

THE ILLUSTRATED BEE.

Published Weekly by The Bee Publishing Company, Bee Building, Omaha, Neb.
 Price, 5 cents per copy—per year, \$2.00.
 Entered at the Omaha Post Office as Second Class Mail Matter.
 For advertising rates address Publisher.
 Communications relating to photographs or articles for publication should be addressed "Editor The Illustrated Bee, Omaha."

Pen and Picture Pointers

Without regard to its origin, there is no more beautiful or appropriate custom than that of once each year decorating the graves of the dead soldiers with flowers as an evidence that their memory is cherished by the living. The idea was born while the patriotic fire engendered by the civil war still burned brightly. Children who marched in the first Decoration day parade are men and women now, with children of their own to teach the significance of the wreath that is laid on the sod above the sleeping soldier's breast. A deeper meaning is now associated with the day and its observance than was attached to it at first. On the first Decoration day the wreaths were woven and laid on the graves by hands of those who had sustained personal loss, and the fountain of whose tears was not yet dried up. Many of these have gone to join the gallant dead of that day, and "the blades of the grave grass quiver" over more of those who followed Old Glory through the south than there are whose eyes grow dim as they see the starry banner furled at the head of the column that marches to the cemetery. Other hands have taken up the work, other heads bow reverently at the graveside, and other hearts overflow as the flowers are strewn and the promise is renewed. Patriotism has not flagged, the soldier who risked his life for the flag is not forgotten. A new army has come up to follow the Grand Army, and we are living to realize more than ever that "a grateful nation remembers its dead." The young men who made up the army that went out against Spain and those who took part in the Philippine



MAYPOLE SCENE AT JULIUS MEYER'S BIRTHDAY PARTY—Photo for The Bee by Bostwick.

campaigns now have their share in the ceremonies of the day. It means as much to them as to the gray old veterans whose battles were fought before the boys of 1898-9 were born. It is not a day on which to talk of battle, only to remember the fight in which the hero fell. It is a day when the holiest recollection of the soldier is that of the comradeship of those

who are gone. The living again pledge their love to the dead, and the sentiment is a sacred one.

William B. Ely, the new president of the Nebraska State Medical society, is essentially a self-made man. His parents were too poor to give him even the advantages of the common school system of Massachusetts, where he was born, but by hard

work he managed to equip himself for the practice of the profession in which he has attained considerable eminence. He first studied music in a desultory way and found himself at the age of 27 in charge of the musical department of a New York seminary. This afforded him means to enter on the study of medicine, and nine

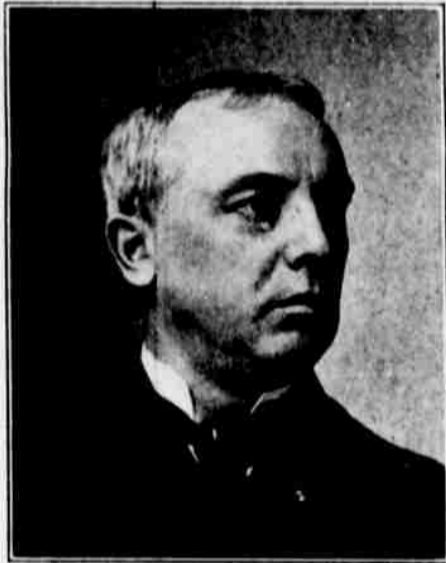
years later he found himself with the degree of M. D. After eleven years' practice in New York state he came to Nebraska in 1889, locating at Ainsworth, where he still lives. The doctor still holds to his membership in the Rochester (N. Y.) Pathological society, is a frequent contributor to the medical journals, as well as to the secular press upon political and economic subjects, and is an industrious student and earnest worker in his chosen profession.

Mr. Julius Meyer is not an unknown figure in the west. His manhood years have been spent on this side of the Missouri, and while he has called Omaha his home, his business has taken him to the confines of that great scope of country which is frequently summed up under the general heading of the west. Mr. Meyer's activity in other directions has given him no time to seek out a wife and his fiftieth birthday, which was recently celebrated in royal style, found him without a helpmeet or offspring, but with a wonderful array of "nephews" and "nieces" ranging in ages all the way up to when it would be indelicate to say, "Uncle Julius" had a perfectly lovely time with his flock.

