

A MERRY XMAS  
TO ALL OUR READERS

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December 1934

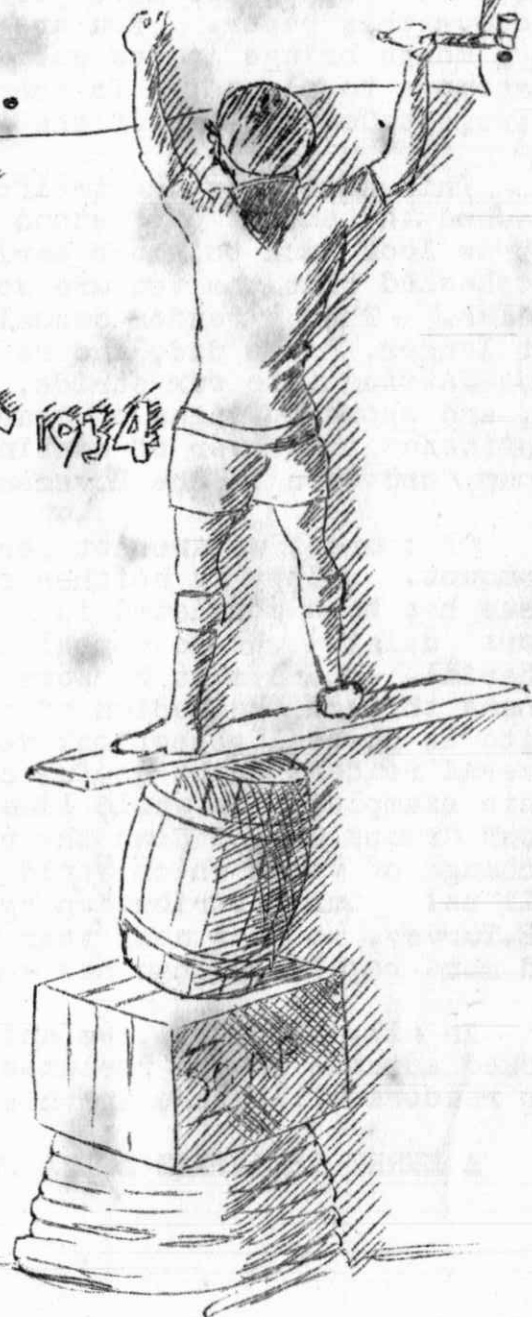
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THE WATER RAT.

Vol. IV. No. 12.

Edited by Robert H. Marrion.  
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J.B.



A MERRY CHRISTMAS! We seem to have said that a great deal lately, but nowhere has it given us such profound pleasure as now, from the pages of this magazine, to broadcast to all our readers that age-old sentiment, as sincere as Christianity, than which it can be only a few years younger. And yet, in the present circumstance, it has an even deeper sincerity than normally. You, the readers of the Water Rat, are in large part known to us personally; we look upon you all as intimate friends; we have your interests at heart as month by month we produce this paper. You are an increasing band, too! Unfailingly, each month brings in new subscribers, fresh friends to welcome, new customers to please. To them all we extend our Christmas wish, the heartiest Compliments of the Season.

This number is the twelfth of Volume 4. That is to say, we have reached the end of the second year of the magazine's rejuvenation. Let us look back to those early numbers. Many there were who prophesied that the venture would not last three months. It lasted twelve. Then a reader casually asked us if we hoped to continue a bit longer. We did, and we have. After two dozen issues we are just getting into our stride, the machinery of production has been run in, and shows no signs of wearing out. We start 1935 with greater confidence than ever of continued service as the Power for Good in the Group, and even in the Movement, that we believe the Water Rat to be.

Of course, we are not perfect. We have many difficulties yet to surmount. Copy is neither plentiful nor punctual. (This present issue has been completed in a terrific rush largely owing to contributors' delay.) We do appeal to our readers to come forward with material. There must be something that each of you could tell the others through the medium of these pages. To say that you can't write is no real objection; we have, in our two short years, trained several readers to be useful contributors; each of you could follow their example. We would like to print much more news of other Sea Scout Groups up and down the river. In that way we might start an exchange of views which would be of benefit to everyone. Write and tell us! Our distribution system is being re-organised under Rover R.E. Turvey, so that next year we hope you will get your copies earlier and more regularly than has sometimes been the case.

In all, therefore, we anticipate that 1935 will show yet another marked advance in the fortunes of the Water Rat, and we trust that all our readers will share in this increased good fortune.

A MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR TO YOU ALL!

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:: THE SKIPPER'S SCRAWL. ::

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OUR FUN FAIR & BAZAAR was an unqualified success. There are still a few payments to come in so it will not be possible to publish a financial statement until next month. The profit will, however, be somewhere in the neighbourhood of £32. For assisting us to achieve this splendid result, our sincere thanks are due to LADY WOODGATE (who was accompanied by Sir Alfred, and their son and daughter) for opening the Bazaar and making a large number of purchases; to MISS PEGGY BROWN of Surbiton, for judging the Cookery Competition, and kindly providing two additional prizes; and to MR. N.G.BURLEY, for presenting the Coal for the Weight Guessing Competition.

