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Our Rural School Problem

In Western Kentucky we have a population of about a million and a third. Practically a million of them live in the open country. Nearly all of them are native born white people. More than two-thirds of them own the land on which they live.

All this is good, but many of the children go to school irregularly or do not go. For those who go the term is short, the equipment not the best, and the teachers often poorly trained.

From the children who should now be in school we shall need for the future five thousand teachers, five thousand lawyers, doctors and ministers, forty thousand businessmen, forty thousand skilled laborers. The schools may be able to furnish these, but we shall also need one hundred eighty thousand housekeepers, and one hundred thirty thousand farmers, all of whom should have culture, high ideals and skill for their work. We have been measuring our schools by their ability to furnish leaders. We must come to measure them by their ability to prepare the whole mass for effective work and citizenship.

The Normal School is anxious to see the problem as a whole and to assume its full responsibility for future Western Kentucky. But may we not hope to have the assistance and co-operation of every teacher, every county superintendent, every trustee and eventually of every citizen? Our problem is great, but it can be solved. May we count on you to help?
1. The House
The rural schoolhouse should come to typify the progress of other phases of rural life. There is no more reason why a modern one-room school should be built like an old box with windows on two sides, so that the light must injure the children's eyes, than there is for a home being so constructed. The rural school needs a porch as much as a residence does, or even more. The entrance should be protected, there should be a place for removing rubbers and cleaning the feet in bad weather and a place for getting a breath of outdoor air on rainy days. Besides all this, there is just as much reason for making the school attractive as for making the home so.

The schoolhouse should have a work-room, and some cloak-rooms, as well as a place to read and recite lessons. A one-teacher school should have a building of four rooms. Three of those rooms may be made to serve double or triple purposes, as occasion may demand.

The house should be heated by a modern method. The best and cheapest means, if one can have a dry basement, is by use of a furnace. A furnace that will be out of the house and out of the way is cheaper to install and as cheap to run as a good, modern heater that must be placed in one corner of the room. In case a basement is not practicable, a modern jacketed heater is the best.

II. The School Ground
The school yard or ground should contain at least two acres of land that is level enough for ornamentation and play. Effective organized play, a great need of every school, is not possible without a large yard. Then there should be room for trees, vines, shrubs and flowers. The Normal School will be prepared to furnish suggestive plans for school buildings and grounds. We shall be glad to co-operate with any county or district in an effort to secure more efficient and more attractive school plants.

THE RURAL SCHOOLS AND HEALTH
In Western Kentucky the death rate varies in different counties from a little less than seven per thousand people each year, to more than seventeen per thousand. This means that some counties have nearly three times as much sickness as others. So far as we are able to learn, those counties having the least amount of sickness are the ones that work most effectively at the problems of sanitation.

Much of our sickness and death is due to preventable causes, and much of our poor attendance at school is due to sickness. The greatest item of expense our people have is that caused by illness, and that would be vastly enlarged if we add the loss due to inefficient preparation for life by means of good education.

The Normal School is attempting to teach practical hygiene and sanitation in all its courses in physiology and pedagogy. Trained teachers may do much to prevent sickness and death by seeing that the house and grounds are kept in sanitary condition, by having pure water and by proper caution with regard to contagious and infectious diseases. In the absence of medical inspection a careful teacher may discover bad teeth, weak eyes, adenoids and throat troubles, and by giving advice to parents may save the people several times her salary in money and contribute so much to the health and happiness of the people.

A good plan for each rural school would be to teach a few fundamental rules of health and to work at one important problem in community sanitation each month. This department will be glad to send a suggestive program to any teacher asking for the same. We shall also be glad to suggest means for obtaining expert advice on any serious problem that may confront any particular school.

RURAL INDUSTRIAL LIFE
Rural life is not a phase of economic and civic life; it is a civilization, the oldest and the best that the world has ever known. But if this civilization is to be maintained, our rural industries must keep pace with our progress in other lines. We do not believe in book farming, wholly, or book housekeeping, but we believe the story of advance in farming and housekeeping may be told as well in books as the story of advance in medicine or theology. We also believe that they may be taught as well by trained teachers as other subjects.

Far too long, the inspiration of our rural teaching has been to lead boys and girls out of the country and place them in our towns and cities. Our cities are over-crowded with unskilled cheap labor, much of it from the country. We are trying to give sane, practical instruction in seed selection, cultivation, crop rotation, stock feeding, marketing and buying that will help make farm life more pleasant and more profitable.

