

NATURE STUDY—No. XII.

SCHOOL GARDENS IN GREAT CITIES.

(Report of Committee on Industrial Training submitted to the Public Education Association of Philadelphia.)

Facing the Hudson, on the west side of New York City, is a piece of condemned land awaiting improvement, ironically called DeWitt Park. The most vivid imagination could not have conceived a more desolate spot than this was in the summer of 1902. Approached from the east through filthy streets, crowded with noisy, dirty urchins, it loomed up a dark blot on the beautiful background of cool river, green hills and blue sky. Rows of tumble-down houses, disused carts, piles of rubbish, stones, rags and litter, among which the children played, made even the streets seem neat and orderly by comparison.

In the centre of this plot of ground it was evident that something of more than ordinary importance was occurring. The air was black with flying missiles, while excited groups of children ran hither and thither. To all enquiries came the reply, "We are getting ready for our farm." The idea of a farm in that unfavorable spot might have made the inquirer slightly skeptical, but had he stayed to see, the changes wrought were little short of marvellous. The children's ready hands, assisted by older brothers and sisters, and by workmen from the Park Department of Manhattan, accomplished wonders. Stones and rubbish vanished, the hard earth yielded to the plow and harrow. Load after load of rich loam was brought. A fence enclosed the selected space. Walks were laid out, and plots marked, and after days of earnest work the "farm" was ready to receive the seed.

Twenty-five children filed in at the gate and received a practical lesson in planting from the gardener. Teachers meanwhile registered names and properly tagged each "farmer." These tags, upon each of which the name of the child and the number of the plot assigned were registered, were certificates of ownership to be presented at the gate as a pass to enter. The lesson over, the children marched to their respective plots and planted the seeds given to them as they had been shown how to do by the