I want also to express my personal thanks to all the members of the Group and their parents and friends for helping in such a magnificent manner. The whole show was a wonderful co-operative effort. One of our regular helpers told me that she had thoroughly enjoyed the preparations for the 'show' as the Committee meetings had provided opportunities for re-newing the acquaintance of many friends who were seldom encountered except at Leander stunts. I am delighted to know that the Bazaar should have been not only financially but also socially so successful.

On Saturday December 15th, at All Saints' Church, the Wedding took place of Miss Avril Ayres and 'Peter' Dawson. Peter was for many years a member of the Leander Rover Crew, and was the original artist on the staff of the "Water Rat". We wish them many years of happiness together.

Just as we go to press comes the news that the Group has been the recipient of a most acceptable Christmas present. This is a 10ft dinghy, in splendid condition, and complete with gear, given to us by our neighbour, Mr. Pryor of The Thicket. This boat makes a most valuable addition to our "fleet" as it is considerably lighter than our two "flatties". It will thus give added interest to our journeys and games afloat especially for the smaller Scouts.

At the last meeting of the Court of Honour it was decided to institute a Camp Savings Fund in the New Year. This is a means whereby weekly payments can be made towards the cost of the Troop's Summer Camp. To 29 payments made by the members, the Troop will add one by way of interest, thus weekly payments of 3d, 6d, 9d or 1/- will provide sums of 7/6, 15/-, 22/6 or 30/- respectively. Any Scout who finds himself unable to camp will of course have his money refunded in full. Contribution Cards will be available at the Troop Muster on January 1st.

A JOYOUS CHRISTMAS TO YOU ALL.

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:: GUARDIAN OF THE WRECK. ::

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We sailed slowly up the creek against the first of the ebb! Dusk was already falling, and we were both tired from a long day in the little boat. "Sleep aboard tonight?" queried Bill, with wonderful word-economy. "Looks like it", I answered, "no hope of camping round here".

Night came on, bleak and lonely. There was no moon and the stars were frequently blotted out by masses of cloud. The breeze had a nip in it, as happens on the East Coast even in August. To port, a dark shape loomed up. "What d'you make of that Mister?" I asked. Bill shone the torch. "Barge, derelict. Aground about H.W. mark. Deck might be dry.

So we ran alongside, and behold it was so. Further, though she was a bit of a wreck forward, with a large part of the bows stove in, her stern lay well up the beach, and the after cabin was perfectly dry and in good condition. We looked at each other, and nodded.

After supper, we sat back on our respective bunks and lit up the weed of contentment. The tiny cabin was hot and odourous from the cooking, while the hurricane lamp smoked rather owing to the penetration of salt water. Bill had just announced his intention of not doing the washing-up, and I pondered this matter, while the pipe-smoke swirled and eddied round the deck-timbers overhead. Suddenly the hatch was pushed back, and a pair of sea-boots began to descend the companion, followed by a grizzled and bearded figure clad in a blue jersey and an old brown jacket. "Hallo! Who are you?" "Good-evening. We're Sea Scouts. I suppose it's quite alright for us to stay the night on board?" I countered, wondering how our visitor had managed to reach the barge, seeing she was surrounded by mud. "Yus, you're alright. She's a wreck. Don't belong to nobody proper". He seated himself on the other end of my bunk, and I was trying to make out just what he was when the dixie boiled over, extinguishing the primus at my feet. "Ah, that reminds me. We were just making tea. Will you have a cup?" "Nah, thanks. I don't hold with tea. Old woman's drink. Besides, you can't make it when you want it most. Give me a drop of whisky, or brandy, or rum. Anything, so long as it's spirits. Spirits, I tell you, that's the stuff to warm your innards when you really want's 'em warmed. I remember a filthy trip I made in this 'ere barge down to Queensbury one winter. 'Owlin' east wind, it was, with mountains of liquid ice coming at me from every ways. Me mate, 'e got washed off early, and I was froze solid so's I couldn't leave the wheel. The water was over the deck so deep all I could see was the mast stickin' out of the sea ahead. Thirtysix hours o' that, and d'you know how I did it? Spirits, me lad! I 'ad a bottle of schnapps in me pocket (something I learned off the Dutchmen), and I kept takin' a swig at that so often

as I could get the cork out. And believe me, when I got into the Medway, I felt like sailin' this sugar-box to Canterbury, if she'd 'ad wings!"

