

# THE NEED OF A PUBLIC PLAYGROUND AND GYMNASIUM IN VALLEY CITY

Why should attention, time and money be spent upon properly planning and directing the play time of our girls and boys? There must be good reason and great need for such an expenditure, for since the organization of the playground movement in 1906, over three hundred cities in our country have organized and have in operation playgrounds under the supervision of playground directors. Thinking men are beginning to realize with Lee F. Hamner that "the right use of leisure is the big social problem of the day."

America may justly be proud of her free educational system but, as the critics are constantly reminding us, the educational system is still far from perfect and in many ways fails to accomplish the end for which it is intended. David R. Porter who, perhaps, has criticized the schools as frankly as any, has given this as his ideal standard for school life: "First to teach students to know; second, to teach them to do; and third, to teach them to be." He goes on to say: "If you draw the conclusion I have drawn after very careful study, you will see that, according to these three great tests of efficiency, our schools meet, to any satisfactory degree, only one, and that is the first one."

The school ought to teach boys how to gain a large amount of knowledge. Second, it ought to teach boys to translate that knowledge into action. Deeper and more fundamental than all that, it ought to base this action and base this knowledge upon a character that shall have found much of its inspiration in connection with the school system.

But even if our educational system should teach boys to do things, that alone would not fill the need and the demand of an ideal education which also must teach the people to live. I am more and more impressed that we are turning out of our educational system, grinding them out by the thousands, boys who are perfectly well educated; they know things, many of them can do things; the only trouble with them is, that they have not any life—I mean, spiritual instruction that alone will send men out to help other people in the great fight for life. So that brings me to the last phase of this subject, the question whether or not our schools are teaching boys to be; whether down deep below the surface of life our schools are penetrating into the depths of personality, where a rational will can be trained, where conscience may be moved and where decisions are made. That and that alone is the final test of whether a school is living up to the ideal standard.

For years our school have been teaching the children and young people to know; the vocational branches which have been introduced more recently are teaching them to do; but in what better place can they be taught to be, than upon the playground, the playground? Upon the playground, the child is himself; all of the self-consciousness, the restraint, the thought of possible criticism or correction is left behind in the classroom and his own individuality asserts itself with all of its faults and virtues, its impulses for the good or bad. An observing, understanding supervisor may learn more of a child's true character and peculiar weak points, and temptations in fifteen minutes of absorbing play than in a month of close observation in the schoolroom. A boy may talk earnestly in ethics class of the value of honesty, having in mind the sin and punishment of stealing or forgery, and then go out into his own world of play and consider it rather clever to cheat in the game whenever the opportunity affords a chance; or he may see clearly the narrowness of a selfish nature when that topic is being discussed, and take advantage of every chance to make a "grandstand play" and receive the praise of the onlooker when it would have been to the advantage of the team to sacrifice the chance to another man.

A boy learns that the habitual use of narcotics is injurious to the health; but when his team goes onto the floor to play a game of basketball and he sees the boy who is already a slave to the cigarette habit reach the end of his endurance before the first fifteen minutes of hard play is over, the fact is borne in upon him with a new meaning that narcotics will not only injure boys in general, but will actually take from him the power to do well the things that he loves to do; will make him an object of pity and take from him the power to excel.

The boy who learns to play a clean game against great odds because he will not spoil the fair record of his school, knows what it is to be a patriotic citizen and the captain who has learned to hold his temper and quietly control his team will be the man for the place in later years when a leader of men is needed; a boy who has learned to give a "square deal" and to despise the fellow who cheats will be the business man of tomorrow whose "word is as good as his note."

Honesty, generosity, justice, and self-control in time become a part of the boy's character but they must first become habits and such habits are not formed after the child has reached manhood.

The playground is the training school for men. What better preparatory training could a leader of men have than to serve for a season as the captain of a baseball or basketball team? He must control himself at all times, that he may not lose the confidence and respect of the boys who have chosen him as leader. He must know his men and study to bring out the best that is in them; must lustily instill into them, almost without their realizing it, the ideals of fair play and loyalty to team which are the essentials of success. Not every boy is fitted for this position; but the boys, with unerring instinct, will choose the one among them to whom nature has given the power of leadership. It remains for the wise supervisor to talk over all matters with the captain; to keep in close touch with him; to instill into him the ideals or right leadership, and he will do the rest. The training is no less valuable to the rest of the group of boys. It is just as important that our future citizen should have the habit of obedience to and respect for law, of loyalty to the institution which they serve and of working with others for a common aim and under a common leader.

