

Superior Types of Rural Schools.

BY SINCLAIR LAIRD.

DOES the one-roomed rural school have any possibilities of improvement at all? If consolidation is out of the question, and the people can only afford a one-roomed school, is the community justified in believing that nothing can be done with it? Its scope is limited by its architecture, but a really good teacher can often do wonders. A one-roomed school may be made attractive and may serve most of the purposes of the community. It may even provide a good community centre for the neighborhood.

Tremaine Rural School.

Such is the one-roomed school at Tremaine, about five miles east of Rapid City, Manitoba. As the result of a debate that was held about 1915 on "The School Versus the Church as a Community Centre," the people in the neighborhood took a great interest in school affairs, and made up their minds to have a good school, which is now said by the inspector to be the best one-roomed school in his division. It is built of brick veneer and its architecture is suitable for its purpose. Measuring 24 by 40 feet, it has a high basement, nine feet high, fully finished and well floored. There is a movable platform, and seats can be provided for 150 people. So the basement is a good public hall for community meetings. For school purposes, the basement is divided into a gymnasium with horizontal bars, rings, clubs, dumbbells and boxing gloves. All of this equipment was furnished by voluntary contributions amounting to \$125. The gymnasium is open on two evenings a week to the whole community, which takes advantage of this privilege, because a resident of the district, who was a physical instructor, gave regular classes. During the day, the gymnasium is available for the children. In the other half of the basement there is a fine cooking range, a large cupboard, and a complete set of dishes and cooking utensils. This equipment cost about \$100, and is available for the use of the community if so required. Hot lunches are served to the children every day at noon. Both boys and girls are required to take turns at cooking, serving and washing up. In the future, the trustees expect to equip part of the basement with benches and tools for manual training.

Upstairs, the school room can accommodate fifty pupils. Besides the regular school room apparatus, good pictures decorate the walls and a neat bookcase contains the school library. Children enter the school through a porch, which opens into a large cloakroom. Next to it is the teacher's room.

The Tremaine rural school demonstrates what can be done with proper basement accommodation, and shows one way of improving the advantages of a one-roomed school at very little cost. In this school, the heating arrangements for the class room and for the basement are separate, so that in the evenings the people of the neighborhood can use the basement without requiring to heat the class room. At an additional cost of about \$1,000 for this extra accommodation, the people of Tremaine have built a school which gives them far more satisfaction than could otherwise be obtained by the additional interest on the extra capital outlay.

Another type of one-roomed rural school not quite so satisfactory as that at Tremaine, is seen at Hebron, Manitoba. This is a frame building with an excellent basement, containing a large playground, a finished room suitable for a kitchen, a furnace and fuel room, and lavatories.

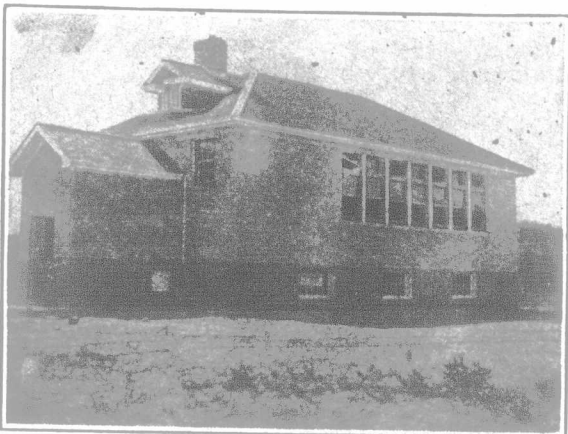
On the main floor are two cloakrooms and a teacher's room in addition to the class room. Such provision should be made a minimum requirement for all rural schools, but is not an ideal of what really should be the maximum.

Porter School, Missouri.

The Porter Community School in Northeastern Missouri has changed from a small rural school into a community school, whose fame was gained by the devotion and insight of its teacher. The success of this teacher is due to the community spirit which was developed by the lady teacher. Gradually the feeling of faction and neglect disappeared; in its place appeared a desire for co-operation; a friendly feeling and mutual regard, until finally the people are proud of their community and uphold their school in all its activities. These now include a vocational school, agricultural short courses with the assistance of the extension workers from the State College of Agriculture, cadet work, musical organizations, nature study clubs, social clubs and other organizations for the benefit of young and old. The school was rebuilt through voluntary effort, great assistance being given by people conveying the building materials, excavating the site, constructing the fences, and painting the school.