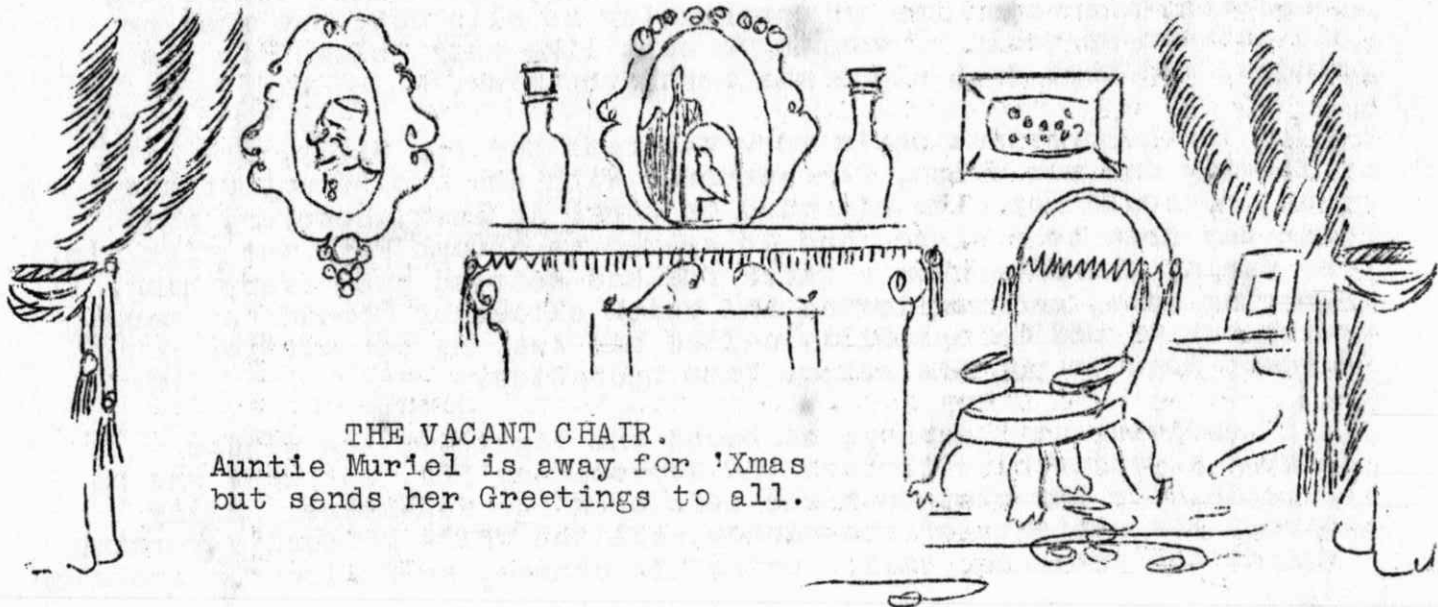
"Skipper of this barge, were you" murmured Bill, puttind down his tea-cup and stoking up his briar. "Yus, mate. Fifteen years up and down the coast, six on this very 'ooker". A lively brute she was, too in a blow". "I suppose you got some pretty nasty gales sometimes in winter", I prompted. "Why, yus, but believe me, I'd sooner have a winter gale than a summer one, if it really gets to blow. Don't you fellows think you're safe 'ere 'cause it's August. 'Twas a summer gale I lost this barge in, and that not three year ago. Sou'west, the wind was, and rainin' bucketsful, and I'd drunk me last bottle of Scotch, so I was puttin' in 'ere for shelter. Soakin' down, it was, and me wet through, when all of a sudden another barge at anchor jumps up from nowhere and smashes a great 'ole in me portside. "Jump, ye drunkard" yells me mate, jumping 'isself. "Not me" I says. "I stays with me vessel till we gets to 'arbour or 'eaven". And in the end we didn't get to neither, chum. Ho-ho!"

I turned to look at our strange visitor. He was laughing uproariously, head thrown back and mouth open. At that moment the hurricane lamp flickered and went out. There was sudden silence. I fumbled for the torch, and pressed the switch. Bill and I were alone in the little cabin! A sudden chill draught seemed to sweep over us, although the hatch was closed.

And then - a choking laugh from outside the hull, somewhere in that welter of slimy mud. "Ha-ha-ha! Spirits, I tell you, Speerits!"

R.H.M.

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THE VACANT CHAIR.  
Auntie Muriel is away for 'Xmas  
but sends her Greetings to all.

Billy was fifteen years old and lived in a slum. He was undersized and underfed, but his soul was consumed by an absorbing ambition to possess a suit of clothes with all the various garments to match. Never in his fifteen years of life had he worn such a suit, but had always been compelled to make do with trousers bought from a jumble sale, a waistcoat from lord knows where, and a jacket purchased from the "Old Clo'" Man's Stall in an open air market near his home. He lived in Poplar, and worked in a warehouse as odd-job boy at the beck and call of everyone, but when he was released from his drudgery at the close of the day he would drag his weary limbs home, passing down Burdett Road. Half-way down this road on the right hand side was the brilliantly lit shop of a multiple tailor in whose window stood a wax figure of a lad about Billy's age, but it had rosy cheeks, was clean and was arrayed in a beautiful blue suit, with creases down the trouser legs and smart turnup bottoms. Every evening Billy would halt on his way home, gaze at this figure, lost in admiration, and murmur to himself, "Gor, if only I had a couple of pahnd, I could look like 'im, and wouldn't I swank, not 'arf." Then one evening, after a particularly bad day at work, when he had been cursed by his boss and bullied and cuffed by the workmen, he made a great decision. He would have a suit like the one in the window, and if he could not get it by fair means he would try foul.

That night Billy could not sleep, but lay on his filthy bed in the garret scheming and planning, and there came to him a great inspiration. He remembered that just inside the door of the shop hung a row of overcoats and it would be an easy matter to slip in when the shop people were busy and hide behind them until the shop closed for the night. That he would find a way of getting out again he felt certain. Even if the worst came to the worst, he could wait until the manager came in the morning, again hide behind the overcoats, and watch for an opportunity to slip out, but when he did get out he would be wearing a suit like that 'bloke' in the window, and that fact alone was worth the risk.