Dr. E. N. Leake of Fremont, who has just been elected president of the Nebraska State Homeopathic Medical society, is a native of New York state. He took the classical course at Syracuse university and later received from the university the degree of A. M. He received the degree of M. D. from the New York Homeopathic College and Hospital in 1880 and at once began the practice of his profession in western Pennsylvania, remaining there until 1894, when he came to Fremont. He has a wife and one daughter and is an active member of the Methodist church.

The photographs of Mr. Richard Mansfield which The Bee presents this week, are the first that eminent actor has sat for or allowed to be taken of himself or his train during the wonderful trip he has made through the country with his great play of "Henry V."

Nebraska's New Public Library Commission



E. BENJAMIN ANDREWS—CHANCELLOR UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA.



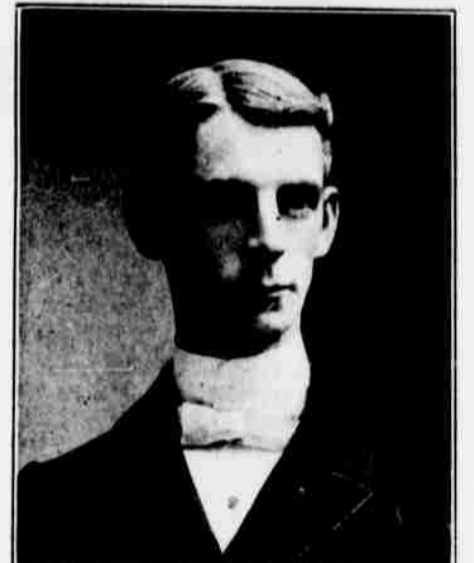
R. E. L. HERDMAN—CLERK AND LIBRARIAN OF SUPREME COURT.



J. I. WYER—LIBRARIAN UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA.



FRANK L. HALLER—OMAHA PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD.



W. K. FOWLER—STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION.

DID it ever occur to you that good reading is scarce and hard to get in our state? What would you say to the assertion that the least illiterate state in the union (pray pardon the allusion) does not contain one copy of a good book for each man, woman and child within its borders? And yet this statement seems to be entirely within reasonable bounds, considered in the light of the best data obtainable.

The total number of volumes in all the public and semi-public libraries in the state does not exceed 250,000, and these books are chiefly congested in the two large cities. Omaha has the only large public library in the state with its 60,000 volumes. All other Omaha libraries are small collections on special subjects, e. g., the libraries of the Omaha Law association, the New York Life Insurance company, the Presbyterian Theological seminary, for the use of a very limited number of people.

Lincoln has 110,000 volumes in her four libraries, but the state library, 43,000 volumes, is a law library, and the library of the University of Nebraska, 51,000 volumes, while freely open for reference to everybody, is of necessity largely a students' research library, with a comparatively small constituency. This leaves the entirely inadequate public library of 10,000 volumes to supply reading for 40,000 people.

Indeed, in the matter of voluntary recreative reading—the sort that unconsciously makes for culture and elevation; the sort that rests one after a hard day's work; that brings a laugh to the face and a lightness to the heart; the sort that we read for the pure joy of reading—our state is pitifully lacking.

Some Unsatisfactory Figures.

In all Nebraska there are not more than a dozen active free public libraries, and

these supply a tributary population of less than 200,000—not one-fifth of the people of the state. The other 800,000 Nebraskans—those in the smaller towns and, more than all, those on the farms—depend largely for their reading on the weekly newspapers, the cheaper monthly magazines, government and state publications distributed gratis, and on the few books which the pioneers brought west with them a generation or more ago.

Few Nebraskan homes outside the large towns can show a collection of books which could properly be called a library, and the best of bright, fresh, new books which the public library offers to the city resident are almost entirely unknown in the great country. Even in progressive Nebraska there are places where a good book is seldom seen, where the people have no way of knowing what books are good, and where the advent of a new book of any kind is hailed with joy.

The scanty library provisions in rural communities are due not so much to the failure to appreciate books as to certain practical difficulties in the way of getting them.

Public libraries in the smaller towns are impossible under the present law.

With the very low assessed value of property in this state and the small tax rate which may be levied for library purposes (until the last legislature only 1 mill) there are not more than six or eight towns in the state where the revenue for the entire permissible tax will amount to enough to support the smallest public library.

