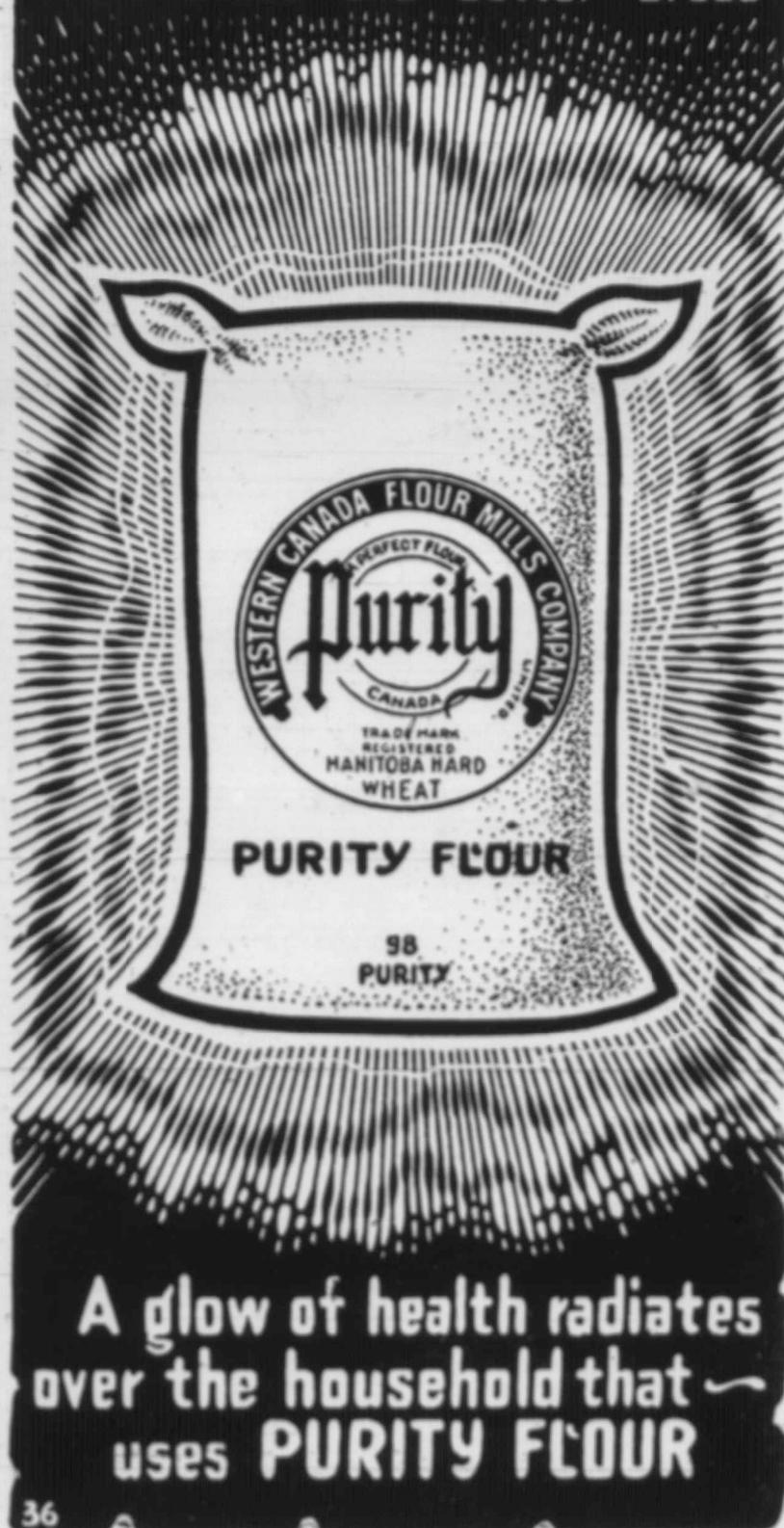


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## MYERS' HAY TOOLS

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## The Rural School

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looked on as an overpaid individual who should be willing and anxious to obey the behest of all the faddists and experimenters that come along. She should be an encyclopedia of book knowledge, an absolutely impartial judge and jury, an expert needlewoman, an accomplished cook, a Seager Wheeler agriculturalist, an unerring naturalist, a gardener; perfectly healthy, so that she never misses a day; absolutely without nerves, so that she will never get impatient; a moralist, and one suggestion was that she should give prizes to the ones who did most chores at home. Then she should not be above helping a little with the housework at her boarding-house.

Now behold her at the station waiting for the secretary to take her out. She is a perfect stranger to these parts and has left home behind. She is about eighteen, and her nose is red with the cold. Her clothes are new, if a bit cheap. It is her first-school, and her father borrowed the money to send her to Normal and buy her outfit, and she must pay it back, for there are others to educate. The teachers thought her wonderful, so do the folks at home. Her heart flutters. Will she make good or not? It is sixty-five a month salary and five a week board. Here is your teacher now. Heap on the work. The tears will come often, but you will not see them—education has made her a thoroughbred. You must sympathize with the teacher if you expect results in the rural school. If you look upon her as a machine to do so much, she will look on you as another to make out checks. You will pay her just what you have to, with, perhaps, criticism thrown in; she will do what she has to, with the same. You know the rule—"With what measure ye mete shall be meted to you again."

