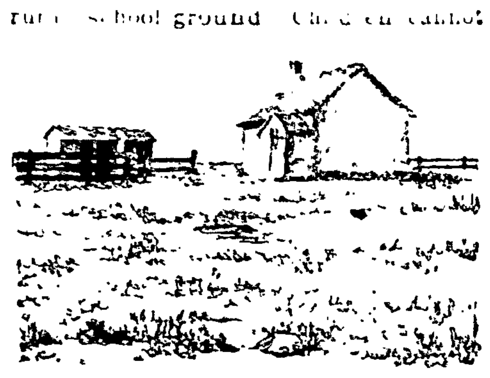
SCHOOL GROUNDS.

HINTS ON RURAL SCHOOL HOUSES AND THEIR SURROUNDINGS

An Interesting and Timely Bulletin for Cornell University—Suggestions for Improvement—Recommendations as a Result of Long Study.

One's training for the work of life is begun in the home and continued in the school. This training is the result of a direct and conscious effort on the part of the parent and teacher, combined with the indirect result of the surroundings in which the child is placed. The surroundings are more potent than we think, and they are usually neglected. It is not rare that the antipathy to farm life is fixed before the child is able to reason on the subject. An attractive playground will do more than a prize for a wheat crop to keep the children on the farm.

Bare, harsh, cheerless—these are the facts of the average rural school ground. Children cannot



Where Children are Taught (Fig. 1).

be forced to like the school. They like it only when it is worth liking. And when they like it, they learn. The fanciest school apparatus will not atone for a charmless school ground. It would seem that land is very precious. Very little of it can be afforded for a school ground. A quarter of an acre of good land will raise four bushels of wheat, and this wheat may be worth three or four dollars a year. We cannot afford to devote such valuable property to children. We can find a bit of swamp or a sand hill or a treeless waste. The first district school I taught was on a treeless hillside. The premises had two or three disconsolate oaks and an old hatter was stuck in the top of one of them. The second school was on an island in a swamp. The mosquitoes loved it.

The school building is generally little more than a large box. It has not even the charm of proper proportions. A different shape, with the same cost, might have made an attractive building. Even a little attention to design might make a great difference in the looks of a schoolhouse and the mere looks of a schoolhouse has a wonderful influence on the child. The railroad corporation likes to build good-looking station-houses although they have no greater capacity than homely ones. I asked an architect for a simple plan of a cheap school house. He gave me Figure 2. Plans for the improvement of schoolhouses may be obtained of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, Albany.

The following sentences are extracted from the Report of the Committee of Twelve on Rural Schools of the National Educational Association (1897).

The rural schoolhouse generally speaking in its character and surroundings is depressing and degrading. There is nothing about it calculated to cultivate a taste for the beautiful in art or nature."

"If children are daily surrounded by those influences that elevate them, that make them clean and well ordered, that make them love flowers and pictures, and proper decorations, they at last reach that degree of culture where nothing else will please them. When they grow up and have homes of their own, they must have them clean, neat, bright with pictures and fringed with shade trees and flowers, for they have been brought up to be happy in no other environment."

"The rural schoolhouse should be built in accordance with the laws of sanitation and modern civilization. It never will be until the State, speaking through the Supervisor, compels it as a prerequisite for receiving a share of the public funds."

How to Reform.

We will assume that there is one person in each rural school district who desires to renovate and improve the school premises. There may be two. If this person is the school commissioner or the teacher, so much the better.

Let this person call a meeting of the patrons at the schoolhouse. Lay before the people the necessity of improving the premises. Quote the opinions of intelligent persons respecting the degrading influence of wretched surroundings; or even read extracts from this bulletin. The co-operation of the most influential men of the district should be secured before the meeting is called.

Propose a "bee" for improving the school grounds. John Smith will agree to repair the fence (or take it away, if it is not needed). Jones will plow and harrow the ground, if plowing is necessary. Brown will sow the grass seed. Black and Green and White will go about the neighborhood with their teams for trees and bushes. Some of these may be got in the edges of the woods, but many of the bushes can be picked up in front yards. Others will donate their labor towards grading, planting, and cleaning up the place. The whole thing can be done in one day. Perhaps Arbor Day can be chosen.

The Place Should Mean Something.

The home ground should be homelike, retired and cosy. The school ground should be set off from the bare fields and should be open enough to allow of play-grounds. It should be hollow,—well planted on the sides, open in the interior. The side next the highway should contain little planting. The place should be a picture, not a mere collection of trees and bushes.

Keep the Centre Place Open.

