

The Home Circle.

THE FIRST DAY OF SPRING.

O! thou bright and beautiful day,
First bright day of the virgin spring,
Bringing the slumbering life into play,
Giving the leaping bird his wing!

-William Gilmore Simms.

THE COUNTRY SCHOOL-HOUSE AND ITS GROUNDS: AN AID TO AGRICULTURAL TRAINING.

Sometimes the country school-house has extensive and well-kept grounds, but oftener it is in a pasture, a cultivated field or a wood-lot.

The country boy is usually bashful, and has little to say to new acquaintances; the flowers would get into his confidence sooner than most strangers.

The young farmer cannot be introduced to nature too soon, and should never be long separated from her object lessons.

Instructive lessons about annuals, biennials and perennials could be taught as the years go by. The names of the plants and of their several parts would be memorized much more readily from the living subject than from a book.

We live in an age of specialized work, and men of education must usually, if they would become impressive, confine their inquiries to one channel.

In the very best rural schools are found herbariums, fishes preserved in alcohol, samples of rocks, soils, woods and minerals.

Yet although the farm keeps the balance of trade in the nation's favor, furnishes two-thirds of our exports, contributes to our manufacturing supremacy by providing cheap food for our mechanics,

Advanced research to discover the effects of heat and moisture on production is receiving some attention at our agricultural colleges, and valuable results are available to the students who reach the colleges;

But considering that Americans pay more money for public education than any other people on earth, a comparatively small proportion of the sum is devoted to stimulating and aiding that half of our people who cultivate the soil.

Many of us have distinct recollections of disagreeable schoolhouses and grounds. We ought to arrange matters so that different impressions will be made on the little people who now venture from home and go to school.

And first, the ground around the schoolhouse could be made to speak out in a language easily intelligible to the youth whose eyes have been familiar with nature from the days of the cradle.

Flowers and plants are most pleasing additions to the house as well as to the lawn. Students should be taught the daily care necessary to have healthy and beautiful flowering plants, the uses of the spray, and the remedies for infesting or destructive insects.

Flowers should abound in the schoolhouse grounds. They are among the best of educators, for they develop taste and a love for the beautiful, and make men sensitive to the attractive and lovely, in town or country, in field or forest.

The children of a schoolroom will watch with interest the unfolding of new leaves, the first appearance of a bud, and finally the bursting petals of a beautiful blossom.

Moreover, the flower of the plant has an economic use, concerning which the scholar should be informed. Nature designed it to invite the wayfaring insect, and we can employ it to delight the child in its first journey away from home.

The pupils would always delight in caring for and protecting them.

Flower-beds on the lawn are pretty if properly made. A few hyacinth bulbs planted in the fall make almost as early reminders of spring as the hepatica or the ambitious crocus that laughs at a snow-bank.

The gathering of seeds from all trees, shrubs and plants should be encouraged. If all the seeds be saved, pupils whose parents have not encouraged flower culture may be induced to make little flower-gardens at homes and incidentally to take pride in the appearance of the yard.

LESSONS IN FORESTRY.

Young people attending the country school would soon learn the names of all the trees indigenous to the neighborhood. If the pupils would gather the seeds of the trees at different seasons when they are ripe, the teacher would have an object-lesson to assist her in conducting nature studies.

The great life-work of Senator Morrill of Vermont, assisted by other far-seeing American states-was the endowment of institutions in each State in the Union, where the sons and daughters of American farmers could study the sciences that relate to agriculture and domestic economy.

In most of our States we have normal schools for teachers, yet some of our State agricultural colleges have not succeeded simply because the instructors had been educated in institutions that gave them too little of the science relating to agriculture.

The dry ranges of the great West are being rapidly destroyed by injudicious grazing. The beautiful valleys of the mountain states are being rendered barren by the unwise application of water.

The young farmer attending the district school could readily be taught what a plant gets from the soil and what it gets from the air. The several grasses could be planted, and their office in filling the soil with humus, enabling the soil to retain moisture, could be explained.

A plant which a poor city girl brought to a flower-show took a prize, and people who knew in what a wretched, sunless attic she lived, expressed surprise that she could grow so beautiful a plant in such a place.

The microscope could be brought into use in the study of the soils, and microscopic plants could be studied, special attention being paid to those that change fertilizer into plant-food.

STUDYING THE INSECTS

Entomological studies might very well be carried on around the country school-house. The wild bee goes from flower to flower of the clover plant seeking pollen with which to build her cells or honey to store in them.

The people around Charleston who raise early cucumber in greenhouses for the early markets find it necessary to use the brush in distributing pollen, but they take care to have a swarm of bees to do the work as soon as the weather is warm enough.

Tens of thousands of Smyrna fig-trees that should produce the most valuable fig of commerce, brought from the Turkish Empire and planted on the Pacific coast, have never ripened fruit except when artificial pollination was practised.

The attention of the young farmer at the country schoolhouse could be gradually drawn, by easy stages, from one insect to another. A little help by the teacher would arouse in the student intelligent interest in our insect friends and enemies.

Children should be encouraged to bring specimens to school, collections could be made, and the student's name associated with every new discovery. In all these ways the student can be brought to an understanding of nature, living and inanimate, to knowledge that will develop head and hand and heart.

As soon the young ducks or geese are hatched, don't put them in the water thinking because they can swim they ought to be in the water. Keep them out for 15 or 20 days, and thus avoid having a number lame with rheumatism, and slow to grow.

The farm furnishes the best training school for boys that has yet been found. Its curriculum is such as tends to strengthen the body and the mind and qualify a boy for a practical and useful life.