If the previous day's work had been bad for Billy, the following one was worse, for seething with the excitement of his plan, he could not give his mind to work. At last, however, the long day drew to a close, and it seemed as though Fate was with him, for during the afternoon a thick fog had settled over everything. Hurrying home, and swallowing the thick slices of "bread and marg" which out of politeness Billy called his tea, he set out for Burdett Road to put his scheme into operation.

Arriving at the shop, he found the lights of the window showing a yellow blur through the surrounding fog, but luck was on his side, for the shop door was left open for customers. Billy scanned the contents of the window, all the while gradually working towards the entrance, till, seeing his chance, he followed a customer

through the door, and dived for the overcoats. "Oh joy!" he was in. So far he had been successful, but what if the man wanted to buy an overcoat? Luck, however, was with the ragged urchin, and he had now only to wait until the shop closed for the night. It was about seven o'clock, and business finished in Burdett Road at eight, so Billy endured a solid hour of purgatory waiting in his hiding place for the Manager to lock up and depart. Many times during that hour Billy was tempted to give up and bolt, but when he thought of the figure in the window he ground his teeth, and determined to see it through. He would have a suit like that even if he had to go to prison!

At last his vigil was over, and as the clock over the cash-desk struck eight, the Manager bid his assistants goodnight, switched off the lights and locking up, departed for his home, leaving Billy in the shop alone. He waited for a while before emerging from his hiding place just to make sure that no one else was left behind, and then commenced a tour of inspection. Suits, wonderful suits! He had never seen anything like it. He felt sick and faint with excitement. The first one he examined was obviously meant for a man of about fifteen stone, and throwing this down in disgust he began to search feverishly for one that would fit his weedy body. Then, wonder of wonders, behold a blue suit exactly like the one on which he had feasted his eyes every evening! Something seemed to snap in his brain and he could not wait to unfasten the pieces of string and pins that held his old clothes together, but simply **tore** them off him. Reaching for the suit of his dreams, he put on the trousers. They did not have a Bond Street fit, but to Billy's eyes they were perfect. Then came a snag. How was he going to keep them up? Why, braces of course. Where they sell trousers they sell braces, thought Billy, so he began to search around and in doing so made another discovery. In some drawers under a counter he found shirts, dozens of them, cool and clean. Oh! how different from the dirty old flannel rag he wore at present. Yes, he must have a shirt, and if a shirt, why not a collar? He had never worn a collar in his life, and after that a tie, one with those beautiful coloured stripes, and then of course socks, boots, and to complete it all, a trilby. Oh Boy! Billy found all these and stripping off his old rags clothed himself anew, choosing all the brightest colours throwing the rejected garments on to the floor in his great excitement. He had lost all sense of time, and was living for the moment in paradise. Having at last dressed himself to his satisfaction he stood before the long mirror to see how he looked. At first he got a great scare for he failed to recognise his reflection in the glass, and thought it was another lad coming towards him. Plucking up courage again he stared into the glass, expressing his pent-up emotion in the one word "Blimey".

Now had to be faced the most difficult part of the plan. Billy had to get out of the shop, so he began to search around trying all the doors and windows, only to find them securely fastened.

Suddenly he realised that although the electric lighting was switched off a faint yellow light flooded the shop. How did it get in? Why, through the skylight of course, and he had not tried that means of exit. Against the long shelves that decorated the walls rested a set of steps used by the assistants to reach the rolls of cloth from the top shelves and Billy fetched them, unconsciously breathing a prayer to some unknown Being that luck would favour him again. His prayer was answered, for the steps were long enough, and the skylight bolted on the inside. Climbing up the steps he unfastened the skylight and squeezed through. He was out of the shop but not out of the wood for he found himself with no means of getting down to the ground. The fog had thickened and seemed to have developed an acrid biting smell which got down Billy's throat making him cough and bringing tears to his eyes. Also from over the roof of the next shop came fitful patches of light through the darkness. Over the tiles and along narrow ledges he scrambled like a monkey. Risking his neck at many places where a false step would have cast him through space to the road below, he made for the flashes of light, hoping that he would eventually find a newly erected building fitted with an up to date iron ladder reaching from the roof to the street. With his fingers raw and bleeding where he had clutched the rough stonework, he reached the shop from which he had seen the lights shooting and to his horror he also found the explanation of the lights and the biting smell of fog, for the shop was on fire. Billy's plight was desperate, but either he must have friends in the other world specially detailed to watch over his welfare, or there is a special Providence for wrong doers, for just as he sat down on a coping and burst into tears a ladder was reared against the wall and there appeared a fireman's helmet.

The Fireman, seeing Billy, shouted to him "Come on son, this way, you'll be alright", and helped him down the fire escape to safety in the street below. Billy did not stop to thank his rescuer but melted into the crowd watching the fire and slipped away before any awkward questions could be asked.

