

Practical Work for Better Neighborhoods

WHAT A LITERARY SOCIETY DID.

How Three Girls Started a Neighborhood Forward.

THE church had almost gone down, the Ladies Aid Society was lifeless and there were few social functions, thus the young people sought pleasure elsewhere.

We (three girls) decided to do something to make life worth while. With the few school children we could get to join us we organized a Literary Society. The teacher being president, the meetings were held at the schoolhouse on Friday evenings.

Recitations, dialogs, story reading, reading of the local news, debating, spelling on sides, etc., constituted the work of the society, which suffered much opposition and ridicule. The noon recess each day was spent in cleaning off the grounds, trimming up the shade trees, making flowerbeds and cleaning off the ball-ground till things looked decent.

The first program was short. Each member carried out her part faithfully and it was enjoyed so well by the school the remainder joined us. We then invited the outsiders to the next meeting. Only two ladies came, but we were not discouraged as we had the pleasure of adding them to our list.

So it rocked on and by one, two and three, new members were taken in till at the age of two months all the young people and most of the older ones were interested and a box supper was agreed upon in behalf of the school.

Some had recitations, some dialogues, others a debate and one read the local news, after which came the fun of selling off the boxes to the highest bidder and eating supper.

The sum of \$22.41 was raised which was sufficient to buy a new blackboard, new window panes and leave a few dollars in the treasury.

I left the society still progressing and I have learned that through its aid the church has come to the front and Oak Grove lacks nothing in the way of social functions.

MISS JOSIE EATRESS.

Fayetteville, Ala.

THE NEIGHBORHOOD BETTERMENT CLUB.

The Progressive School as the First Step Upward.

NOT long ago in a neighborhood where little interest was taken in improvements of any description, there was organized a club, the purpose of which was to better conditions and build up the neighborhood to a higher tone. The organization of this club proved to be the conductor to rapid progress and improvement in more ways than one.

The club was open for any man, woman or child who was interested in the nature of this work to join. At first the membership was small, but in a few months the membership was three times that of the first meeting. The officers consisted of: President, Vice-President, Secretary, and Treasurer, and Executive Committee. With the leadership of these officers the club was on a fair road to success. Of course, there were various other committees, such as refreshment committee, committee on sanitation, committee on programs, etc.

This Betterment Club met three times a month. One Friday afternoon in every month it met at the neighborhood schoolhouse, and this meeting was the social one where everybody had a good time and met their friends. This was also an occasion when the school children entertained their fathers and mothers

with a short program. After these exercises refreshments were served. This coming together of patrons, children and friends at the schoolhouse did more towards building up the school than anything else could possibly do. It caused more interest to be taken in the school and school work. It gave an opportunity for every patron to know just what his child was doing. It was splendid training for the children and excited each one to want to excel the others in a friendly way. It afforded a time for the teacher to place the work of the pupils on exhibition. She also had an opportunity to learn more of the home life of her pupils by knowing and meeting the parents so often.

In any country neighborhood you can measure the standard of the people by the interest they are taking in the school and by the improvements that are being made in the school-room and on the school-ground. If you find progress there you will find it in the neighborhood also; on the other hand, a poor school is a certain evidence of a lifeless community and until there is interest manifested in the educational line it will remain so.

This Neighborhood Betterment Club was a benefit not only through the school, but brought about changes in other ways as well. The other two monthly meetings I spoke of, were held in a different way from the first. They were usually on Saturday nights when all could attend. These were given over to the neighborhood members entirely, but managed through the executive committee. A short program was usually given by the members for entertainment. After this some ideas were put before the club for discussion. The ideas were usually along the domestic line, and it was decided whether they were worth experimenting with and to what extent. For example, the farmers studied modern methods of farming and exchanged ideas. The ladies conversed on topics that were beneficial in carrying on their house work, and whenever one had learned an easier and better way of doing any particular kind of work she was only too glad to tell her neighbor about it.

There were readings and sewing clubs organized in connection with the Betterment Club.