Housekeeping is both an art and a science. We teach both phases of it in a very practical way. Every effort is being made to train girls to do the work of a home in a more artistic, less burdensome way and at the same time a more economical way. Every student is urged to learn enough of Agriculture and Domestic Economy to give him a deep sympathy with all the work of the country.

If you cannot come at once to prepare yourself for this important work, let us send you a series of suggestions which will help you to link up the work of your school with the work of your rural community.

RURAL SOCIAL LIFE
No one thing in rural life has come nearer to moving backward than the social life of the people. In some communities there has been positive decline. The old quilting parties, apple-pairings, log-rollings, house-rumplings and other forms of co-operative activity have ceased and no new activities have come to take their place. We do not need the log-rolling, the quilting and the rest in our life. The economic demand for them has gone, but we need something to bring the people together and take their place socially.

The singing school, the writing school, the spelling match and the rural literary society have passed out of the life of many communities and no forms of recreation have been organized to take the place of them. It is altogether likely that most of these forms of entertainment and development should be reclaimed and made to do service for the community.

The school is the most logical agency for promoting social life for the community. There should be something for men and women of all ages. Parents' Day programs offer splendid opportunities. Then there should be occasional free evening programs. One Normal School girl gave a program like this, far back in the country on Hallowe'en:

1. Song—"My Old Kentucky Home."
2. Violin music by some old men of the neighborhood.
3. Quotations from ghostly literature by pupils.
try men have sat upon the supreme court bench in a quarter of a century.

12. Do your pupils give attention to their own efficiency as a result of which so much thought was given to the grounds. Every student is urged to become interested in rural social life.

To those in service we shall be glad to mail a list of programs for rural school gatherings.

FOR TEACHERS' SELF-EXAMINATION

By grading yourself honestly on these points, you can pretty justly rate your own efficiency as a rural school teacher.

1. Are you vitally and deeply interested in rural life—5 per cent.
2. Do you thoroughly enjoy your school?—5 per cent.
3. Is your scholarship and training good enough to do the work well—5 per cent.
4. Is your voice low and clear?—5 per cent.
5. Is your personal appearance as good as you can make it?—5 per cent.
6. Do you use good English?—5 per cent.
7. Do you write a clear, legible hand?—5 per cent.
8. Do you read good books?—5 per cent.
9. Can you talk intelligently about rural interests?—5 per cent.
10. Do you get good help for your work in the way of school papers, plans, etc.?—5 per cent.
11. Do you know how to select a library which your pupils will delight to read?—5 per cent.
12. Do your pupils give attention because they are interested?—5 per cent.
13. Do you plan your lessons before you hear them?—5 per cent.
14. Do your pupils clean their teeth regularly?—5 per cent.
15. Are you growing as a teacher?—5 per cent.
16. Do you have good health?—5 per cent.
17. Do you sleep soundly for seven or eight hours each night?—5 per cent.
18. Can you teach the same school next year if you desire or think best?—5 per cent.
19. Is your attendance 60 per cent of your census?—5 per cent.
20. Are your pupils all anxious to be promoted at the end of the term?—5 per cent.

RURAL COMMUNITY CIVICS

The rural portion of our citizenship is not equaling the same influence in the life of our democracy which it attained in former times. It is more than a generation now since a man country born and reared has filled the presidential chair. But few country men have sat upon the supreme court bench in a quarter of a century. Of the last ten men elected presidents of our largest universities, eight or nine were city bred.

We need civic clubs in every country community, the old-time debate should be born again and should never be allowed to die any more, and all the teachings of civic should be valorized and linked up with the life of the people. The city child studies the municipal government at first hand in the city hall, the police court, the fire station and on the streets. The country child should approach the subject of the study of his school, organization, the village near by, the road question, the magisterial and county courts. The teacher should feel that she is a part of the community and take a vital and intelligent interest in local and county affairs. Local patriotism is the best approach to national patriotism.

In the Normal School we valorize the teaching of all social and civic questions. Our students have most elections and most legislatures. Most problems are debated and voted on as early or earlier than they are in the law-making bodies of the country.

We shall be glad to send you suggestive programs for civic days and for valorizing the subject of civil government by beginning on those things nearest to you.

RURAL SCHOOLS AND READING

Reading is perhaps the master problem of all schools. The teaching of reading is the severest test upon the teacher. In our rural schools too little material is available for the children to read. Reading, as a formal study, is only a means to getting thought. In order to make it educative the art must be applied.

