

Nebraska's Public School System

Leaves from a Visitor's Notebook

It was the last period in the afternoon of an unseasonably warm day—just the time when a teacher, and especially a primary teacher, does not care for visitors. The building was an old one and the walls certainly were not the most inviting background for decoration. Yet the room had a cozy homelike air. The pictures were inexpensive, but attractive. A little washstand, with basin, mirror and towel stood in one corner, and a swing was suspended from the ceiling at the back of the room. When we entered Miss C. was conducting a lesson in Speer work. The children at their seats were preparing a reading lesson and so quiet were they that the voices of those reciting might easily have been heard from any part of the room. The members of the class were gathered about the table from which each had taken two blocks, about which he was to make some statement:

"My two blocks are equal," said one.

"If this block cost one dollar, this one

asked Miss B., but as no one seemed ready she turned quickly to a boy with great, soft brown eyes and said: "Burtie, close your eyes. Now, who can tell me the color of Burtie's eyes?"

Up went the hands and "brown," "brown," "brown," came from the children.

The Eye Test.

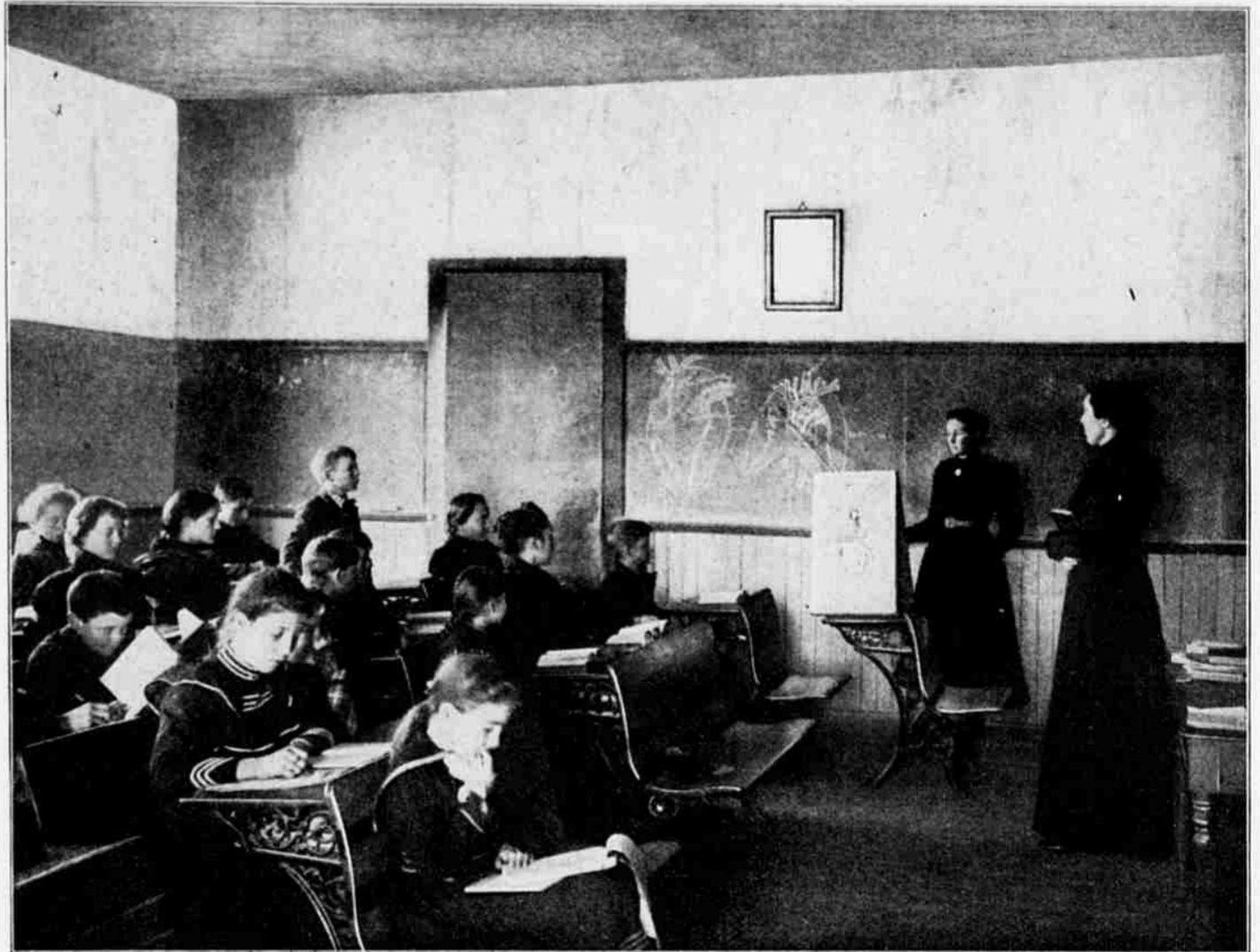
"Right," said Miss B. "I see you are all sure of Burtie's eyes. Charlie, you may close your eyes." (Charlie was a little fellow with a mass of red hair and hazel eyes.) "Now," continued Miss B., "who will tell me the color of Charlie's eyes?" A moment's hesitation, then several volunteered an answer. "Blue," said one, "brown," said another, but most of the children were uncertain.

