

NINTH ANNUAL REPORT
OF THE
S E C R E T A R Y
OF THE
STATE POMOLOGICAL SOCIETY
OF
M I C H I G A N.

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for the secretary and his assistants, the other for the treasurer and executive committee meetings.

Mr. Guild.—My experience has been that fruit men are the worst to manage in this matter of touching and moving specimens of fruit, and I see no way only to keep men from handling even their own fruit after it is once in place.

Mr. Lyon—I would have a rule rigidly enforced forbidding any person handling fruit except by authority or permission and have notice of the rule posted where all could not help but see it; one or two examples made of transgressors would soon settle the whole matter.

Prof. Beal.—I must recur once more to the matter of plants and flowers. They show better by massing, and florists will be better satisfied if given an opportunity to exercise their skill in arranging plants so they will mutually benefit each other. It seems to me in any plan this fact should not be overlooked.

Mr. Guild.—My suggestion concerning Mr. Chilson's plan, is that the arrangement of shelving remain the same, but that the plants and flowers occupy a section across the middle of the hall, having special addition of shelves to accommodate the massing of specimens, and then the exhibit, as viewed from either end of the hall, will have a background of plant and floral decoration. I think this modification would please our plant growers.

Various motions were made concerning Mr. Chilson's plan, and finally the following substitute by Judge Lawton, was adopted:

Resolved, That the plan presented by Mr. Chilson commends itself to the Society, and that in general terms we accept and adopt the draft and refer it to the executive committee for such amendments in the details as they shall see fit to make.

The next subject—"What steps can be taken toward the

ORNAMENTATION OF COUNTRY SCHOOL GROUNDS."

was opened with an essay by W. C. Latta, of Mason, which we give in full:

Though the ornamentation of school yards is outside this society's regular line of work; though it is unpopular—something new, almost unheard of and unthought of; though it smacks of extravagance, and will cost both time and money with no return in kind; yet, associated as it is with any true education. I offer no apology for coming before this body to urge the improvement and embellishment of the school grounds of our rural districts.

In behalf of the alternately bleak and parched yards turned into commons for the pasturage of vagrant cattle and swine; in behalf of the heavy-footed boys, and hoidenish girls only less noisy than the boys; in behalf of the poor benighted parents who can't see why in the world their children are so rough; and last, not least, in behalf of the careworn, disheartened teacher who daily sweeps out shovelfuls of real estate, I desire to suggest some means of improving the appearance of the grounds of our country schools.

To men I am called on to speak to—a far too numerous class of individuals; I can hardly call them men—whose highest type of beauty is utility, and whose ideas of economy are met in using the fire-shovel for poker and dustpan, I should hold my peace. But there are others who are not continually harping on how it was when they went to school; men who see some utility in beauty, and who desire to throw around their children any influence and association

that will help to build them up into the full stature of men and women. To such—and there are such here—I gladly contribute my mite.

A WORD OF CAUTION.

Much as the average school yard needs immediate improvement, we must remember that the farmer is a conservative, and looks askance at any innovation; and what greater innovation than ornamental country school grounds. We must feel our way cautiously, for any active measures would probably result in a dead-lock, as three out of every five of the “deestrick fathers” would get “riled,” and, in all the dignity of their local prestige, declare that “we won’t have any more traps for the big boys to smash up.” Before much can be done in this direction, the ideas of the people on this question must undergo a radical change.

There must be a veritable growth of wholesome public sentiment in this regard. To secure this we must agitate the question, pleasantly, persuasively, but persistently. Hence, I am glad to see this society making a move in this direction. It is a credit to any society, whatever its aim, to work in so good a cause.

But mere talk will avail but little, unless it crystallizes into definite plan and action.

AWARDS OF MERIT.

