

The Rural School

PARENTS HELP WITH TEACHING

"Know your environment," is the motto of the trustees of the Fair School, situated at Water Glen, Alberta. Supplementary to the work of a teacher who, with seventeen pupils, has nine grades, the trustees arranged evening meetings to demonstrate lines of work done in the neighborhood. Bird Headley conducted a demonstration in hair cutting, accompanied with full instructions regarding purchase, use and care of barbers' tools, and giving desirable recipes for shampoos and lotions to be used on face after shaving. He explained why cloth shears could not be successfully used and other details of tonsorial art. Mr. Headley is an artist in this line, and this presentation of practical ideas on a common subject was both profitable and enjoyable.

Ed. Body presented the school with a handsome waste paper basket which he constructed on the stage while explaining what willows, grown in Alberta, could be used for, the names and uses of his tools, and when stock for work should be gathered. He passed around a chart showing some of the mathematical problems of the basket weaver. Mr. Body is a graduate of basketry and willow furniture of a technical school in England, and his rapid work and clear, terse statements created enthusiasm among old and young. He offered to give instructions in willow work evenings next winter.

The Woollen Industry

One evening was devoted to the woollen industry of the neighborhood. Mrs. Peterson spun, Mrs. Dufra carded, Mrs. Pearson operated the knitting machine, Mrs. Fagan crocheted and Mrs. Nelson had handing. Mr. Nelson occupied the centre of the stage making one of the famous Nelson mittens with his home-made wooden needle. Mr. Root gave an address on sheep, breeds of sheep, kinds of wool and marketing of wool. This vicinity is rich in experienced spinners and weavers, and it is hoped to arouse the interest of the young in this splendid cottage industry while such expert teachers can be supplied. This demonstration was given a cordial and appreciative endorsement. In line with this Miss C. A. Johnson, one of the newly elected lady trustees, is teaching the children to knit. As there are no looms near for cloth weaving, C. A. Johnson, our secretary-treasurer, took the entire school by motor to the residence of Mrs. Pearson to see her weave rag carpet. The older pupils gained a clear conception of the mechanism of the loom and its operation, as was learned in the report made by Oscar Peterson, and all were delighted with the motor ride. The small number of pupils in each grade emphasized the need of a larger school unit. In our first effort to meet this want an oratorical contest was arranged in which Calumet, Asker, Climax and Fair schools took part. It was a splendid effort on the part of pupils and was supported by a good attendance from all the districts interested. Prizes were awarded. Mr. Burdett, organist, and the local singers contributed to the success of the evening, and the pupils of Fair School gave some excellent drills.

School closed June 30, and a competition was arranged for Dominion Day. Prizes were given to rural schools ranking highest in manual training, domestic science, school studies and art. Another series of prizes was for sports, and prizes were given individuals for highest score in knitting, darning, crocheting, map drawing, painting, best collection of pressed wild flowers, essay on birds, specimen of manual training, potted plant or hanging basket. In Fair district most of this work will be done at home. In a reception which the school gave to the women of the district early in the term the trustees besought the co-operation of parents in the teaching of all those things which children should learn and for which the rural teacher cannot find time. Their response has been all that could be expected, and its effect on the pupils is marked. May Day was observed by a fitting program, and the trustees made it the occasion for a lesson in table setting, serving and dish washing in connection with a banquet to the May Queen, her court and the school.

Art and Photography

Our last evening meeting was devoted to art. Mr. Watson, teacher of Gadsby Lake School, gave an interesting talk on how to teach drawing, and illustrated his points by blackboard demonstration. His "Chalk Talk" was worthy the attention of any audience. Mr. Shattuck spoke on the pleasure and benefits of farm photography, and demonstrated the art by taking a flash light picture of the Hawkeye Ranch staff and showing how expeditiously it could be printed and developed. He is familiar with all branches of photography and generously offered his assistance and advice to any pupil or resident of the district who had a kodak and had found difficulties in producing good work. Mr. Irwin, of Asker School, followed on "Crayon Paint-

ing," illustrated in part by work prepared in advance and the rest by a landscape which he painted before the audience. His strokes were swift and his touch sure, and it was intensely interesting to follow him as he sketched the scene, laid on the real color, then worked in the atmosphere, shadows and finishing touches.

It will take some time to know our environment as we have a great deal of local talent still to be used in demonstration of rural work, and we are arranging for field days which we hope to make so interesting that their memory will be a valuable asset to the children in attendance. This repre-

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Realizing that the future of Western Canada is closely related to the success of the one-roomed rural school, The Guide has been seeking information as to what is being done, and may be done, to make this institution a better instrument of education than it is today.

Some of our readers have given us valuable information in the letters which appear on this page, but there must be many other districts in which the peculiar needs of the community are being met in a peculiar way. We should like to hear from teachers, trustees and parents concerning them, and to compensate the contributors for their time and trouble The Guide is willing to pay for letters published, and any illustrations which are suitable for use, at its usual rates.