Granted, then, that the playground under a special supervisor meets the third essential of the ideal standard of education. Our schools are beginning to realize this. They are being provided with fully equipped playgrounds and are hiring trained supervisors for the work. But this is not enough. Not only every city, but every county center should have a public playground properly supervised through every month of the year. Of the whole year, the summer months are by far the most important. The summer is deemed a vacation; a period of rest from the learning to know; whatever the child learns to do, during that time, he learns as an apprentice under some tradesman in a particular line; but the very cessation of regular work gives him an abundance of time of his own and he goes vigorously about building up habits and spending the entire day, from sunrise until dark pursuing the most important line of education of all; that of learning to be—and that absolutely untutored.

It is an indisputable fact that the boy returns to the school room in the fall a totally different individual from the one who left it in the spring. As an individual, he has changed more in those three months than in the nine months preceding vacation. The teacher realizes this; she finds that the same things do not interest; the old methods do not appeal. She is often heard to remark, "John has changed entirely since last year. He is not like the same boy." And John feels the change and vaguely wonders.

(Continued on page seven)

## What the Commission Plan Has Already Done

SERIES OF ARTICLES WILL BE PUBLISHED GIVING EXPERIENCES OF SEVERAL CITIES.

That the commission plan of government has been a success in the abstract is the contention of most people who know anything about its workings.

There is a very large percentage, however, who have no idea of the opportunity for results under the plan and with this in mind the Times-Record will publish a series of articles in the next few weeks giving experiences of a number of the leading cities of the country which have actually tried the commission form.

Galveston, Texas, Houston, the same state, Leavenworth, Kan., Des Moines, Iowa, and Cedar Rapids, Iowa, are the cities on which reports have been secured. All these cities are larger than Valley City, but the improvements made could be applied in a smaller way to any municipality.

## Mr. Otto and His Auto

The following is not original but it is so good we think we "Otto" run it: Otto bought an auto, which he ought not to have done until he had studied how an auto ought to be run; but Otto didn't study so he had himself to thank, that when Otto cranked the auto, Otto was the crank. For Otto left the auto with the lever pushed to go, when he ought to have reversed it, with the power off, you know. So when Otto cranked the auto, the auto gave a jump and landed Otto sprawling with an automatic thump. But Otto grabbed the auto as the auto autoed, by then Otto and the auto down the road did fly, and at a speed that auto luckless Otto whirled, like an automatic autocrat, who thinks he owns the world. While the auto hating public stood and watched the auto rush, till it ran against a lamp post in a most terrific crash. Then they sadly laid poor Otto who has lost his auto zest, where the autos cease from troubling and the Ottos are at rest.—Ex.



## Put the Load Where It Belongs



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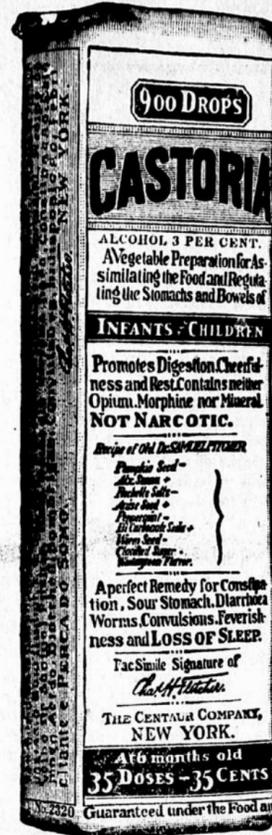
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Chester Schrum who was recently operated on for appendicitis at the Riverside hospital is reported as doing nicely.

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- 6 room house, well, barn, lot 100x150, Morrison's add. for \$1375
- Lot with small house in Riverside Park Addition for \$650
- 6 room cottage, in Smith's Addition for \$2500
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