

We get glimpses of the unselfish and affectionate disposition of Dickens from the records of his biographers, especially that of John Forster. But to two of his own children we are indebted for recollections of Dickens that show us how happy he was in his home life, and how he made all about him happy. His daughter, Mamie, has left us a charming little book, dedicated to his memory, "My Father as I Recall Him," in which his love for children and family life are vividly recalled and shown with all the affection of a loving daughter. Unfortunately she was taken ill and died just as the book was ready for the public. She relates her father's fondness for animals, flowers and birds, his care of domestic pets, his love of walking and athletic sports, and tells many pretty stories of his kindness to those about him.

In a late magazine (*The Cosmopolitan* for January,) his son, Alfred Tennyson Dickens, writes a sketch of the "Life of Dickens," which is illustrated by many portraits showing him at different periods of his life. The son tells:

He was the kindest, most thoughtful, most considerate of fathers, and he was one of the most charming hosts it is possible to conceive. While he had a fund of anecdote and humour, he was never in the least pedantic or bookish in his talk; and if anyone referred to himself or his books, he invariably, in a very pleasant way, turned the conversation into another channel. As in his public and professional life he laid down for himself the golden rule that "Whatever is worth doing at all is worth doing well," so in his private life he was the most methodical and orderly of men. . . . He was wonderfully good and even-tempered, although, as may be easily imagined, of a nervous and excitable temperament. If he did allow his temper to get the better of him for a few moments, which, however, he very rarely ever did, then, like the sun after a passing summer shower, all the most lovable traits of his most lovable character shone out to great advantage afterwards.

The Problem of the Rural School.

It is a good sign in our educational progress that the needs of the rural school are receiving more and more attention from those framing courses and those engaged in carrying out such courses in these schools. Much remains to be done to make the teaching in the rural school more helpful to the child in better acquainting him with his surroundings, especially in cultivating that love for country-life and home that is founded upon knowledge. The United States Bureau of Education has just

published, for free distribution, a monograph containing detailed outlines of a normal course for rural school teachers. The following paragraphs are brief extracts from this book, which is entitled "A Course of Study for the Preparation of Rural School Teachers."

The rural school has not the influence that it should have. One of the chief reasons lies in the fact that the course of study is ill adapted to rural life in all its relations. We are united in believing that a school should train its pupils for life and its work while these pupils are living and working. The course of study taught in the rural school today is entirely too much like the course that is taught in the city school. The country school will not reach the position of efficiency that belongs to it until a distinctive training is required of its teachers.

A State (or Provincial) normal school should prepare a large number of teachers to go out into the rural communities, there to be potent factors in bringing about the best rural life. The rural child is entitled to a course of study and to a course of instruction that will dignify and enrich his life, and make life for him in the rural environment, should he choose to remain there not simply tolerable, but glorious. It is possible and right, and indeed a duty, to dignify rural life and to save to it and its interests the best blood of the country.

To prepare teachers who can meet this demand, the following course of study and training is proposed: The first year is largely given to distinctively rural problems and interests; the two succeeding years turn more toward general scholarship, in order that those taking the entire course may be able not only to teach rural schools but to enter larger fields of usefulness.

After indicating the cultural branches which should be possessed by the rural school teacher, the authors continue:

It is now quite generally conceded that the following subjects are necessary for the proper training of rural school teachers: Nature study, elementary principles of practical agriculture, sanitary science and hygiene, domestic economy, and practical principles and problems in elementary chemistry and physics as applied in the study of these subjects. The formal training of most country boys and girls ends with the rural school course. A fundamental knowledge of the foregoing subjects is certainly a minimum to require of the teacher who trains them for the lives that they must lead.

The outlines of the special courses named are then discussed in detail, accompanied with detailed outlines of the ground to be covered, and the manner in which the several courses should be treated.

"A Course of Study for the Preparation of Rural School Teachers" will be sent free upon request to the United States Bureau of Education, Washington, D. C. This liberal offer should meet with a ready response from teachers and all who are interested in the betterment of our rural schools.