

## NATURE STUDY—No. XXXI.

## MOTHER NATURE AND HER BOYS.—AN INSTITUTE THAT BRINGS THEM TOGETHER.

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Nature Study at the Broadview Boys' Institute, Toronto, begins with the study of boy nature. It finds that the unnatural surroundings and conventionalities of city life dwarf the boy physically and narrow him mentally, and that to have the boy at his best they must counteract the influences of man-made environment by getting him back to Nature. The annual summer camp assists in this. For a few weeks the boy lives under canvass in the wildwood; he is next door neighbor to the squirrel and the chipmunk; he breathes the aroma of the pine and the hemlock; he eats the fish he has caught in the lake and the berries he has gathered in the thicket, writes letters home on birch-bark, becomes tanned and seasoned, but best of all he is unconsciously listening to the wonderful whisperings of Nature and becoming broader in mind and sympathies.

Camp experiences are excellent, but all too short. An experience that calls out more labor, effort and thought, is required. This the Institute has found in its Miniature Township. This is a boys' world, with its disappointments and losses, as well as its successes and achievements. Boys soon learn that they can tickle the earth with hoe or spade and it will laugh with bright flowers and delicious fruits; that Mother Nature rewards diligence and punishes neglect; that what a boy sows, that shall he also reap—multiplied manifold—if he cultivates faithfully in the meantime. The Miniature Township consists of a portion of land divided by section lines and cross-roads into 86 little farms and 10 flower gardens. The farms are 10 x 40 feet, and flower gardens 10 x 8 feet. These are cultivated by individual boys or partners, who style themselves "farmers" and delight to don overalls, top-boots, and broad-rimmed hats. To be called "hayseed" is an honor, because it implies that they are landed proprietors and yeomen of the commonwealth.

The farms are leased to the boys, a regular printed form being



used, which is duly signed and sealed. The stipulations of the lease are : One hour's work per month is to be performed upon the common plots as rental ; farms are to be carefully cultivated and kept free from weeds ; roadways adjoining farms are to be kept clean ; rules, regulations and by-laws of Municipal Council are to be obeyed. The farmers provide their own tools and seed. The produce of the farms is the property of the producer to take to his home, sell, or dispose of as he pleases. Names are chosen for the farms by the proprietors and are neatly painted on uniform sign boards and placed in the center of the plot. Some of the names of last season were : Lakeview Farm, Old Homestead, Geneva Farm, Great Western, Glencoe Farm, Enniskillen Farm, Enterprise Farm, Shamrock Farm, Jumbo Farm, etc.

A course of Monday evening lectures on "Agriculture and Nature Study" are given by experts during May, June, August and September. Among the lecturers are such men as Prof. Zavitz, of the Agricultural College at Guelph ; Principal Scott, of the Toronto Normal School ; Wm. Rennie, Sr. ; C. W. Nash ; practical gardeners and florists and teachers in Nature Study. Such themes as these are discussed : "Preparation and Care of the Soil," "Weeds and How to Treat Them," "Our Friends, the Birds," "Insects Injurious to Vegetation," "Nature Study in Parks and Gardens," etc.

The Broadview Miniature Township is a self-governing Municipality. On the last Saturday in April the citizens nominate, and on the first Saturday in May elect, by ballot, a Reeve and five Councillors, who compose the Municipal Council and hold office for one year. The ballots are printed, the poll manned by deputy returning officer, poll clerk and constable, and the voting takes place in the regulation way. The Municipal Council appoint a Weed Inspector, Pathmaster, and other officers, make and enforce regulations and by-laws, impose statute labor, collect fines and cancel leases. The Reeve is the Justice of the Peace for the Township by virtue of his office, and tries all offences, whether against the laws of the Municipality or otherwise.

Prizes are given for the best kept farms, and inspections take place at regular intervals during the season. No better vegetables are grown anywhere than can be found on these little



farms. A third prize was won this year at the National Exhibition, Toronto, for the best collection of vegetables, in competition with regular market gardeners. A Fall Fair is held by the Institute in September of each year. At the fair for 1905 there were over 1,000 entries in agricultural products, flowers, collections of seeds, pressed flowers and weeds, insects, shells, birds' nests, polished woods, manufactured articles, fine arts, and boys' pets of all kinds, such as dogs, poultry, pigeons, rabbits, Guinea pigs, etc. The prizes this year totalled \$240, and the attendance on two afternoons and evenings reached 1,400. The "Farmers' Harvest Home Dinner," held each autumn, is another interesting feature of the township idea. Upon its extensive menu nothing is allowed to appear, from soup to dessert, that has not been grown, in part at least, upon the boys' farms. Even the menu itself is printed on corn-husks. Ministers of the Crown and some of the most prominent agriculturists in the province have been guests at this function.

The objects gained through the Miniature Township are manifold and may be summerized as follows:—

1. A comprehensive course in Nature Study. An insight into the principles of agriculture, which has led a score or more of the boys in the past four years to take up farming as a life pursuit.

2. A practical experience in citizenship. Respect for law and order has been cultivated, and the sacredness of the ballot emphasized.

3. The development of judgment and business instinct. Judgment has to be exercised in the choice of seeds, treatment of the soil and rotation of crops. The enterprise and business ability of the boys has been brought out in a most striking manner in the disposal of their own produce, the speculation in the purchase and marketing of the produce of other boys, and the formation of combines to enable the carrying on of a vegetable supply business on a large scale.

4. Healthful exercise for city boys, and the acquiring of habits of industry, perseverance and thrift.

A few particulars in regard to the work of the Broadview Boys' Institute as a whole may be of interest. It is incorporated as an educational institution and is run along lines much the same



as a Y.M.C.A. The ages of the boys range chiefly from 12 to 17 years of age, and the citizens of the Miniature Township are all 15 years of age and under. The membership of the Institute during the year is about 600, and the boys are chiefly the sons of artisans. Premises, consisting of a large club house and five and a quarter acres of land, have been purchased. They are situated on the east side of Broadview Avenue, a central location for the east end of the city of Toronto. A portion of the grounds are used as an athletic field in the summer and as a skating rink in the winter. During the fall, winter and spring months, evening classes are conducted by a staff of competent teachers in manual training, technical printing, clay modelling, wood carving, cooking, free-hand drawing, designing and lettering, typewriting and correspondence, music, Bible study and gymnasium work. The equipment for this work includes a twenty-bench manual training plant, full sets of wood carving and clay modelling tools, natural history and art models and designs, domestic science tables with fourteen individual gas circles, a complete printing plant, etc. Reading and recreation rooms are provided, also accommodation for literary and other subordinate clubs. A circulating library of books suitable for boys is maintained. Well equipped shower baths, with hot and cold water, are open to members. A savings bank finds many depositors, and an employment bureau has more applications for boys than can be filled. A brass band of 26 pieces, under a proficient leader, is open for engagements. Religious meetings are held, and entertainments, club suppers, banquets and various social gatherings are attractive features of the work. The superintendent, the staff of teachers, and all who assist in the work, do so voluntarily and without remuneration. The Institute is supported by contributions, membership fees and its own enterprises. Visitors are cordially invited.





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