May not this society again take the lead by offering at each quarterly meeting a prize for the best plan of school grounds, drawn by a country teacher, and which had been previously approved by the school patrons? Such an example would probably be followed by the county agricultural societies, whose potent influence would soon arouse an interest in school ornamentation throughout the state. Again similar prizes might be offered at the annual exhibits of the State Pomological or State Agricultural Society. It should be understood, however, that all such plans must first be approved by the school districts in which they originate. This precaution, by making them judges of, and interested parties in the plans presented, would bring the question of school ornamentation right home to those whom we most need to please, the school patrons themselves. Following this, prizes might be offered for the best plans which are to be put into execution. And then it might be advisable to award medals to the schools having the best grounds actually laid out.

The work which I have briefly outlined will require time—years—and yet it is only initiatory. But this should not discourage us, for in every enterprise how much preparatory work must we do before we can pluck the ripened fruit of our efforts. The first step, however, must be taken; the people must be educated to see the present condition of things and appreciate something better. We must labor to secure such a reform of public sentiment on this question as will make the ornamentation of school grounds not only possible but general.

And this society, with all its prestige, its command of the press and its premiums, added to the enterprise of its members, has the power to inaugurate, and, with the aid of similar societies, effect such a reform. In fact, I can think of no other efficient means to this desirable end; and I hope the society will not shirk the responsibility by laying it on the shoulders of our educators. This society is an educator, great and authoritative, and can appeal to the people as the teacher can not.

THE TEACHERS' WORK.

But the teacher has a work with the children. Too often, and yet with some truth, is it asserted that the children will not sufficiently appreciate ornamental features to preserve them from mutilation.

Somebody is to blame for this; and I believe that many teachers are gravely responsible for neglecting to cultivate the æsthetic qualities of those intrusted to their care. The children should be encouraged to bring into the school-room and care for their plants and pictures. Many a dull noon might be made pleasant and profitable by caring for a bed of flowers.

The boys will enthusiastically assist their teacher in clearing the ground of rubbish and in sodding the bare places. Half a dozen of the boys could easily be induced to plant, care for and protect as their own, as many trees from the neighboring forest. Some one in the district could be found willing to donate an evergreen or two, which would not only be ornamental, but also screen some unpleasant feature of the school-yard.

Then the schools in each township might unite in the purchase of a banner, for which each might compete every month. In this monthly competition for the honor of being the banner school, the deportment, scholarship and neatness of the school, the general appearance of the yard and buildings, and the condition of the fence, walks, borders, school furniture, etc., might all be taken into account. This would make more extra work for the town superintendent of schools; but I verily believe the saving in wear and breakage of school property would amply repay the expense of making a close monthly inspection, and reporting the results of the same in the local paper.

But I am going into details too ample. To the ingenious, willing teacher, ways innumerable will suggest themselves for bettering the condition of both grounds and buildings. And how shall we estimate the good that would result therefrom? Instead of a rough looking set of fellows, who run pell-mell, with whoop and yell, to stone off a fugitive squirrel, we would see quiet, genteel boys, with hands ready to defend the weak, with kindly words for squirrel and bird, and that kindling expression of countenance which betokens thought. With such a spirit pervading a school what might we not do in the way of ornamenting the school ground? Other plans might be suggested, but a hint to the wise is sufficient.

A British general once very truly said the American boys breathe in the spirit of liberty. It is equally true that the children of our schools breathe in, drink in, the very spirit and life of their surroundings; and that the influence brought to bear upon them during this susceptible period affects the life and character for all time. Why, it is a fact that the most difficult and least appreciated work of our colleges is in combating and correcting evils which had their source away down at the very foundation of our public school system.

Thus everything connected with the early education of the child becomes a matter of exceeding importance, and hence the tasteful embellishment of the school grounds, calling into active exercise as it does, the finer qualities of the child nature should receive our thoughtful consideration and earnest support.

Prof. Beal.—This is a capital topic for discussion, and after making a single remark I wish for a moment to put a question to the essayist. This subject is one peculiarly appropriate in connection with the work of this society, and I trust now that it has been brought out it will be kept before our people until something of practical value shall result. Our school houses throughout the country are a shame to our civilization. One gets a whole history of school management by making an observation upon school premises when passing,

and too often the story told is a very unpleasant one to think about. School houses commonly have unsightly outbuildings, broken windows, clapboards off, and the ground littered with wood, brush, clubs, etc., with mudholes in front of the steps, and if there is not a rare chance for improvement here I am no judge of such matters. Mr. Latta did not give in detail any plan for ornamenting school grounds. I would like to ask him to give us a little light here.

