

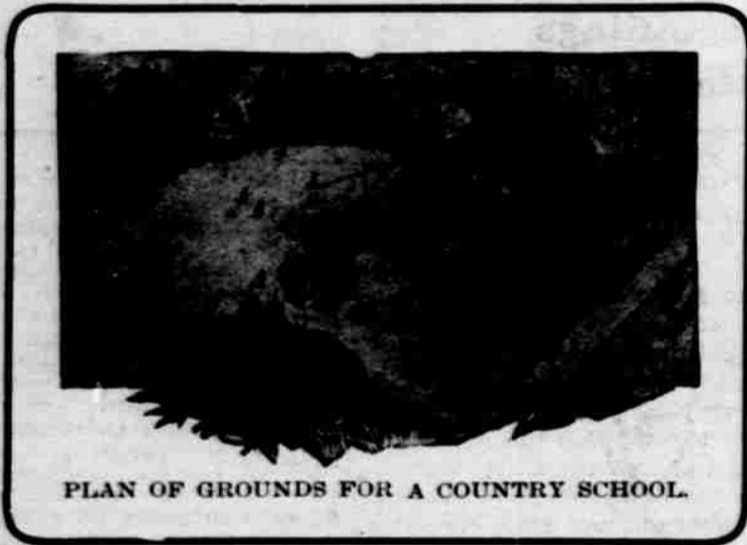
OBSERVATIONS

BY SARAH B. HARRIS

Nebraska Schools
"School Buildings and Grounds" in Nebraska is the title of a book of 278 pages recently edited by the state superintendent of education, Mr. W. K. Fowler. Besides information concerning schools it contains several hundred illustrations of the school houses of Nebraska. When it is considered that these buildings have been erected in a new state within thirty years the great and substantial growth of the state is put in concrete form. In 1869 there were in Nebraska 377 school districts and 74 school houses. In 1901 there were 6674 school districts and

which makes consolidation of schools necessary, the fact remains that it is the only rational solution of the question that has been offered."

According to these tables 169,195 Nebraska children are attending schools in which the average attendance is less than twenty. The teachers are paid small salaries and they are deficient in knowledge and general culture. The district receives the advantage of more culture and ability than it pays for; but at less expense to each district, school buildings may be erected at a common centre, competent teachers employed and good schools



PLAN OF GROUNDS FOR A COUNTRY SCHOOL.

6773 schools. Of these 320 are brick, 25 are stone, 132 are log and 464 are made of sod. There remain 5826 wooden structures, four iron buildings and one made of baled straw.

According to Superintendent Fowler's tables compiled from the reports of county superintendents for the school year of 1900 and 1901, there are 489 schools in the state with an average attendance of five or less; 1,841 with ten or less; 3,528 with 15 or less; 4,771 with twenty or less. There are about 6,300 strictly rural school districts. The superintendent concludes that: "This attendance in three-fourths of our rural schools is too small for vigorous, interesting and profitable work, educationally, socially or financially. No school can claim conditions for good work if it have less than twenty-five pupils; yet there are 4,771 rural schools in Nebraska with an average daily attendance ranging from one to twenty pupils. The pupils in these small rural schools must be collected into larger and better schools with better teachers who are better paid. It does not matter how much we deplore the condition

conducted, with a saving of the pupils' time and energy. The experiment has been tried, notably in Ohio, with great success.

With such a system the pupils must be transported to the centralized school. Country prices for transportation prevail in the centralized region and the cost of transportation is more than overbalanced by the saving in teachers' hire, heating, et cetera. An Illinois teacher who visited Ohio especially to investigate the system says that the man who collects all the children in one district and carries them to and from the school receives for his work about \$1.20 a day. His passengers are about twenty in number. His route is five miles long, that is, starting from the first home the distance to the school is five miles. The actual distance traveled every day is greater because of the necessary detours to the homes of the children.

The establishment of such a system in Nebraska means a better education for the 165,195 children who are now attending the poorly equipped, inadequately taught small country schools. The numerous illustrations of the sod

school houses and of one room buildings show the present inadequate system.

The great men who never went to any other school than the district of their childhood afforded were great in spite of the school, though the small school has one great advantage: if it chance to have a teacher of imagination and appreciation for greatness in embryo, the stray children of genius who may attend his school have a larger chance of being identified and properly encouraged and stimulated. The city public school teacher with a school of fifty or more has little time to make individual studies of her pupils, and the exceptional child suffers for exceptional treatment. But with modern conditions the city schools employ the best teachers that can be employed for the small salaries paid. If a district school teacher discovers unusual talent she is quickly transferred to a larger school.

Mr. Fowler discusses tree-planting on the school grounds. The nursery plan of setting trees here and there without regard to the composition or pictorial effect of the whole has been generally adopted. He suggests that setting the trees thickly together at the rear and sides of the school grounds will give the building and the grounds a picturesqueness that will appeal to the beauty-loving eyes of children. In the illustrations published in connection with this review the plan is presented.