"You are not sure of Charlie's eyes. What is the first thing that you notice when you look at him?"

"His hair," was the ready reply.

"I wonder if you can tell me now when we should tell the color of the hair and eyes," said Miss B. Up went half a dozen hands.

"Oh, now I see," said one boy. "When it is something we would notice we tell about



NEBRASKA'S PUBLIC SCHOOLS—SEVENTH GRADE, PHYSIOLOGY, AT GENOA—MISS MARIE HENDERSON, TEACHER.

This was received with disapproval, for when she had finished several started to give it differently. However, before half a dozen words were read, the place had been yielded to a little girl whose manner of reading was a decided improvement on the one who had preceded her. But even this was not satisfactory to all, for one of the boys read it the third time, raising his voice at the lines—

"Ho! what have we here.

"So very round, and smooth, and sharp?"

The little girl who read the fourth stanza evidently satisfied the class, for it was not repeated. A slight pause and then one of the larger boys read the fifth. The rhythm of the poetry apparently appealed to him more than the thought, for there was a decided tendency to emphasize the last

word of each line. Again half a dozen voices started out on the correction and again, without the slightest confusion, the place was yielded to one.

So the reading was continued throughout the whole poem, some stanzas being read as many as four or five times before each child was satisfied. After the poem was finished the superintendent took the floor and a few well-directed questions revealed that many had looked beyond the surface of the poem, had divined the author's purpose in writing it and had recognized the type which the blind men represented.

"We do not have this kind of recitation very often," said the superintendent, "as the best readers are most critical and take the lead in the corrections, so it is more of a help to the strong than to the weak ones. However, an occasional lesson interests them and helps to arouse a spirit of competition for good reading.

School Room Decoration.

From a glance at the room an observer might have guessed something of the tastes of the teacher and pupils who spent their time there. The south windows were filled with plants, on the desk stood a vase of great golden chrysanthemums and a bowl of goldfish ornamented the work table. It was recess time and Miss S. had no idea that she was conducting a recitation. About her was gathered a group of eager little children, displaying their treasures. One little fellow, his eyes shining with delight, exclaimed: "Oh, Miss S., I have a web. It was my brown caterpillar with the dark brown band around him. I noticed he was lazy for two or three days. I thought he was getting ready to spin and now he has finished. I had another caterpillar just like this and he spun a web, too. Will the butterflies be alike?" "Suppose you put your two cocoons in the same box," said Miss S., "then we can tell when they come out in the spring." "I have a new web, too," said one little girl, holding out the soft, silky thing for inspection, "and I'm sure it will make a new kind of butterfly. It came from one of those big green worms that live on milkweed. They are just the color of the milkweed leaves." "That is so we can't find them, isn't it, Miss S.?"

said one of the children, "and so the birds won't see them." "Then what makes my caterpillar this color?" asked a little boy. "He is green, with little red stripes." "Where did you get it?" asked Miss S. "From the maple trees in our yard. There are lots of them there and they are all just like this. Oh, now I know! The maple leaves are green and the stems are red, so the caterpillar can hide better if he is green and red, too." The children examined the tiny creature, a new wonder shining in their eyes, that so small and mean a thing was not too insignificant to receive a share of the Creator's thought for its protection. The bell rang and the children hurried away to their lessons, but that the essential lesson of the morning had not been taught, who shall say?

The Sad Errand of a Reporter

New York morning papers printed a story recently that Billy West, the minstrel, was dying in the apartments of Pete Dailey, his brother-in-law, at Broadway and Thirtieth street. That afternoon a young man from the Dramatic Mirror was sent to get a sketch of West's career. He rang Comedian Dailey's door bell and Dailey answered the ring.

"I'm after an obituary notice of Billy," said the reporter in a low and solemn voice. "I'm sorry he is dying."

"Yes," said Dailey, wiping what might have been a tear from his eye. "Poor Billy!"

"I'd like to see him before he dies," said the reporter.

"His doctors say no one is to see him," said Dailey, in his best funeral voice.

"But I really would like to take one last look at him," said the reporter.

"All right," said Dailey, in a whisper, follow me."

Dailey plunked a dead march on an imaginary banjo and tiptoed through the hall, followed by the reporter. He opened a door suddenly and pointed to a man sitting at a table eating a beefsteak.

"There's Billy," he said.



NEBRASKA'S PUBLIC SCHOOLS—HIGH SCHOOL BUILDING AT COLUMBUS.

would cost one-half of a dollar," said another.

"This block is three halves of this one."

"My small block is two-thirds of my large block."

"If my small block weighed one pound, my large block would weigh four pounds."

"Tell me that in another way," said Miss C.

"Four is the ratio of my large block to my small block."

"Can you tell it to me in still another way?"

A moment's pause, then, "One-fourth is the ratio of my small block to my large block."