If the Department of Education placed the teachers, complaints, if any, from either party, teacher or trustees, could also be laid before it, preventing much of the petty, personal persecutions to which many teachers are subjected, also bringing to light cases of inefficiency in the teachers.

All this just reminds me of a case Miss Cora Hind speaks of, and a bona fide one, of a thoroughly capable teacher being dismissed by a board of trustees, for what reason do you suppose? Because she refused, for good reasons, to teach the Bible Class on Sundays.

I think that school boards have entirely too much power in such instances, power which, for the dignity of the teacher and the good of the school, should be vested in the Department of Education.

The business of the different school districts is sometimes terribly bungled. Sometimes the trustees are none of them on speaking terms and cannot hold a meeting, so everything goes to pieces. Often the annual meeting is a perfect orgy of abusive language, recriminations and the challenging place for a series of fist-cuff duels that ensue.

Perhaps I am laying on the colors rather thickly, but I have observed all these little pranks. I hope that more businesslike methods will be arranged, also a sane school curriculum, and believe that the communities, schools and teachers will profit thereby.

Yours truly,

ANNIE SHEPPARD ARMSTRONG

## OUR ANTIQUATED SCHOOL SYSTEM

I am glad to see that The Guide is taking up the question of the rural school, and trust the matter will never be dropped until there is a decided change for the better. I have felt for many years that we are trying to reform at the wrong end, trying to build up or repair without a solid foundation. Most of your readers know what a hopeless task that is. We have organizations galore: Grain Growers, Free Traders, Women's Suffrage, societies, Boys' clubs, Home Economics, etc.; all very good in their way, but fighting frequently against a stone wall and with little progress or at any rate not near the progress that should come from the time, energy and money spent, and why? For the simple reason that the country resident, at any rate,

is handicapped at every turn thru lack of even an elementary education. I make this statement with a full knowledge of rural conditions and the rural community. It is simply an outrage the miserable apologies we have in the country called schools. I am not referring to the buildings specially, altho, goodness knows, there are some beauties, nor to the teachers—as a whole they are equal to the system, if that is saying anything—but I am referring to the antiquated, out-of-date, one-horse, small area trustee system.

Listen to what a writer in The Saturday Evening Post, of August 26, has to say of this system in the United States: "We should be ashamed of our support of public schools instead of congratulating ourselves about it. There are over two hundred thousand one-room, one-teacher rural district schools, where, on the whole, we are working a great confidence game on some millions of helpless minors by taking their time and giving them a bogus article of education."

"These one-room, ungraded country schools belong to the pioneer era when farmers reaped wheat with a scythe, threshed it with a flail, and hauled it twenty miles to market thru mud half way to the wagon hubs; when building a barn involved getting half of the male inhabitants of the township together to raise the frame. Grown-up people plow and reap with tractors, thresh with steam, go to town in fifteen minutes in an automobile and talk on the telephone, but the youngsters are still back in the thirties of the last century."

In the year 1915 in the Province of Manitoba there were 1,308 one-room ungraded schools trying to educate 44,471 children of school age. They managed to get an average attendance of 22,258, or say 50 per cent., and these graded as follows: Grade I, 10,995; Grade II, 6,003; Grade III, 5,480; Grade IV, 5,073; Grade V, 3,534; Grade VI, 2,235; Grade VII, 1,346, at a cost to the government of \$169,641 and to the municipalities of \$1,028,320 or a total cost of \$1,197,961 to get 1,346 children as far as standard seven. Is it necessary to comment on this? It is simply one of the rottenest systems in existence. No need to go to Turkey or any other uncivilized nation to find people steeped in ignorance and glad of it. We have it right here in our own province, and evidently some of our cousins across the line are waking up to similar conditions over there.

Now what is the remedy? There are two. Wider areas or municipal school boards, with full powers to provide transportation for all children over one mile from the school house, which will tend towards graded schools and the total wiping out of the present little red school house. Second, consolidation, a term now familiar to most Manitobans, as I understand there are about seventy of these districts in Manitoba.

My ideal would be a graded school—no more one-teacher, one-roomed buildings—with either a teacher's or caretaker's residence on the school grounds, so that the teachers can be housed and cared for on the spot, and this would form a rural community centre. Something on this line has got to come if we are to retain our young folk on the farms. Up-to-date teachers of a graded school, with an assembly room and library, would be a centre for entertainments, socials, etc.

These suggestions would cost more, but I am satisfied would bring results in return nearer one hundred cents on the dollar than the present system. Note, as there are only 1,346 as far as grade seven, the inference is that there would only be an average of one entrance pupil for each school. Is this what your readers are looking for? With an up-to-date system every child would get as far as entrance anyway.

I will say little of the poor little tots who have to blunder along muddy, sloppy roads, travelling all weathers from one to three miles, arriving at a cold, frequently dusty old school house along with half a dozen or so others in the same plight. I get too wrathful to discuss such schools. I only wish all the fathers could be made to do this tramping for say three months, and then there would be a revolution.

Now, how are we to get this change? It is easy. Simply demand it from our government. The machinery is on the statute book now. Unless you make