CULTIVATE THE BEAUTIFUL.

John Wanamaker says that one of the most beautiful sights he ever saw was in the Museum of Arts. "When the twelve o'clock signal for dinner sounded," he says, "two hod carriers came through the galleries and stood awed and fascinated as they studied the pictures; and, as those men stood there, I felt they were being lifted up nearer to the angels."

Ruskin and many other great souls made it a rule never to allow an opportunity for seeing anything really beautiful, inspiring, or uplifting, to pass without improving it. Almost everyone, even the man whose daily routine is filled in with drudgery and the most prosy details, can manage to see something beautiful every day, something that will bring a gleam of light and sunshine, an uplifting influence into his dull life.

One should never go past any beautiful object, whether a park, a tree, or the flowers in the show window of a florist, without pausing to enjoy a glimpse of the loveliness and harmony which nature is constantly holding out to us.

A plant which a poor city girl brought to a flower-show took a prize, and people who knew in what a wretched, sunless attic she lived, expressed surprise that she could grow so beautiful a plant in such a place.

There is a great lesson for us in this little story. We may be surrounded by the most forbidding environment, and yet we can manage, in some way, to get sunlight enough to brighten life.—Success.

Our Social Chat.

* EDITED BY AUNT JENNIE, RALEIGH, N. C. *

AS CONTRIBUTORS to this department of The Progressive Farmer, we have some of the most wide-awake and progressive young ladies and young men and some of the most entertaining writers among the older people of this and other States, the ages of the members ranging from sixteen to more than sixty.

Another county heard from: Uncle Dan comes from Craven, and we are glad to have him with us.

There is nothing more conducive to sociability and the general upbuilding of a neighborhood than such a society.

Nellie is with us after having been absent some time. Her letter is a thoughtful one.

Mrs J. L. D. re-appears this week in a helpful letter.

And still a number of favorite members of the Circle have been long absent. Can't we have a reunion of them? Who will be first to return?

CRAVEN RESPONDS.

DEAR AUNT JENNIE:—Will you allow one who has passed the threescore years, to join the Social Chat? I have looked for some time to find a Chatterer from Craven county, and as I see none yet, I feel that our noble old county should be represented.

We are in the "low grounds" of the Old North State, but by no means the "poor grounds," for the variety of our productions is hardly equalled either in quantity or diversity. We are behind, however, in two very important points that make true progress.

Will some member of Social Chat tell us how to make a "reading circle" successful in the country among farmers? It is needed very much to stimulate mind and heart, but how to keep an interest is the point we desire.

As many of us about here are troubled with weak eyes, I am glad to learn from Kentuckienne how we may improve our eye-glasses by a vigorous bath. I think to give it a trial very soon but cannot expect to make young eyes of mine any more till sight is perfected in the "wonderful country" where "we shall see as we are seen."

UNCLE DAN. Craven Co., N. C.

A HOUSEKEEPER'S DISCOVERIES.

DEAR AUNT JENNIE:—May I come in and chat with you? It is so cold and dreary. We are having winter weather just when we were thinking that spring was here.

I must tell you all a joke on myself. Not long since I prepared my flour and other ingredients for some good old fashioned ginger bread. Everything was in the tray before I found that I had no ginger.

I made another discovery to day. My fish pan is an iron one and you all know how greasy a negro gets cooking utensils. So I scraped Bill an' Tom, an' Dick, an' it keeps me a-go'in' from daylight to dark!

and scoured, but all seemed of no avail, so I deliberately carried it to an open fireplace and gently laid it over the coals. In an hour I had (all appearances) a new pan. It is thoroughly clean and a joy to behold.

I am so glad that we are to have public school libraries. The school here will have one and my children will be benefited by free access to it, thus gaining much knowledge that they would otherwise be deprived of.

MRS. J. L. D.

THE LESSON TAUGHT BY SICKNESS.

DEAR AUNT JENNIE:—It has been so long since I have written a word to Social Chat that I hardly know how to commence, but I feel it my duty to write enough to let you all know that I am still reading and enjoying the good letters written by those more competent than myself.

But is there no lesson to be learned from these afflictions?

We do not know how to value health till it seems to be slipping from our grasp. I often think that sickness is sent on us for our own good—to call to our attention the blessings we receive each day that we had not realized before.

Wishing you all much joy and success, Duplein Co., N. C. NELLIE.

THE BATTLE OF GUILFORD COURT-HOUSE IN A NEW NOVEL.

"When Blades Are Out and Love's Afield" Announced by The Lippincotts.

The people of Greensboro, after having so long and lovingly labored for the Battle Ground cause, should find peculiar pleasure in the notice that is now being taken of the subject of the battle far and wide throughout the country, all of which comes from the patriotic labors of beautifying and caring for the battle field.

"A typical novel in Mr. Brady's best style this,—a tale of war and love in the Revolutionary times. The scene is laid in the country around Greensboro, North Carolina, and the chief action that known as the Battle of Guilford Court House, when General Greene met Cornwallis and inflicted such damage upon the seasoned troops of the latter, that though technically victorious, he was forced to fall back upon Wilmington, and the British advance into the south was checked.

"It's a queer world," said the old man, "when you come to think it over. You know, I educated Jim fer a lawyer?" "Yes."

"An' Tom fer one o' those here literary fellers?" "I've heard so." "An' Dick fer a doctor?" "Yes." "Well, now, what do you reckon I'm a doin' of?" "Can't say." "Well, sir, you mont not believe it, but I'm a-supportin' of Jim an'