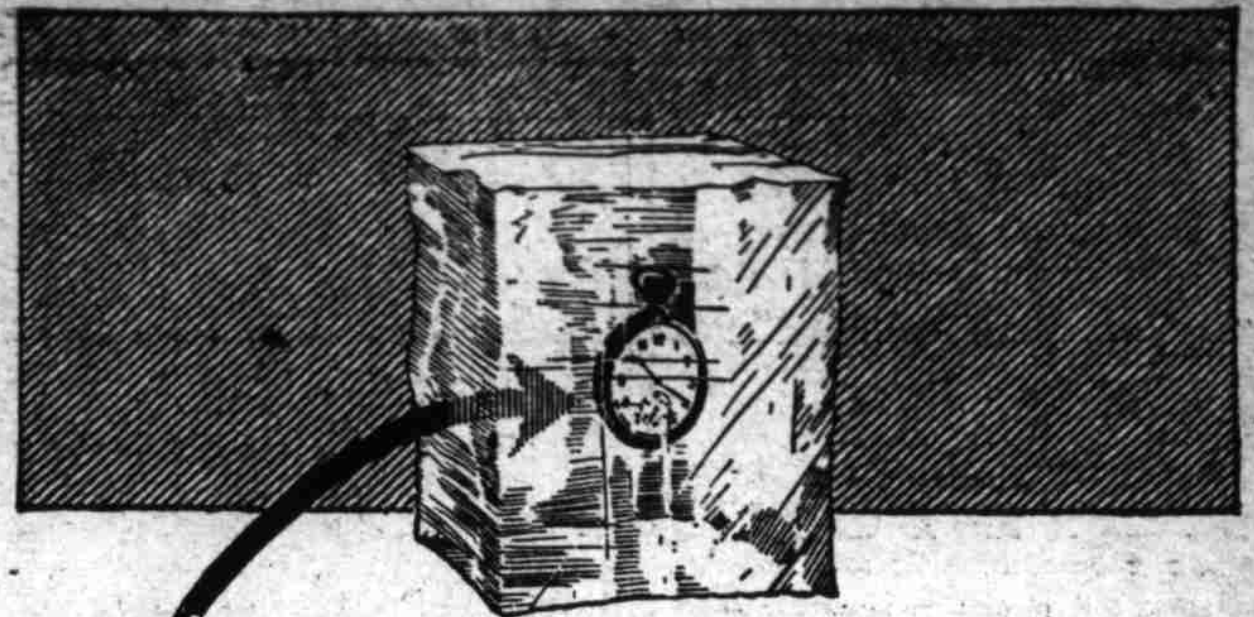
The club gave lots of importance to making the farm, home, school and church more beautiful and attractive. The members not only studied this, but in truth really made everything look its very best. They were soon busy planting flowers and shrubbery in the yards, homes were being repainted and in some cases rebuilt, gates were put on hinges, the window blinds which had fallen from the houses several years before were being put in place again, the unsightly objects were being moved from the front door, more attention was given to sanitation, a new schoolhouse was built according to latest models with modern furniture, the school ground was cared for as never before. All of this came about through Neighborhood Betterment Club and had it not been for it the community today would have been in the same rut as it was in before the organization of this grand club.

MISS JANIE CRAIG.

Bennettsville, S. C.

The Singing School as Neighborhood Betterment.

NEXT to our Womans' Betterment Association, of which an account was published in this paper last January, comes our Singing School, as a neighborhood betterment. Last summer we hired a competent man to teach a singing class for us. The



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most of our people took a lively interest in the school and consequently it proved a wonderful success.

This year our former teacher having moved away, we have hired another teacher, and if possible there is greater interest manifested this year. The people are more awake to better things. More of the older people come out, and what can do more to keep people young than good singing? I feel the money and time could not be spent for a better cause than that of improving and cultivating the voices of those who are to take our places in the future.

The boys should be taught to sing just as much as the girls. If more interest was taken in this line, there would be fewer young men to take back seats at church. As it is they say "I can't sing," therefore, "I will not go to the front." Who is to blame? The parents who should have taught them to sing. There is power in song. Hearing a familiar hymn sung has been known to soften the stony hearts of criminals, and cause them to turn from their wickedness and walk in the way of truth and righteousness.

I look forward with pleasure, each day, to the time when the day's work has all been done, and we can rest and sing. Each little fellow doing his best, even the little two-year-old tot must have a book to sing from, if it is only an almanac. I believe by giving our children the opportunity of learning to sing, they will grow up more happy and contented and wield a greater influence for good.

MRS. C. G. TUNSTALL.

Edward, N. C.

Practical Community Work.

WHAT our neighbors have done in just a few years, working together, has proven a great benefit to us. By showing our interest, we secured, through our commissioners, better roads. This helped us immensely. Next, we co-operated in securing better schools. Have in our rural high school departments of agriculture and domestic science. This is quite an advanced step to the betterment of any vicinity.

Of course, we combined in establishing a rural telephone line. This, too, is indispensable to the progress of any community.

We combine in maintaining a literary or debating society through the winter season. This, too, is a decided benefit for the old as well as the young people.

Advanced methods of farming are constantly being introduced through the reading of better agricultural papers. Scientific methods are proving very encouraging and hopeful in our farm work. Surely our betterment has not been accomplished without some opposition, but the obstacles we overcame, and our community is a much better place in which to live.

The deep sense of feeling that we were carrying out the injunction to love our neighbors as ourselves seemed to pervade.

We do not combine in buying farm tools and machinery, but lend to, and when necessary, borrow from our neighbors.

W. L. KIVETT.
High Point, N. C.

Inducement.

"Did dat man offer any inducements to sit you to buy dat mule?"
"Yaas, indeed," replied Mr. Eraustus Pinkley. "He give me his membership in a 'society dat pervides a handsome funeral for anybody dat belongs to it.'"—Exchange.