

said, "A farm home for boys who have no home, or who for some reason or other can't stay there."

"It is not a reformatory?"

"Not in the least. It's a place for normal boys who lack normal home advantages. They come at 10 or 11, and stay with us for five or six years, and they are as normal and healthy when they go as we know how to make them."

"You put health first?"

"Always. We draw no line between health of body and health of mind. We believe that one depends on the other."

"It's a farm as well as a home?"

"A farm of 50 acres. We have our own cows, and pigs, and poultry. We grow our own fruit and vegetables. Come and have a look round."

I stayed the rest of the day and all night, and what I saw still surprises me. The Superintendent, there can be no harm in saying, came out of a bank. His wife came out of a hospital. They have no children of their own. But whether it was luck, or instinct, or fine character, or a still active memory of their own childhood's needs, they have arrived at a system of education that allows for nearly everything that is wholesome and strengthening and excludes everything morbid and oppressive. There is first, of course, the beautiful home itself, and the beautiful setting. It is an institution in that it has dormitories, discipline, and rules, but it is as little like an institution as such places can be, and discipline looks after itself.

"If I got caught to-day," the Superintendent told me, "and felt absolutely compelled to flog a boy, I would not know what to flog him with. We get along very happily without those things."

In itself that might not have convinced me. But I had arrived without any warning at all at the most awkward time in the day. There was no opportunity to brush up, and as I speedily saw, no need. The dormitories, lavatories, bathrooms, living and recreation rooms were spotless without being forbidding. There was order everywhere without chilliness. There could be no question about the quality of the discipline.

But that was only the beginning. It was the life outside that impressed me most—the intimacy with the animals, the amount of work done without any supervision, the usefulness of the training (from milking cows to knitting), the relationship between the boys and "the Boss," the fullness of each lad's life (something to do, somewhere to go, somebody to go with all the time); all that, with the knowledge each boy had that he was a "trustee" in the neighbourhood, free to wander over any farmer's land and to go unaccompanied to town or the pictures.

The visits to town were particularly interesting. Since there is a good deal of work to be done round about, most of the boys have some money, and each boy who has money has his own account in a ledger kept by the Superintendent but available for inspection at any time. If therefore a boy wants to go to the pictures on Saturday he asks to see his account. If there is money in it he gets what he asks for unless the circumstances are unusual; but he soon learns to keep his account buoyant, and blames nobody but himself when he has to stay at home.

That was one touch of reality that I thought admirable, but nothing interested me quite so much as the fact that the boys were not merely permitted but encouraged to go primitive at week-ends if they so desire. It works something

like this. Duties end about 10 or 10.30 on Saturday morning, and at that point each boy who feels the urge may draw rations for 24 hours and retire with a mate to a hut he has built on the river-bank or up a tree and live there like the Indian or backwoodsman he now feels himself to be. I examined some of the huts, and whatever other quality they had they were all secret retreats, built by the boys' own hands with scrap material (logs, bags, boards, planks, waste iron, or stones), clean, private, and for use.

I could easily understand that a superintendent who knows boys as well as that, and trusts them as far as that, would not know where to keep a cane or a cat.

(to be continued)

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