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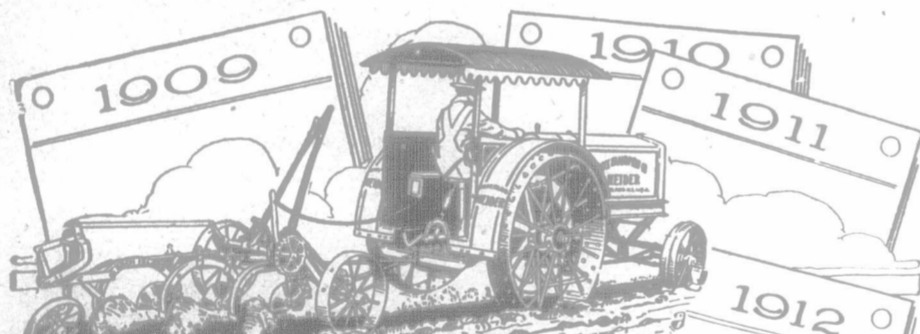
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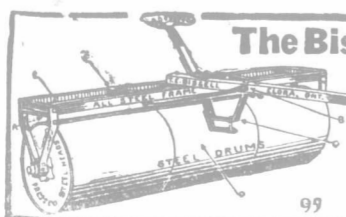


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See advertisement also on page 348

Our School Department.

A Rural Teacher Who Succeeded.

It was to Mendota community that the new teacher, Miss Grace Wyman, came to render her services. To the people of the community, she came merely as "the new teacher;" in her own mind, however, she came with the determination of becoming the community leader in educational affairs.

The Community and the Schoolhouse

Mendota was typical of thousands of other communities in the United States, particularly with reference to its attitude to the local school and education generally. A satisfied feeling that the school was good enough had become rooted in the hearts of many of the parents of the district. The schoolhouse was old, its walls dingy, an ugly stove disgraced one corner, and a cold, dark and damp cellar furnished disagreeable odors for the room above. No hall-way was provided for the hanging of wraps, and the lunches of the children were placed in various nooks about the schoolroom where a nail or other space afforded an emergency location.

The school, its buildings and grounds, its progress and achievement, are the mirror of any community, and the school situation at Mendota was no exception.

These appearances were anything but encouraging, and, to most young rural school teachers, the general outlook would have struck terror into their hearts. But not so with Miss Wyman. She quietly studied the life of the community and soon a light was discovered.

A social activity had been long engendered in the people here, and it was then actively engaged in many Sunday School gatherings that were held in the schoolhouse, where not only the usual exercises were held, but, also, questions of social and community interest were discussed by both persons of local importance and by special speakers from the leading educational institutions of the state.

The Teacher's Opportunity.

Here was the teacher's opportunity and she recognized it. Yes, more important than that, she acted upon the recognition; she did something. Plainly, her big problem was to turn this social habit of the community into school channels.

The children were normal country boys and girls, willing to work, and always ready for something new. That something new, however, must be something which would be big enough to attract and enlist the interest of the parents too. It was finally decided that the new thing was to be a big school exhibition in which everybody in the community should have a part.

As the teacher outlined the plan from day to day, enthusiasm grew. Nearly every morning, a new plan was presented. In spite of a congested school program of over thirty recitations a day, the big undertaking went forward with a vim. The children talked it over at home, the older people soon began to talk exhibition too, and the idea was in the air everywhere.

The mysterious element was furnished by the "Original Corner" in which each pupil was asked to prepare and exhibit an original piece of work of his own choosing, but which he should keep secret till the day of exhibition. The preparation for the Original Corner brought forth the activity and work in the homes that it was planned for. Everybody was busy. The pupils brought in their own and parents' surprise boxes and exhibits.

One boy brought a hand-made Dutch wind-mill, standing in a box of earth—a suggestion which he had received from a picture. Another boy exhibited a ruler, properly marked to scale, which he had made with his new jack-knife. The girls brought various domestic articles. One brought a cake perfectly baked and frosted. Another brought a well-baked loaf of bread which she made and baked herself. Other girls exhibited needlework of various kinds and other household articles.

Getting the Real Thing Done.

The exhibition was well attended. All preparations had been carefully

planned long beforehand. Programs were printed and hand decorated by the children, and were distributed in all the homes of the community. Everything in the program was so arranged as to contribute to the one big aim which the leader had set for accomplishment; namely, a new or a remodeled schoolhouse, wherein she might render a better educational and social service to the community.

One boy gave a parody on the "Old Oaken Bucket," using to clever advantage, the worn out old schoolhouse. One of the girls gave a prophecy of the schoolhouse ten years hence. The question of the schoolhouse was kept before the community audience in a very vivid fashion. The teacher, also, explained what was needed and presented carefully thought out plans and estimates.

A committee of three was appointed from among the leading patrons to investigate school conditions—and even this was planned for ahead by the teacher. The citizen committee was instructed to present a definite report at the next regular annual school meeting in July.

The Community Discovers Its Leader.

The people began to realize the worth of this live teacher. Of course she was expected to stay another year; everybody wanted her back. When she was asked to stay, she announced that she had planned to do so, if the school committee, at the July meeting, should vote to remodel the schoolhouse, so that she might not be handicapped in the furtherance of the school work which she had planned for the next school year. The announcement went like an electric current through the community. Everyone was thoroughly aroused to the danger of losing the teacher.

The Annual Meeting.

The annual meeting came; every voter in the community was there, because he had been impressed with its importance by the committee appointed at the exhibition. The schoolhouse was crowded to hear the report of the committee. Some exciting discussion was held on several of the committee's recommendations. However, in the end, the complete program, in all its essential features, was adopted, the vote to borrow money was cast, and improvements to the extent of nine hundred dollars were authorized. The teacher had won, and the community was safe.

GARLAND A. BICKER.

To The Teacher.

This is only the third appearance of our "School Department," and perhaps our aims are not thoroughly understood. The primary purpose of devoting this section to the schools was not to give all the agricultural information a teacher might need in her work, but to provide a medium for the profession through which they might communicate with each other and exchange ideas. That is to say, if you have found one method of teaching a certain lesson particularly successful, we would be glad to publish your outline for the good of your contemporaries. More than that we shall endeavor, through conversation and correspondence with teachers, to get suggestions which we shall pass on. This Department's Editor is also ready and willing to answer any questions of an agricultural nature you care to ask, because we feel that problems must often arise for which a solution is not readily forthcoming. More than that, if you wish to ask other teachers a question, address it to us and have it asked through this Department. Tell us in what way we can be of most assistance and any suggestions will be greatly appreciated.—EDITOR.

Seed firms are now mailing their catalogues. If you are planning a school garden you could use a catalogue very well when deciding what to plant.

Are your school grounds well provided with flowering plants and shrubs? Don't allow the school grounds to resemble a pasture field—Beautify!