

THE PROGRESSIVE FARMER AND SOUTHERN FARM GAZETTE

A Farm and Home Weekly for North and South Carolina, Virginia, Tennessee, and Georgia.

Vol. XXV. No. 25.

RALEIGH, N. C., JUNE 25, 1910.

Weekly: \$1 a Year.

The School the Hope of the South.

TRAVELING this week across a considerable section of our Progressive Farmer and Gazette territory, we could but dream of the time when all our Southern country shall become as fair as the rural districts of France and England as we saw them two years ago—when our muddy roads shall give way to beautiful highways; when our old fields shall be redeemed to life and usefulness; when our half-cultivated patches shall be converted into broad and fertile fields; when herds of cattle and flocks of sheep shall dot our hillsides; when a gully shall be reckoned a disgrace and a fire-ruined wood a crime; when cabins and ugly cottages shall be replaced by homes made beautiful by loving care, however humble they may be; and when a thickly-settled and well trained population shall not only relieve country life of that isolation which has most retarded its development, but shall give needed support for all the conveniences of twentieth-century rural life—rural telephones, water-works, the township high school with its public library and lyceum course: the school a center of intellectual and the church of spiritual activity, each giving symmetry and beauty to a community life which finds its material basis in a high degree of efficiency on the part of the average man.

Even as the painter when he goes to his canvas, sees with his mind's eye some beautiful vision which he is to work out, even so all of us should have before us as we go about our daily tasks this vision of the South that is to be, and the part, however insignificant, that we may have in helping its fulfillment. We should all of us like to live to see it with our own eyes, as Moses yearned to see the promised Canaan to which he led his people. But whether we shall see it with the physical eye or only in our dream, it is enough that we may have a hand in bringing it about, enough that we may work intelligently and unselfishly to hasten the coming of this better day. And the one way is by giving the child a chance. That boy of yours, that boy of your neighbor's, who

already has the basis of all character in that he is learning to work, that boy who "warms his feet cold mornings in the place where the cows lay the night before"—he is the hope of the South. That girl of yours, that girl of your neighbor's, whose mind and spirit will some day give tone and color to everything in a home—she is the hope of the South. And only through the school they can be developed.

The boy and girl in the towns are getting good schooling; the farm boy and girl in the North and West are getting good schooling. Shall it be, then, that among all our twentieth-century American youth the Southern farm boy and girl alone shall enter life's race handicapped by shackles of ignorance?

It must not be so. The best investment the South could make in 1910 would be to double its school taxes and double the patronage of our high schools and colleges. Only by providing the best of facilities can we attract to the South that tide of immigration which we need to increase our percentage of white population and to relieve rural life of isolation; and only by educating all our people can we ever work out our dream of a South the beauty of whose rural and urban life, the intelligence and efficiency of whose people, shall make it indeed the foremost and the fairest section of America.



[Courtesy North Carolina Department of Education.]

THE OLD AND THE NEW

Here is a striking example of what consolidation of rural schools and the local tax will do. There are still hundreds of such school houses as those shown in the two upper pictures, scattered about over the South—school houses without any facilities at all for good work and without pupils enough to permit of the employment of a good teacher. Where two or more such schools can be combined and an up-to-date building with modern equipment provided and a good teacher employed, is it not worth while to do it? Every person who helps in making such a change has a right to be proud of his work; and no one can tell what difference the better surroundings will make in the lives of the boys and girls who attend the school.

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