

## THE SCHOOL: A PLACE TO PRACTICE LIVING BETTER

A FEW years ago I went to visit the parents of a girl who dropped out of my school before she had completed the eighth grade work. The father began by telling me that he had six girls and three boys (I had already become acquainted with two of these boys in school). He was very anxious to get the boys through school in order that they might be better prepared to get a job.

"It's the men folks who have to earn the bread and meat, ye know," he said to me. "Now the gals will gist marry off as soon as they git the chanct an' go to raisin' young 'uns. They won't earn back the money I spend to send them to school. See?"

Indeed I saw. I saw his viewpoint. And I thought I saw even more. I realized that he had been thoroughly sold on the idea of "getting an education" in order to fatten the pocketbook. But no one had ever talked to him the idea of educating to live. And, no doubt, the school to which he sent his children had never set up this objective as a prime goal to be sought.

These six girls will, of course, marry upon the first opportunity. It is desired by their parents that they do so. Then they will begin at an early age to bear children, to live in drab hovels, to go on cooking and keeping an unattractive place to exist—not a home—as their father and mother have kept. Those girls who marry early naturally live a longer period of fruition in wedlock. It will follow that their brood will be larger. And (these mothers being the children's first teacher) it is expected by a reasoning person that ignorance, squalor, and misery will be perpetuated.

Now something can be done for this class of people in our rural schools. First, we who draw from the educational budget can cease crying out that the dollar is the only objective of an education. Better teach that we shall do our best to learn to live more

richly and that money-making will be merely a side issue. It is all right to earn money. But if the individual first is trained to live to fullest capacity the money is worth so much more. It may be used in fulfilling the desire to live abundantly.

Recently the girls of my school have filled out questionnaires for the state vocational guidance department. An examination of these results shows that the girls want to be teachers, nurses, clerks, and so on. But not one indicated that she expected to be a home-maker and a mother, the very existence most of them will experience. Their actual job in life has never been mentioned to them by their own mothers or teachers. They have been too busy crying out money! money! to see the actual needs of these girls.

But here in our particular part of the rural South we are catering to the home making job as much as possible. And results are obvious. I have visited homes before girls enrolled in home economics and participated in other activities of our school, and have then made a second visit later. I was forced to observe the more attractive hanging of pictures, the cleanliness, the more appetizing meals, the better arrangement of dishes and eating utensils, the trend toward better manners.

Oh, we here in Dixie have a reputation for chivalry and hospitality. Chivalry existed among the old plantation owners. But those folk are dead. Most of their descendants now live in the towns and cities. The ruralites scarcely know that those old gentlemen and ladies ever lived.

If these girls who know nothing other than marrying early are encouraged to stay in a school where they can learn and practice living, they will hand down to posterity customs that are more progressive. They will rear fewer children and will in turn wish those children to live rather than to exist drably.

Just after the opening of school this session a woman from a more remote section

of our county came to my office and inquired of me whether I knew if the teacher in the one-room school out there could "handle the eighth grade." She felt that she and her husband were not financially able to send their boy to the local high school.

I replied that I was not in position to inform her. But I suggested that she make an effort to get the boy to the village school. Perhaps he could walk part of the way and then get a ride with other school children. The woman stared at me blankly. What was the use of all that if the boy could stay at home and get the same credit?

I began my argument.

"Mrs. Doe," I said, waving my caller to a seat, "your boy ought to learn a lot here even if he fails to make a single high school credit." This brought an expression of awe. I went on with my talk.

"Here the boy will come in contact with pupils from all over the district. He will form many worth-while acquaintances. He can take a course in vocational guidance (of course I had to explain what that meant). He can study agriculture. But that isn't all. He may take a part in our school band if he finds he likes that sort of thing. He can try his hand at helping in our school print shop. He may like that. We have a very fine library. To the library come a number of daily and weekly papers as well as national magazines. We encourage pupils to spend as much time in the library as possible.

