

Nebraska's Public School System

The School and the Home

It is the purpose of these articles to give to the readers of The Bee a comprehensive and unprejudiced view of the work as it is carried on in the public schools of our state—to meet, and, if possible, answer correctly questions of such vital interest to us all. What are these educational movements that are sweeping our state today? What is the value of the so-called fads? Is it true that we are neglecting the essential for the non-essential? These are but a few of the questions that present themselves.

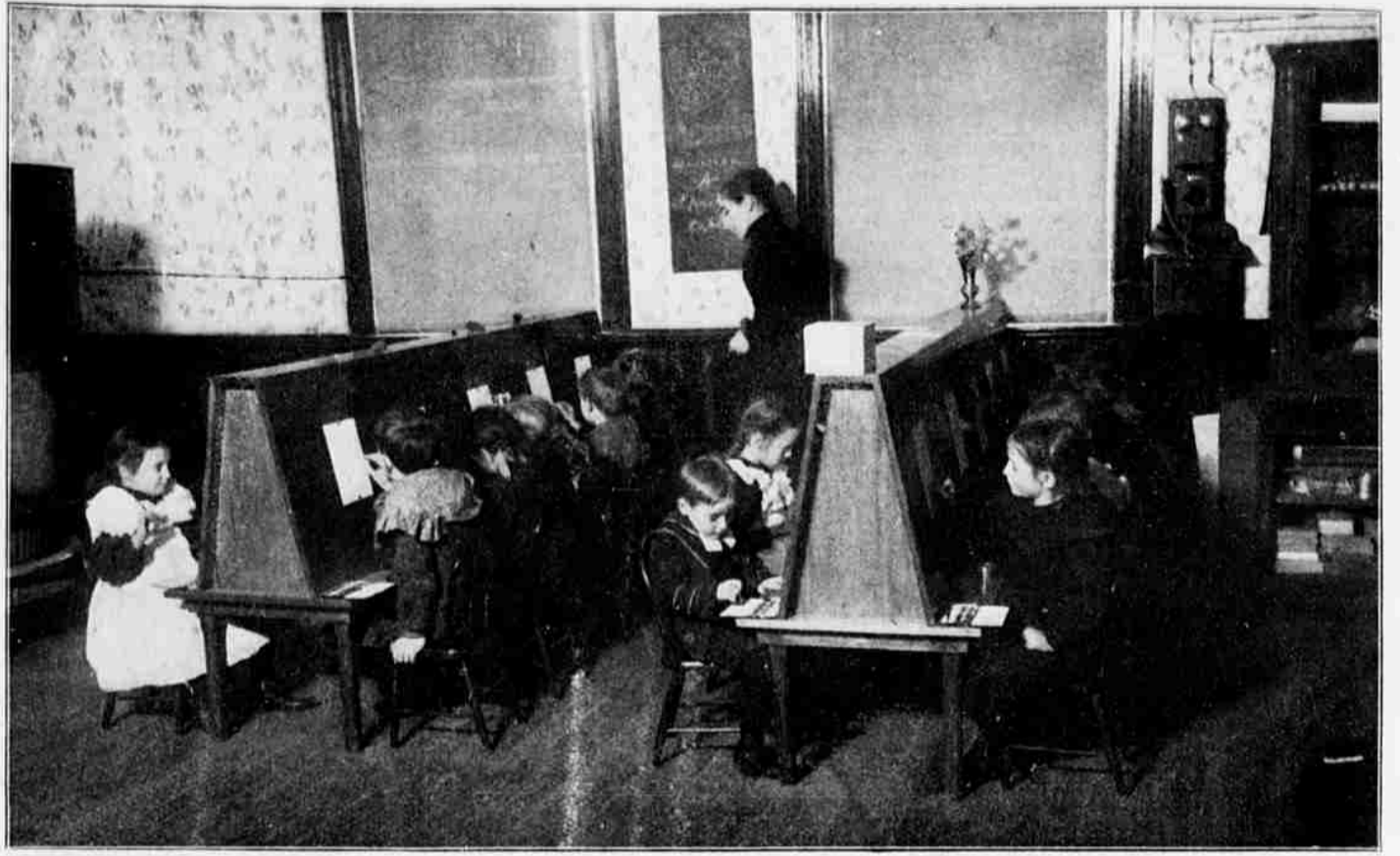
Today, more than ever before, our educators are awakening to the fact that the school is not a thing by itself. It is but a part of the community life, and too often, instead of the school determining what the community shall be, the community determines the character of the school. The work of the teacher is made or marred by the influence of the home. The demand for intelligent co-operation on the part of parents and teachers has given rise to the patrons' meetings, educational meetings, mothers' meetings, etc.—all the same thing under different names—that are springing up on all sides. That the movement has met with ready response on the part of parents has been due not so much to the enthusiasm of the teacher as the natural interest of the parent in the welfare of his child.

