

OUR YOUNG CANADIAN NATURAL HISTORY CLUBS.

UNDER THE DIRECTION OF YOUNG CANADIANS.

How it came about was this. In the midst of all my work in starting our YOUNG CANADIAN, and in trying to make it worthy of our young readers, and of the support of their parents, so many topics accumulated on my table that eventually, after filling drawers full, and stuffing pigeon-holes, I resorted to the much more convenient plan of getting a large book, which I called my Suggestion Book. The topics got classified under different headings, and were entered accordingly on the page bearing at the edge the letter of the alphabet which corresponded to the principal word in the topic.

For example, under the letter

B,

there was put "Birds' Eggs," "Birds' Nests," "Habits of our Birds," "Birds' Songs," etc., etc., etc.; and every time I turned over that page I had the most delicious feeling of pleasure in anticipation, knowing well the lovely subjects and delightful surprises I should have in store for you all.

Under the same letter B, came also "Butterflies" and "Beetles," and a host of things like "Boats," "Bats," and others equally tempting. How my fingers fondled my book! How they groped out for my pen, impatient to dash into the subjects!

But they were not all—those good things, in B, nor even all at the beginning of the alphabet. I turned over to

W,

and there I came upon Wild Flowers. I could go no further. I fell a-dreaming. Visions of rambles over hills, down dales, through thickets, across marshes, in woods, along the roadside, around the farm, came creeping into my soul. Voices that have mingled with mine in praise and adoration of what we saw; hands that have swiftly plucked each new specimen discovered; feet that have nimbly risked their best shoes to save mine in quest of a bright-coloured treasure high up on a bank, or deep down in a gully; chatter by the way-side of the "why" and the "wherefore" that made the rosy sunset come all too soon; and laughing appetites for supper that sent a deeper pathos into our "Heavenly Father, be pleased to grant Thy blessing."

I set down my pen—just there by the ink bottle—and thought, and thought, and thought. Next morning I thought again, and thought, and thought. How to get my young Canadians to know this pleasure, to taste this joy, to secure this education, to love those quiet, simple, beautiful, glorious things that Nature has strewn around our path with such prodigality that we almost despise it for its richness.

In one of our rambles we had a competition. We set out determined to find twenty different specimens of plants. The voices protested. "Twenty! That's a fearful lot." We came home with thirty-five—not bad for a first outing. Next day we spread our booty out on the grass to count. You should have heard the voices and seen the faces as the specimens counted up, and up, and up. When we came to sixty, I could not control the fingers and the feet. Such a wriggling of

excitement as we drew near seventy! But at last, when we concluded at seventy-eight, some people in a canoe out on the lake had good reason to think we had taken leave of our senses. And, strangest of all, the youngest pair of eyes, and hands, and feet, claimed the lion's share of the spoil.

That was her first lesson. Since then you need not try to deceive her about any plant within one hundred any way, and her own age can still be written with one figure.

My thinking and thinking grew, as all thinking should, into acting. I began. I wrote to some. I visited others. I was bold enough to brave the "oaken doors" of many learned men. I *must* have my young Canadians love these things.

Perhaps I may tell you a secret which I am here reminded of. We had much difficulty in choosing the colour of the wrapper of THE YOUNG CANADIAN. Our Royal Canadian Academy gentlemen who were designing the Title Page of course preferred some æsthetic shade—lovely browns, soft greys, even a terra cotta was suggested. We fell upon a plan, a sort of census of opinion. We did not, however, go to the professors' oaken doors this time. We went out to the garden, and called a host of small fry who were pulling roses and swinging in hammocks, and in every way having a good time. We set out before them a varied choice of colours, all the hues of the rainbow.

A few moments' silence ensued. The eyes wandered over every colour, back and forward, and back again. By and bye we could see that opinions were being made up. The eyes left the papers and sought out other eyes, to know whether they too were decided. With one exception, they chose our colour—not the one we wanted them to choose, but the colour we have—that pretty shade of blue, over which I daresay your eyes sometimes wander with pleasure as they pick out the picture that pleases them best. And why?

"It's so like the dear little robin's egg we found yesterday dropped out of its nest."

When I told them the colour was actually called "Robin's Egg Blue," they did not scream. They stared in silent wonder.

So you see there is Canadian Natural History even in the colour of our paper.

But my thinking, and writing, and visits, did not bring me much satisfaction at once. This is months ago, and I almost made up my mind that I should have to become a travelling agent, and go about all our great cities to find someone who could work up for me my favourite subject. Some were too busy. Some too idle. Some knew too much. Some too little.

At length my mail-bag, one fine morning not very long ago, brought me a solution of my difficulty. After opening a pile of letters, I came upon the following:—

"I desire to congratulate you on the tone and object of your undertaking, as well as the superior get up of your journal. I heartily approve of every effort being made to develop a national sentiment in our young people in contradistinction to sectionalism, which, in the past, and even now, causes a friction very undesirable.