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## School and College

Written for The Western Home Monthly by W. A. McIntyre, L.L.D.

**T**HIS is the time of the year when parents have to decide as to the school or college their children shall attend for the coming year. For most parents the choice is simple. The public school of the community is the only one possible, and taking it all in all, is, or may be the very best school for young children.

It is best because it is a miniature community. It is the school of all the people. There are no invidious distinctions of race, color, class or creed. Children work together, play together, sing the same songs and learn the same folk stories. They enter into friendly rivalries and learn to appreciate one another's gifts and powers. All this makes for the feeling of neighborliness which is the foundation of the great national virtues.

The common school has other merits than this. In it there is not the classification within narrow lines that makes the day's work wearisome in its monotony. There is a mingling in a common fold of pupils of different ages, and because of this the feelings of responsibility on the one side and hero worship on the other are developed.

There are of course disadvantages, but they are not so many as the penny-dreadful writers in the yellow journals of

people, the other two being of our own nationality. The school inspector for the district is official trustee. The attendance of the children is almost perfect; their interest in their work exceeds anything we find in the ordinary town schools. In the field of manual work—sewing by the girls, and wood-work by the boys, there is nothing in town schools of the same grade to compare with it. The school is the big thing in the lives of the pupils and the community and it is rightly regarded as the force which makes for "sweetness and light." Looking at the pupils and their work I could carry away but one conviction namely, that before many years, these young people because of their well-established habits of industry and thrift, and their consuming desire to know and to accomplish will be leaders in our industrial enterprises while the children of the present wealth-owners will be their servants. These people in this quaint little village, which to the ordinary citizen seems so backward and so ugly, have chosen, or have had chosen for them, the one thing that will make for progress, refinement and full-orbed liberty. Should you ask the reason for the success in this settlement, it must be attributed as in many other schools of the kind to the initiative of the Department of Education and the missionary zeal of trained intelligent and sympathetic teachers. And it is always true in the education of children that the selection of the teacher is the prime consideration. That old trustee down in Ontario fifty years ago made a sure bid for a poor school when he advertised: "Apply stating salary; lowest salary accepted." The wise man will say: "Send us your name, the applicant with highest qualification will be accepted."

In Northwestern Manitoba is a town of a few hundred people. A public-spirited citizen conceived the idea that it would be a good thing if the neighboring school districts united with the town in erecting a central school. After much patient discussion the scheme was finally accepted, and a new building was completed to accommodate the two hundred pupils who attend. The building is on a site of nine acres. It has a heating and lighting plant, a fine auditorium, laboratories, lunch rooms, play-room, and next year will have manual training outfit. The pupils carry on their work right through into the High School. The town and district have caught up the spirit of the school. There is a community club, a musical club, and until the draft of young men there was an athletic club. What was an ordinary little uninteresting village has become a noted educational centre, and all because a few dominating souls with clear vision perceived a need and a possibility. And again let it be said that all the effort would have been lost if the board of trustees had failed at the last moment to engage the services of the very best teachers. It is a real treat to visit a town in which the people are aflame with interest in all that pertains to the education of the children. Other towns may have finer buildings, and may boast wealthier citizens, but in few places are parents so bountifully providing their children with opportunities for culture and development. They have chosen the good part which cannot be taken away.

Another town close at hand has a school in which, owing to the leadership of a few public-spirited citizens, there has been worked up the greatest interest in education. Organized work, organized play, gardening, manual work, supervised study—all these and more—indicate the pains taken to enrich and give life to the activities of the school. Just one thing is chosen for illustration. Every fall there is a commencement day. After a concert, the prizes are distributed, and then the retiring class is banquetted by the citizens of the town, who wish the young people God-speed as they go forth upon life's journey. Every pupil of that school belongs to the town. It is the town-spirit that is remarkable. Have you anything of the kind in your town or your district? Surely in nation building the only way to begin is by educating or developing the capacity of the children. The simplest agency to employ for this purpose is the public school. But a school must be equipped for work and must be backed by the sympathies of the



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pedagogy have pictured to us. Even the little rural school at the cross-roads has something in its favor. Those of us who have had the experience of receiving our early training in such schools and who remember what town and city schools and town and city pupils were at that time, will not be ready to admit too quickly that the one-roomed school was wholly miserable, judged either by the teaching or by the product.

There are the greatest possible differences among the public schools of a country. Even when in the matter of wealth two neighboring districts are approximately equal, one boasts a school of undisputed excellence while the other possesses a school of which no one could boast. Usually when there is marked progressiveness it is owing to the effort of some dominating spirit in the community—it may be a teacher with a passion for his work, or some citizen who believes in the power of the school to quicken and ennoble. Two or three illustrations come to mind, and these speak more forcibly than any words I could utter.

It was my good fortune two weeks ago to visit a school about fifteen miles out of the city. It was in the heart of what is known as a non-English district. The grown people do not speak our tongue and understand it but little. The children are learning the language rapidly and so it is being introduced into the homes. The dwelling houses, the stables, the farm implements of the people are all very primitive. It is as if a settlement of a hundred years ago had over night been planted on the prairie. In the midst of this settlement is the school, or rather there are two schools side by side. They are in charge of three very fine teachers—one of whom speaks the language of the

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