The simplest plan of patrons' meetings is the one which has been carried on for some

ings has been not so much educational advancement as the bringing of teacher and parent into closer sympathy, and in this it has been highly successful. Not only have teacher and parent come to better understand one another, but mothers, through exchanging experiences, have been helped to solve many of the problems of the home.

This year, however, a new movement has been started and it is hoped that these meetings will prove a wedge for the introduction of those of a more educational character. An organization has been formed whose purpose it is to bring together all of the educational forces of the city and to arrange a systematic plan of work, which may be carried out in the meetings of the various school districts. One meeting of the general organization has been held and the results are beginning to show themselves in a better attendance of both fathers and mothers at the patrons' meetings. In some instances these have been held in the evening, and while social intercourse is still one of the leading features, topics relating to the school have been introduced and freely discussed. Dr. Gordon usually arranges to be present and explain the plans and purposes of the board and teachers.

Quite a different plan was the one carried out during the last year by Superintendent Dinsmore of Beatrice. There, instead of different buildings taking up the work independently, the teachers worked together. They were divided into groups of three—a leader with two assistants. These three



NEBRASKA PUBLIC SCHOOLS—GRADE I, HARLAN BUILDING, FALLS CITY—MISS NETTIE SNIDOW, TEACHER—CLASS AT PAINTING TABLES AFTER A STUDY OF FIR TREE.

leader, wrote two papers. These papers were read and discussed, afterward typewritten and mimeographed and a copy given to each teacher.

Patrons were invited to these meetings and took part in the discussions. From an educational standpoint they were most profitable, but as patrons' meetings they were not so successful as they might have been, for the reason that the patrons felt that the meetings belonged more particularly to the teachers.

This year, however, a new plan has been tried which has proved all that was desired. An educational meeting has been held once a month. These are held in the evening in order that fathers as well as mothers may be able to attend. The program is divided between patrons and teachers and topics of general interest discussed. The subjects of two very interesting meetings were: "Home Study and Study and Health," and "Discipline at School and in the Home." Many superintendents over the state are planning to have at least one meeting in the coming year. Preparations have been made by Superintendent Stephens of Fairbury for a meeting to be held in January. The topics for discussion are: "Manual Training in the Public Schools," "The Teaching of True Patriotism" and "Proper School Environment."

Perhaps the most enthusiastic meetings of the year have been held at Albion under the supervision of Fred Abbott. A formal program has been arranged for each meeting consisting of a paper by a teacher or patron followed by a general discussion. At the close of these discussions a question box is employed to bring up questions pertaining to any phase of school work, management or discipline. The attendance has been as large as the room would accommodate and the discussions have been deeply interesting. The results have already more than proved the success of the plan in that community.

