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Iowa State Women in Rural Schools

By W. H. LANCELOT, Head of Vocational Education

WHAT should be the attitude toward rural life of the young women who go out from Ames? Are they under any obligation to become its champions and advocates by reason of the fact that they are graduates of Iowa State College?

The fact that our institution seeks to serve and promote the rural interests of the state does not, of course, commit its students to any such stand. Yet there are two reasons why they might be expected to go out with a somewhat more sympathetic attitude toward rural life than is shown by the graduates of other institutions generally. One is that a larger percentage of them come from country homes; and the other, that their college training has been carried on in an environment friendly to country life.

Despite these facts, it seems true that our young women are disposed to some extent to turn their backs upon the country and everything that pertains to it. It appears that considerably more than half, even of those who live in the country, plan definitely to enter upon city occupations. It is true that technical occupations as a class lead toward the cities; and it follows that our technical graduates may be expected to leave the country. No such migration is necessary, however, in the case of teachers; for there are many opportunities to work in the rural consolidated schools of the state. Not many choose to do so. Rather our young women seem to prefer not merely to go to the cities, but to start in the largest one in which it is possible to secure a position.

Why They Go, A Puzzle.

Just why this should be the case is hard to say. The spirit of service seems strong among them; yet it appears to lead them in only one direction. It is as if they believed that the greatest service could be rendered not among country people but in the towns and cities. This is not true; for the place where most can be accomplished is where most needs to be done. Whether we consider the possibilities from the standpoint of the improvement of home conditions, or of educational advantages, or of social life, the opportunities for service are immeasurably greater in the country than in the city. Indeed, there are probably few fields of effort in which greater good can be accomplished than in the rural districts of Iowa and other states of the middle west.

For not only is there much to be done, but the young people themselves are as a class so capable and so resourceful as to insure the maximum results from the efforts put forth. It is true that the consolidated schools are not so large as those of the commercial and industrial centers; but it seems also true that they fully make up for this by the superior quality of their young people.

It is one of the misfortunes of rural young people that teachers generally have no sympathetic understanding of the problems which they must face in the life that they are to lead. This is due to the fact that such teachers have as a rule been brought up in towns or cities

and therefore know nothing of life in the country. It follows that rural parents have no way to educate their children except at the hazard of losing them; for under the influence of teachers who are out of sympathy with rural life, farm boys and girls are soon found turning their faces away from their country homes.

Teachers, of course, should not exert any such baneful influence upon the children from the farms, particularly in view of the fact that the deepest and most vital interests of our state center in agriculture and rural life. The truth is, however, that they do have such an influence and that there seems no way to neutralize it except by preparing and sending out a group of teachers who believe in and stand aggressively for life in the country. Iowa has never needed such a group of teachers as she needs them today. Would that they might be found at Ames.

What Happens to Them.

As already stated, what we seem to find instead is an almost universal desire to go into the larger town and city schools, where our young teachers are presently submerged and lost to sight. In the large high school faculty groups, they are mere individuals. Often, because they have had no experience, they prove unsuccessful; and their failure not only necessitates a step backward in order to make another start in a smaller school, but it makes it difficult to secure a position of any kind even in the schools which have once been scorned.

Many careers indeed, have been wrecked by starting too high, and still more have been set back seriously by the demotion which would have been avoided had better judgment been used in the beginning. Even in those cases in which the inexperienced teacher proves successful in her teaching work in a large position, she is soon found dissatisfied because further promotion cannot be secured. Her demands for salary increases are usually not met; and as a rule she retaliates by offering her resignation. After it is accepted, she discovers to her sorrow that all other doors upward are closed to her, and that the only course left is to secure a position in a smaller school that pays a lower salary.

Thus it seems generally to turn out that the career of the untried teacher in a large school, whether her work be satisfactory or otherwise, is brief and comes to an unhappy end. It appears far better to grow into the large positions than to jump into them.

I understand that many young teachers do not expect to continue long in school work. Yet, being ambitious, they desire to make their mark professionally in the short time which they are to devote to teaching. Doubtless this accounts largely for the general desire to start as far up the ladder as possible. It is a mistake nevertheless, for it is far better to succeed in a small position than to fail in a large one; and it is virtually certain that a considerable number of Ames girls who have not done well in large posi-

tions during the past few years could have succeeded in the smaller ones. Furthermore, after such successful experience in the smaller schools, there is every reason to believe that they would have been able to succeed in the larger ones. Thus by beginning in smaller schools, they could have ended their teaching careers in the larger ones. Instead they have moved in the opposite direction.

Choosing the Better Part.

In the light of the record of the past few years, it is apparent that in the choice between ambition and service, the one who chooses to serve well comes out ahead; and it is as clear that those who have resisted the lure of high initial salaries, putting other considerations before money in laying their plans, have been abundantly vindicated and rewarded. In the great movement to make homemaking a part of the training of every American girl, they have been the torch bearers. They are the ones who have won the commendation of the public, while those who were guided by their selfish ambitions have too often impeded and interfered the progress of the movement. Our young women of the present senior class may well be grateful that there have been so many before them who have put unselfish service first in their plans; and by the same token they should be found ready to apply this rule in the planning of their own careers as teachers. The question should not be "How much money can I get?" but "Where can I accomplish the greatest good?"

A new condition which has arisen this year may make it necessary for our inexperienced graduates to heed the above suggestions regardless of their desires in the matter. The number of such untried graduates desiring teaching positions is greater than ever before. At the same time, the number of alumnae with teaching experience, who desire to secure school positions, bids fair to surpass all former records. Since the latter class of teachers will be preferred because of their experience, it is doubtful if many of the larger positions will fall to our new graduates. Rather, they will apparently be forced to go into the smaller schools whether they desire to do so or not.

While this will be the best thing that could happen for all concerned, including themselves, very many will be grievously disappointed over the unkind fate that has overtaken them. It is to be hoped that they will not let their disappointment or unhappiness be so much as suspected in their new homes, for it will make failure for them nearly certain. Furthermore it would be a serious mistake to go about their work condescendingly or with an air of superiority. Too many teachers go to the smaller schools indicating by every act and gesture that they consider themselves engaged in a work of uplift among an inferior and benighted people. No self-respecting community will tolerate such teachers long in its midst.

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possible to fully heed the call of fashion and have garments that are beautiful in line and color, but Frank Alvah Parsons sums up the situation adequately when he pleads with us to "Render unto fashion the things that are fashion's, and unto art the things that are art's."

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Rather, teachers must take an active part in the best social life of their young people, bringing to it the same genuine interest and enthusiasm that they might show among their friends at home. At the same time, they should observe faithfully the best social and moral standards of the community, being governed as to their personal conduct and even as to their companionships by these standards. And finally, if they show a desire to perform a helpful part in every possible way, regardless of how unpleasant or inconspicuous that part may be, they will have done much to insure that their great adventure will turn out well.

Tea Room Accounting

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ording all receipts, properly caring for them, and recording all issues, or consumed stores.

One real small tea room uses this system to good advantage. A daily tally sheet is kept on the wall near the door of the store-room. On this sheet is placed all incoming stores provisions for the day, and goods taken out. The room is open only at stated hours, except in emergencies. The initials of the person receiving and taking goods are placed on this tally sheet and at the end of each day these tally sheets are transferred to the stores ledger cards.

When incoming goods are counted, inspected and recorded, notice is served to employees and merchants that here is a place where affairs are handled in a business-like way. If it is not desired to separate provisions into perishables, and stores, the perishables may be recorded with stores, but in studies of food control it has been found practical and desirable to separate them.

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