



OUR BOYS' HOME AT COLLIE, W.A.

## *Our Collie Boys' Homes*

**S**ITUATED some 130 miles from Perth, and about six miles from the township of Collie, our Boys' Home for Western Australia—one of the largest in the Commonwealth—is situated.

The Estate covers an area of 2000 acres, and, being well watered by the Collie River, it carries some of the finest of the jarrah forests, for which the south-west of W.A. is so well noted.

It would be hard to picture a more pleasant scene than one that presents itself on first arrival. Coming round a bend in the road, and emerging from the heavy timber, the whole Settlement comes into view. The main buildings, with the schoolhouses, barns, stables, dairy, Officers' quarters, etc., with the river in the foreground, suggest a small village, whilst the horses and cattle grazing in the adjacent paddocks lend peacefulness to the picture.

At present there are about ninety-eight boys in the two Homes, their ages ranging from four to fifteen years. The majority are State boys—i.e., boys, who, very often through no fault of their own, are left destitute and uncared for.

Consequently, if not reclaimed in time, they often become associated with bad company, which brings them before the Children's Court.

Private cases are also provided for. It often happens that a man loses his wife and is left with a young family; or a woman loses her husband; and in circumstances like these, The Army offers a splendid home for the bereaved children.

In most cases, when the boys arrive at the age of fourteen years they are placed in situations. The majority of these lads turn out so satisfactory that almost every mail brings applications, from all over the States, offering a good situation, and prospects, to 'a Collie boy.'

The following resume will give some idea of a day in the lives of the boys at Collie:—

At 6 a.m. the boys rise, make their beds, wash, and are ready for breakfast, which is served at 6.45 a.m. This is followed by morning prayers, led by an Officer, whilst some of the converted boys take an active part. After prayers each boy has his special duty to per-



BOY SCOUTS AT DRILL

form, which is changed monthly, so giving the boys an all-round experience. It also helps the different Officers to become better acquainted with the lads. These duties consist of scrubbing, sweeping, dusting, washing (both clothes and dishes), setting tables, dairy work, wood-chopping, gardening, etc. The boys also have gardens of their own, in which they raise either vegetables or flowers, according to their separate tastes.

After work is finished, the boys have time for play, till it is time to prepare for school at 9.30. They are out again at 11.30, and a few of the 'duty boys' help to set the tables for dinner, which interesting event takes place at 12 o'clock. It is quite a treat to see how heartily the boys eat and enjoy their meals.

After dinner comes more play, till school time, 1.30 p.m.; and, at 4.30 p.m., the Officer on duty is reminded by whoops and shouts when his young charges have once more finished lessons for the day, and are ready, or fully primed, for any fun, play, or mischief which may present itself.

Tea is taken at 5.30 p.m. At every meal, before and after, grace is either sung, or one boy is chosen to ask a blessing.

After tea, when the days are long, the boys are found romping and playing about

out of doors, while during winter, when the evenings are cold, some of them play games in the boys' dining-room, whilst others group themselves around a crackling jarrah fire, intently listening to some story read or told by an Officer.

Next come evening prayers, with some singing, and a little talk from the Bible by the Officer on duty.

It is now eight o'clock, and time for bed. Some boys still find something to talk about, whilst others read. Then 'good-night,' and off to dreamland, which, with the boys, is just a matter of laying their heads on their pillows.

An Officer always sleeps in what is called the guard-room—a small room placed between the two dormitories, with windows overlooking each—to keep an eye on anything which may need attention. There are no bolted doors or windows. We endeavour to make the boys feel that they are trusted, and it is a significant fact that, for something like eighteen months, there has not been



THREE OF THE BOYS—THE BAKER, THE GARDEN AND WOOD BOY

*Taken at their request under the colours*



one case of absconding.

Like all other boys, they have different seasons for their various games—football, cricket, rounders, tops, and hosts of others; but football and cricket seem to be the most popular.

There is a lovely pool in the river, a short distance from the Homes, which forms an ideal swimming-pond. With the boys, this is no doubt the

dominating sport, and it is a fact that they are as much at home in the water as on land. It is impossible to describe the fun and joy the boys have diving from the springboards and overhanging branches, ducking and racing each other, amidst a perfect babel of shouts and laughter. It might be mentioned that, last swimming season,



THE MANAGER'S QUARTERS

out of about sixty boys at our No. II. Home, there were only three who could not swim.

When one remembers that every Australian summer numbers of people lose their lives at the seaside, and through falling into dams and rivers in the country, it will be understood that for lads to learn to swim is not only of great physical benefit to themselves, but, moreover, each is fitting himself to assist in saving life.

It is a branch of our operations which is extremely interesting, as often beneath a rugged exterior is found splendid qualifications and noble character, and to see the lads developing into youth in the possession of noble ideals in life, is worth all the energy and time the Officers put into the work. In fact, there is a recompense which only those engaged in this interesting department can understand and fully appreciate.

Once an Officer throws himself into this sort of work, he soon finds it interesting and absorbing, for, after all, to guide young feet into the path of duty and honesty, and gain the confidence of a youthful heart, is a task both Christ-like and worthy of a man's best effort.



'PADDY,' WHO IS ONE OF THE INDISPENSABLE HANDS OF THE ESTATE