

# NEW DEAL AT BONNY OAKS

T 7-19-1918  
Real Home Provided for the  
Dependent Children.

No Semblance of an "Institution" to  
Remain Under Superintendency  
of Mrs. Edwards.

To educate for citizenship by providing a real home with no semblance of an institution and be able in the near future to relegate to limbo the objectionable parole system—except in rare instances—this is the newer ideal compassed in the present management of Bonny Oaks Industrial school.

Mrs. Sophia Edwards, of Nashville, has just completed her second week as superintendent of both boys' and girls' department.

Formerly the two departments were run independently, each having its own superintendent.

Last September when Mrs. Edwards assumed charge of the girls' department, she reached a threefold conclusion very quickly after surveying the situation summed up as follows:

First—The little girls are county dependents.

Second—They are no different from other children and entitled to a chance.

Third—It is up to Bonny Oaks to give them that chance.

Mrs. Edwards set about very quickly to do constructive work. First, they must be made happy, and when at work be able to choose a congenial occupation. Thereupon, many new lines of activity have been introduced. For instance, a small "preserve" on a porch enclosure devoted to the raising of Belgian hares, the gift of the Southeastern Breeders' association, was installed. A home garden has been created from the back yard dump. Its clearing took place last winter and today every variety of vegetable indigenous to this locality is to be found in this garden worked entirely by the girls.

Everything suggestive of the atmosphere of an institution has been abrogated, and the home idea stressed. Bonny Oaks henceforth must be regarded entirely as a school and home since not one girl is there against whom there is anything like a prison sentence. They are simply orphans, each having lost one or the other of her parents. The careful and painstaking work of many former matrons, Mrs. Edwards points out, shows itself in politeness, personal cleanliness and well-prepared lessons, so that very little discipline is needed. Consequently the girls come and go at will, and conversation and exercise are without apparent restraint.

Where the present idea stands out distinctively is in the fact that now no one is looking out for another home for any of the forty-one girls at Bonny Oaks. It is the desire of the board of which Mrs. K. T. Eaton is president to educate for citizenship and provide a vocation enabling the child to do battle with the world in later years.

Throughout the present year plans have been slowly assuming shape and the condition of the girls' department under Mrs. Edwards has impelled the

board of trustees of the industrial school under the presidency of L. G. Walker to ask that Mrs. Edwards assume entire charge of both departments. Accordingly Mrs. Edwards has yielded into the keeping of Miss Sylvia Richmond, the girls of Bonny Oaks, while she herself has undertaken the superintendency, moving her quarters into the boys' building in order to begin the same kind of work among the latter.

To this end an instructor, O. R. Webb, of Berry school, has been engaged to begin vocational work among the boys. A young man of wide versatility and a thorough boy himself among boys, many lines of vocational training will be undertaken. At present the work of manual training is beginning to take form and several pieces of hand-wrought furniture will find their way into the Bonny Oaks exhibit of the interstate fair.

Among urgent needs at the present time is an automobile. Not until a more rapid method of transit is provided between Bonny Oaks and the city will a number of apparently insurmountable obstacles be overcome. A child with the toothache must cry all night until the morning train can take it to the city. Then it must wait until 4 in the evening to return. If a bolt or screw needs replacing, the same program must be enacted.

The overcrowding in the girls' department may be overcome sometime in the near future by the addition of rooms to the rear of the girls' building in order to enlarge the schoolroom and provide additional space for dining room and kitchen, with a basement playroom for winter days.

Yesterday was canning club day at Bonny Oaks. The vast quantities of farm and garden products which have repaid the watchful care of the school farmer, Mr. Conley, will be conserved for winter use in a variety of ways. But no process holds greater interest among the girls and boys than that of the operation of the canning plant. A Times reporter visited the scene yesterday in company with Mrs. J. B. Lauderbach, county agent in home economics. The canning club girls whom Mrs. Lauderbach some time ago organized into a county unit were already at work when the agent arrived. In the cool shade of the large trees that stand near the chapel, quantities of snap-beans were being prepared for the processing by a half dozen or more of the girls. Boys were bringing the beans in containers from the bean patch. A merry lot they were with their chatter and laughter. All were in high spirits and greeted graciously the agent and reporter. An experienced supervisor, a man who has superintended much of the canning, processed and canned the vegetables, the girls taking turns at the scaling. Following the canning of beans "soup bunches," consisting of two parts of tomatoes, and one part each of corn, okra, cabbage, carrots, etc., with a slice of onion were put up. Several hundred cans were filled.

A full larder is promised from the farm's output this year. The children have preserved blackberries, peaches, peas, beans, carrots, and will continue the work from time to time under supervision of Mrs. Lauderbach and Miss Richmond, with the assistance of others, so long as there are fruits or vegetables to can.

Bonny Oaks Canning club was included in the list of campers at Hixson last week. Miss Sylvia Richmond was in charge of the seven young girls in attendance. Miss Iva Richmond, her sister, assumed charge of the other children, remaining at the Jersey home during their absence.

To what degree Bonny Oaks may be regarded by those who have known no other is evidenced by the following letter received recently by Mrs. Edwards from a young girl who was recently graduated as a nurse deaconess from the Lucy Webb Hayes national training school in Washington, D. C.

The letter follows:  
Washington, D. C., May 28, 1919.  
My Dearest Mrs. Edwards—Received with great pleasure the sweet letter you wrote me.

I appreciate so much your congratulations and invitation extended to me.

I would love to visit my only home some time.

It has been my home since 1904 and the dear old place holds a very great place in my heart.

My happiest days were spent under the trees and out in the yard of the beautiful home I love so much.

I owe all to dear old Bonny Oaks and its Christian workers. I have worked for six years to show the dear people I appreciated their care of me when I was a homeless waif.

And nothing could make me feel so proud as to know they were proud of me.

Now as I go forth with a great vision before me, to do for others as I was done by, I can only pray that my seed shall fall in good ground and bring forth good fruits.

I wish to thank you many times for your letter, and give my love to all of my little sisters and tell them I never forget them.

Lovingly,  
VIRGINIA.