When schools buy books very often they buy those which are too difficult for the children to read and enjoy. In choosing books for a school library, the children in the lower grades should be kept in mind first, because books for those children are less plentiful in the homes and are more difficult to select. A library of fifty volumes should contain at least a dozen books suitable for primary grades. The best way to learn to read is to read, and the reading habit must usually be formed early if formed at all.

In our classes in the Normal School we give much attention to making the students familiar with lists of books suited to the needs of the children in the rural schools. It is our aim that no teacher shall go away unprepared to build a rural school library. We have on our shelves three well-selected rural school libraries which we are using constantly in our classes.

Teachers and superintendents or parent clubs who desire to secure lists of books for rural schools will be gladly supplied if they will write us in regard to the matter. A great deal of time and expert advice has been given to the making of these lists.

RURAL SCHOOLS AND PLAY

Many of our rural school children are losing the art of play. That is to say, they play but few organized games. The writer has frequently watched a group of fifty country school children, apparently healthy and happy, all sitting around the room at recess time. At other times a group of children out of doors but listless, sitting on logs or stones. Sometimes they chase each other with no motive but to obey nature's call for exercise.

A long experience has taught us that normal children will all play, in fact, they like to play, but often their stock of games is quite limited. The ones they know have lost their interest, or the weather is not suited to them, and so they lose the social value, the mental value and the physical value to be had from games.
SOME OF THE RURAL CHILDREN WHO HAVE BEEN TAUGHT BY THE TEACHERS WHO HAVE ATTENDED THE WESTERN NORMAL.

It is a progressive statesmanship that realizes that what is desired in the life of the Commonwealth must be developed in the lives of those teachers who train the children of the Commonwealth. The Normal Schools were established in order to give the teachers of the Commonwealth an opportunity to have more life to give to the children of the Commonwealth.
In the classes in Pedagogy and Physical Training we study the technique of a large number of games, we compare their value for various purposes, we select games for children of all ages and for all kinds of weather. Then the students go out on the campus and play those games until they are able to direct them. In this work we give especial attention to rural schools, keeping in mind the various kinds of ground found about our country schools and the usual lack of equipment. We shall keep on hand a list of good games for various seasons of the year and for pupils of various sizes. These we shall be glad to mail to any teacher who may be interested. Not that they are better than your own list, but you may need a greater variety. Do not fear to ask for them if you are interested. It may help your attendance and improve the health of your pupils.

**SOME CAUSES OF RURAL DECADENCE**

1. **Economic Conditions.**—The land is often poor, the roads are bad, the market is far away, the variety of products too few, the productive period is too short.
2. **Health.**—Many men and women in the country are physically inefficient, the intensity of working conditions on the farm is too much for them.
3. **The School.**—The term is too short, the equipment is inadequate, the school spirit is not strong for lack of members and school activities.
4. **The Church.**—The membership is small, the preacher is poorly paid and poorly qualified, the meetings are far apart and often when held are not inspiring or helpful.
5. **The Isolation.**—The people live apart; they do not co-operate with each other in the affairs of life, the opportunities for intercourse and recreation are wanting.
6. **Working Conditions.**—The hours for work are long and irregular, children are often forced to do the work of adults, wages are low as compared with the cities, and the labor of the year is crowded into one-third of the time.
7. **Ineffective Methods of Distribution.**—The producer receives too small a per cent of the value of his products. Grapes are rotting on the vine around Elizabeth-town for lack of market; in Louisville, forty miles away, the price is prohibitive except to the rich.
8. **Absence of Boosting.**—In every town and city there is a boosters' organization of some kind. Every day the young people hear and read that their town is the best. In the country young people are often taught no community pride or patriotism.
9. **Lack of Appreciation.**—The country too often neglects the things that appeal to the aesthetic taste of the people. Nature study is neglected in the very heart of nature, music is not properly studied and taught, home decoration is much neglected and inspiring books are often not available.

For the improvement of all these conditions the school could do much, the church could do much, the community could do much, and all three working together could go far toward solving them all.

**HELPERS' CLUBS IN RURAL SCHOOLS**

Parents and other adult members of the community may be of very great assistance to the teacher and the school. Some very notable and helpful work has been done by such clubs in Western Kentucky, both in the country and in the cities. The greatest danger in such organizations is the lack of definite programs for work. Many clubs have started with much earnestness and enthusiasm and in a few months the zeal has all evaporated and the club disbanded for want of a job. A helpers' club with nothing to do is about as needless a thing as one could have. Most helpers' clubs must be shown what to do, and this is the business of the teachers.