Do not scatter the trees over the place. They will be in the way. The boys will break them down. Moreover, they do not look well when scattered over the whole area. When an artist makes a picture with many people in it, he does not place the persons one by one all over his canvas. He masses them. Thereby he secures a stronger effect. He focusses attention, rather than distributes it.

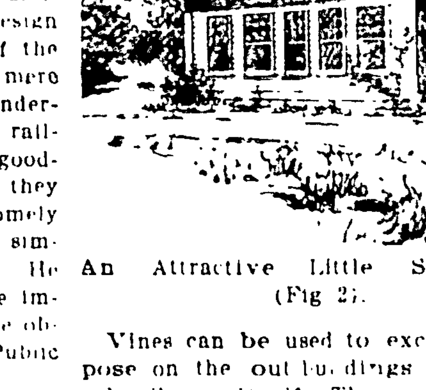
Arbor day has emphasized the mere planting of trees. Fortunately many of the trees do not live. They are too often put in the wrong places. If the love of trees could be combined with some purpose in the planting, the results would be much better.

How to Make the Improvement.

Every effort should be exerted to do the work well in the beginning. If all preparations are thoroughly considered and the details carried out with care the premises should become more attractive year by year with almost no annual outlay of labor. The school grounds should be able to take care of themselves when once the place is set in order. Of course, better results are to be expected when more labor is put on the grounds each year, but it is useless to advise such expenditure for the rural schools. But it is surprising what excellent results can be secured with almost no attention from year to year.

Making the Sod.

In many cases the school yard is already level or well graded and has a good sod and it is not necessary to plow it and re-seed it. It should be said that the sod on old lawns can be renewed without plowing it up. In the bare or thin places, scratch up the ground with an iron toothed rake, apply a little fertilizer and sow more seed. Weedy lawns are those in which the sod is poor. It may be necessary to pull out the weeds, but after they are out the land should be quickly covered with sod or they will come in again. Annual weeds, as pigweeds, ragweed, can usually be crowded out by merely securing a heavier sod. A little clover seed will often be a good addition for it supplies nitrogen and has an excellent mechanical effect on the soil.



An Attractive Little Schoolhouse (Fig 2).

Vines can be used to excellent purpose on the out buildings or on the schoolhouse itself. The common wild Virginia creeper is the most serviceable. On brick or stone school houses the Boston ivy or Japanese ampelopsis may be used, unless the location is very bleak.

Graves of Attila and Alaric.

Attila died in 453 and was buried in the midst of a vast plain in a coffin, the first covering of which was of gold, the second of silver, and the third of iron. Along with the body were buried all the spoils of his enemies, harness enriched with gold and precious stones, rich stuffs, and the most valuable articles taken from the palaces of the kings which he had pillaged, and that the place of his interment might not be known the Huns put to death, without exception, all those who had assisted at his funeral. The Goths had previously done the same for Alaric, who died in the year 410, at Cozenza, a city of Calabria. They turned for some days the course of the river Vassento, and having caused a trench to be dug in its former channel, where the stream was usually most rapid, they buried the king there, along with immense treasures. They put to death all those who had assisted in digging the grave and restored the stream to its former bed.

A Melodramatic Execution.

At a Servian village near Prokuplje, says the Vienna correspondent of the London Daily Mail, a Greek priest named Ilic Jevrem, was recently murdered. His wife and her lover were condemned to death by shooting for the crime.

The hour of the execution arrived, and the two criminals were placed before the firing party in full view of thousands of spectators, who were kept back by troops. The man broke down and howled for mercy, but the woman was cool and cynical, and remarked:

"How famous we are! If I had died a simple priest's wife not ten people would have followed my coffin to the grave."

The firing party had raised their rifles and were awaiting the final order to shoot, when a messenger on horseback burst through the crowd and handed the commanding officer a sealed letter.

The condemned man and woman embraced each other and shed tear of joy at their supposed reprieve, but it soon transpired that only the man was pardoned, while the woman had to undergo the extreme penalty.

As her lover was led away the woman clung to him, begging for one more look and one more word from him, but he repulsed her pitilessly, and went away without even glancing at her. After this affecting scene the death sentence was carried out.

THE LAZY MAN.