"Furthermore, we have a daily activity period for all high school pupils. On certain days everybody takes part in intramural play. They have a great time. On other days they go to their clubs. We have music clubs, glee clubs, athletic clubs, debating clubs, story-telling clubs, health clubs, and a lot of others. Once each week the whole student body assembles and one of these clubs entertains. Everybody gets a chance to participate."

I paused. The woman smiled.

"I do think John needs to take part in something like that," she said. "He's a mighty timid child." She stopped and worked her mouth and glanced out the window. After a while she spoke again. "I suppose you're mighty strict on students here, too."

"Well," I said, "we try to so manipulate things that pupils are given a hand in working out their own adjustments. I don't bring boys who have had a little fist fight into the office and 'lick' both of them without more ado about the matter—as was the old custom around here. I ask those boys if they can come to terms without my entering into the matter more than as a sort of mediator. Usually the boys will arbitrate the matter—but sometimes it takes a half-day or more to do it. I never make them do anything. I merely suggest possible ways out of the difficulty, close the office door, and go on about my work. In nine cases out of ten one of them will look me up after a while and have me come to listen to their decision. Often their decisions will require the listening in of other students. You see, Mrs. Doe, we like for pupils to get life experiences. We aren't going to do for them things they can do for themselves. One learns by doing, see?"

She nodded and smiled.

"I think I'll try to get John out here," she finally decided.

John came. The first day he got lost in the building and missed some classes. He came to see me and told me of his difficulty. It seemed that he felt he had a friend in me, but that he was uncertain about his fellow pupils. He had not learned them yet. He was afraid they would laugh at him, perhaps. So I wrote out on a scrap of paper explicit directions as to how he was to get to classes. He smiled a "thank you" and went out.

Just to smile thanks is as much as most unschooled rural folk do, especially in the mountainous sections. They have never been taught at home to say "I thank you,"

and they just can't say it when it should be said. I can say this through my own experience. I am just one of them with a bit more experience.

But John will learn a lot of the mannerisms that make up the habits of the well-bred gentleman here. He'll hear his teachers expressing appreciation of courtesies to other teachers and to pupils; he'll hear fellow pupils doing the same. After a while he'll be able to say it without feeling himself blush.

Although we have no regular course in ethics to offer—such isn't prescribed by the state course—we like for much of this matter to be woven in throughout the school day.

It occurs to this writer that in a great many schools the matter of boosting grades has also been overdone. Honor rolls and lists of students distinguished in grades have been so greatly emphasized that a great many teachers as well as pupils believe that all that is necessary is to keep that grade going up. Standard tests have been insisted upon until it seems that the prime reason for study at the immediate time is to learn such things as the date of Shakespeare's birth, or the number of presidents we have had, or the frequency with which Old Faithful Geyser "plays," or the number of bones in the human body.

To study literature with the object of learning to love it so that leisure time in later life may be more enriched by reading literature is beside the question in the minds of some teachers. The thing to do is to get the facts because we have a testing program on.

They think, too, that it is less important to take regular baths and wear clean clothes and have the classroom ventilated properly than it is to make high grades on hygiene. Yes, just make high grades now in order to pass those examinations and have your name on the honor roll; then away out there in the future you will be able to get a job

whereby you can earn money and start living.

Just now, while I am sitting in my office pecking the keys of a typewriter, the football boys and the members of the school band are being entertained in an adjoining room by fellow schoolmates. I even cancelled an engagement in Bristol tonight in order to be here. I am quite in sympathy with such social activities in the school building. A lot of the private homes are not large enough for such activities and, besides, parents as a rule don't care for them.

I would like to have more social functions here. I would like for the boys and girls to engage in school dances and invite their parents. Teachers and even local ministers could take a part. "A good time could be had by all." But such isn't yet possible in most of the rural South.

These parents frown upon such activities at the school. But they never say a word if Mary goes for a car ride with Jim Hawkins or Tom Berry, if they spoon out under the moon, alone, until eleven or twelve o'clock. They sometimes object to their going to a road house to partake in hellish frivolity where there are no chaperones, but they are often powerless to dominate. They do not realize that school dances, properly chaperoned, would become keen competitors to those dens of vice.