Indeed, the benefits from the amended law, permitting a levy of 2 mills, will be seen in placing libraries now established on a more satisfactory and useful basis rather than in the establishing of many new libraries until our population is substantially greater than now.

Another difficulty is to know what books

to get. The present conditions surrounding the retail book trade make it impossible to carry a representative stock in any but the very largest cities. The book store in the smaller places is usually a side line carried by the druggist or jeweler, and slight effort is made to interest the public in the best new book, chiefly, perhaps, because the man who owns the book store does not know his profession (for bookselling has become a profession in these days of experts and specialists) and the village book store sells chiefly stationery and textbooks.

Under these conditions has come into being, in pursuance of an act of the last legislature, the Nebraska Public Library commission, whose work is to be, in gross, to foster the love of books and to make possible the reading of good books wherever throughout the length and breadth of our state there shall be found those willing to read them, especially the farmers and residents of small towns.

This commission is a non-partisan board composed of the chancellor and librarian of the University of Nebraska, the superintendent of public instruction and the state librarian, who are members ex-officio. The appointment of the fifth member of the board is to be vested in the governor, who has just named Mr. Frank L. Haller of Omaha as commissioner for a term of five years.

This puts the work in charge of a board of representative educators and librarians, in whose hands it would seem may be lodged with entire safety the control and administration of Nebraska's library interests. The work of the commission will fall into two distinct lines—that of traveling libraries and that which may be called field work.

Traveling Libraries.

The traveling library which is about to be inaugurated in Nebraska under state control is a fixed and successful institution

in more than twenty other states. Its maintenance and control have been assumed without question as a proper function of the commonwealth, and the success of the library commissions under competent expert management is evidenced in the increased support which they are receiving from year to year. In New York state, where this work is most widely developed, the traveling libraries are sent mainly to three classes: Study clubs and literary societies, public schools and country communities.

Whenever ten or more taxpayers sign a request for a traveling library, guaranteeing the safety of the books and agreeing to pay transportation charges, a box of twenty-five or fifty carefully chosen volumes is sent out. Let us suppose that it goes to a farming community. The books are kept in some convenient place, easily accessible, where they are given out to readers, who return them when they are through in exchange for another book.

In Wisconsin, where the country work has been most successful, out of thirty-four stations twenty-two are in farm houses, nine in postoffices, two in country stores and one in a railroad station.

With each box goes a simple outfit for recording the books loaned and a number of small printed lists of the books.

The library may be kept from three to six months, when it is sent to another place, and the first community gets a fresh supply. These traveling libraries may be loaned, according to the provisions of the act, to any library, literary society, study club, or to any community or organization, whether incorporated or not, or to any body of citizens or taxpayers temporarily associated for the purpose.

It would seem wisest, perhaps, in Nebraska, as the work begins with a small appropriation of \$2,000 per annum (as compared with \$4,000 and \$7,000 per annum in other western states), to give preference

to the smaller towns and country communities and to the women's study clubs, many of which are sadly hampered in their study by lack of books.

Indeed, so keenly has this want been felt among the women's clubs in the country towns that an informal system of traveling libraries, numbering several hundred volumes, has been successfully operated by them for several years. It is now in charge of Mrs. B. M. Stoutenborough of Plattsmouth, the librarian of the State Federation of Women's Clubs. Indeed, the present law is in great measure due to the earnest work of the clubwomen of the state, who expect to turn over to the new commission the books now owned by them to form a substantial nucleus for the new work.

How Schools Are Helped.

Another direction in which the traveling libraries can be of great use to the people is to the public schools of the state. For example, any principle who is poorly provided with library facilities and who is desirous of supplementing the reading in his course in history, science or literature, would be able to send an outline of his work to the commission, with a list of the books available at the school, and get in return a library of twenty-five or fifty of the best books on the subject, and those which would be of most use to his students as supplementary reading. These books may be kept until the end of the school year. This work is carried to great lengths in New York state in connection with courses prescribed by the State Department of Education, and the presence of the state superintendent of public instruction on our new library commission should make it easy to co-operate effectively with the schools in the state.

Traveling library work in the United

(Continued on Eighth Page.)