I'm the laziest man, I reckon, that a mortal ever seed.
Got money? Nary dollar; I wasn't built fer greed,
Fer graspin' an' fer gripin' where the revenue is found;
I'm what you call a lazy 'un jes built fer lyin' round.
Contented? Mighty right I am, when spring winds whistle sweet,
In the meadows, where the daisies make a carpet fer your feet;
Where the nestin' birds are chirpin', where the brook in witchin' play
Goes laughin' on, a pushin' all the lilies out its way.
You'll find me almost any time a-lyin' at my ease,
With the hul son o' the locust an' the drowsy drone o' bees
Above me an' aroun' me. I'm a poet in my way,
An' I'd rather hear the birds sing than to [illegible] 'em any day.
"Jes' laziness," they tell me, an' I reckon they are right;
But the world's so full o' beauty, an' you can't see much at night.
But different folks has different minds, an' drinks from the same cup
When I'm laughin' with the lilies, they're a-plowin' of 'em up.
My field's a pasture fer the cows, an' though it never pays,
It's a powerful source o' pleasure jes' fer seein' the creeturs graze!
The tinkle o' the bells is such a [illegible] sound—
But I'm a lazy chap, you know, jes' built fer lyin' round.

Frank S. Stanton.

"OLD BILLY."

There is always some old fellow in every remote country town who ought to be called the chronicler of death and disaster. He has lived in the town for forty or fifty years, may be, and while he retains a very hazy recollection of the pleasant things that have happened, he can tell you of all the unpleasant things with photographic accuracy. A gentleman of this city, says the New York Tribune, recently revisited his native village Slowtown we will call it because that isn't its name, after an absence of twenty years, and met one of these old fellows who had been one of his boy companions, but was now known as "Old Billy."

"Well, Billy," he said, after mutual greetings, "I suppose you can tell me all about everybody. We will begin with old Niggles, whose orchard we used to rob. I suppose he is dead and gone long ago."

"Wasn't 'n that," said Billy. "He fell down a hundred foot well and the well was so narrer that they couldn't git his body out nohow. So they just put a big stun over the well and erected a monyment on it with the words of Scripter engraved on it, 'All's well that ends well.' It was a leetle unconvenient to have the grave so nigh the house, but it wa'n't nigh it very long."

"Why, how was that?"

"Oh, the house burned down in two weeks, jist the day arter the insurance run out. The Widder Niggles, she took on worse about the fire than about the old man, but she soon had something more than the fire to think of."

"What was that?"

"She got married agin; feller named Stackpole. Come from the West. Got her to sign all her land to him, and then sellin' it for half its vally in cash, he run away."

"And did she never hear of him?"

"Oh, yes; two years arter a feller called on her in the poorhouse, where she was, and told her that Josh 'ad been strung up by a committee fer stealin' hosses, and that he sent her the only vallyble thing he had, a lock of his hair as a souvenir."

"Well, well! How things do happen when you leave a place! Now tell me about Jack Holbrook who used to spell us all down in school."

"Oh, he came to a bad end," said Billy, as he picked up a straw and began chewing it. "Married a widder with five children, two on them twins. Pretty soon afterwards he came into a fine house and farm by the death of his father, and the widder, his wife, you know, was a kind of mesmerist, and she made passes on Jack one day and got him in a trance like, and made him sign a deed of the property to her. When he woke up, she told him the land was hern, and when he began to kick, she mesmerized him some more. Mebbe you won't believe it, but she has been mesmerizing him for twenty years. He never thinks of kicking at anything now. All she has got to do is to jiggle her hands at him a few times, and he is as helpless as a baby."

"Why, Billy, haven't you anything to tell me about the old town?"

"Guess not," said Billy. "Hold on, though. Hi Wheelock—you remember him used to be sweet on your girl, you know well, he got rich in the grain and produce business, and when he had more'n he knew what to do with, he doubled his pile in the new railroad. That's his house you see there on the hill; purty sightly place, and cost a heap of money, too. But, Lord bless ye, he's had trouble, too! Had a boy he thought a deal on. Sent him to college, and then wanted him to go to a theological cemetery or some sich thing. But Harry wan't built that way. Thought he'd go into politics, an' now he's the biggest drunkard in the country. Say, ye're not goin', are ye? If ye'd stay, I'd tell ye how Susie Clayton married a travellin' showman, an' how Billy Haydock went out West, and came back in three years with only one sock an' a second-hand coat; an' how Steve Carson failed up the year arter he opened his Meetropolitan cash store, an' how the Granger boys got sent to State prison for stealin,' an' how o'e' Squire Burton lost three hundred sheep in the blizzard"——

But the visitor had fled in search of an optimist from whom he might learn something cheerful about the old town.

Henry Explains.

She was waiting for him, and when he entered the room she began.

"This is a nice time of night to —"

"I—er—hic—know I'm late," he hastily interrupted, "but I couldn't help it, my dear. Club had—er—big discussion on female beauty."