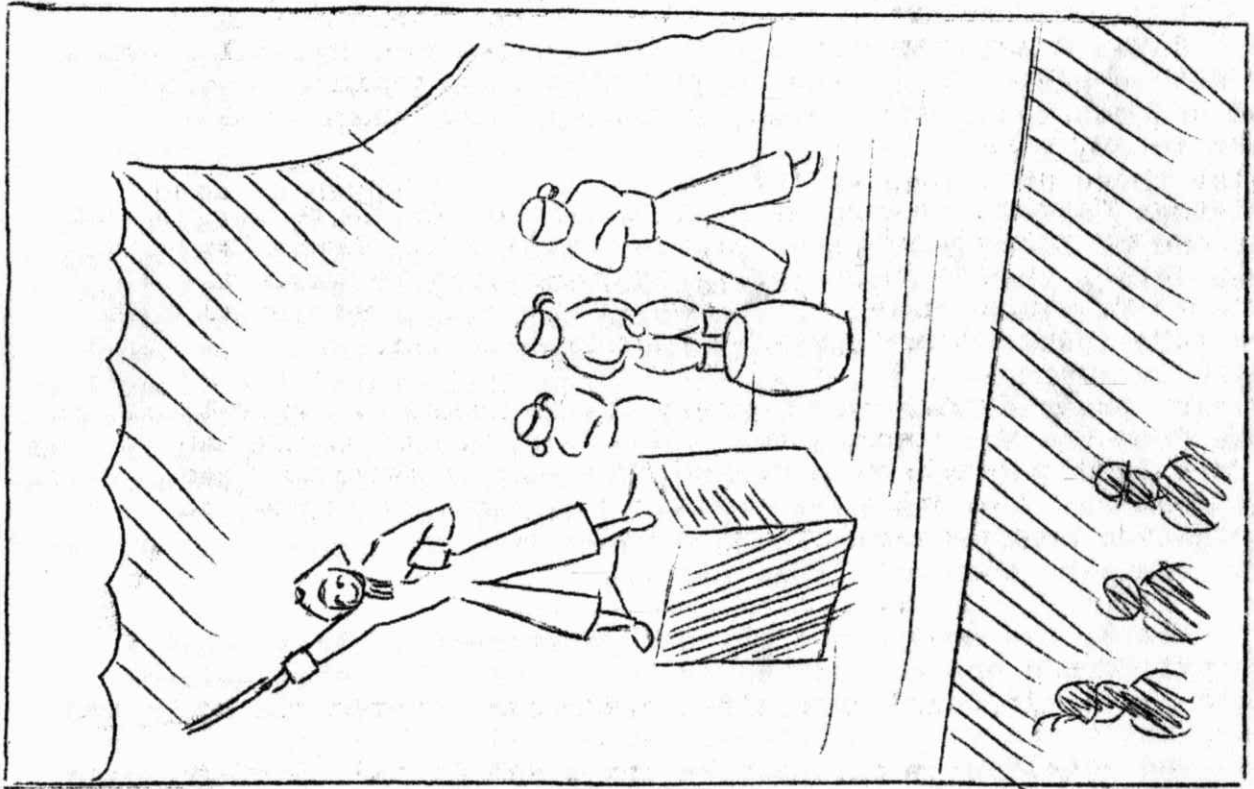
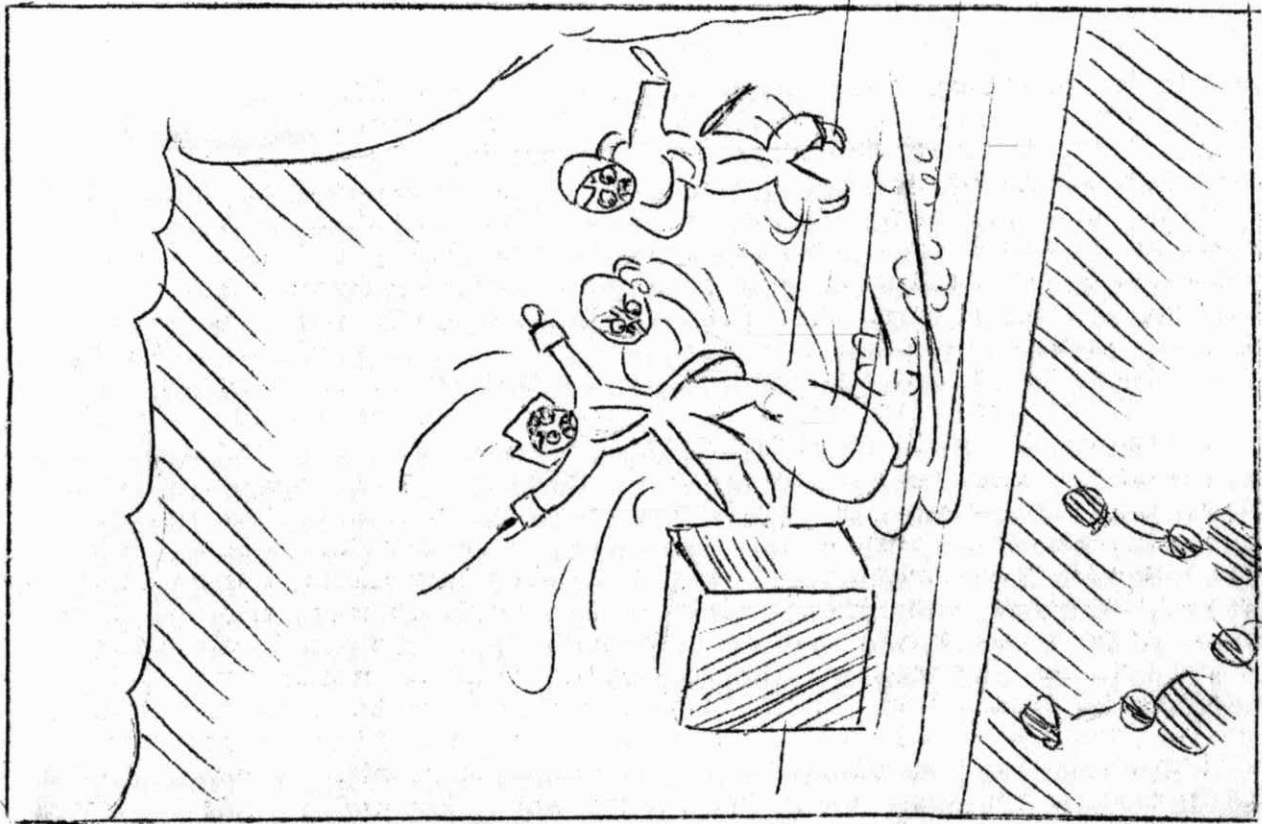
In the following day's papers there appeared two interesting items of news, one describing the fire and rescue of an unknown boy and the other a burglary in a tailor's shop in Burdett Road. It was very fortunate for Billy that it did not occur to anyone that there might be a connection between the two.