In regard to the heating and lighting of school rooms in general and the systems in use in Nebraska the book gives valuable information. What we were, is illustrated by the sod school-house. What we are is illustrated by the magnificent new high school building at Omaha. If education itself and the methods of drawing out the best in children had developed as rapidly as the buildings which house teachers and pupils, the future would indeed be bright. This publication which takes account of progress by pictures and statistics is valuable testimony of the present condition of the schools of the state.

The Poor Boy's College

Superintendent Cooley of the Chicago public schools believes that the high schools should be regarded as the academy of the poor rather than as a preparatory school for colleges. On account of lack of funds it is proposed to discontinue the eighty-nine public kindergartens after June first until such time as the school revenue is adequate to open them again. Superintendent Cooley regards the kindergarten as of inestimable value to a city like Chicago where it is necessary to begin the English education of the children of foreigners at a very early age.

Speaking of changes in educational ideas and the relation of education to the masses of the people it is likely

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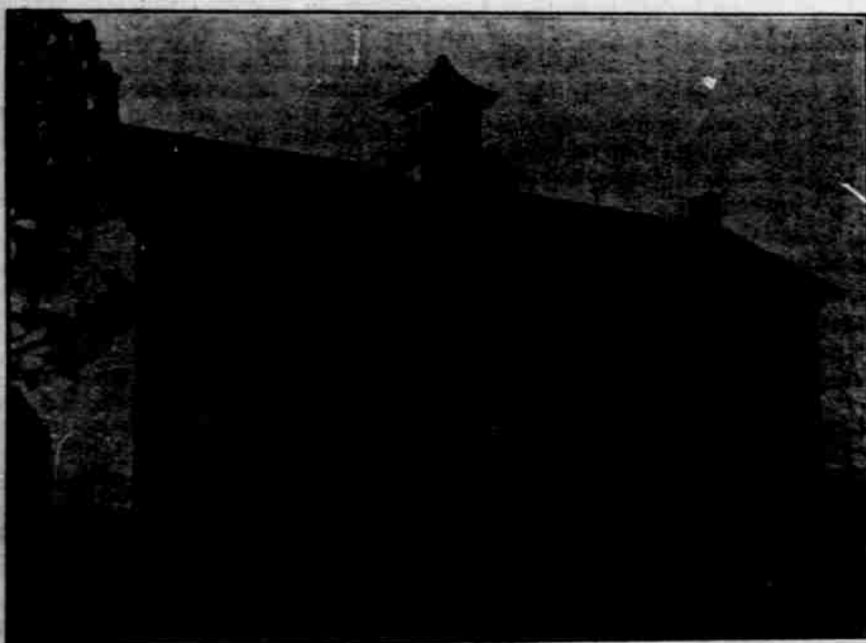
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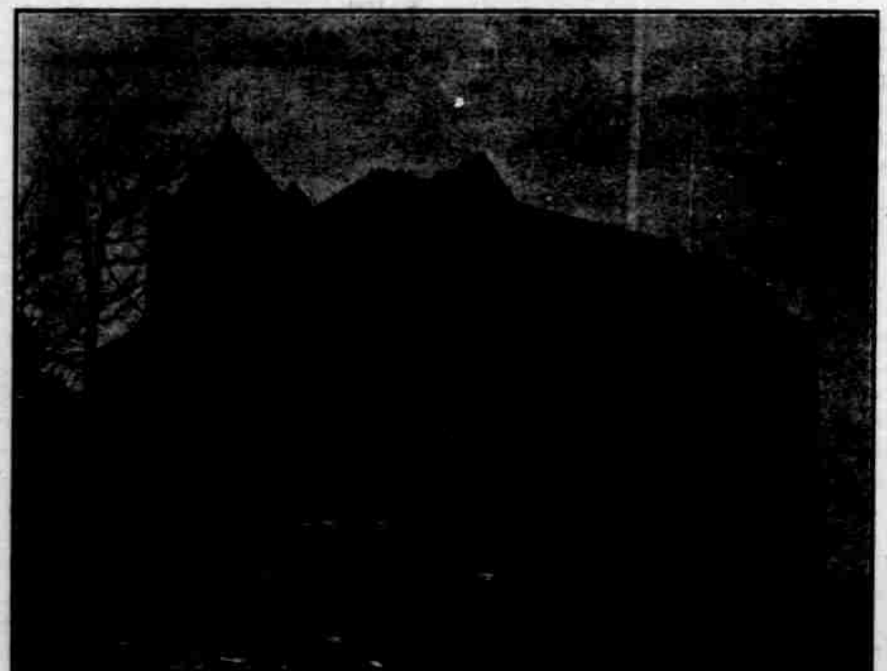
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