

The School and the Rural Community.

In the olden days the country school-house along with the country church, was the center of many social interests and activities of the neighborhood. The young people gathered at the school-house for amusement. Those were the days of spelling matches, debating clubs and singing schools. The older members of the community joined with them in these neighborhood functions, partly because there was little else to do, and partly because the school children themselves were in many cases young men and women, so that there was no sharp line dividing the social interests of the adults from the pupils of the school. Then, the rural school was efficient, because it was closely linked with the life of the community in all its interests.

Gradually the school lost its hold on the community. Prominent among the causes of this deterioration was the rapid development of the city. The city community seemed to have certain comforts which the country did not possess. It afforded more diversity of amusement and more opportunity for the satisfaction of social instincts. Those who went to the city left gaps which have been filled up by a transient population of renters, who have seldom had the stability to build up a neighborhood life, that would bear comparison with that of the pioneers. Under these unsatisfactory conditions, almost every phase of the high rural life has deteriorated. Indeed, our rural schools have created a distaste for country life. This is due to inexperienced teachers educated in the cities, unacquainted with and unappreciative of country life. Then again, the formal intellectual studies taught in rural schools contribute nothing to the opening of the children's minds to an appreciation of the interests of country life. Often the wretched quality of the teaching turns the youths to improved modern schools of urban communities. Too often the ideal of the country school is to prepare boys and girls for college, but since only three per cent of them ever get there, this aim cannot be considered just.

The rural community demands a form of education particularly adapted to itself, its problems, its needs, its special type of social life.