

THE NEW KIND OF CORNER LOT

Four Years of
Organizing To-
ronto's Play-
grounds Has
resulted in Eight
Places Being
Fully Established
—All are Used
to the Limit By
the Children of
the Congested
Parts of the City
—Points Where
Toronto Excels.

By Mrs. Donald Shaw.

In the vital work of preparing the future citizens of the Dominion to worthily fill their appointed places when the call comes to them to do so there is no more vital or interesting scheme than that which has been developed and tested during the past four years in the organizing and working of the city's supervised playgrounds.

At the present time there are in The City of Toronto eight playgrounds under civic control, and it is expected that two more will very shortly be open to the children of those parents who have no means or space to provide their children with the recreation and freedom at home which is essential to the growth and development of every healthy child, and even more necessary and essential for the saving of the fragile and delicate of the nation's future citizens.

The history of the introduction of the supervised playgrounds into Toronto is brief but interesting.

In 1909 St. Andrews playground was organized as a supervised playground. The Toronto Playground Association was organized among people interested in playground work, and through their efforts Miss McCormick built and equipped the present McCormick Recreation Centre, and Sir Edmund Osler bought and equipped the present Osler Playground. In 1913 these playgrounds were passed over to the city by the Playground Association.

The Recreation Committee appointed as recreation organizer, S. H. Armstrong, who is still at the head of the department and to whom I am indebted for all the information which I have been privileged to obtain on the subject; a subject by the way which has received too little attention hitherto from Toronto's citizens.

Expenditure Has Grown.

In the short space of time since Mr. Armstrong took the reins of government the number of playgrounds under civic control has more than doubled itself, and will in the near future probably treble itself. As a proof of the way in which the work has grown and developed, in 1909 the City of Toronto expended the sum of \$1,143 on its playgrounds. In 1913, \$17,398 paid the bill, and it is estimated that the expenditure for this year will be over \$48,000.

The first civic playground to be opened was the Elizabeth street ground, which lies just behind the General Hospital, and in the same year — 1911 — Controller O'Neill equipped the O'Neill Playground at his own expense. In 1913 the Leslie Grove ground on King street was opened, and this year the Carlton Park ground on Royce avenue was placed at the service of the children of the district. The Earlscourt ground was first organized by the Earlscourt Methodist Church, which equipped a small playground within the church precincts. This was turned over to the city's supervision a short time ago. The Leslie Grove

and Carlton Park grounds are the most picturesque, owing to the fact that the apparatus is all under trees, but the McCormick ground is perhaps the best equipped as it has a large building suitable for all-the-year-round work, besides which it is extremely attractive, possessing brilliant flower beds, a covered sandpit and a long range of individual gardens which the children are taught to manage themselves. The only other ground at present which has the individual gardens is the St. Andrews playground, where there are three. This year it is proposed that the gardens shall be examined and prizes given for the one which is considered the best.

Open to All.

All playgrounds are open to children of every age, creed and nationality; no questions are asked, and beyond the registration of the child's age and parentage and address no details are necessary. The ideal aimed at is to have the children of parents who have neither space nor means nor opportunity to keep their children off the streets under proper supervision and in perfect safety. In these playgrounds no harm can befall them beyond a few ordinary bumps, bruises and cuts, and as the supervisors are provided with a first aid outfit most of these minor accidents are treated on the spot without any ill effects resulting.

The equipment for each playground as a general rule consists of a sandpit, a wading pool, swings, athletic apparatus, and appliances for such games as basketball, volley ball, baseball, tether tennis, etc. In addition instruction is given in industrial work, folk songs and dancing. During the winter months skating rinks, toboggan slides, and hockey rinks are provided, and where there are all-the-year-round buildings indoor work is carried on—it is hoped that in the near future facilities for extending and perfecting the indoor winter work will be very much improved.

Even Babies Play.

The "baby swings" in which tiny mites of humanity from two years upwards may be left in safety, are particularly popular, and are never empty from the hour of nine o'clock when the grounds are open, until closing time, which is at dark, except in the cases where big lights are provided in which event the ground is kept open till ten o'clock for the benefit of the older boys and girls. The grounds are levelled and all are, or shortly will be, gravelled, as it has been found that sod does not stand the wear and tear of the restless little feet so satisfactorily. The grounds on Elizabeth street is

the only one which at present possesses a running course. This ground has big lights and is open at night. It is largely instrumental in providing the newboys of the city with recreation. Most of the grounds are divided into separate sections for boys and girls, in fact, I believe all of them except the Leslie Grove and Carlton Park grounds, which it is not convenient to arrange in this manner owing to the trees; the latter is not at present gravelled, but will be shortly. It also has no building except a portable house, and where no buildings are provided the winter work is carried on in the schools.

