W.
Biden, C.	Hamilton, G.	Simms, F.
Bisiker, F.	Hillyer, E.	Stair, D.
Blanchard, L.	Hughes, H.	Sullivan, E.J.
Brady, E.	Johnson, L.	Turner, J.
Buckingham, H.	Kennett, K.	Tyrell, J.
Buckwell, R.	Lewis, C.	Wagner, A.
Budd, L.	Leeson, D.	Weakley, D.
Cornell, E.	Masters, C.	Whatsley, J.
Dawson, G.	Outrim, R.	Whitmarsh, H.
Dench, H.	Pidgeon, D.	Winder, J.

WHISPERINGS FROM THE JUNGLE.

Dear Little Brothers,

What a wonderful pleasure it is to be running in the Jungle again with you all. I hope I shall be able to continue to do so. And oh, what joy to see the real Cubby way you have been hunting with Bagheera and Chil! A wee bit too much chatter; some of you must forget your Banderlog stage, and be real Cubs. I am sure it will help if you say the Cub Law to yourselves each day when you get up.

We are sorry that Tony Wilkinson has had to leave us. We must wish him good luck and hope he will be able to join us again later on. Home lessons seem to have hit us badly of late; Tony is the 4th Cub who has found School claims most of his spare time.

When one is sick and is compelled by the Doctor's orders to stay indoors what a thrill one gets when through the door comes a Cub with a real posh Cubby grin! Akela felt well the moment she caught sight of it! Another pleasure I had was a visit from Mrs. Millest, the Akela who first started the Leander Jungle. I feel we all owe her a good Cubby howl, as having lately started a Pack myself I know the hard work that has to be put into it. The good hard-trodden paths in the Leander jungle tell of the good start we were given. See to it they are kept up. Good hunting, Little Brothers,

AKELA HAS SPOKEN.

WHAT HO, GREYS! Christmas is coming, we are getting jollier and you are puzzling what presents you are going to get. The Grey six is doing alright, but I think we are a bit slow at keeping top in the monthly Six work, for the Tawneys have got that position and we are second. We must score top marks next time, so we will have to work hard in 1934. Try to get your 1st and 2nd Stars and score some more points. Jumbo is going to score an extra one, because after he has had his Christmas dinner he will be an ELEPHANT. He might be able to buy his own buns out of the money he gets from the pudding! Good wishes for Christmas to the Greys, also to Akela, Bagheera and Chil.

SIXER F. CAKLEY.

HULLO, BROWNS! Let's work hard to do our bit towards making the Bazaar and Fun Fair a success, and, what's more, make our Six a success likewise. The Browns' attendance has improved; I hope you chaps will keep it up. Don't let us always be the ones to be "in the dumps", let's be "top notchers" for a change! Well, Browns, Christmas will soon be here. I hope you all have a jolly good time, but let us remember to D.O.B. always. Good Hunting, Browns.

SIXER J. MARDON.

HULLO, TAWNEYS! We have done well at football lately, but we have not had many Inter-Six Competitions, because we have been practicing the dances for the Bazaar. We shall be alright after this, so goodbye for now.

SIXER R. HILL.

THE CHRISTMAS STORY.  
(From a furry point of view)

The little Indian wolf who belongs to Kipling's Mowgli stories heard nothing of the beginning of Christmas, nor did the bigger Wolves of Europe and N.America, with their extra fluffy under layer of fur. It was the largest of wolves the Palestine wolves, generally spoken of as ravening wolves, who sensed something strange and wonderful in Man's Land nearly two thousand years ago.

A pack of these cunning animals lay hidden in caves in the hills just north of Jerusalem. There were no battles in the human world, because the Romans had conquered all the land they knew, and as there was no-one left to fight had settled down to govern what they had. Only the wolves were not conquered. It was no wonder, then, that shepherds kept a very careful watch over their sheep on those winter nights.

One particular night the wolves crept from their caves, and the pack met in a convenient spot surrounded by trees a little way up the side of a hill, lying quiet as though under a spell. One of their number was missing. It should be about time for an attack on those sheep out in the grassland, but the shepherds were particularly wakeful that night; they were gazing at the sky, which was brighter than usual. Suddenly they rose up and moved off southwards. There was the flock left unguarded; just the chance for hungry wolves, but something stayed them, with one consent they remained in ambush.

Later on, the straying wolf returned. The rest eyed him suspiciously. "Where have you been?" their eyes demanded. "To that little town called Bethlehem not near the great buildings where Man dwells, but around the stables!" He told how one stable was alive with human buzz; the shepherds arrived there, and found a Baby, tiny and helpless.

There were three wise men there, who had reached the place by following a star. They too had come to see the Baby. He was a perfect man-child, and yet was the Son of God as well, for God sent Him as a gift to the whole world, somehow to make people good, because God loves the world.

"Good-gracious" howled the pack. That is what lots of the people said, and some just took no notice at all, but the shepherds and the wise men, and the Child's mother and father, and some of the others who believed God, were saying "Thank you very, very much".

The Pack went on a short hunt that night, Northwards, because they could not disturb the peace which rested on Bethlehem.

PATROL LEADERS' OPINIONS.

HULLO, SEAGULLS! Happy days are here again! When the Bazaar is over we shall be able to get down to the usual Scout programme once more. Soon I shall expect to see more of you with 1st Class and Proficiency Badges, now that it counts towards the District Competition. I hope that by the time the next number is out we shall have had some Cubs come up, to bring our strength up to that of the Storks.  
Cheerio all, till next month.

J. PHILLIPS.



STAND BY, STORKS! When the work for the Bazaar is finished we must settle down to our 1st and 2nd Class tests, so that we are really efficient by next May, the commencement of the summer season. We also hope for two more recruits to bring our number up to the maximum. In the near future I hope we shall all be able to go to Camp at Oxshott. I'll tell you the date later on, but I fancy it will be the 1st week-end in January. Since the last Mag. appeared we have had two jolly good scouting games. The first we called "Liquor Running" and played as follows.- The Trowlock backwater was shallow water where only the supply vessel (the flattie) and the fast launch (Folbot) were able to navigate, whilst the revenue cutter (small gig) could not venture inside. The liquor men had to run the cargo across to a fast lorry (yukon) and counted a win if they got it to H.Q. without being caught. The first case was taken easily, the revenue cutter just managed to capture the second, but the third got through, and was drunk amid great jubilation. The second game consisted of a treasure hunt by the flattie, the oars of which were removed by a buccaneer vessel, and whose marooned crew had to send a message to the coastguard station to come out and rescue them. All very good sport! With Oliver Twist, we pass our plates up for more.

F. HALLETT.

HOW DO OTTERS! Now that all the rush in preparation for the Bazaar is over we shall be able to get down to more Scouting. This winter I should like to see more outdoor games than have been held in the past two or three years. I am pleased to note that some of the fellows have made a very good commencement in obtaining badges and I think it is about time that the other few began,

H. MARTIN.




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