Here again, the basement is a useful part of the building, containing a hot air furnace, drinking fountains, lavatories, and complete equipment for cooking. The class room has a library and a musical instrument for the teaching of music and singing.

But the grounds form one of the chief features. In addition to the flowers, shrubs and trees which are used for decorative purposes, the children have plenty of playground apparatus for games and play, and take full advantage of them. Five acres of land which were leased for some years by a resident of the community, are worked by the school, with the help of the adult farmers' club under the supervision of the extension workers from the State College of Agriculture. Demonstration plots show the value of rotation; the school orchard demonstrates the methods of fruit-growing and care of trees. Space is provided for experiments



The Tremaine School.

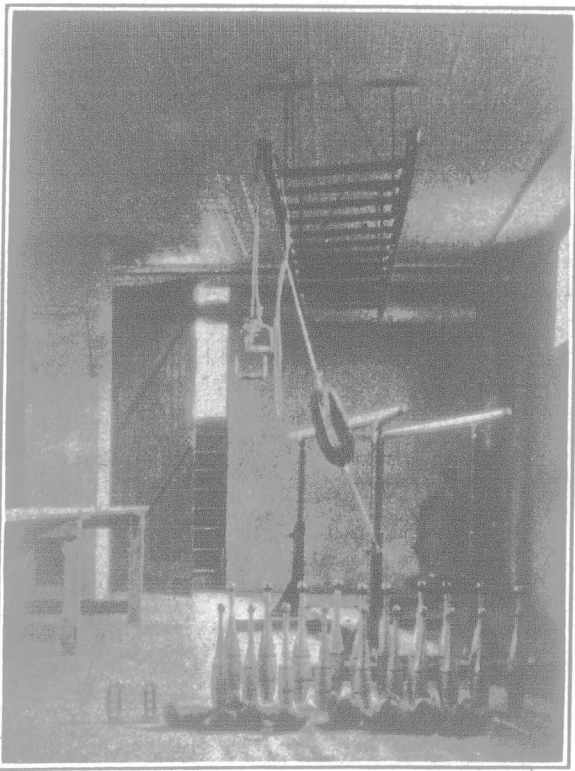
to show the value of different kinds of manures and fertilizers, and also the value of inoculation for alfalfa. Different crops are grown, such as corn, beans, peas, wheat, oats and clovers.

The school grounds include space for volley ball, base ball, horizontal bars, croquet and a giant stride.

Half a mile from the school, a frame house has been converted into a teacher's residence, where the teacher lives all the year round, and has a garden which is cared for during vacation time, as well as during school months by the teacher and the children. The teacher's garden is the laboratory for teaching the growing of vegetables.

The State Agricultural College gives short courses at this Porter School every year, and succeeds in drawing large crowds to the practical demonstrations. Perhaps extension work of this kind could be developed more fully by district representatives and agricultural demonstrators in our Canadian provinces. Probably the districts which have one-roomed schools need this service most of all.

Such community activities as meetings for band practice, farmers' clubs, women's clubs, music classes, bird societies, vacation school, are held regularly in this school house, which is thus used all the year round both for teaching the children and for helping the parents. In other words, the Porter School is a real community school serving the neighborhood twelve months in the year, and benefiting both young and old.



A Corner of the Basement in the Tremaine School.

Kirksville Practice School, Missouri.

