

THE SUPERVISION OF COUNTRY SCHOOLS

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The Supervision of Country Schools by Andrew Sloan Draper

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ANDREW SLOAN DRAPER

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SUPERVISION
OF
COUNTRY SCHOOLS

BY
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Commissioner of Education, State of New York



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The Supervision of Country Schools



There are 9,500 "country schools" by the side or at the corners of the roads in the Empire state. Each has from one to a score of children, of all ages, and with just as good stuff in them as any in the state. For the most part they are in one-room houses, grown old long ago, without many of the necessities, to say nothing of the conveniences, of modern schools. The teachers are "better trained" and in many ways "smarter" than they used to be, but whether they have more fiber or teaching power is not free from doubt. There certainly has been a serious loss of forceful men who now find other promising and permanent employment, and who used to teach because there was little else for them to do.

These humble schools do about whatever in the way of drill and research the teacher wills. They serve a little hamlet, or a dozen farms which stretch a mile or more away, and they are governed by the annual school meeting of the people who sustain them and by the trustee whom those people choose to execute their will. The state gives them considerable aid and lays down the fundamentals for them, and then leaves them very largely to themselves. It can not be said that they are unworthy. On the whole, they fill their humble station and serve their stately purpose very well. They can not be artificially inflated or quickened without results which will be both temporary and undesirable. But they are of just as much concern and ought to have just as much thought and care from the state as any other part of the educational system.

I am glad to admit a little bit of personal feeling about them, for the first school to

which I ever went was one of them. It was a weather-beaten house, with desks knocked together by a rough carpenter and "finished" if not *ended* by boys who knew how to get jack-knives and understood how to use them. The house was old fifty years ago and still persists in holding on, in a way which becomes the neighborhood. It is where the roads meet, at the foot of overhanging hills, hard by a silvery stream which threads as attractive a valley as any country ever had. The white house and the rugged farm across the road had then been our family homestead for three generations. There a young soldier, fresh from the army of the revolution, had gone to clear a farm and make a home in the wilderness, and there children and grand-children and great-grand-children in goodly number had come along to put some graceful lines upon the rugged face of nature. Character established and things done had

written a name upon the neighborhood. There was dignity, repose and comfort; there had been deep pleasures and there had been some keen sorrows and disappointments. The people were kindly and open-handed; their doors were always open and their larders always full. They were not ignorant, and surely they were not of the soft and insipid kind. They had reserve power and they also had outlook and purpose. Books and papers were not very abundant but they were of a kind which made an impression upon life; they combined with work—hard, grinding, continuous work—to turn out men and women who believed in something and could do things. Habits were exact and the results ample. If an unregenerate child lost his resolution, the routine of the home and his father's word were likely to recover it for him. If life was simple, it had phases which were intense. Religion seldom lagged and patri-