

CHAPTER LIV

BOY SCOUTS

By George

George was very much interested in the Boy Scouts during the period while the family lived in West Newton, a suburb of Boston. One of the favorite trips of the Scouts was to Walden Pond near Concord, which is the scene of Thoreaus book of that name. While there on an overnight hike, George lost his glasses, the only pair he had with him. He was sure that he had left them right on the dock in plain sight while he was in swimming, but when he got out of the water he couldn't find them. All of the scouts searched for the missing glasses, including George, who couldn't have seen them unless he was right on top of them. They finally gave up and George got a ride home in a truck that was taking some of the baggage back to Newton. A year later, when the scouts went up there again, a boy in diving "to pick up bottom" saw something bright and the next dive he came up with George's glasses, which were none the worse for having spent a year at the bottom of Walden Pond.

You may be interested in knowing what George was especially interested in in the Boy Scouts. Well, his primary interest was in the first aid work and that was the first merit badge that he got. After that came camping and cooking. He received merit badges for Pioncoering, Cooking, Astronomy, Cycling, Swimming and several others in addition to the one for first aid. He tried along with eight others for the Basketry merit badge, but the examination was given by an old maid art teacher whose artistic standards were so high that nobody passed. Later they got someone else to give the Basketry examination, but George never tried it again. He always meant

to try the examinations for Signalling but never got around to learn the Semaphore code as he and the other boys in his patrol always used the wig-wag system. Strangely enough, he never got a merit badge in music, although as you know that has been his principal hobby ever since he was about twelve years old.

At one time George aspired to be a bugler, but while the family and neighbors were marvelously patient about it, he never made any real accomplishment along that line. He did, however, teach what little he knew to a colored boy who became so proficient at it that in 1917, when we entered the war, he joined one of the crack colored regiments as a bugler. He was killed in action shortly before the armistice was signed.

What promised to be George's greatest contribution to scouting was in the matter of making fire by rubbing sticks. This is quite a little trick and sometime you will have to get George to show you how it is done, although the process involves bending nearly double and it isn't as easy for George to bend double now as it was when he was a Boy Scout. When George and his friend Sydney Bowen started working on the matter, the official world's record was something over a minute. George and his patrol made a careful study of different kinds of wood, tinder, thongs, size of hole and technic of fanning the spark into flame. George made an unofficial record of thirty-two seconds and one of the other boys in his patrol, whom George coached, won first place at a national meet with an official record of seventeen seconds, which was considered phenomenal at the time but has probably since been broken.