Mr. Latta.—It is difficult to give advice except one knows the situation of the grounds and something of the district as well. In general terms I should say, have larger grounds than are usually given to this purpose and plant groups of shade trees, giving as much variety as consistent. The outbuildings I would have screened with evergreens, and upon the whole ground I would get a moderately smooth turf as soon as possible.

Prof. Beal.—The great difficulty lies in getting the town superintendents and district boards interested in any such project. I should name three important points to strive after in pushing this matter to a practical undertaking:

1st. Secure commodious grounds and see that the house is kept in perfect repair.

2d. Grade the surface smoothly and seed down.

3d. Put in here and there collections of trees and shrubs and care for them. I would attempt very little in the way of flowers at first, some teachers might succeed in doing something of this kind, but the majority will fail.

Secretary Garfield.—What does Prof. Beal think of introducing plants for purposes of instruction in botany, as well as for ornamental effect?

Prof. Beal.—Inasmuch as generally we have throughout the county no spring schools I imagine very little can be done with flowers for this purpose, and as for shrubs and trees occasionally a teacher might do something toward employing them as a means of instruction but it would be the exception rather than the rule. To be frank I have very little hope in this direction with the present aspect of affairs as regards our schools.

Judge Lawton.—I am in favor of ornamenting school grounds and road sides, but there is little to encourage with the cattle of the country having the freedom of the highways. If school grounds are ornamented they must be cared for by somebody,—that person should be the director of the district, but as he gets no pay for it how can you expect him to preserve the property as he would his own. As matters stand I think the simplest thing that can be done is the best. In Lawton we chose an oak grove and erected our school house in the midst of it. I am opposed to the children's remaining at school many hours a day any way, but while there would like to make it as pleasant as possible for them.

Mr. Latta.—My conviction is that we must begin this matter with the children. They must be interested, and when once you have their hearts in the work the main difficulty is overcome.

President Lyon.—Gentlemen, I do not know as you are thoroughly aware of it, but I assure you in awakening the people to a proper consideration of this question you have undertaken a big job. You must go back of the school-house, the school-grounds, and the children, to the homes, and there work a while first before you can expect to accomplish much directly. When men begrudge a few feet of ground for an evergreen tree because the same space might be profitably occupied by a potato hill; when men narrow down their front yards to enlarge their grain fields and pasture lots, you need not expect very much enterprise in the direction of ornamenting school premises. And after

you have by great effort secured the attention of a few families in the district, and they are willing to take hold and add a little to the beauty of the school-house surroundings, how long will this spirit last with the present grade of teachers, who in large majority care nothing for this sort of thing, and will not turn their fingers over to maintain anything that is already begun. So you see there is another serious job in the education of the teachers. I have known teachers in rare cases to make flower-beds at the school-house and preserve them in attractive condition, all to the great benefit of their schools, but unfortunately this state of things can be found only at great intervals. I apprehend our work is with the parents and patrons of the schools. If we can by any means awaken an interest in securing larger, more attractive and well kept school-grounds, we are doing a great work for our State.

Mr. Guild.—I arise rather to a suggestion of a point of order than to continue this discussion. It seems to me that notwithstanding this is a very interesting and profitable discussion, we are getting away from the scope of our legitimate work as decided by a vote of this association some meetings ago. The fact is this is a State Pomological society, and although a strong effort has been made to make it "horticultural," so as to cover such discussion as this, it has been a failure. I make this suggestion, not to choke off discussion, but to call your attention to the fact that our name is not in keeping with our work.

