

Summer Holiday Activities.

In his evening talk before the summer school of science at Yarmouth in July last, Principal Soloan, of the Nova Scotia normal school, outlined an attractive course by which boys and girls may make the summer holidays a source of unending delight and benefit to themselves. In his wild garden at Lake Annis, Mr. Soloan occupies much of his leisure vacation moments, when books and correspondence and the calls of teachers' conventions will allow him, in the study of nature which is lavish and in great variety about him. It was in congenial mood, then, that he spoke of the opportunities of healthy enjoyment that lie open to children in vacation, and he has yielded to the request of the REVIEW to place these views before a wider circle of teachers.

To enjoy a vacation and yet make it useful is Mr. Soloan's plea, and teachers will readily enter into sympathy with it on account of its possibilities to themselves and to their pupils. All through the school term there is too little time to read the stories or books that lend interest to literature, history, geography and other school studies; references are constantly being made through the winter months to objects of nature-study, such as are seen in field, forest and garden, to birds, insects and plants, which may be observed only in the mid-summer months. How good it will be then to anticipate the joys of coming vacation and have boys and girls jot down in their note-books what may be read as a supplement to present lessons, or what may be observed in their rambles afield in summer. It is hoped that Mr. Soloan's idea given below may meet with the cordial sympathy and co-operation of our readers:

Is it not worth while to consider whether the summer-holiday activities of the schoolboy and school-girl could be availed of to such a degree as to render them a direct asset of the school business without thereby impeaching the rights of youth to untrammelled enjoyment of holiday blessings?

That a boy's holidays are a period of intellectual sleep would be a most thoughtless conclusion. True it is that during such periods certain activities called into daily requisition in the classroom cease to be operative; but, on the other hand, with the advent of summer freedom, various other mental processes wake to unwonted activity. Like those of older people, the schoolboy's pleasures are in the main intellectual: his rambles, his games, his masqueradings, quite as much so as our own. Let us admit, then, as we readily can, that formative influences

are potent in the mind and heart of the pupil whether school keeps or not.

It remains, then, to inquire whether these influences can to any extent be regulated, modified, or, indeed, supplied by the teacher after school has closed. The faculty of observation, for example,—this is ever lively in youth. And could not young persons' holiday observations be given point, rendered more exact and more permanently available if some general instruction, encouragement and aim were supplied in advance by the teacher?

I shall not try to elaborate the theme very much. Consider, however, the whole realm of school studies, and the thoughtful teacher will hardly discover one subject treated in the schoolroom that does not lend itself to independent out-door treatment by the pupil—*independent*, or, better, *slightly dependent* on pre-suggestion and advice of the teacher. It is nature-study? Think how manifold and full are the processes of nature during the six weeks following the closing of school. It is the fruition period for what was but flower or bud in the fresh spring days of May and June; the hail and farewell period for many of our birds of passage; the nesting-time of others; and the season when not only flower and bird world, but the insect world, too, is at its gayest. The very heyday of nature! And, in the midst of the blaze of summer glory at which the coldest hearts are lighted to warmth and joy, our young folk are storing up an enthusiasm which can be transformed into an active principle in the nature work for weeks and months afterward.

The specific problem for the teacher is, first, how he may direct and encourage the holiday efforts of boys and girls to enjoy and to know nature's moods and processes; secondly, how this acquired knowledge and enjoyment can be enlarged and correlated by subsequent recall and conversation after holidays are over. Let me suggest. What boy or girl will deem it drudgery or an inroad into holiday freedom to be asked to acquaint himself thoroughly, during the idle summer days, with the life and habits of some species of bird or insect, or with some group of plant-phenomena? Suppose a few young people bring back to school the store of definite information which the teacher has before holidays shown to be easily and pleasurably obtained,—what themes there for talks with these eager lads and lasses whose reports on various heads lack none of the charm of new discoveries! How keenly idle ones will regret their aimless and fruitless days, and will take a lesson for future application!