

"Skinny Camp"

HARRY ATKINSON, WINNIPEG.

"WOO, Skinny, Come over!" that's our camp cry.

"There's somebody coming." Down went bats, ball and mitt. Everybody ran helter skelter to the river bank to see who were coming. Three or four had a fight as to who should take the boat over to the other side to fetch the newcomers. The rest waited on the bank.



READY FOR A DAY'S SPORT.

As the boat drew nearer remarks were passed complimentary or otherwise about the new boys. "See that fellow at the end of the boat? He's a Sheeny." "Not he, he's from Sutherland Avenue mission. I know him. I saw him pound two other fellows once. They'd been licking his brother."

After the party had landed; bundles were carried up to the camp, and for the next five minutes tongues wagged freely. The new boys were hastily shown every part of the camp and given to understand what they must or must not do. Then the interrupted game was continued.

Our camp was near Selkirk, Manitoba, in connection with All Peoples' Mission, Winnipeg. The use of a large house and grounds was granted for the summer, so we decided to run a camp for working boys who were too old to go to the Fresh Air Camp at Gimli. Ten boys went out each time with their leader. They did the necessary camp work, such as bed-making, dish-washing, etc. Friends sup-



SHOOTING CROWS.

plied the funds to assist needy cases, but when able the boys paid their own way.

Swimming, fishing, boating and excursions to St. Andrew's Locks, Fort Garry and Selkirk, made the week pass all too quickly, and soon the cry was heard on the other side of the river which meant

the arrival of a new bunch, and hence that somebody must go home.

Our camp was of a cosmopolitan character, and at every meal one found that the various nations in our land are not yet welded together. The German was delighted with cookies and happy if he could trim off every meal with the contents of the syrup pail. Catfish fried in natural oil was generally relished, and plates were passed for more. But the Jew declined the first helping. Jews do not eat fish that have no scales. The English boy wanted "beef and tea." The Canadian was delighted with soups and pie. There will have to be a great amount of detail work before our immigrants become assimilated into one nation.

One day we visited Fort Garry and heard with interest the story of its various uses, though we were a little disappointed not to be able to picture fights with Indians, because there never were any there. The next day the effect of our visit was seen in the five English boys tying one of their number to a tree and dancing around him brandishing clubs. Only my timely intervention saved him from being choked, so tightly had they fastened the rope round his neck.

"Did any boy get homesick?" "Well, rather." The attack was generally at its worst on Tuesday, the fourth day in camp. One Tuesday half the boys decided to return home the next morning. As the visitor took a look at the camp for the night he saw more than one tear-stained cheek. Most of these boys had come from the poorest of homes—dirty, repulsive, cruel—but no matter how poor, it was home, whether foreign or Canadian. Social workers can find in this an added plea for the prevention of crime.

Wednesday morning, bright and shining, brought fresh plans for the day. Nobody went home.

"Where did you get these boys from?" They had come to the Mission from all parts of the city. Many were ready to come long before the time. One boy of sixteen years, as his mother told me, had packed his bundle six weeks before the day set for him to come.

A week's holiday to a poor working boy means more than we think. If all employers of boys would look at a holiday as a boy looks at it they would willingly do without a boy for a time in order to give him one. Great difficulty was experienced in getting some of the employers to see that their boys needed a holiday. "Jack" had worked in a store for three years and had never had a holiday. When he asked for a week off to go to the camp, he was told he could have one but that another boy would be put in his place. A would-be generous employer phoned us about his boy who sadly needed a rest. He urged that he should be kept as long as was thought would benefit him. No expense should be spared, as he wanted him in good shape for the winter. The boy came, but he was so fagged out that for the first few days he was content to merely sit beside the fire. He was a well-made lad and tall for his age, but he reminded one of an over-driven horse. His hours were from 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. one day, and from 9 a.m. to six p.m. the next, with an alternate Sunday work from 10 to 10 thrown in. He worked as messenger boy in a drug store, and was on his wheel most of his time, often not having more than half an hour for his meals. For this labor he received six dollars a week. When he had been with us three weeks he became more cheerful, and joined heartily with the others in their games. But what will three weeks fixing do for this or any other boy when the

state allows employers to grind all life and vitality out of them the whole year round?

Two others had been in the Juvenile Court. One of these after he had swept up the crumbs from our first meal, asked me: "Shall I go to my room now and be locked up?" Poor little fellow. Through the sad negligence of his parents at home, who were too busy working out in order to buy lots, he had spent some considerable time at the Juvenile Detention Home.



A REST ON THE ROCKS.

A camp is a great place to study boys. Here a thoughtful worker may gain an inside track of any boy's life. The roughest lad is ever ready after a hard day's play to listen intently to a story worth telling. "Good night stories" are often "good life stories." Amid the silent influences of a camp evening, boys feel strangely moved as the heroic and strong are presented to them. The stories of the martyrs and of those who struggled to give England her Bible, were equally demanded.

On Sunday afternoon we had our services under the trees. Though we did not frighten the birds by our singing, our discussions on the commandments were very lively. In these discussions one caught a glimpse of the different standards of morals held by the various nationalities present in our camp. On Sunday we discussed "Thou shalt not steal." Here for once the light-haired German and the swarthy Syrian stood together. Both decided that if a customer gets "taken in" in a bargain it is his



COOLING OFF.

own fault. The storekeeper cannot be called a thief.

As one came to know the boys intimately the question forced upon one was: Why do fathers and mothers fail to inform their sons about the great physical passions that are sure to come to them