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"An' we laid aloft an' loosed the sails an' squared the ship away,  
An' a chap beside me on the yard says, 'Bill, it's Christmas Day' "

C.Fox Smith ("Sea Songs and Ballads").





IMPROMPTU??



This Magazine of ours, being nutty, fruity, meaty, and what not, reminds me of the fact that at this season a word or two on the subject of feeding the beast would not be inappropriate. Speaking for myself, the delights of the interminable meal called Christmas Dinner have somewhat palled, being replaced by a keener interest in the more delicate of those things which will shortly be adorning tables and sideboards.

Jellies - those glorious mounds of vivid colour; amber; rose; purple; scarlet; chocolate, or even parti-coloured like Harlequin. Deep buried within them may be fragments of luscious pineapple, cherries, or other mysteries. Sometimes one may have a wee shape all to oneself. These shapes can be very jolly - castles, bunnies, and jewels with many glistening facets, or a broken pile of many odd shapes and colours. Fantastic whorls and spirals of stiffly whipped cream may add to their fascination.

Blancmanges, in their pastel colours appearing chaste and cold in their likeness to chilly polished marble are very good for the children, who being told that this is so, eschew them for their more vivid cousins the previously eulogised jellies.

Cakes - Ah! What a wealth of variety lies in these. Plain and not so plain; large and small; fruity and very much fruity; iced and not iced. Of course, if we did those things which we ought to do, we should choose the plain varieties, but can YOU resist those creations of the artist in sugar, known as Iced Christmas Cakes? I thought not. I am just that way myself. Cut into one of these decorative pieces. What do we find? China white sugar icing, then a layer of that delectable confection marzipan (or call it almond icing if you will) and deeper still the rich dark cake itself; with currants from Greece, sultanas from South Africa or Australia, raisins, maybe from California; the flour from the vast prairie fields of Canada, almonds from the Mediterranean; sugar from the West Indies (we hope not from the prosaic sugar beet of this land); spices from Cathay, although I am afraid these often come from the less romantic Ceylon in modern days. Let our imagination roam to these lands of sunshine, then see if we do not enjoy our cake even more than before.

Meats, the ordinary sort, not sweet-meats. Again what a variety! Horned and hooved-clawed and beaked. The sleek-sided, placid beeves of our countryside; the noble stag of our moors and hills, which can give the stalker such a difficult day with his speed and knowledge of his native crags and glens; the aggressive turkey so fearsome to toddlers with his red neck and speckled back; the clacking fowl of the barn-yard and back-yard; some in gorgeous plumage, others in drab uninteresting garb.

:: WHISPERINGS FROM THE JUNGLE. ::



Dear Little Brothers,

We got over the Bazaar in grand style and with the splendid help of two P.L's were able to keep our Cubby end up. Things could have been better with more practice, but time was short when the help came along. In future, we must do a lot better, especially if we can get our big brothers' assistance again. We all say "Good Camping" to P.Ls Carpenter and Martin for their work.

Now Christmas is once again very near, so what about a real good turn? One might easily be to see if you can raise some more for the Jam Jar Fund, also to pay our subs right up to date. That will show our big Brothers we are truly backing them up in their big undertakings.

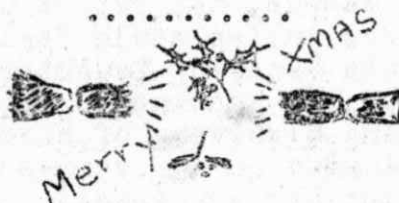
Now Sixers, what about those recruits you are needing for your Sixes. Just see what you can do to fill up the gaps. The Tawnies have a new member, and with the jolly name of Duff, too. I have been wondering what kind of nickname he will get, I feel sure one will certainly arrive for him.

It is good going for Small Ginger and Curly Hawes to have passed their 1st Star. Now then, Cooky, what about your right eye? It really ought to be open by now.

Dear Cubs, do not eat too much at Christmas or spend all your money, as you will need quite a nice bit to spend at Olympia Circus in the New Year when we pay our yearly visit, so start saving up right now.