It is significant that in the same State of Missouri, a Normal School at Kirksville has developed a rural school department in charge of a special professor who trains teachers for the very kind of work which is so successfully managed in Porter School near Kirksville. In the grounds of this normal school, there is a model rural school used constantly for practice teaching by the students. In addition to being a practice school, it tries to show the latest and best developments in rural school architecture. After all, architecture does help the rural teacher or hinder her, as the case may be. If she only has one class room with no other accommodation, it is very difficult for her to introduce modern methods of teaching and special rural subjects. But if a good basement and proper equipment are available, it is possible for a live teacher to make a one-roomed school into a one-teacher school, for after all leadership and enterprise are more valuable than school architecture. At Kirksville, the rural department is

really an experiment station where new subjects and new ideals for the rural community are being tried out. In addition to the regular subjects which are compulsory in all countries, much attention is devoted to problems of rural life, such as the farm home, its sanitation and comfort; the values of food and cookery, and problems of clothing; and the work of the farm. Besides arithmetic, literature, history, geography and civics, a whole group of subjects such as agriculture, nature study, hygiene, cooking, sewing, manual training and art work are added. But although the subjects are thus separated for purposes of explanation, in the daily lessons there is no such separation. Each subject is connected with all others in the entire course through correlation and concentration. For example, nature study lessons are connected with reading and home geography, and in higher classes with home agricultural projects. These include the rearing of farm animals, garden problems and home problems. Such subjects form a basis for language and arithmetic work also. But each year the nature study work is intended to cultivate a love of rural environment and an appreciation of country life, and to prepare the way for the adoption of a farming career.

Such experimentation is not included in most normal schools, although it should be. Attempts have been made in some provinces to train high-school teachers qualified to give instruction in agriculture to senior pupils. The time is coming when we shall perhaps see normal schools attached to all of our agricultural colleges to give special training for the regular rural teacher who goes to a one-roomed rural school. The Kirksville practice school is not merely a practice school, but a demonstration school of the most modern developments in rural school practice. In other words, it prepares teachers not for what is, but for what should be and for what will be.

"Standard" and "Superior" Schools.

Standardized rural schools have been developed in several of the United States. This has been done by the State Education Department publishing a standard of requirements which must be reached before a rural school receives endorsement as a standard school. For example, Michigan has published these requirements with photographs of typical rural schools which have reached the standard. A school which wishes recognition makes application to the County Commissioner, who inspects the school with an official from the Department. After approved, a metal plate bearing the words "Standard School" is placed on the wall. The unveiling of this plate is usually an important educational event in the community. Illinois grants diplomas to schools for satisfactory conditions in the school building and grounds. In addition, a standard plate is placed above the door on the outside. The average community does not have any standard by which to measure the efficiency of its schools. The parents believe that what was good enough for them when they were young is good enough for their children.

The rules for standard schools may deal with the school grounds, the building, the equipment and the qualifications of the teacher, the efficiency of the teaching and the general management. Uniform regulations are in existence in such States as Illinois, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Oregon and Alabama. In Oregon, the score card is printed and posted in the room. Whenever all the items reach the standard, the school obtains State recognition. It should be remembered, however, that standardization, while improving the physical conditions and even the teaching conditions of the rural school does not proceed far enough to make a rural school a real community farm school. It stops short unless a very exceptional teacher takes charge.

In more advanced sections of the United States, school officials have been anxious to possess a school as near the ideal as possible; so Illinois has established more severe conditions than those required for standard schools. These higher and more severe standards give recognition as a "Superior School," and a door plate with the words "Superior School" engraved upon it. The chief additions to the requirements are a cloak room for each sex, a library room, manual training room with equipment, and equipment for teaching sewing and elementary agriculture. There must also be a parent-teacher's club to secure the co-operation of parents and the children. In short, the "Superior School" must be equipped with everything for the best teaching, must have a teacher of superior qualities, must do excellent work, and must have the co-operation of parents to maintain a high standard. The important feature of a superior school is the co-operation of teacher, pupils, parents, trustees and tax payers.

A full page is required for a summary of such requirements in the State of Kansas, and an explanation of this summary requires a bulletin with twenty pages of small print.

Nebraska score card for standard rural schools takes three pages, of which the last page is worth giving in more detail. After 85 points are given for grounds and buildings (ten points) the teacher (25 points) organization of school (15 points) building (15 points) equipment (20 points), forty points are left for results (20 points) and country life agencies (20 points). The results are estimated by the number of those who attend and complete the eighth grade and who then proceed to a higher school; other points being percentage of attendance and percentage of enrolment. The country life

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