It is intended that reading rooms and lending libraries shall form a part of each playground equipment, and shower baths for boys and girls are already installed in some of them.

How the Staff Works.

So much for the grounds themselves. Now as to the organization. Under Mr. Armstrong, there is a staff of supervisors, young men and women, there being two women supervisors and one man for each ground. A supervisor's course has been arranged for the women teachers, and a man's course will shortly be inaugurated. Meantime all supervisors meet once a week to discuss the work and its development, and the St. John Ambulance Association have given a course to men supervisors and those women who have not passed the regular first aid course.

Story telling forms an essential item in the work of a woman supervisor; also she must understand industrial work and be able to teach folk dancing, and playground games, and songs. I was fortunate enough to be able to witness a demonstration folk dance and song by several little girls at St. Andrew's playground which was very gracefully and charmingly rendered.

Altho the supervising work is kept as far as possible on uniform lines, the supervisors of each playground are permitted to organize and arrange their individual work according to their own ideas, thus again carrying out the idea that is slowly gaining ground that human beings work better if permitted to exercise their own initiative. In the Elizabeth street playground, which is fairly typical of all the rest, every Monday, Wednesday and Friday night is set aside for a special athletic practice; Wednesday night is known as the Ribbon Twilight Meet, and all work now being done is in preparation for a big event on September 12, when all the playgrounds of the city will compete for championships and prizes. Every playground in the city will hold a festival of its own during August, at which parents will be admitted.

Plenty of Contests.

All kinds of gymnastic games are organized and contests in apparatus work are held. The awards are given on a system of points, and the boys or girls who obtain the highest number of points receive either championship crests or special pennants. The girls play tether tennis, basketball, volley ball, and a girl's baseball league is now being organized.

A special feature is being made of swimming instruction, and the swimming tanks of the Y. M. C. A. are placed at the disposal of the authorities who take classes on certain days in each week. At the present moment there are 180 boys under swimming instruction, sixty being taught at the West End Y.M.C.A. and the remainder at Broadview. The latter is conveyed there by the generosity of the Street Railway Co. The swimming is purely instructional, and only boys who cannot swim at all are admitted to the classes; otherwise the congestion would be impossible to cope with. A class of girls is instructed in swimming at Kew Gardens once a week by the civic instructor, who during the rest of the week instructs the public, and is in entire control of the beach, on which the city has recently erected two spring-boards and a toboggan slide for the children.

In connection with the playground work, mothers' picnics are being arranged, in order to bring the mothers into closer touch with the work of the playgrounds. A regular weekly meeting for mothers is also held in order that they may understand the nature and aim of the work and co-operate with it.

All Run by City.

The ideal of the supervised playgrounds is to utilize every scrap of waste or unused land in the city for the benefit of the city's youth—in nearly every case, even during the time when the work was being carried on by private effort, the city

provided the land for the playgrounds, while patrons provided the equipment. In future, of course, the entire scheme will be under civic control, and the playgrounds will form as a matter of fact, one part of a far reaching organization which will eventually bring every institution and social club under the control of the city authorities. Thus in time all dancing clubs and social organizations of whatever kind will be directly under civic supervision.

One of the grounds to be opened this year will be at Exhibition Park, which will, during the Exhibition, be used as a demonstration ground to introduce to the public the work that is being carried on in the supervised playgrounds. Each day supervisors will take down classes of boys and girls who will carry out their usual routine for the benefit of the public.

Difficult Task Sometimes.

It must be remembered that the majority of the children in these playgrounds come from the very poorest homes of the city, and where there are no distinctions of color, creed or race, the supervisors have at times a somewhat difficult task to cope with. The children are under supervision during the full time that the grounds are open, and two supervisors are always present at any contest. A weekly schedule of games and events is prepared, and put on the board, so that each child can see exactly what is taking place at any corner of the ground as soon as he or she enters the building. Up to the present very little has been done towards carrying on social work outside of the playground; in fact it would be impossible for the supervisors to do so to any great extent, seeing that they have to oversee some two or three hundred children daily, but where any child gives evidence that it needs special care or treatment the supervisor calls upon the mother and explains the case to her, and the



E. G. BANKS

Top photo, Dutch dances; centre photo, a group of girls performing a Norwegian folk dance. Supervising staff of the eight Toronto playgrounds.



