A SCHOOL FOR CITIZENSHIP

A SCHOOL FOR CITIZENSHIP

ALS IK KAN

ORN and reared in what was then the wilds of Wisconsin, where it was necessary for everyone to take part in the pioneer work of home-making, it was natural that I should be influenced all through my life by the environment, training and ideals of those early days. In the small community in which we lived, we were close at all times to the great primitive forces of Nature—to the sternness of her unflinching laws, to the wonder of her changing seasons, to the mingled joy and struggle that made up the daily round of our outdoor life.

Unhindered and unhelped by the complex details of a more civilized society, we worked out our own plans and problems, provided for our material household requirements as well as our social needs, embodying in our pioneer group the characteristics of a miniature community. We made our clearings, built our cabins, raised our own vegetables and made our own clothes. We depended very little on outside supplies. We were cooperative and yet individualistic, for each new emergency threw us on our own resources, developed ingenuity, skill, patience. Whether I was working or playing, felling trees or making whistles from their bark, hauling logs for the fire or making untaught some simple piece of furniture for the log home—whatever it was, I was learning unconsciously the lesson of the pioneer. I was developing my power of seeing clearly, deciding promptly and acting practically, doing my own reasoning instead of following precedent, learning, in short, to think and act for myself.

Those days wakened a sense of kinship with the nature world and brought me visions and ideals of life and work that colored all the after years. The settlement of which I felt myself so vigorous a part was like a little world in itself. Along with a hard knowledge of realities was developed a sense of the picturesqueness of it all, so that I had what one might call a "play" feeling toward every task. It was work—and very hard work—yet at the same time it had a certain spontaneous, irresistible quality that made it seem like fun. For was it not part of the greatest of all adventures—Life!

It was very natural, therefore, that later on, through many years of varied activity in the East, the memory of those early Wisconsin days should still linger in my mind. And when I selected the tract of land in New Jersey which has become known as Craftsman Farms my thoughts reverted instinctively to the pioneer country where my hard-working but happy boyhood was spent. These sloping Eastern acres with their fern-grown woods and meadows, where the new green of cowslips and clusters of wild violets herald the springtime, these alder-fringed creeks and clear springs where the watercress abounds, were like an echo of the old pioneer surroundings. Here seemed to me the ideal spot for a farm home.

Some of the land had been abandoned fifty years ago, and it was my ambition to bring it back to fertility, to clear and plow, to make roads and build houses, to develop if possible an ideal home. We would build a log house in some quiet wooded spot, and grow our own fruit and vegetables as we had in the old Wisconsin times. I would relive, as it were, the Western boyhood which had been so full of meaning and beauty.

But as I came to plan and build and lay out the land, I realized that I could not get real enjoyment by doing it merely for my own ends. The grown man cannot resurrect the spirit of his boyhood alone; he needs the companionship of boys, the contact of their eager interests and quick imaginations. And so I felt that I must have growing boys to work and play with, to help me clear the forestland, plow the ground, dig and plant, plan and build, until at last we should evolve out of the raw material of Nature a little farmstead community of friendly workers.

The boys should go to work like youthful pioneers, getting out of the adventure and struggle of it all the joy and strength and wholesomeness, the freedom and self-reliance that such life had held for me. They should have the same primitive realities to contend with which had developed my own muscle and brain; they should feel the same thrill of satisfied achievement as they felled their first tree and built their own shelter; they should have the pleasure of cooking their own meals at a camp-fire and taste the comfort of a night's rest well earned. I would help them with the fruit of my experience, teach them woodcraft and farming, home-building and cab-
A SCHOOL FOR CITIZENSHIP

inetmaking, show them how to become a capable, self-dependent group.

And so, with that impulsiveness and enthusiasm which my early life had bequeathed me, I announced to my friends and the readers of our magazine that it was my intention to start at Craftsman Farms a school where boys could learn these outdoor crafts, study agriculture and dairying, learn to make furniture and fittings in their own shops. And the interest with which the announcement was received showed how much the plan appealed to people whose ideas were moving, consciously or unconsciously, along similar lines.

But when I came to consider all the practical details, to make definite plans and arrangements for such a school, I realized that after all the average Eastern lad differs considerably in character, training, environment and tradition from the Western youth that I had typified. The influences of our complex civilization have unfitted him in a great degree to cope with the roughness of actual pioneer conditions. To such boys as might come out to my farm the initial steps, the pioneer stage of development would prove a hardship rather than a joy. If they were to throw themselves into the work heart and soul as I wished, I must temper somewhat the harshness of natural conditions to their more sensitive bodies and minds. I must pave some of the way that was to lead to the goal, do the first clearing, farming and building to show them what could be accomplished. I must get a nucleus around which their young interests would center and from which they could branch out for themselves along individual yet co-operative lines.

So I set to work and for three years devoted whatever time, energy and money I could spare to the development of Craftsman Farms. The result is already known to our readers. Around the home center of our big, friendly Log House are grouped the smaller cottages, the garage, the cow and horse stables, chicken houses, flower and vegetable garden, orchard, fruit patches and corn fields. But the 150 acres at present under cultivation comprise only a small fraction of the whole estate. All around the farm stretch the woods and hills and sloping meadows where other cottages and workshops may still be built and other fields cleared for the planting of more fruit trees and corn and the laying out of new roads and pleasant gardens.