These letters will be used to enliven a discussion of the problem of the rural school, which The Guide purposes publishing from time to time thruout the winter.

A departure of this kind can only succeed if it has the hearty co-operation of our readers, and it is hoped that beginning with the school fairs, which are about due, we shall have a long succession of interesting letters telling how the rural school is being more closely related to the life of the community.

Address all letters:

Rural School Editor, The Grain Growers' Guide, Winnipeg

sents the work of four months. If persisted in for even a short time it will send pupils up for entrance examination with a better understanding of the advantages and limitations of their education in comparison with that received by pupils in town schools who will write with them.

EMMA J. ROOT,

Chairman, Trustees of Fair School.

NOTHING PROGRESSIVE IN THIS SCHOOL

In your issue of April 13, re Rural Schools, you have asked answers to a number of questions. I will try to respond to as many as I feel competent for in the order which you gave. In the first place I will chiefly refer to what is doing in our own locality in which I have been a resident for thirty-three years, and in which I have been personally interested. Of course you will know that I have been here since there was but one small school in Regina and before there were any rural schools in Assiniboia. Our first school was started twenty-two years ago, and the then program of instruction rigidly adhered to. The nature study part was a struggle for the teacher to maintain, as it was ridiculed by the parents, and of course it was difficult to keep the scholars interested. There were no gardens for school thought of at that time. To skip over the intervening years to the present time and state what improvement has been made is an uninteresting task, for as nearly as I can trace events I can only call them a retrogression. We have always paid good salaries and in the main

have engaged competent teachers, so this cannot be laid to their charge. To begin with your first question, "School Gardens." We had one teacher of the very best who, by urgent appeals, got a spot plowed and with help from a lady friend had a really nice garden for two summers. The next teacher tried till she was discouraged to follow up this plan, but the school fence was out of repair and the ponies which brought the children to school were not supplied with hay in the stable so were turned out for pasture. Of course all the trees and bushes were destroyed, and since then no garden has been attempted.

"School fairs, school clubs organized." None of these. The school house has been occasionally cleaned or half-cleaned, school equipment just as meagre as can be possible, no hot lunches, sewing, cooking or manual training attempted. I do not know that they are taught anything about our wild birds and animals. There has been a little done along the line of weeds, but not, I think, about wild flowers. Farm arithmetic is confined to what may be in the text book. They may be taught a little about our great men, not about women. They are taught, I think, our system of government.

Parents Show Little Interest

Our teachers have always had a comfortable home near the school. The parents send their children to school and generally attend when there is a school concert. That is about all they seem to consider their duty in that line. I do not think a parent, or even a trustee, ever enters the school for the purpose of making a visit or to see how the teacher and children are doing. I only know of one who ever did, till it was so unpopular that they quit. Now, this seems like an unqualified criticism on the neighborhood. I would like to show, if possible, just where the trouble lies. The people are all English speaking and have come from Ontario or from the old countries and are an intelligent, moral and prosperous church-going community. There must be some new regime or some means taken to stir them up. Inspectors come occasionally to the school and school taxes are paid. New trustees are elected mostly by at most half a dozen who may attend the yearly school meeting. It is my opinion that the trustees should be appointed by the municipality. Also that the mothers of the school children should have a voice and a chance to take some interest in the school work. I think women are eligible for trusteeship, and instead of three trustees as is now the case, there should be four, two men and two women. To avoid a decision on any point being a tie, let the secretary-treasurer give the casting vote. Of course he must not be a trustee.

MRS. H. M. NEVILLE.

Cottonwood, Sask.

Note.—Special attention is called to this letter, and it is hoped that we shall hear from many more such districts.

MUST HUSBAND SCHOOL HOURS THRIFTILY

I went to school a good many years and taught in both town and country for seven, so I feel on solid ground in discussing schools. In my estimation the child's mind is not to be regarded as a sponge to absorb this or that, but as a living organism that, once aroused to activity, will assimilate for itself. Education, as the word implies, is a drawing out, not a cramming process. When a teacher hears a child ask her an intelligent question she rejoices, because she knows that the child's mind is working, not just absorbing.

Now in this western country the climatic conditions and distances keep the average attendance rather low. Also circumstances put the children to work young. Let us then be wise in the use that the average child makes of his school days. The school is a preparation for citizenship, and he must conform to the rules of the school and respect the rights of others. He must learn to read and to appreciate the beauty and value of the selections in the various readers. He must write a good hand and learn to spell any word that he uses correctly. He must learn to use a dictionary. He must learn arithmetic well enough to rapidly and accurately measure a field, the contents of a bin, reckon simple and compound interest, make out notes, receipts and to keep simple accounts. The girls need to know these things, too, as farmers' wives.

The teacher should inculcate a taste for good reading and open up the world of good books by daily reading from some good work. And if I had my way every child would learn the Lord's Prayer, the Creed and the Ten Commandments, and learn them at school. And another important thing is the use of correct language. Whether they have time to learn the rules of grammar or not, insist on correct English by imitation. Never let an

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