

# A Tribute to Miss Belle Robberson

By PAULINE RIPPY

I placed my hand on the trim white gate and stood musing as recollections began crowding upon me. Nine o'clock. I was late. Fifteen years ago I had opened that gate every morning at eight-thirty o'clock. Not because the little kindergarten opened at eight-thirty, but because my childish eagerness for discovery had received so much satisfaction beyond the gate inside the little green-trimmed white house. Almost involuntarily, I looked off to my left. The little barn was still there, but I felt disturbed that the cow was not chewing her cud over the pasture fence.

"The spotted cow. . . . ."  
Yes, there had been a poem about it.

"The spotted cow of red and white  
I love with all my heart.  
She gives me cream with all her might  
To eat with apple tarts."

There had been a poem about the birds that fluttered against the window pane one day, about the raindrops, and there must have been one about the cherry trees. For a moment I was a poet myself, though "mute, inglorious." I knew that the others who had come here remembered the poems, too, and had a fine spot in their hearts that would last forever.

And where were they all now? They were still scattered over the community for the most part. And not one of them had failed to reach graduation from high school. They were all good citizens. They could not be otherwise. The little playground had been a laboratory for the Golden Rule and the Commandments, and for the group feelings of sympathy and friendship.

Through the window I could see the table and its little red chairs. In September there would be "Injun Chief" tablets with crayons and pencils in a neat row down the table. There would be children bowing their heads above them for morning prayer. There would be implanted seeds of the desire to learn, of good habits, of politeness, and of fine character for another generation of upright boys and girls.

I opened the gate and walked up the gravelled walk, which was lined with young zinnias just pushing out of the soil. How vital and growing, I thought, and how lasting is that part of Miss Belle Robberson which she is taking from her experience, from the goodness of her life, to help in moulding the character of children and the life of the community.