With so much already accomplished and so much more still waiting to be done, I feel that a fitting time has come for the inauguration of my long-cherished plan—the founding of a boys' school at Craftsman Farms. But what has helped me most of all to realize that the time was ripe for such an undertaking, was a visit a short time ago from Mr. Raymond Riordon, the Superintendent of the Interlaken School in Rolling Prairie, Indiana.

Our readers will remember that in The Craftsman for May, 1912, we published an article written by Mr. Riordon about his boys' school in Interlaken. This article came to us unsolicited; in fact, until the manuscript reached us, we regret to say that we did not know of this institution for the training of boys to a fine citizenship which Mr. Riordon has organized in the Middle West. But from the first reading of the article and the study of the pictures which he sent to illustrate it, we felt that here was an organization if not exactly along the lines that we had in mind for Craftsman Farms, at least born of the same spirit and the same desire to see that boys were once more trained to be men first of all and scholars incidentally. Not but what a thorough education is given at Interlaken and will be given at the Craftsman Farms School, but the boys' mental training will be gained just as much from experience in right living, in working, in meeting emergencies, in helping, as from reading and studying and memorizing books.

We believe at Craftsman Farms, as Mr. Riordon does out in Rolling Prairie, that no boy is educated who does not know the rudiments of living, who has not been trained to shift for himself, who could not, if he were lost suddenly in the woods or on the prairies, save his own life and care for himself as men could in the pioneer days, in all early vigorous days of civilization. Those of our readers who have read Mr. Riordon's article about his own school will remember that his boys not only learn how to cook and to wash and to do their own housework, but build their own houses and schools and are trained in physical care for themselves and for each other, as pioneer life trained the men who were courageous enough to meet it.

We were so much interested in Mr.
A SCHOOL FOR CITIZENSHIP

Riordan's article about his school that a personal correspondence ensued and we soon found a real comrade in this young man who understands life and boys so well. The result was that Mr. Riordan's interest in what we were doing became as great as our interest in his work, leading to the recent visit to Craftsman Farms, where the project for a school was begun and a friendship born of mutual ideals cemented.

Our present plan, a definite one, is that the Craftsman Farms School for Citizenship will be opened on the 15th of June, 1913. In the meantime the scheme of organization will be thoroughly worked out, Mr. Riordan helping in all practical ways—most notable of which will be the manning of some of the departments of work at Craftsman Farms with young men trained at the Interlaken School, who will not only take charge of their own work, but immediately begin planning to make it of value to the fifty boys with whom the school will start.

It is our purpose to make of use to these boys everything which has been done at the Farms—the large stables and stock, the well-filled poultry houses, the vineyard, the orchards of peach, apple, plum and cherry trees, the large log dwelling in which the family are housed, the smaller bungalows for the use of friends, and other buildings completed and in process of construction. The boys will be taught to build, to care for the animals and the garden, to understand and help in the installation and running of our electric plant, as well as to learn road-making and landscape gardening in their various branches. Whatever is new and scientific in agricultural development in this country will be gathered for the benefit of the boys, and any information that is of real importance in stock-raising will be at their disposal. The newest systems of intensive farming will be taught in the most practical way. And in connection with this training in the Work of Living the boys will receive thorough instruction in the "Three Rs." No boy will, however, be held back from the more formal mental training. Those who display a tendency toward the higher forms of education will have the opportunity of gaining a requisite basis for this, although there will be no time for separate preparation of boys for college. Those who feel that the college education is a part of what seems essential to them in facing life will be so thoroughly equipped in ways of earning their living and in the necessary first steps in practical education that there will be no difficulty whatever in their getting into and through college if they so desire, and they will be all the better for winning it for themselves.

The boys that we have in mind for this school in citizenship are the less fortunate youths of the land, those who have not had the right help from parents or friends and who have been left to face the difficult problems of boyhood at times when they had not the strength to come out whole. We feel that these boys are the ones that greatly need, and should have help, and a school like ours may prove an opportunity for such lads to rehabilitate themselves and to get the hold on life that may make them the kind of citizens we are hoping to graduate from Craftsman Farms.

We prefer the boys to be between nine and fourteen, as this seems to be the impressionable age of boyhood. Beyond fourteen, while boys might be amenable to a new way of living, even interested in a better way of living, the chances are that once returning to bad association the old temptations would be overwhelming for them; whereas the boy between nine and fourteen is fairly open-minded and the impressions which he receives at that period of his life are probably the most indelible that can ever touch his character.

Mr. Riordan's present plan is to begin to send on his trained young men from the first of October, 1912, so that from month to month during the winter our plans for the school will crystallize. Then early in the summer he himself will come, bringing with him his wide experience of the mental, moral and physical training of boys. He will stay long enough to help get the work thoroughly under way, and will keep in close touch with us afterward through correspondence and occasional visits. We feel that this association with a man who has tested his capacity and right to govern youth is one that will prove invaluable to such a school as we are hoping to develop at Craftsman Farms. A more complete presentation of the School plans will be published in the November issue of The Craftsman in an article by Mr. Riordan, which will be illustrated with photographs of the Farms showing what has already been accomplished there.