Each teacher in the country should be able to learn the needs of the community, and to classify them somewhat in the order of their importance. When this has been done, the club should be divided into committees, each committee to have direction of a special phase of the work. Any rural school that has an organization of parents or adult helpers will need most if not all of the following committees:

1. **Committee on school attendance.**
2. **Committee on health and sanitation.**
3. **Committee on social life in the district.**
4. **Committee on decoration and care of grounds.**
5. **Committee on library and reading.**
6. **Committee on civic development.**
7. **Committee on illiteracy.**
8. **Committee on industrial conditions.**

The committees may and often will need the help of the entire club. For instance, the committee on attendance may need books and clothes for the poor children; they may need help in getting crippled children to school. The work must often be done for widows, that the children may not be kept from school. But a small committee will find the needs and can direct the assistance necessary better than the whole club.

The committee on health and sanitation can never finish its work, but it can always have work to do. As long as anyone is made sick by preventable causes, the committee can do effective work. This committee will also need, at times, the help of all the members.

The committee on social affairs should be made up of those socially inclined, and yet they should have lefty ideals and keep the social affairs on as high a plane as possible. Their work will not be ended until people cease to be social beings and there is no longer any call for gatherings among the people.

So it is with all the committees. Each will have work to do every month in the year for all the years that are to come. We shall be glad to mail suggestions, plans of organization and programs for parents or helpers' associations to anyone interested. The rural school department in the Normal School believes that a live, interested teacher with a working organization will help the parents and other adults in the district, can accomplish anything to which they set their hands and hearts.
high ideals to assure proper direction, for a spirit of democracy that all may be willing to serve, for the growth of individual personality and for the development of a sane, safe and wholesome moral and religious character.

That these ideals have been attained in a large measure is attested by the influence that the students of the institution have had in raising the standard of educational ideals, and the standard of living for the Western District of Kentucky. It is a matter of common comment that our students have become not only leaders in teaching children, but that they have learned the art of going far beyond the four walls of the schoolroom to help build up the communities in which they live and labor.

These activities beyond the school room have resulted in a better attendance at the schools; in community campaigns for better health conditions about the school and in the neighborhood; they have led to improvement of our roads, to a wide range of agricultural advancement; to the improvement of our homes and home-making; to the sustaining of night schools; to the conducting of better institutes; to the constructing of better school buildings; to an improvement of the grounds; to an increase of the number of graded schools, and to a growing sentiment for consolidated schools.

Because of a perfectly normal tendency of all prepared and trained teachers to gravitate toward the better paying and more permanent and desirable places and to the fact that there is a notion that the rural communities are not realizing sufficient proportional benefits from the State Normal School, the following statements are presented and may be worth more than a casual examination. It will be remembered that this institution has had its doors open but eight and a half years. The graduates, therefore, are not numerous. During the school year of 1914 and 1915 the graduates and graduating students appear to have been distributed as follows:

| Total number of graduates, including the present class | 182 |
| Graduates this year | 74 |
| Declined | 4 |
| Married and not teaching | 22 |
| Engaged in professional schools | 31 |
| Attending universities | 3 |
| Teaching in State universities | 1 |
| Teaching in State Normal | 3 |
| Teaching in private and professional schools | 12 |
| Teaching in high schools | 15 |
| Principals of grade and high schools | 4 |
| Principals in rural schools | 2 |
| Principals in city schools | 1 |
| Principals in semi-rural schools | 3 |
| County superintendents | 1 |
| Assistant county superintendents | 1 |
| County examiners in agriculture | 1 |

The same may be stated in another way to advantage, thus:

- **Graduates not including the present class**: 248
- **Graduates in 1914 and 1915**: 153
- **Not teaching**: 79
- **Teaching in 1914 and 1915**: 74
- **Teaching in 1914 and 1915, not in private and professional schools**: 41
- **Teaching in 1914 and 1915, not in private and professional schools of the present class**: 24
- **Teaching in 1914 and 1915, not in public schools**: 13
- **Teaching in 1914 and 1915, not in public schools of the present class**: 9
- **Teaching in 1914 and 1915, not in public schools, not in private and professional schools**: 8
- **Teaching in 1914 and 1915, not in public schools, not in private and professional schools of the present class**: 4

Approximately eighty-three and one-half per cent of the graduates are contributing their lives to rural interests and sixteen and one-half per cent to city interests.

