

other words, the stimulating, directing and informing power of a teacher is multiplied two, three or even four times to many of the individual pupils through the passing on, by pupils to their classmates, of the help they have derived direct from the teacher. It is not only the clever and bright pupils who do this. Every child, in some measure, interprets to its fellow child some part or some phase of a lesson. By gathering the children from five or six rural schools into one central graded school, the teaching power of the children of the locality for other children in the locality would be utilized. Each pupil in a class learns much from his fellow pupils. As the bright, quick ones see in part, others are helped to see; as they reveal their methods of study, other children learn. Children also learn from classes to which they do not belong, as well as from children in the groups of their own degree of advancement.

#### EFFICIENT SUPERVISION.

Supervision of rural schools by school boards, inspectors and departments of education must be intelligent, sympathetic and skilful, co-operating with the teachers to bring the schools into touch with the homes and with the occupations of the people. Those who have the power of governing and responsibility of guiding must needs be in close touch with the lives of the people whose children are being educated, and in sympathy with the life which the children themselves will follow when they come to mature years. It is most promising and hopeful that the public school inspectors are leaders and guides in education, rather than official valuers of other teachers' work.

It becomes necessary that members of school boards should have a clearer appreciation of the qualities essential to a good teacher; and of the fact that the best teacher becomes still better by at least two years of experience. School boards, for the sake of saving a few dollars in salary, cannot afford to have the children practiced upon all the time by young teachers who are gaining experience at the cost of child-time and of the opportunities which to those particular children never come again.

The indifference, ignorance and selfishness of some parents come between their children and the chance of a good education. The united power and influence of departments of education, inspectors, school boards and teachers, must be exerted more energetically and patiently in behalf of those little ones.

#### GOOD BUILDINGS.

The rural schoolhouse is rarely a thing of beauty; it is sometimes a place of discomforts and a hindrance to the natural development of robust bodies and to the growth of mental vigor and activity. Many a school still lacks suitable desks with comfortable seats. In matters of heating, lighting and ventilation, the lonely little school has been left untouched by the improvements which have made town schools models for promoting comfort and health. Everybody admits the high educational value of a well-constructed, well arranged, well equipped schoolroom, with windows and floors shiningly clean, and walls decorated with pictures. "Day by day beautiful, comfortable and clean surroundings will have their ethical influence upon his development until he comes to abhor anything that is not beautiful, well ordered and clean."

#### NEAT AND BEAUTIFUL SURROUNDINGS.

Pleasant and well-arranged surroundings are silent, potent educational forces. The child naturally tries to put himself into harmony with what surrounds him. That effort, often uncon-

scious to himself, is part of his education. What a charge that sentence brings against the untidy, uncomfortable, unlovely interiors and exteriors of many schoolhouses in rural districts, and against their fenceless, uncared-for and hardly decent surroundings!

There are over 100,000 school gardens in use in European countries. These beautify the school grounds and are used for educational purposes as well.

Why should not the schoolhouse and school premises be the most beautiful and attractive place in the locality? If the children are to spend between six and seven hours a day there, should it not be made a place to be proud of, and known to them as worthy of all praise?

Would it not be a good thing if the bare, neglected, depressing and sometimes hardly decent surroundings of the schoolhouse were improved into gardens, expressing the refined taste and skill of the people of the locality, under the management of their teacher? If unsightly and repellent premises are not in themselves degrading, they have a tendency to dull the taste and the judgment of young persons as to what should be esteemed. It is of great benefit in early life to have one's surroundings of such a sort as to inculcate and develop a love of flowers, of pictures, and of good books. The school should be a place for supplying those conditions in such a way as to help on the harmonious development of the child's character.

The rural school, as every other school, should be so conducted as to bring about the formation of desirable habits. Among those are regularity, punctuality, obedience, industry and self-control. Children who observed beautiful things, nicely arranged inside the school and outside the school, would also be more likely to observe graceful speech, good manners and unflagging truthfulness, and to become respectful and reverent towards the beautiful and the good.