Just to illustrate the point: Last year members of the junior and senior classes wanted to dance at school at the Junior-Senior party. I asked each member to write secretly his reaction to the proposal. The majority were opposed. One stated this: "I don't think school houses were built to be used as dance halls." To that student this was a truth. Her parents and her minister had said so.

It seems to me that teachers and preachers and parents of the vast rural America, particularly of the South, need that old crust of tradition loosened up a bit. We can do something with this crowd of viva-

14

cious youngsters if only we will cater to their interests and aptitudes and march along with them, rather than everlastingly cry out "Money's what counts!" and "Don't do that sort of thing!" refusing to allow them to learn to live by living.

LUTHER F. ADDINGTON.

## GRAMMAR AND THE TOUSLE-HEAD

HIS LESSON had been  
VERY bad  
THAT day  
SO SHE kept him  
AFTER school  
AND scolded him  
SEVERELY  
AND told him  
HE was lazy  
AND several  
OTHER things.

BUT he  
LOOKED up  
VERY seriously  
INTO her eyes  
AND said  
"BUT you and me  
IS PALS anyway,  
AIN'T we?"  
AND she was  
AN ENGLISH teacher  
WITH her M. A.  
AND all sorts  
OF things,  
BUT these words  
SOUNDED just right

FOR she was young  
AND she loved  
THIS tousled-headed boy  
AND had  
WORKED hard  
TO help him  
WHEN everybody else  
HAD GIVEN him up  
AND said  
THAT he should go  
TO the reform school  
OR some place—

ANYWAY they couldn't  
WASTE their time;  
BUT she believed  
THAT it was  
WORTHWHILE  
AND that he  
WOULD grow  
TO BE a fine man  
AND a good citizen

AND maybe he will  
SOME day.  
AND after all  
JUST what difference  
DOES grammar make  
ANYHOW?

—Sierra Educational News.

## FOOD AT LOW COST

**T**O GROW best, children need every day food from each of these five groups:

GROUP 1: Milk—From one pint to one quart to drink and to use in cooking.

GROUP 2: Bread, Cereals, Rice, Macaroni, and the like—One or more of these foods at every meal; dark bread and cereals are recommended.

GROUP 3: Vegetables and Fruit—Generous helpings of two or three vegetables, including lettuce, spinach, escarole, or other leafy vegetable. Tomato or orange and some other fruit daily.

GROUP 4: Eggs, Meat, Fish, Cheese, Dried Beans, Peas, Lentils—At least one food from this group daily; an egg at least three or four days a week; meat never more than once a day.

GROUP 5: Fats—Some cream, butter, oleomargarine, nut butter, bacon, suet or other fat; a little codliver oil daily.

When every cent must be well spent, first buy:

*Milk*  
Fresh or  
Evaporated;  
or any form  
of inexpensive  
whole milk

*Bread and Cereals*  
Whole wheat bread  
Cornmeal  
Other whole grain  
cereals (dark) such  
as oatmeal

*Vegetables and Fruit*

|                        |                   |
|------------------------|-------------------|
| Potatoes               | Tomato            |
| Cabbage                | (canned or fresh) |
| Carrots                | Bananas           |
| Onions                 | Prunes            |
| Spinach (canned)       | Oranges           |
| Turnips (yellow)       | (when 1c or less) |
| Beans and peas (dried) |                   |

### *Thrift Suggestions*

1. A tall can of evaporated milk with an equal amount of water added is as good for children as one quart of pasteurized whole milk. Evaporated milk may be used in soups, desserts, cocoa, and to drink.

2. Four pounds of potatoes may be used in place of one middle-sized loaf of bread.

3. Day-old bread is better for children than fresh bread, and costs less.

4. Eat some raw fruit or raw vegetable every day. Try chopped raw cabbage with