Prof. C. L. Whitney, Muskegon.—I think the gentleman is all wrong. We are right in discussing this question here. It is a profitable one, and comes within the scope of our society work. Our name does not necessarily describe our work, but designates the society from all others, and indicates a piece of work that we may do. It was the name under which we were organized. Let us keep it, but let us not make some definition of it circumscribe our work. To me this question of ornamenting school-grounds is one of the most interesting because it has been so much in my mind. Since I helped plant out a few evergreens at the Normal school very early in its history, and while I have been watching their rapid development and effect upon the beauty of those grounds I have still been thinking, and talking, and working toward increasing this kind of work about our country school-houses. It is a great wonder to me that more is not done in this direction, because a little counts so much, and so large an interest is received upon the investment, because trees grow while we sleep, and do not stop in vacation. I, too, am in favor of flowers and bedding plants. Prof. Beal was misinformed concerning our schools in western Michigan, for we do have spring terms,—just the time to accomplish this kind of work, and I give my opinion as the result of experience, that work of this kind properly superintended is of more practical value to the children than any single study they pursue. This is a good way to gradually work out of the idea that all which is to be learned must be dug out of books. Many homes would be completely changed as a result of a little work in this direction, and whole neighborhoods influenced for the better.

Prof. Beal.—My objection to bedding plants and flowers is simply on the ground of expediency. It seems to me they will be neglected in the summer vacation and the effect lost.

Mr. Whitney.—I have yet to find a neighborhood which lacks a family that would not care for a flower bed in the school yard during vacation.

Prof. Beal.—I move that the suggestions contained in Mr. Latta's essay concerning methods of interesting the people in the ornamentation of school grounds, be referred to a committee consisting of Prof. Whitney, for the pur-

pose of securing a resolution upon which we may act before this meeting finally adjourns.

Sec'y Garfield.—I support the motion, and heartily endorse the general sentiment expressed here that looks toward some practical methods of beautifying our school grounds and employing the same elements of beauty as a means of practical education in the schools.

The motion was carried unanimously. Many of the society desiring to attend Mr. Chandler's reception at the Lansing House, and it being nearly 9 o'clock, on motion, the meeting adjourned until nine and one-half o'clock Wednesday morning.

Wednesday Morning Session.

At the hour of opening the meeting the room was well filled, and the discussion on the first topic of the morning,

"HOW GOOD A VEGETABLE GARDEN CAN THE FARMER AFFORD,"

was opened with the following essay by Mr. Eugene Davenport, of Woodland, Barry county:

How much has been said and written, but how little, really, done about the farmer's garden! When overworked men and women in the city begin to feel that life is becoming a burden, they resort to the country for health and quiet, and force an armistice with outraged nature. Here the air is pure, the food simple and healthful. The orchard is visited for its fruits, and the well-kept garden never fails to furnish the most tempting vegetables; life upon the farm is a pastime.

That's the way it is in the books. That's the way the poor garden is dragged into publicity in its Sunday clothes, to furnish spice for some lovesick novel. It is all plausible enough and reads beautifully, but, in the generality of cases, is all untrue, and the farmer's garden is far from the orderly little paradise it is represented as being. That some farmers do have good gardens cannot be denied; but the average are, to say the least, very poor, and in most cases they are nurseries for all sorts of troublesome weeds. The thrifty pigweed bends to say "How d'ye do" to the sweet corn, and the onions, and the cabbages, and the beets, and the lettuce, are struggling in unequal conflict with the purslane and the ragweed, which latter, however, unlike most conquerors, soon hide the shame of the former.

INVESTIGATION PROPOSED.

There is, seemingly, no possible reason why every farmer should not be the possessor of a well-tended, productive garden. But he is not; and a fact is a fact, no matter in what shape it presents itself, and that in spite of all speculation and theorizing. Believing that there are reasons for everything, we are tempted into an investigation, if possible, to discover and suggest remedies. Although I do not expect to say anything new, I hope to hear a full discussion of the topic by those who have had more experience. It were presumption in me to attempt to tell how to keep a garden, and I shall merely notice some of the reasons why farmers do not have better gardens, with a view to an answer to the question.