

A PERSONAL LETTER.

MY DEAR FELLOW-TEACHERS,—

What do you purpose doing on Arbor Day this year? Now is the time to plan for the beautifying of the school grounds. You will agree with me that much ought to be done, and that much may be done, towards making the school premises more attractive. You will agree with me, also, when I say that our teachers must *lead* in this work. Won't you lead this year? Won't you make a determined effort this year, by planting trees, shrubs and flowers, to make the school grounds more beautiful

Who does his duty is a question
Too complex to be solved by me;
But he, I venture the suggestion,
Does part of his that plants a tree.

—Lowell.

"Let us observe Arbor Day in every school with appropriate songs and exercises; but let us not forget to plant when planting needs to be done. For schools whose premises are treeless, the proper thing to do would be to *dig* rather than to *sing*. What is the use of singing and reciting about trees when planting and caring for trees is needed?"

Among the parents something may be accomplished; but for the true teacher the pupils will be the mainstay in such an undertaking. In my own experience, I have always found pupils willing to assist in any work which had for its object the improvement of school conditions. Do not think that the improvements seen about the school premises will be all the good wrought. Fifty years from to-day a few gray-haired men and women will give their children and grandchildren encouragement in having a garden "all their own;" will take more interest in and extend sympathy and service to the better appearance of the school grounds because of your altruism when you taught the district school. We are building for the future.

But I hear you say, "What is the use? When I leave, succeeding teachers will not take care of anything. That may be; but the good example set by you must bear fruit, somewhere, some time.

No blooming of roses endureth forever,
The glories of sunset not alway remain;
Yet liveth their grace in the spirit, though never
The senses perceive the same beauty again.

—S. M. Newman.

If the school grounds are not enclosed, won't you try this spring to induce the trustees to put up a neat wire fence with suitable gates? If cattle and other animals do not roam the roads in your section, it may not be necessary to enclose the school grounds; but "an ounce of prevention is worth a

pound of cure." Perhaps you could raise some money by means of a concert or social to help pay for the fence. "Where there is a will there is a way."

In addition to the planting of trees, shrubs, flowers, etc., can't some of you arrange for a real school garden? The board of education will give to every teacher who establishes a garden, and makes good educational use of it, a yearly grant of thirty dollars; and to the trustees of the school a grant of twenty dollars, which amount is to be used in connection with the garden and school grounds, to pay for tools, plowing, cultivation during the vacation, etc., etc. Any person who has a love for the things of nature, is enthusiastic, persevering, and willing to do some mental and physical work beyond the routine, can, by study and experience, make a success of school gardening.

Do not think that the object of a school garden is to teach farmers how to farm. In every section no doubt there are a few farmers who could give even a well-trained teacher many "pointers" as regards agriculture. In every section, also, there are persons who could teach the teacher grammar, mathematics, history, etc., subjects in which, if in any subject, the teacher has been well drilled. Teachers do not pretend to have a monopoly of every ordinary subject, yet they must teach those subjects as best they can to the children sent to them from homes where there may be experts in those ordinary subjects. The school garden is for the children primarily, and we must measure results from the standpoint of the children, and not from the standpoint of the successful agriculturist. "Give children large interests, and give them early."

I hope that you, fellow-teachers, after reading my remarks, will do some hard brain work, and, if possible, crystallize your thoughts into deeds. I may say that I have prepared a bulletin that gives detailed directions for the planting of trees and shrubs, and the making and care of school gardens. This bulletin will appear as an appendix of the chief superintendent's annual report. It will also be published in separate bulletin form for free distribution. At all times I shall be pleased to advise or assist you, teachers, in any way that I can. Don't be backward about writing in regard to any topics relating to nature study or school gardens.

With best wishes, Yours sincerely,

D. W. HAMILTON.

Normal School, Fredericton, N. B.,
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