"And what had you to do with that?" demanded the ireful wife.

"More'n any one there. I was the one—er—who had the most beautiful wife an'—er—'course the best authority on female beauty, an——"

"Why don't you take off your overcoat, Henry? Let me get your slippers for you. It's awful cold outside; I think you must be half froze."

Half a minute later Henry was snugly ensconced in his easy chair with his wife at his feet putting on his slippers.—New York Press.

MAN'S NERVE.

Many Not Trained for War Have Lots of Cool Courage.

Miss Clara Barton, the famous army nurse and director of the Red Cross Society, said the other day: "I have often wondered where the cool courage of men comes from; where common ordinary men, trained to do nothing like war, get their nerve; where strangers to firearms, strangers to foes, strangers to everything warlike, find the courage to face death as bravely as soldiers did during the war. There were men, perhaps no more cowardly than others, who from sensitiveness of temperament, suffered more. I do not think mere brute daring is the highest sort of courage, but one who had the experience that I did among soldiers would readily recognize that there is a great deal more moral force in courage than physical."

I asked Miss Barton if she ever knew a soldier during the war to die of homesickness.

"That is a question by itself," she replied. "Homesickness, or nostalgia, is a most important factor in the treatment of the sick in hospitals. While of itself it may not be quite sufficient to kill, it no doubt complicates other conditions. When a soldier, or any person, gets homesick, it destroys the natural inclinations and functions, and it may destroy the appetite. Even an animal may be so homesick that it will not and cannot eat. Thus the foundation is laid for other diseases. Something else sets in and produces a permanent or fatal illness. Now, homesickness is the cause of that. A soldier may be attacked with something else without realizing that he is homesick at all. He is all right when he is running around with the boys but if he takes cold and gets sick or some disease attacks him and he finds himself down he begins to think of home, and then nostalgia follows. It either produces illness or aggravates it. Now, the one important remedy for such illness is to send that soldier home. I cannot say that I ever saw a soldier die of nostalgia, but the reason that I didn't was that wherever I discovered that disease was likely to work mischief I urged all the power I had upon every authority I could reach to furlough the patient. When a man is extremely homesick he has no desire to live and then no matter how skilled the surgeon he cannot save him. It is impossible."—Chicago Record.

An Independent Lawyer.

A lawyer with his client called one day at the office of a gentleman who is considered to be one of the leading men of the Philadelphia bar. The lawyer had an important case and he wanted to take the legal big gun in as adviser. He explained his business and said he and the client would be back in the afternoon. "I won't be here then," said the legal giant. "I have an engagement at 3 o'clock and I won't be here after that hour." "But there is a $5,000 fee in this for you," explained the younger lawyer. "Can't help it; I won't be here. You will have to come to-morrow."

"But my client can't come to-morrow."

"Well, I can't break my engagement," said the senior. After some further talk it was agreed that a meeting be held that night. That afternoon, having nothing else to do the young lawyer and his client went to a ball game. The first man they saw inside the grounds was the great lawyer, who was hurrahing for the "Phillies" with all the vigor of his lungs. That was his important engagement. Needless to say the lawyer's practice nets him enough money each year to make him independent.—Philadelphia Inquirer.

Portable Writing Pad.

A portable writing-pad that will prove a never-failing source of delight to the fair summer traveller has for a foundation a piece of stiff pasteboard made to fit the top of an ordinary table. To this is attached a strip of green felt, with pendant ends pinked around the edge, and to each end is stitched a cross-piece of felt divided into sections, serving as receptacles for the disposition of writing paper and unanswered letters. To the pad proper strips of felt of varying sizes for the reception of envelopes, postal-cards and all the essentials of ordinary correspondence are fastened with small brass-headed tacks; while for securing the blotting-pad four three-cornered pieces of felt are nailed at the right distance apart. For the safekeeping of the ink bottle a narrow strip of cardboard, covered with felt, is joined round and sewn to the cover, a similar contrivance being conveniently placed for the reception of the penwiper.

The Lake of Blood.

Every polar expedition and whaling vessel which visits the Baffin Bay region puts in at Yaureke Bank, so as to allow explorers and seamen to visit the celebrated Lake of Blood. Of it the author of "My Summer in the North" says: "It is a lake of considerable extent, lying only a few feet above the level of the sea, and appears of a deep dark blood red. * * * Careful examination proved, however, that the water itself was as pure and clear as possible; the red effect being due to the fact that the bottom and sides of the lake, as well as the few stones which were scattered about in it, were coated most perfectly with the red snow plant. In some places, where the water had evaporated, the withered red plants on the soil and rocks looked exactly like dried spots of blood."