Some superintendents have hesitated about following the movement for fear parents might be more critical and hinder rather than help the work. It is not the purpose of these meetings to provide a place where

teachers and parents may bring out each other's shortcomings, and in each place that they have been held the spirit has been quite the opposite. Such criticism as has been stimulated has been of an intelligent nature rather than that which arises from ignorance of the subject. To accomplish the aims of each the home and school must go hand-in-hand and each movement which brings them into closer harmony is a step higher. A few months ago a certain Nebraska teacher paid a visit to a cousin—a young mother, with two little children, the youngest in the midst of her first year in school. Just before her departure the mother said: "Ellen, I want your advice. It seems to me that the children are becoming more fretful each day. Since reading Mrs. Wallace's article, 'The Murder of the Modern Innocents,' I have concluded that they are being overworked at school. What do you think of my giving them a few weeks' rest?"

The teacher smiled. "You have asked an honest question," said she, "and I will give you an honest answer. My advice is this: Send the children to bed at 8 o'clock instead of 9:30 or 10; start them off to school on a little more substantial breakfast than hot cakes and coffee; wrap them up well and give them at least an hour a day in the fresh air, and, above all, visit the school yourself and don't take some other person's word for it."

Fortunately the advice was received in the same spirit in which it was given and the children are still in school. The story has its moral—yet mothers are not the only ones to learn. Many a teacher would be less critical if she could glance behind the scenes and know something of the self-sacrificing love and patience it requires to care for a household of little ones—that, if the mother seems to have no thought of self-improvement, too often it is because in her busy day there is no place for it.

The comparatively new educational meeting is rapidly finding its place, yet perhaps after all the one which has the greatest value is the little meeting of two members, where, in heart to heart talks, mother and teacher are led to feel that their interests are the same, their purpose one—the development of the little one entrusted to their mutual care. If she will but improve her opportunities the teacher may be a powerful factor in raising the standard of the homes in her community, at the same time receiving from devoted mothers, earnestly striving to improve themselves for their children's sake, a broader sympathy and deeper sense of the great motherhood that must ever be the basis of true teaching. When the teacher is at heart a mother, the mother a teacher, the school a home and the home a school, something of the conditions toward which we are striving will have been attained. L. S. W.

A Prosperous Year for the Grant Paving Co.

With increasing prosperity comes a general demand for public improvements, particularly for street paving and permanent sidewalks. During the present year many permanent improvements have been made in Omaha.

The Grant Paving company has paved many streets and constructed more than 100,000 square feet of slagolitic sidewalks. The following streets have been paved with asphaltum by this company during the year: Dodge, Thirty-first avenue to Thirty-fourth street; Mason, Thirty-first to Thirty-third streets; Fortieth, Farnam to Jackson streets; Thirty-ninth, Farnam street to Dewey avenue; Thirty-second avenue, Farnam to Dodge; Twenty-second, Leavenworth to Mason; Capitol avenue, Sixteenth to Seventeenth, and from Eighteenth to Twentieth; approach to new Union Pacific depot; also about 4,000 square yards of macadam paving at the new freight depot of the Omaha Bridge and Terminal company.

In addition to its street operations the Grant company crushes the slag output of

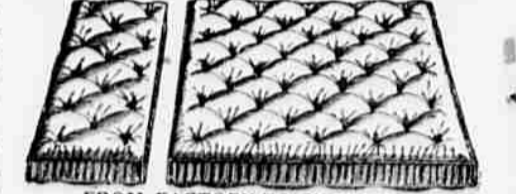
the smelting works, its plant being in operation during the entire year, the product this year reaching nearly 20,000 cubic yards. The superiority of crushed slag for concreting purposes and street paving has made such a demand for the material that the company readily uses it in its own work and disposes of its entire output. This material was used during 1898 exclusively in all asphalt street paving laid in Omaha. The sidewalks constructed by the Grant company of cement and slag are the finest in the country and the million square feet heretofore laid attest its durability.

The Grant company has under contract several streets to be paved with asphaltum as soon as spring opens up and its officials predict a large amount of public work during 1900.