However, what the institution turns back to the Commonwealth is in no wise limited to that returned through its graduates. Great as that is in inspiration and leadership, it must be remembered that the graduates are but a small, though choice, part of the total student-body. While there are 282 graduates, there have been 6,365 under-graduates. Our graduates on the average have spent thirty-five months here as students, while under-graduates have attended on the average eight months. So, throwing this into tabular form, we have contributed to city interests 39 times 35 months, which equals 1,050 months.

Graduates contributing to rural schools, villages and farms, 123 times 35 months equals 4,395 months.

Under-graduates contributing to rural schools, villages and towns, 6,368 times 8 months equals 50,930 months.

The students contributing to city interests are 1,050 months; while these contributing to rural interests are 4,395 months, or something over 50 times as much as they contribute to city interests.

Of course, it must be kept in mind that by no manner of means are all of the old under-graduates teaching. While the teaching and living services are fifty to one in favor of rural communities, a conservative estimate shows that the acting teaching service of the last year was about in the ratio of twenty to one in favor of the rural communities.

Graduates have been students on the average of three and a half years, which is quite satisfactory, since a rather large large per cent of them are four-year high school graduates, or have attended colleges for a considerable time. The student who has been here for three and a half years safely can be said to have attained a remarkable degree of scholarship for teaching and to have caught a vision and an inspiration capable of carrying him into a larger usefulness. The average attendance of the under-graduate students is as high as one could expect since so many enroll for the short summer terms. Eight months is too short a time in which to make any great advancement in academic knowledge and training, and yet long enough to catch a new vision for life, to set new ideals and to begin the unfolding of a useful citizenship.

Turning again to those numbers, it is apparent that nearly all of the great student-body have come from and are returning to rural communities. The community benefits doubly: On the one hand from the better instruction that the young men and women receive for their own use and development, and, on the other hand, from what they in turn give out to the schools and communities when they return to their homes and to their work. These rural young men and women make teachers who not only understand rural life, but who are in sympathy with it and who are integral parts of it. When these catch a vision of a higher rural life, then rural life is already unfolding and developing, for they are part of it. Not only is the teacher the shortest cut to rural problems, but he is an integral part of the problem, participating in its progress.

In concluding this part of the report, let me say that significant as these numbers are, they very inadequately represent the real value of the institution to the rural interests of the Commonwealth. The character of the Course of Study and the vitalizing forces of the student-body and faculty acting harmoniously through this Course of Study and through county delegations and other organizations show an influence and a contribution that overtops the limitations of mere figures. Neither from the standpoint of the contributions of students to the cities in point of service, nor from the standpoint of free tuition taken by students, are the cities getting more than their just share of benefits from the State Normal School.
We give above a perspective, showing the proposed plant of the Western Kentucky State Normal School as it will appear when finished. The Board of Regents has considered the present as well as the future in laying out a modern plant for the Institution.

Many State educational institutions in this country after having expended thousands of dollars in the development of a plant, have been forced to purchase a new site and begin over in order to avoid a crowded and unsanitary condition and to have room for the growing needs of the institution. The buildings have frequently been located, walks and drives constructed, and trees planted without any thought of the location of future buildings, of harmony and articulation and of the future requirements of the institution. This failure has cost heavily and has subjected the management of these institutions to just and severe criticism.

The management of the Western Normal has tried to look ahead for a few hundred years and has earnestly attempted to make a beginning that will permit of future development. After securing one of the most beautiful sites in America for a great institution, expert building and landscape architects were employed to work with the school in laying out a plant for the future. The commanding hill upon which the buildings are being constructed was laid out in contours of one hundred feet each, and an elevation of every foot of land on the hill was made, and every building, walk, road, for the present and for the future, was located. The architects who were employed to do the work were asked to hear, if possible, the conversation of intelligent citizens while on the campus of the Normal and discussing the plant one hundred years from now. The management believes in an economy that looks into the future and invests every dollar in a way that will give it a permanent earning capacity.

The new site contains one hundred and forty-five acres of land. About one hundred acres of it is capable of cultivation. The plant is being constructed in honor of Childhood, and will, when completed, reflect the statesmanship and patriotism of the Commonwealth of Kentucky. The Regents are pursuing a policy that will invest every dollar paid by the taxpayers of the Commonwealth and appropriated by the General Assembly to the institution in such a way as to make it contribute its full value to the State, not only now, but for decades to come. They are putting every dollar into a plant that will have, at its completion, economy, convenience, harmony and sanitation. The Regents submit the completion of this patriotic enterprise to the people of the Commonwealth, fully realizing that it will take time to finish it, but, at the same time, entertaining the hope that the future will witness its completion.