We are pleased to get Ely back again with us, and I think the Browns will not be at the bottom so often in future, as he can be awfully good at Six work when he puts his mind to it. The Signalling practice from him last week was really good. Keep it up, Brown Brother!

AKELA HAS SPOKEN.



THE LEADER (HEIL!)

Rover Leader Ervine is at the tiller once more, and although we always have our course set to his directions, it is a real joy to see him pacing the deck in the flesh (I don't mean without his trousers, of course). After a lengthy absence on business in the West Country, he descended upon us on the Thursday after the Bazaar. We were not prepared. The Chairs were all over the shop, the floor bore the mud smudges caused by some idiot putting water down on the lino before sweeping. Sawdust, wood chips, paper added to the chaos. Tubby made no comment, but his glance was enough, the very first time that the Den had been left in anything but a ship-shape condition, we were copped. Which just shows you, doesn't it?

LIME-LIGHT.

I feel compelled to turn the limes on to the Biden Brigade, this time especially upon Bert for the tremendous amount of spade-work he did in connection with the Bazaar, and upon Ted for the very considerable amount of construction. Ted is the most versatile workman that I have ever met, and unlike a large number of chaps that attempt many types of work, he is a craftsman. If Ted does a job, it is either a good job, or he kicks it to pieces.

ANYWAY.

The Bazaar was a great success, and I commend the blokes on the way they backed up. I am proud of the way that the Mrs. Rovers hastened to put into practice the resolutions they made at the Dinner and from my dignified perch as R/M of the Nelson Patrol, I assure them that they are now definitely members of the Crew, so much so that I am toying with the idea of a Mrs. Nelson Patrol night, with Mrs. Tubby Ervine in the chair, and a Seamanship lecture by Mrs. Bert Biden. I can even imagine Norman Smart fuming at home because it is past midnight, and Mrs. Norman is still at No. 2 Boat-house having a last row of knitting with Mrs. Frank Biden and Mrs. Phil Day, while Mrs. Bill Myers is hiking home to Wimbledon, having missed the 12.16.

TALENT UNEARTHED.

I will say nothing of the splendid dramatic quality of the caste of "The Master Mariners", of the masterly portrayal of that immortal Captain of "Elizabeth Hopkins", or of Fred Hallett as the roaring salt-soaked George, not yet of Ginger's soulful, tear-extracting Cook. George Arliss would feel eclipsed after seeing Phil as Zingall, while the "Dancing Daughters" are a poor show compared with the crew of the schooner. But all this is placed at nought by the epoch-making discovery of a great singer in our midst a potential Joseph Farrington on our very doorstep. Critics the world over proclaim Robert Marrion (Bass) as a star in meteoric ascent. They are unanimous in their opinion that he has a great future - in silent films!

ROVER NOTES - continued.THE YARNS.

On Rover nights the 45 min.yarn is a popular feature. We are particularly fortunate in having among our number, people who are able and willing to tell us about their jobs. Bert Hawkey was extremely interesting on the subject of paints and varnishes. He was very capable in his replies to a shower of quite technical questions, and I believe he has promised the Editor to supply an article on the problems particularly associated with marine paints and varnishes.

Then came Eric Turvey, who told us about the recording and reproduction of sound. Many of us had been to the Cinema without having the remotest idea of the intricate apparatus and the amazing amount of work involved in the production of the talkie. Eric, in quite a polished and detailed yarn,gave us a very good general survey of a difficult subject.

THE FISHERMEN OF ENGLAND -

Must have been very busy to catch the enormous feed of spratts which were served after Eric's lecture. These were cooked and dished up by our culinary expert. We look forward to these surprise meals which are Butter Cole's speciality. While we are on the subject of Butter Cole, he is also our Ice-Skating Champion, and has promised to take us all to the Ice Rink one day. This should produce some fruity copy for Rover Notes!

THE SEASON.

Christmas is again in our thoughts and very close upon us. No, I'm not going to moralise. I'll leave you to enjoy it in peace, but I would like, on behalf of the Rover Crew, to wish all our friends and sympathizers the very greatest happiness possible during the festive season, and to hope that in 1935 they will see something really big from the Leander Crew.

A.J.L.

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THE CULINARY ART. (Continued from page .

Now! Let us get to the job and prepare these things to make this season what it is. We will start on the roast. The oven is nicely hot. Baking dishes are to hand. The Fowl. Stuff him with... Eh! What is that? Dash it all, Mr.Editor, we are just starting to cook the dinner and here you are trying to kick me out of the Magazine. All right, all right! I'll go quietly, only, if Mother makes a mess of the dinner this Christmas, don't blame me!

B. A. C.

I spent last Christmas with my brother Ben, whom I had not seen for 27 years, having been out in Canada farming. The occasion was therefore rather a special one and as we settled to our pipes after breakfast on Christmas morning, Ben was in a confidential mood. "Tell me", I said, as conversation lapsed, "about this mysterious parcel you've mentioned in your letters". Ben smiled, stretched his feet before the fire, and thus began.-

"Many years ago, when first I married Hilda, I rented this cottage, which has five rooms, and as at that time we only needed three, we decided to let two to gentleman lodgers. It was nearly Christmas of 1909 that one evening a young man came to us, asking for lodgings for a few days. Some friends of his, he said, were picking him up as they came along the coast on their way to London. He was a pleasant young fellow, Winton by name, very quiet.

