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Beside the Camp Fire
Notes on Scoutcraft
Commissioner Rev. Geo. W. Tebbs

THE following most interesting account of the progress the Boy Scout Movement is making in India forms part of Rev. Perry Park's last report from India:—

The Key to To-morrow is the boy of to-day. The India of the next twenty years will be great in measure as the boys of to-day are won for high ideals of character, true citizenship and service.

In last year's report, I stated that for several reasons it seemed unwise to inaugurate the Boy Scout Movement here in Delhi at that time. About the first of the year, however, the time seemed ripe for commencing that work. The Chief Commissioner of Delhi Province was interested and agreed that Government should give us a monthly grant which would enable us to pay the salary of a full-time man for that work. He said he wanted the Young Men's Christian Association to make the Scout Movement here part of their regular programme. Accordingly, the Scouts have been in reality a Boys' Department of the Association.

We now have five troops organized among the boys of the Mission, Government, Arya Samaj (Reformed Hindu), Orthodox Hindu and Mohammedan schools. The total membership is in the neighbourhood of 100, and includes Indian Christians, Hindus, Aryas, Mohammedans, Parsees and Sikhs. Of the Scoutmasters, one is Christian, one Arya, one Orthodox Hindu and two Mohammedan. The boys have shown a great keenness in passing the different tests and on the whole have absorbed the principles of Scouting.

The big event up-to-date has been the mela or religious fair held a week or so ago. Several thousand Hindus gathered at the river here to worship the spirit of Jumna, the River-God. The Scouts, forty strong, turned out to assist.

Usually the crowd at a Hindu mela is undisciplined and disorderly, people flock all over the road without thinking of order or convenience. The point of attraction is the river, and it is generally the scene of the greatest disorder and danger, often people are drowned owing to the eagerness of the crowd to get at their religious bath. On this occasion, our Scouts assisted the police in keeping order. They separated the men from the women and protected the latter; they prevented stampedes on several occasions by forming up with their staves touching and holding the crowd back. A life-saving brigade was stationed at the river to prevent accidents; some Scouts stood by to assist women to descend the slippery steps to the river. At least one frightened child was restored to his parents and one man asked a Scout to find his lost wife. The Scout unable to do so passed on the information to the police. One of the Scouts found a woman lying unconscious on the wet road, called other Scouts to help him make a stretcher from Scouts staves and shirts, and carried her to the hospital where she was soon put to rights.

This demonstration had a great effect upon the public. Prominent Hindus asked the identity of the boys who helped so well. Many smiled to see little coddgers directing the traffic, but while they smiled they respected the lads who could so completely win the confidence of the crowd. Hindus wondered to see the usually narrow Mohammedans assisting at a Hindu festival, but they were told that it is a Scout's duty to "help others at all

times." This spirit of service has appealed to all.

When the Scouts were first formed here the Indian principal of the Mission School asked for prayers at a missionary prayer meeting for the boys who had taken the Scout oath, remarking that it was practically a Christian vow. It has meant that almost to some of the boys. Two or three boys whom I knew last year were selfish and dirty in their play, are now courteous, gentlemanly and willing to serve. A Mohammedan boy, who became our first King's Scout, has asked for baptism and is undergoing instruction now with the Mission School. These outstanding cases illustrate the fact that Scouting is changing the Indian boy by putting into his life ideals he did not possess before. The Scout is learning that self-respect which knows how to respect others; by his salute and military bearing he wins respect; by his efficiency and willingness to serve he holds it.

The crux of the problem of work with boys in India, as everywhere, is the leader. Good leaders of boys are hard to find, and frankly we have not been as successful with the leaders as with the boys. This is partly due to the fact that it has been necessary from the start to draw the Scoutmasters from the teachers of the schools from which the troops were formed. This has limited our scope. Although we have had one or two failures we are still working with the Scoutmasters and there are signs of success. We are going to experiment with four college students and are about to train them as Scoutmasters. If they make good, that will relieve the situation considerably.

SHOTT AND NOTT.

The story of these gentlemen and their duel—a famous one formerly—is revived, and the tale is thus repeated:—

A duel was lately fought in Texas by Alexander Shott and John S. Nott. Nott was shot, and Shott was not. In this case it is better to be Shott than Nott. There was a rumor that Nott was not shot, but Shott avows that he was not, which proves either that the shot Shott shot at Nott was not shot, or that Nott was shot notwithstanding.

It may be made to appear on trial that the shot Shott shot shot Nott, or, as accidents with firearms are frequent, it may be possible that the shot Shott shot shot Shott himself, when the whole affair would resolve itself into its original element, and Shott would be shot and Nott would not.

We think, however, that the shot Shott shot shot, not Shott, but Nott. Anyhow, it is hard to tell who was shot.

CORRECTED.

Mr. Hughes, the Australian Premier, tells the following amusing story concerning the days when he was a school-teacher in London:

"I once wrote on a blackboard these words: 'The toast was drank in silence,' and then asked my class, 'Can anyone tell me what the mistake in this sentence is?'"

"The pupils pondered. Then a little girl held up her hand, and at a nod from me went to the board and wrote the following correction: 'The toast was ate in silence.'"

He (admiring vase of flowers)—Are they not beautiful? Do you know they remind me of you.
She—But they are artificial.
He—Ah, yes, but you'd never know it.—Boston "Transcript."



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