#### PUBLIC INTEREST AND SUPPORT.

It is not to be expected that simple consolidation of schools will create, at once, all the desirable conditions which have been referred to. If the centralizing plan enables communities and school authorities to do better for education than they can do at one-room schools, it is so far a helpful one. In 1902 I visited consolidated rural schools in Iowa and Ohio; and after personal examination and inquiry, am convinced that many valuable advantages can be gained through the system of consolidation as it might be applied in Canada.

As far as could be learned at the places visited, there was almost entire unanimity of opinion among the ratepayers respecting the marked success and superior advantages of consolidation. While the scheme was brought into effect under vigorous discussion and considerable opposition, the adverse criticism has been disarmed by the results of experience. With few exceptions "the kickers," as they are designated locally, were ratepayers without children, or persons who feared some depreciation in the value of their own property, or, worse still, some increase in the value of the property nearest to the centralized school. Experience has proven the former of these two fears to be groundless.

#### A PIONEER IN CONSOLIDATION.

Six years ago Gustavus Township, in Ohio, became the pioneer in that part of the United States in the consolidation of rural schools. There were nine school districts in the township, and as many small schools. Then the districts were united into one, and a central school was erected at a cost of \$3,000. It is a frame build-

ing, containing four large well-lighted classrooms, a small recitation room and cloak rooms. Instead of nine teachers in little isolated schools, there are now a principal at a salary of \$65 per month, and four assistant teachers at \$32 or \$30 per month, in the united school. Nine nice-looking vans are used to convey the children from and to their homes. These wagons, or school vans, have comfortable seats running lengthwise of the vehicle, waterproof canvas covers and spring gearings. Before consolidation the average attendance at the schools in that township was 125. On the day of my visit it was 143 out of an enrollment of 162. The year before consolidation the cost of maintenance of the nine schools of the township was \$2,900. Four years afterwards the cost of the centralized schools, including the conveying of the children, was \$3,156, being an increase in expenditure by the township on its school system of \$256. However, the average attendance at the central school was so much greater than at the single district schools, that the cost of education was decreased \$1.59 per pupil on the average attendance. Moreover, three years of high school work is carried on in the consolidated school, and the total cost of that is included in the \$3,156.

#### OTHER TOWNSHIPS.

The people in five adjoining townships have also consolidated their schools. Those of Gustavus, Kinsman and Johnston were selected for special scrutiny as presenting typical phases of the system. The schools of Kinsman and Johnston townships have been consolidated for two years. At Kinsman the enrollment of pupils was 146, and eight school vans were engaged; at Gustavus 162 pupils were on the roll, and nine vans were used; at Johnston 175 pupils attended school, and ten vans were in service.

Although the weather was rainy, and the roads as bad as three inches of snow mixed with mud could make them, the children jumped out of the vans at Kinsman school with dry clothing and dry feet. Little boys and girls of six years came three and four miles in comfort. The teachers said they came regularly in all weathers. Under the small district system in the Township of Kinsman, two years before, the enrollment at the schools was 110; under the consolidated system it has risen to 146, without any appreciable difference in the total enumeration of children in the township. The high percentage of young children (6 to 8 years) and the large proportion of older pupils (from 15 to 20 years) were eloquent of the gains in education during the first two and the later years of school life in a rural district.

#### SCHOOL VANS.

The contracts for conveying the children to and from the schools are given to responsible persons. These are under bond to provide comfortable covered wagons, and to comply with the regulations of the school authorities. The vans hold from 15 up to over 25 each. The longest route traversed was about six miles. The vans arrive at the school at from ten to twenty minutes before nine o'clock, the hour at which the forenoon session begins. The afternoon session closes at half-past three o'clock. At Johnston school where the closing exercises were observed, the children were in the vans starting for their homes in less than five minutes afterwards.

At Kinsman the eight vans are engaged at an average cost of \$2.07 per school day; at Gustavus, the nine vans at an average of \$1.35; and at Johnston, the ten vans at an average of \$1.27. The price of the vans was from \$100 to \$185 each. All the vans observed were drawn by two horses each. The drivers who were conversed

RIDERS OF THE BAR-U ROUND-UP CAMP, SWIMMING FORD, CORRAL, HIGH RIVER, ALBERTA.