Dancing at the opening of the Carlton Park playgrounds recently.

necessary care and facilities are always provided if the case is a deserving one.

That this work is but the beginning of a very far reaching and vitally important branch of child welfare will readily be seen. In addition to providing healthy recreation and environment many embryo talents have an opportunity of coming to light under the supervisor's eye. Especially in the industrial

work is this shown, and the apparently grubby little fingers of quite small children contrive to turn out very neat and clean work in the way of raffia work, scrim work and plasticine modelling; in the latter much initiative is exhibited.

The Jewish Children.

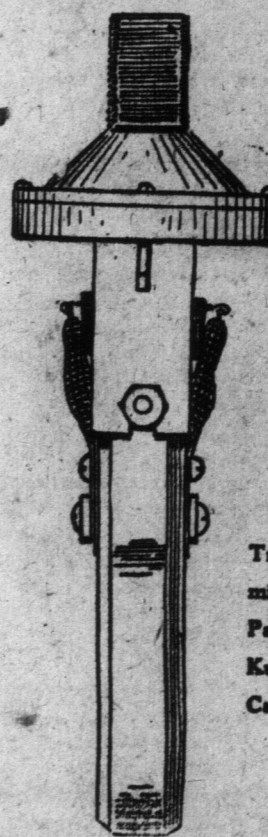
The Jewish children receive a special meed of praise from several supervisors as being remarkable for obedience and tractability, besides exhibiting in many cases great receptive powers. Another fact which is worthy of mention is that in a tour of several playgrounds all filled to overflowing with children I never heard one child cry, saw one fretful face and counted a quite extraordinary number of pretty and intelligent visages. Most of the children were too busy and happy to pay much attention to visitors, in spite of the fact that the day was a stormy one and the weather's irritability spent itself in frequent heavy showers—the swings were all in operation, the sandpits were all occupied, and even the wading pools, tho the sky wept lustily, were also as popular as usual, while under the shelter of the stone porticos classes of bright faced little girls were clustered round their teacher occupied in some kind of industrial work.

Altogether one comes away from the supervised playgrounds with a feeling that the money which has been and is being spent on them is capital well invested, and that the reward will be reaped in a generation of healthy bodied and healthy minded men and women, who in their turn will do much to further the work from the inauguration of which they were the first to benefit.

Remarkable New Way of Transmitting the Human Voice

NATHAN A. KURMAN, born in London and self-educated, by a recent demonstration of the callophone in New York City, upset all preconceived theories of the human voice. Never before in the history of electrical transmission have the inventors been able to pick the sounds from the atmosphere, and transmit and receive the

the street, 325 feet below, and was attached to the ceiling, which was placed in a horn similar to that used on a talking machine. A party of newspaper men were in offices and the lower, while another party gathered about an automobile, in the tonneau of which was placed a horn. Thru a transmitter, sound like that of a telephone on your desk, the newspaper men carried on conversation with the party in the



Transmitting Part of Kurman's Callophone.



Nathan A. P.

same messages over one instrument. This is what Kurman is said to have done. He is not yet 30 years old. The callophone is run by a small voltage. Six dry battery cells do the work. Where this high voltage is used it is necessary to have a water-cooled jacket around the diaphragm. Nothing like this is required in Kurman's invention. A wire was dropped from the 24th story of the Metropolitan Tower to

street. The volume of the human voice was increased from four to six times, and, despite the roar of traffic, a person standing 150 feet away from the automobile was able to carry on a conversation with a person standing at the other end of the line 325 feet above the New York street.

Had the invention been installed on the Empress of Ireland, undoubtedly the loss of life would not have been so great, as the sleeping passengers could have been warned to leave their berths at once and hasten to the deck. Young Kurman ran away from London to South Africa when he was about 16 years old, to avoid serving in the British army. He wandered up and down thru the Boer war, and when it was over went to India and secured a position with an electrical concern in Calcutta. Later he went to Siam and became chief electrician to the king. When the United States took the Philippines Kurman was made chief telephone expert by the government, and installed the telephone service in the City of Manila and elsewhere throughout the archipelago.