Camera Amateurs at the Paris Exposition

Amateur photographers will receive excellent treatment at Paris. The French commissioners have made a ruling concerning the taking of pictures at the exposition. Cameras will be allowed on the exposition grounds after a permit has been secured from the exposition authorities. A charge of 10 cents will be made for this and the applicant will be required to furnish his name, age and other personal data, together with his residence in Paris. Only the buildings and general groups can be taken. Photographs of individual exhibits will not be allowed, as the patent laws of France guarantee the patentee against photographs of articles exhibited. A charge of \$2 was made for similar privileges at the World's Fair in Chicago and photographs were even then taken with difficulty.

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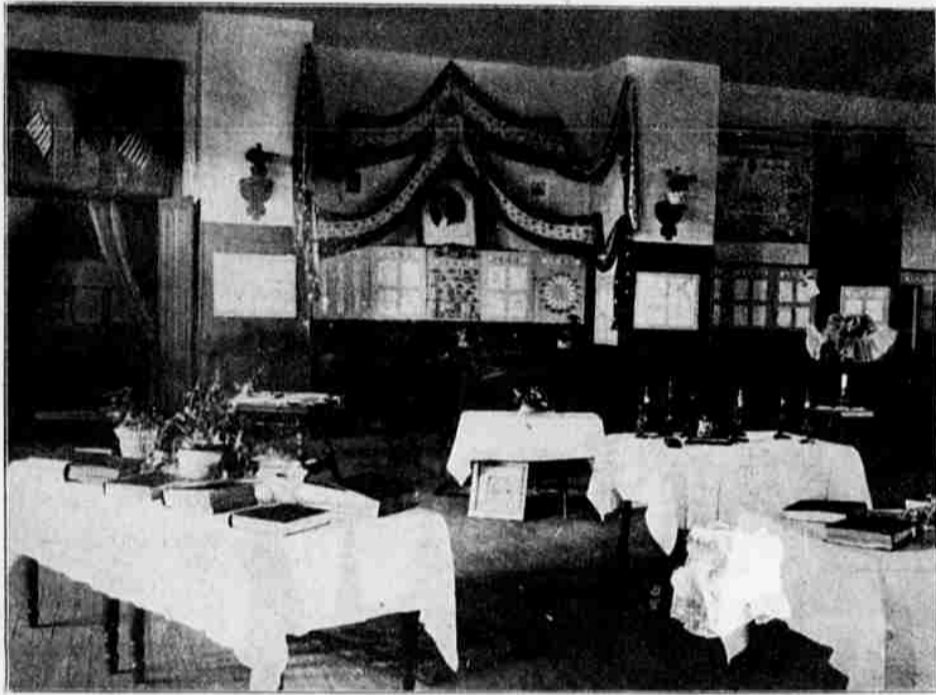
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NEBRASKA'S PUBLIC SCHOOLS—PATRONS' DAY EXHIBIT AT CRETE.

time by several of the Lincoln schools, as well as a few schools in other places.

The teachers of a building appoint a certain afternoon on which the parents are invited to meet the teachers at the close of school. Many of them, however, do not wait till that time, but spend the afternoon in visiting the work of the different grades. At the close of school the guests are taken to one room where an exhibit of school work has been prepared. Here an informal reception is held. The teachers serve light refreshments, and, while there is usually no special program prepared, all join in a general discussion of topics pertaining to school work. The purpose of these meet-

were responsible for the program of the meeting assigned to them. The subject for the year was: "The Moral Life and Development of the Child." Every group of three had a sub-topic under this general head. The leader divided his sub-topic into two parts, giving one to each assistant. He then made an outline of the work to be done, assigned readings, observations and perhaps experiments or questions and each teacher in the city was given something to do, to contribute to the papers that were to be written. These were handed in within a given time and from this material and whatever else could be obtained the assistants, with the help and direction of the



NEBRASKA PUBLIC SCHOOLS—FIRST GRADE, PIERCE, MISS EVA E. MIXER, TEACHER—CLASS AT SAND TABLE IN A LESSON ON THE SPHERE.