

The "Nature in a Knot-hole" Series.

No. II.—NATURE IN THE KITCHEN.

[The first of the series, introducing this "interesting family," appeared in the Review for April, 1911. The talks are suggestive of the pleasant, easy atmosphere which is so desirable in a school and which can be learned best in an ideal home. The nearer the teacher approaches the mother-attitude (that is the wise, the ideal mother) the better; and a hint of playfulness in the teacher is one of the greatest attractions she can have or little children. Better read the April article with this one.]

Walter and I had been to the cellar for vegetables. As we emerged into the kitchen, he with the basket and I with the lamp, Don and his chum, Robbie, came stamping in at the back door. Turning the potatoes into a pan, I found Don at my elbow, asking what time it was, and, answering the hint rather than the question, replied that it was not yet two hours since breakfast. At that moment Robbie was pushing the lamp across the table toward the window where the Little School Mother stood mixing pastry-dough, and Mildred sat peeling apples. With my horror of the all-pervasive smell of kerosene, I called out, "Boys, keep away from the lamp!" But Robbie still stared at the little yellow flame. A lamp, in daytime, at any rate, must have seemed unfamiliar to him.

"Look, Don! What a funny light!"

Don moved over, tried to blow it out, and got his mouth slapped in a friendly way.

"No scuffling in the kitchen!" interrupted the Little School Mother. And, "What's the matter with the lamp," put in Walter.

"Why, the light doesn't shine!"

"That's very well put, for a small boy," said the Little School Mother. "Take him into the cellar-way and let him see if it shines."

When they came back to the table, Walter was explaining about the sunlight, quite in the manner of the Pedagogue, and added, "It's just like you making a big shine spelling when there's no one 'round who can spell, but if you got into a match with us fellows in Grade Eight, with *big* words, you wouldn't be seen at all."

I am beginning to see that Walter's infantile humour, which we thought such a freak, is really the use of a faculty for noticing likenesses and seeing analogies—remarkable enough in the limited experience of less than thirteen years. It is his "association of ideas" that seems a special "gift." But I think it can be cultivated in any child. It will be useful to him in many ways.

A little stick and a piece of paper had been lighted in the course of Walter's lecture and

watched burn away, when Don, the prize questioner of his own or any age, asked, "Why doesn't the wick burn away?" "It does," said Walter.

"It doesn't! Does it, Bob?"

"No, but it's burning—only it's not burned up so fast," carefully stated Bob, the observant.

Then, as I went about my work, I caught bits of a conversation in which, it appeared, the Little School Mother told the four children about the oil being vaporized, the burning vapor, the red-hot particles which make a light. Their blackness when cold was easily shown, and a dispute was arising as to whether or not the flame touched the wick, when Don caught me and demanded, "How does the oil get up there, Muz?"

"Oh, take the old lamp out of here now and give us a rest!" For this I had to give Mildred a reproofing look, though my own first thought had been much the same. However, I told Don I would show him "in a minute," and presently we had an unused wick, a cube of loaf sugar, a piece of bread and some water coloured with tea, to illustrate the familiar soaking up of liquids.

"That's just capillary attraction," began Walter, whose school lessons have supplied him with a good many names and words which, though useful, seem to satisfy him too easily and replace the curiosity I should like him to feel regarding the common phenomena themselves.

"What does that mean, Mummie?"

"It means that tiny tubes, almost as fine as a hair can draw up liquids like oil and water. The wick is full of such little tubes. Just look."

I borrowed from Walter what he likes to call his 'microscope'—a twenty-five cent linen tester which has shown him scores of interesting things in plant and insect life—and sent him to the Pedagogue in the study for a piece of fine glass tubing.

Pouring some water into the saucer under my geranium on the window-ledge, I said, "It looks easy enough for water to pass down through the earth, but you see it passes up almost as quickly, because the earth is full of tiny openings, like tubes."

Here Robbie, who had been examining with the linen-tester, everything within reach, exclaimed: "Why, *everything* is full of little holes!"

I reminded Don of a sorry puddle once found on his bedroom floor because he had left a towel hanging in the water pitcher. The water had mounted from the bottom of the pitcher and over the top