Christmas Eve came, but no friends had arrived. His suitcase stood in the hall ready packed, and this parcel lay on the sideboard. At eight o'clock as we were having supper, a cab pulled up outside, our lodger jumped to his feet, and exclaimed "They are here", dashed into the hall for his hat and coat, and rushed out. As he went I shouted "What about the parcel?", but he replied, tumbling into the cab, "Never mind that, send it on", and was gone!

It was only later that I realised we hadn't his address. However, when Christmas was over, I made enquiries at the local Cab Stand. The driver who had picked up our lodger said he was approached by two young fellows, possibly students, who asked him to drive to my house. This he did, and then back to the Black Boy Hotel. I made enquiries here. Three gentlemen had stayed Christmas Eve, and in the morning a carriage and pair had driven them away, leaving no names or addresses.

We put the parcel away in the sideboard, and there it has remained till now, each year as Christmas has drawn nigh we have looked at it, speculated, and wondered. The children came and grew up. They always referred to the parcel as the family mystery, but my wife and I refrained from opening it, though Tony and Alice have often begged us to. Now, as it is the first anniversary of Alice's wedding, and you are here too, we have decided to open it. We are only waiting for Alice and her husband John."

Promising myself a pleasant surprise, I refilled my pipe from the tobacco jar (a present from myself to Ben) and settled deeper into my chair. In a short while a smart car drew up at the gate, "That's Alice and John" cried Ben's wife, running to open the door.

After the formal introductions, during which I received a kiss from Alice and a very warm handshake from John, the latter said

"What about Father's mystery parcel?" Ben roused himself deliberately and slowly from his chair, and taking the parcel from the sideboard, began his speech: "Dear friends, we are gathered here today to probe the contents of Father's Parcel, a long continued mystery, whose origin Mother and I can only dimly remember. Alice, my dear child" (here Alice playfully pulled his whiskers) "you shall have the pleasure of unravelling it." Solemnly I handed her my penknife, "Here goes" she cried, and cut the string. We all held our breath.

Slowly, too slowly, Alice peeled off the outer brown paper covering, worn and discoloured with age, disclosing a white cardboard box, which seemed to be slightly greasy. Lifting the lid, she found an unaddressed letter. "That's mine", said Ben, grasping it from John. "Alright, but we share the secret; son-in-law's privilege." The tissue-paper inside the box looked even more greasy, as with an excited movement Alice tore it away, to gaze with comical dismay upon the contents. Ben's eyes sought his wife's. There was disappointment in his, and tears in hers. John roared with merriment, while Alice, putting an arm round the neck of each of her parents, exclaimed, "What a sell for you poor dears". "Boys will be boys", was Ben's comment, as he put his hand into the box and lifted from it a large iced Christmas cake, all the colour faded away, but with the inscription still legible: "To my dear boy, - Mother."

"To think we have left that for twenty-five years" complained Ben, flinging the unopened letter into the fire, "no more secrets of the grim past for me!"

R.E.T.

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:: TIDES ON THE LONDON RIVER ::

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This is the title of the second lecture of the series arranged by the Thames Sea Scout Committee. In this case the lecturer is Captain Malzard who is a member of the T.S.S.C. Executive and Marine Superintendent of the South Metropolitan Gas Company. The lecture will be open only to Sea Scouters and senior members of Sea Scout Groups who hold the Charge Certificate of the T.S.S.C. It will be held on board the Committee's Guardship "SEA SCOUT" on Saturday, January 12th at 6.30p.m. The "SEA SCOUT" is moored adjacent to Lambeth Pier which is close to Vauxhall Station and is easily accessible by 'bus and tram from all parts of London. Those wishing to obtain tea on board before the lecture should send a post-card to:- The "Sea Scout" Wardens, 24, Burnt Ash Hill, London, S.E. 12. Accommodation can be arranged for a limited number to stay the night aboard.

:: THROUGH THE EYE OF A STORK. ::

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We are all immensely pleased at the great success of our Bazaar. Everybody put his utmost into it and made it the best one we have carried out. All those who helped must be thanked for their services, whether on the Stalls, in the plays, or last but not least, the doorkeeper, Mr. E. Cook. Our champion ticket-seller, Les Stanford, must be congratulated on selling 40 tickets. Who's going to beat this number next year? Les received, as prize, a copy of the Sea Scout Badge Book.



Now that the Bazaar is over we can settle down in earnest to our Winter Programme, badge-work, etc. I want to see all the Storks wearing their Tenderfoot badges by the end of the winter session. Talking of badges, I think we'd better see Captain White about a Maths. Badge now that the Family Multiplication in the Group is as complicated as Biden (3) Carpenter (3) Marrion (2) Roberts (2) and Foster (2). We shall soon be insisting on a knowledge of Arithmetical Progressions

before a recruit can join the Troop.  
Well, Cheerio till next year.

P.L. E. CARPENTER.

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One ship goes East, another West,  
With the self-same winds that blow;  
'Tis the set of the sail and not the gale  
That determines the way they go.

Like the ships of the sea are the ways of men,  
As they journey along through life.  
'Tis the set of the soul that determines the goal,  
And not the calm or the strife.

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Got any rivers they say are uncrossable?  
Got any mountains you can't tunnel through?  
We specialize in the wholly impossible,  
Doing the things that no man can do.

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