

By PRES. ANDREW S. DRAPER of the University of Illinois.

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BOYS and girls hardly understand the purposes of the public schools. They think very little about the principles upon which our great school system, in which there are half a million of teachers and fifteen millions of pupils, and which costs two hundred million dollars each year, is maintained. They do not trouble themselves over the ways by which the system is to accomplish its purposes and justify all its costs. Too many parents give little thought to the matter.

The impression of the people who do not think very hard about it is that the schools are to teach pupils to read and write, and use numbers, and know something about birds and flowers, and countries and peoples, and the like. The schools are to do this; but they are weak indeed, and they are not worth what they cost, unless they do a great deal more.

All of our states make laws requiring the people to maintain schools for all the children. Nearly all the people would do this without any law. The people of each state make the laws in order that if there are any who do not want to support schools, they will be compelled to do so. In this way, throughout the country, a school is sure to be within the reach of every home.

Nearly all of the cities and towns have established high schools, and many of the states have set up great state universities. All this is to build up self-respecting character and develop sound views of life, to train up good citizens and

make the states and the republic safe; it is not only to give every child an equal chance with every other, but to impel every one to make the most of his chance.

That is the ideal purpose of the schools. To come near attaining it, the school must come near being ideal. We are very likely to judge of a school by the looks of the schoolhouse. We may make a mistake, but we are very likely to be right.

If we see a building that is attractive, with trees about it, and with some green sod and flower-beds in the summer-time, and with a whole and bright American flag floating over it, we shall be likely to find that things are about as they should be inside. If the building looks ugly and the grounds are unkempt and the flag ragged, we shall be likely to find that the schoolhouse is dirty and unhealthful.

We shall also be likely to find that the teacher is lazy and the pupils listless, and the work of little account.

There may be cases in which this is not so. Clothes do not make the man, it is true, but in normal business conditions clothes indicate the qualities of the man. A business man who is cleanly and neatly dressed is probably a much better and stronger man than one who looks shabby, because the better man will usually look well. So a rickety and particularly a dirty schoolhouse is almost as certain proof of a weak school, as a four-days'-old beard, a dirty shirt



DIAGRAM NO. 1.—This illustrates the school grounds after some years' growth, the grounds being originally laid out after the plan shown in Diagram No. 2.

Ornamentation of the School Grounds.

By WILLIAM H. BARNES,
Secretary of Horticulture, Topeka, Kansas.

SEEING in *The Companion* your article on this subject, I beg to offer the following:

I have long been an advocate of the ornamentation of our District School Grounds, and have frequently addressed Kansas audiences upon the subject.

I long ago discovered that the real reason why they are not made attractive is their limited area. Our people in the West, notwithstanding the low value of land, brought with them the idea that a quarter-acre or half-acre was enough land to waste (?) around a schoolhouse. Outdoor exercise (recess) is an essential part of an education, and a herd of scholars playing ball, duck-on-a-rock, quoits, leap-frog, skipping-ropes, rolling hoops or tag in the public road should be prohibited. If the school director should happen along with his team, and the team shies at the children or their belongings, he would grumble and complain as do others.

If we ornament the grounds with "keep off the grass" signs, where will they play? In the

West, where land is cheap, we should have taken five acres for grounds about each schoolhouse. The district should put up swings of various kinds, furnish ball clubs, skipping-ropes, quoits and croquet sets just as freely as globes, maps and models and other indoor paraphernalia, and the teachers should be interested in the plays.

Then two acres could be parked and beautified, with the house or *bower of beauty* in the midst of a lovely setting.

The scholars should be organized into an *improvement club*. This club should be subdivided into working committees; these committees should each control and care for a certain line of work and improvement.

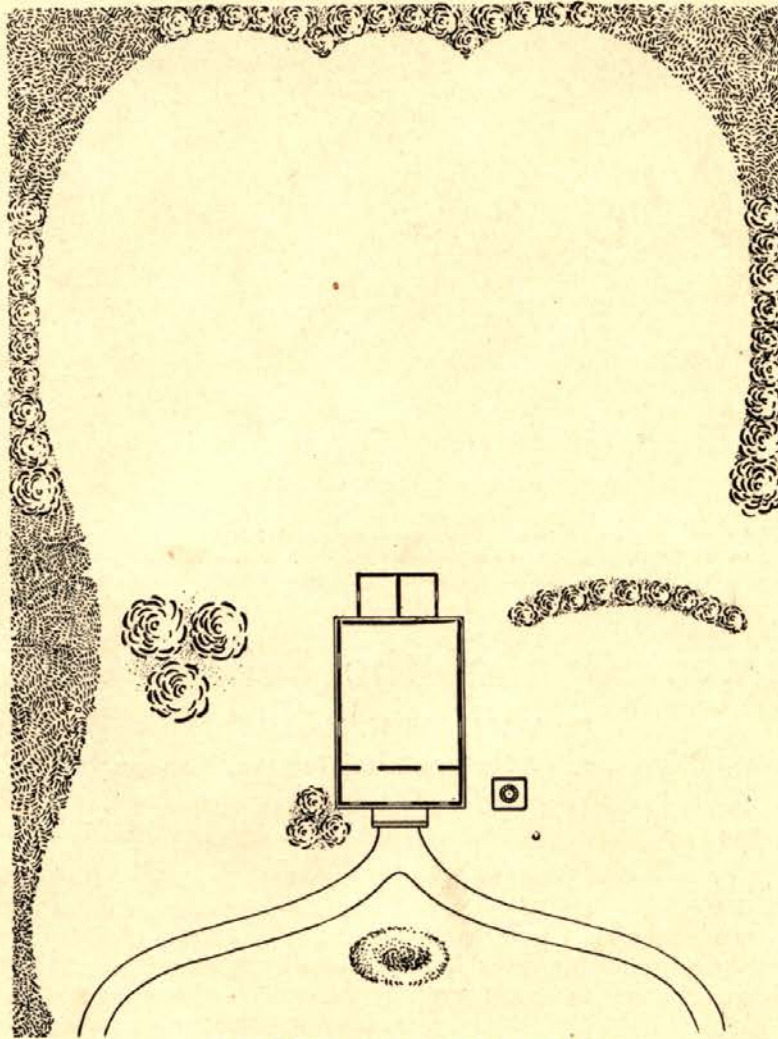
There is Johnny Doe. He lives in the timber, knows every tree by sight. Put him at the head of the shade-tree committee. With a little assistance and encouragement he and his committee will not only dig, bring and plant the trees, but will care for them lovingly as long as they

ORNAMENTATION OF THE SCHOOL GROUNDS.

attend that school, and wo betide the unruly "kid" that dare cut a notch in, or a switch from, one of them.

Another committee looks after the walks; another after the fences, hitching-posts and buildings; another after the hardy climbing

Columns might be written to show the lasting effect such an arrangement would have upon the character of each pupil, and the wholesome effect it would have on the community or district. There are yet hundreds of localities where a few acres could readily be added to the present



SKETCH OF PLANTING

DIAGRAM NO. 2.

vines to cover the outhouses and clamber over the schoolhouse itself; another to look after the beds of annuals or perennials from which the teacher's desk receives a daily bouquet.

school grounds, two acres for adornment, three acres for playground, all laid out with judgment and cared for by the pupils, the necessary expenses being paid by the district.

