

in many cases had not been cleaned for years. The odor from these shanties was indescribably foul, and positively dangerous.

In spite of these surroundings much good work appeared to be going on. Maine children are notably "smart" and ambitious to get on in the world, and it was evident that much of the sterling character which traditionally goes with the district school was being developed in the children. There was no doubt, however, that adverse conditions were doing much to neutralize the native progressiveness.

THE BEGINNINGS OF IMPROVEMENT.

That was six years ago. There are still plenty of disgraceful, rural school-houses in Maine, but the number has been largely reduced. In 1897 Mr. Stetson brought out a pamphlet of "Sketches, Designs, and Plans for School Buildings, School Yards, and Outhouses." In this he gave detailed information as to the choice of school sites, water supply, outhouses, school buildings, colors for exteriors, halls and wardrobes, stairways, windows, blackboard, interior finish, lighting, desks, and ventilation. In short, an opportunity was given to the school directors throughout the state to become informed on nearly all matters of modern school equipment. Floor plans and elevations of model rural school-houses in the states were printed in the pamphlet. Nothing elaborate or fanciful was displayed, but only such buildings as were clearly possible in a poor community, and such as were easily intelligible to a handy carpenter.

On May 23, 1898, the School Improvement League of Maine

was started as a direct result of the agitation started by Mr. Stetson. Its membership December 31, 1899, was 9,530. By March 1, 1901, it had passed the 30,000 mark. At the former date the state superintendent was able to report that the members had made repairs on the fences of thirty-three school yards; that from 221 yards unkempt grass, weeds, rocks, and refuse matter had been removed. Eleven stone walls were removed, and replaced with suitable fences. One hundred and seventy-six trees were planted and forty-four school-lawns graded, forty-six flower beds planted, thirty-four swings erected as well as eight trapeze bars and twelve teeters, twenty-three school grounds seeded down, fifty-eight flags purchased, thirty-eight school buildings cleaned and painted, 156 school-rooms otherwise decorated. Purchases of 436 portraits, 11,000 Perry pictures, and 1,390 photographs were reported. Also through the efforts of the league 2,240 volumes were added to school libraries, with twelve globes, forty-six dictionaries, twenty-one dictionary holders, thirty-six large reference books, and twenty-three maps. Eleven blackboards, forty bookcases, nine organs, thirteen casts, thirty-one clock, 183 curtains, forty-six lamps, fourteen waste baskets, twenty-one wash basins complete the list of donations to rural school equipment in so short a time.

The league continues to grow rapidly under the guidance of President Payson Smith, of Rumford Falls, and the state secretary, Miss Kate McDonald, of Machias.