An Actor's Mistake.

An amusing story was told some years ago of E. A. Sothern, a famous wit and actor. Upon a certain evening he was invited to two entertainments, one for children, and the other a reception for grown people. Fond of children, Sothern decided to go to the party given for the little ones, and thinking it would be a great joke to go into the parlor on all fours and roaring like a bear, he did so, much to the amusement of the guests, and his own subsequent unhappiness, for once in the middle of the room he looked up and saw that he had made a mistake in the house, and had played bear for the grown people and not for the children.—Harper's Young People.

THE TRAVELS OF COLUMBUS.

At the Convent of La Rabida, situated about half a league from Palos, there appeared one day two strangers traveling on foot, a man and a boy. The man asked of the porter bread for his child.

FIND THE PORTER.

THE TRAVELS OF COLUMBUS.

While being refreshed, the worthy friar, Juan Perez de Marchena, coming to the gates, was much impressed with the stranger, and, judging him a foreigner, engaged him in conversation.

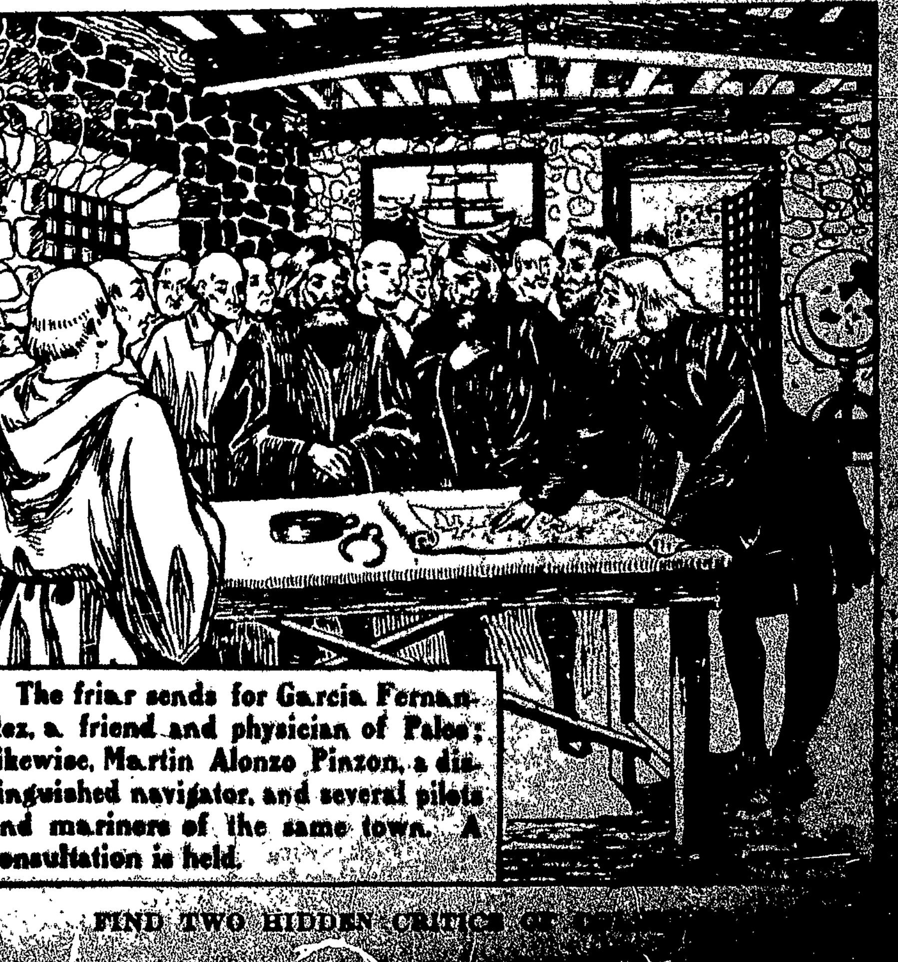
FIND THE FRIAR WHO BROUGHT FOOD.

THE TRAVELS OF COLUMBUS.

The stranger tells the friar that he is Columbus and the lad his son Diego. They are detained by the worthy friar. Columbus discloses something of his plan concerning western lands in the Atlantic.

FIND A THIRD FRIAR.

THE TRAVELS OF COLUMBUS.



The friar sends for Garcia Fernandez, a friend and physician of Palos; likewise, Martin Alonzo Pinzon, a distinguished navigator, and several pilots and mariners of the same town. A consultation is held.

FIND TWO HIDDEN CRITICS [illegible]