"Who will find the block whose ratio to my block is three halves?" asked Miss C. and it was quickly produced.

"Now that we have finished our work," said Miss C. when each child had had his turn and the class were in their seats, "let us have a game."

Basket Ball Game.

She hung a basket above the blackboard and gave each of three children a large rubber ball to toss into it. This was not such an easy task as it appeared, and it usually took several well-directed attempts to succeed. When a ball went into the basket, the children clapped their hands for the winner and another child took his place.

While they were busy with this game Miss C. produced a target and toy gun with arrows, which was hailed with delight. Each had a turn and some of the children showed remarkable precision of aim. One noticeable feature of this work was the quiet manner in which it was carried on. Each child entered heartily into the spirit of the play, yet never seemed to forget to run lightly and laugh softly. The look of sincere regret on the little faces when Miss C. announced that it was the hour for closing must have been a gratification to any teacher who sought to make her school attractive.

"We are to have a lesson in English," said Miss B. when asked what the subject of her Fourth grade recitation was to be. "We are working with exercises in visualization of person. Yesterday," Miss B. continued to the class, "we were to visualize a little child. Today we will visualize our mothers. Harry may tell the first thing to be done."

"I would tell what she is doing," said Harry.

"Why?" asked Miss B.

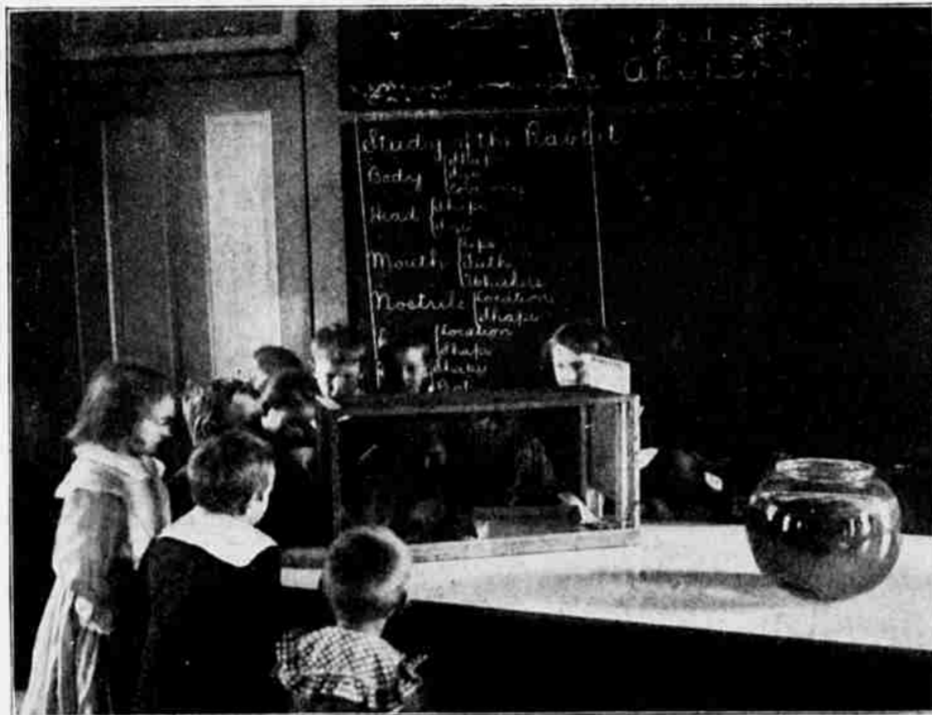
"Because it helps others to see her as I do and shows why I happened to remember her in that act."

"What would you tell, Emma?"

"I would tell how she looked and the color of her hair and eyes."

"In visualizing is it always necessary to tell the color of the hair and eyes?"

Emma was not sure. "Who can tell?"



NEBRASKA'S PUBLIC SCHOOLS—FIRST GRADE AT BEATRICE STUDYING THE RABBIT.

it, and if we would not notice that we tell about something that we would notice."

"Very good," said Miss B., "and now you may write about your mothers."

"The teacher of this school is sick," said the superintendent, "and one of the High school girls is taking her place. I think," he added to the class, "that you had better conduct your own reading lesson this afternoon. You may proceed as if you were alone."

There was a moment's pause, then a little girl in a front seat read the first stanza of the lesson, John G. Saxe's poem, "The Blind Men and the Elephant." Her manner of rendering it was almost beyond criticism and she had not much more than finished when a boy in the back of the room started out on the second stanza.

"The first approached the elephant, and happening to fall," etc., placing the emphasis upon elephant. But his seatmate had looked a little deeper into the thought of the poem and seeing that each blind man was to approach the elephant in turn he recognized the fact that "first" instead of "elephant" was the word to receive the emphasis, so when his companion had finished he re-read the stanza according to his interpretation of it.

Reading Experiments.

A voice from the other side of the class started out on the third stanza, reading with such rapidity as to obscure the thought.



TABLE ROCK (NEB.) 1899 FOOT BALL TEAM.