

The Left Hand Shake

By Lady Baden-Powell

"Truth is stranger than fiction".

"When my husband was in West Africa on that campaign in 1895-96 he heard of the legend of two tribes who lived next door to one another and were always having trouble and even wars between them. This was very bad and disastrous for both, with cattle thieving and so on.

Then the very fine Chief of one of them realizing how wrong it was, gathered his councillors together and they then decided on to have fighting again, but to try to come to terms with their warrior neighbours. So when, after a time, the enemy came advancing towards them expecting them also to advance and start fighting, this good army stood still instead of advancing to attack back.

There was a code of honour which said that an unarmed man who could not defend himself was never attacked, so this good chief of the peace-loving tribe dropped his arms and walked slowly out ahead of his men and after standing alone for a moment walked towards the enemy (who had stopped with surprise at this unexpected turn of events) and, holding out his left hand after flinging down his shield and spears, said:

"I come unarmed and I hold out my left hand to you as a sign of friendship and trust. We are neighbours and should not live in enmity. From now on we wish to live in peace and we trust you to do the same and be friends."

Well all those years later when my husband founded the Boy Scouts he knew that boys and girls like secret signs and so he suggested that we should have and use this "secret sign" of shaking hands differently from the ordinary way. As we all in our Movement truly trust each other, this method of our own shaking with the left hand instead of the right, would be used throughout the Movement.

The Left Hand is nearer to the heart. Whether it is true or not, I for one know that the friendship part of it is as true for our Movement as it was for those tribes of long ago; and please God it will always remain part of the backdrop and essence of Scouting and Guiding."

WHY NOT...

Perform a play based on the story. You could perform it for...

A Campfire Skit

An Award Presentation night

At a Parents Evening

A Promise Ceremony

For the end of year break-up

Your District AGM

