

**RURAL LIFE AND  
THE  
RURAL SCHOOL**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649392346

Rural life and the rural school by Joseph Kennedy

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**JOSEPH KENNEDY**

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# RURAL LIFE AND THE RURAL SCHOOL

BY

JOSEPH KENNEDY

DEAN OF THE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION IN THE  
UNIVERSITY OF NORTH DAKOTA



AMERICAN BOOK COMPANY

NEW YORK

CINCINNATI

CHICAGO

## PREFACE

THIS volume is addressed to the men and women who have at heart the interests of rural life and the rural school. I have tried to avoid deeply speculative theories on the one hand, and distressingly practical details on the other; and have addressed myself chiefly to the intelligent individual everywhere—to the farmer and his wife, to the teachers of rural schools, to the public spirited school boards, individually and collectively, and to the leaders of rural communities and of social centers generally. I have tried to avoid the two extremes which Guizot says are always to be shunned, viz.: that of the "visionary theorist" and that of the "libertine practician." The former is analogous to a blank cartridge, and the latter to the mire of a swamp or the entangled underbrush of a thicket. The legs of one's theories (as Lincoln said of those of a man) should be long enough to reach the earth; and yet they must be free to move upon the solid ground of fact and experience. Details must always be left to the *person* who is to do the work, whether it be that of the teacher, of the farmer, or of the school officer.

I am aware that there is a veritable flood of books on this and kindred topics, now coming from the presses of the country. My sole reasons for the publication of the present volume are the desire to deliver the message which has come to fruition in my mind, and the hope that it

may reach and interest some who have not been benefited by a better and more systematic treatise on this subject.

By way of credential and justification, I would say that the message of the book has in large measure grown out of my own life and thought; for I was born and brought up in the country, there I received my elementary education, and there I remained till man grown. Practically every kind of work known on the farm was familiar to me, and I have also taught and supervised rural schools. These experiences are regarded as of the highest value, and I revert in memory to them with a satisfaction and affection which words cannot express.

If there should seem to be a note of despair in some of the earlier chapters as to the desired outcome of the problems of rural life and the rural school, it is not intended that such impression shall be complete and final. An attempt is made simply to place the problem and the facts in their true light before the reader. There has been much "palavering" on this subject, as there has been much enforced screaming of the eagle in many of our Fourth of July "orations." I feel that the first requisite is to conceive the problems clearly and in all seriousness.

If these problems are to be solved, true conceptions of *values* must be established in the social mind. Many present conceptions, like those of the *personality* of the teacher, *standards* for teaching, *supervision*, *school equipment*, *salary*, etc., must first be *dis*-established, and then higher and better ones substituted. There will have to be a genuine and intelligent "tackling" of the problems, and not, as has been the case too often, a mere playing with them. There will have to be some real statesmanship

introduced into the present *laissez-faire* spirit, attitude, and methods of American rural life and rural education. The nation in this respect needs a trumpet call to action. There is need of a chorus, loud and long, and if the small voice of the present discussion shall add only a little—however little—to this volume of sound, there will be so much of gain. This is my aim and my hope.

JOSEPH KENNEDY

THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH DAKOTA



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