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Office 1132 N street, Up Stairs,
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SARAH B. HARRIS

Editor

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OBSERVATIONS

The experiments in the conservation of moisture that Nebraska, Kansas and Dakota farmers have successfully tried are being thoroughly tested by experiment stations established by the Burlington. All systems of irrigation are expensive. If the melted snow and rain that the soil absorbs during the year can be kept there till the thirsty and lusty roots of July and August are ready to drink it there is nothing that can keep the price of Nebraska lands down.

It is said that it was a South Dakota farmer who first observed that the plants in his kitchen garden which had a fine powdery soil did not suffer for lack of water even in a dry season. He was quick to take a hint and the next year he built a sort of rotary, blunt pointed cultivator, the effect of which is to punch or pack the ground a few inches below the surface so that a considerable quantity of water will be held above the subsoil. Then with another ingeniously contrived machine he kept the surface soil always in a fine powdery condition. His theory was fully justified by the outcome, for his crop was in good shape all the season and gave a profitable yield while similar crops, tilled on the old plan were failures.

The South Dakota farmer who has discovered the way of salvation for Nebraska is an experimentalist of the latest German style. When he observed that his vegetables were crisp and succulent and his wheat was shrivelled and burnt he investigated the composition of

of the soil and found it identical in the kitchen garden and the wheat field. Only in the latter where it had been broken into lumps by the cultivator, the sun had reached the moisture and absorbed it. The kitchen garden soil was powdered by long cultivation into a thick dust that the sun did not penetrate and it remained in reservoir for the roots.

The Burlington is establishing experiment stations at Oberlin, Kas., and at McCook, Holdrege, Alma and Broken Bow, Neb. These places are in the middle of the dry belt and if crops respond to this treatment here the rest of Nebraska is safe.

Each station will consist of a forty-acre tract of non-irrigated, semi-arid land, and will be in charge of farmers who understand the details of the new plan and are at the same time posted on the nature and peculiarities of the soil and climate. All of the expenses will be borne by the railway company in the expectation that it will increase the product of lands already under cultivation and thus insure a larger traffic and also make salable lands which are now looked upon as worthless.

The three organizations which are known as the W. C. A. the senior Y. W. C. A. and the Y. W. C. A. have at last agreed to a constitution and board of governors which will unite their energy and prevent overlapping of effort and trebling of expenses which, to some extent, under the past regime has been inevitable.

A committee of three from each organization was appointed who wrote out a constitution which has been accepted by the governing boards of the three institutions. The constitution assigns to each a distinct mission. The general object is instruction and help to the women and children of the city who need it; as well as to provide an instrument for those who have time, money or talent by which they can help others.

Rudyard Kipling's "Captains Courageous," now running in "McClures," is a new example of his Shakespearean ability to make the experiences of other people his own. The illusion is perfect. "Two Years Before The Mast," though the author actually relates his experiences on a sailing vessel, has not the reality of Kipling's all imaginative report. "Captains Courageous" is the story of the son of a multi-millionaire father who travels with his mother across the ocean for his health. He is a regular cub and needs bringing up as badly as some of the university fraternity boys, but in his case he gets it, for he falls off the steam ship and is picked up by a Gloucester fishing boat where he is graduated at the end of a rope in a

short time. The skipper thinks he is lying when he tells of his father's millions and he knocks him down several times before Harvey—the boy learns the meaning of "Skipper." Meanwhile the skipper's son is a broth of a boy who is delighted to have the company of another boy, he teaches him many things. Harvey says to Dan, "Is your Uncle a farmer?" "Farmer!" shouted Dan. "There ain't water enough 'tween here and Hatt'rus to wash the furrermould off'n his boots. He's jest everlastin' farmer. Why, Harve, I've seen that man hitch up a bucket long toward sundown, and set twiddling the spigot to the scuttle-butt same's if twuz a cow's bag. He's thet much of a farmer." And here's "Long Jack" teaching Harvey the ropes: "There's good and just reason for ivery rope aboard, or else 'twould be overboard. D'ye follow me? 'Tis dollars and cents I'm putting into your pocket, ye skinny little supercargo, so that phwin ye have filled out ye can ship from Boston to Cuba and tell them Long Jack learned you. Now I'll chase ye around a piece, callin' the ropes an' you'll lay your hand on them as I call."

He began and Harvey, who was feeling rather tired, walked slowly to the rope named. A rope's end licked round his ribs and nearly knocked the breath out of him.

"When you own a boat," said Tom Platt, with severe eyes, "you can walk, till then take all orders at the run." But the discipline makes a man of a whining little imp who had come to think himself the centre of things.

The story is soaked in salt sea water and air. It is as refreshing as an ocean voyage to the inland constitutions of Nebraska.

The Origin of Populism.

The annual reports of the cabinet officers to the president contain some interesting information. The secretary of the interior and the secretary of agriculture give details of the paternalism of the government, the one telling us how many million acres of land the government has given away, and the other dwelling on the free seed distribution absurdity. Mr. Morton's favorite theme may appear trivial when considered in connection with the appalling figures of the national land grant; but the giving away of seeds is just as much a form of paternalism as the giving away of land, and it is possible that the time may come when the distribution of land will be adjudged as unwise as the scattering of seeds to the four winds.

In looking for the origin of populism in the west for the beginnings of that sentiment that expects so much from the government, it is a common thing to overlook what is, undoubtedly, one of

the prime causes of populist ideas. How were settlers first drawn to the agricultural west? By the gift of valuable lands. And what has been the effect of this generosity on the part of the nation? There is no intention to enter upon an elaborate discussion of this subject at the present time. Our purpose is merely to make a suggestion.

When public land is thrown open to settlement the class that is attracted is not the industrious substantial element that has made this country prosperous above every other country. The people who flocked to Oklahoma not long ago were people who were looking for "snaps," people who were attracted by the idea that something was to be obtained for nothing. The people who rushed to Kansas and Nebraska in the early days were of this class. Their movings elsewhere were not secure. They were an army of Macawbers. In Kansas and Nebraska they got good land without paying anything for it. The only consideration was the observance of conditions that were easily evaded, or whose fulfillment incurred no great effort. Thus in starting out in a new country they had their capital given to them, and obtaining so much for nothing—from government, what was more natural than that they should look to the same source for other blessings? The state legislatures of the western states in the early days offered much "encouragement" to the settlers, and so the farmer began to look to the state for what he could not get from the nation. The soil was so rich that its cultivation required but little attention, leaving the assisted farmer plenty of time to devote to various schemes for working the state or national government. It was a short step from free land to the beautiful sub-treasury plan. This last scheme was ridiculed, but it was not at all unreasonable or inconsistent. If the government could give the farmer land and supply him with seed why should it not lend him money on his product? And if it could do these things, why should money not be free? It would seem that the grange, the farmers' alliance and the populist party, were all a natural development of the western idea imparted by the nation itself.

Learned From the Realistic Drama.

Sometimes, I think the modern realistic drama is not appreciated at its real worth. As a factor in education it is second only to the new journalism. I have found it much more real and vastly more entertaining than life.

For instance, had it not been for my acquaintance with the realistic drama I never would have known of the peculiar eccentricities of the poverty stricken