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BOYS' AND GIRLS' SHORT COURSES

Proving Popular and Much Good Accomplished.

TEACH THE CHILDREN TO THINK

By Howard J. Gramlich, Department of Agricultural Extension, University of Nebraska.

Some three years ago the farmers' institute department of the state university and the state department of education conceived the idea of having a week's short course at several of the county seat towns in Nebraska for boys and girls from the rural districts. At that time several of these short courses were held and all proved quite satisfactory. Since then there have been a few held each year. During the last year the department of agricultural extension of the university farm has conducted six of



GIRLS AT 3RD JUDGING HORSES AND COWS.

these boys' and girls' short courses in agriculture and domestic science, and plans for the coming years are to conduct even more, as they are proving popular, and the department believes a great deal of good can be accomplished for the amount of money expended.

Boys and girls enjoy the course because of the novelty of it—the variation which it offers from their regular school work and the practical value which they see in it. Needless to say, the boy or girl fifteen years old who has never been away from home to speak of and who has spent practically all of his or her time in the district school, appreciates coming to the county seat town and spending a week with other boys and girls from over the county and learning a few practical things which they can go home and put into practice.

These short courses are conducted in conjunction with the county superintendent in each county, it being the duty of the county superintendent to advertise it in advance and get representatives from as many districts in the county as he or she possibly can. In some counties the superintendent has been able to have a representative from practically every district. The department recommends getting one boy and one girl from each district, preferably the oldest ones or the ones farthest along in their school work. While it is true that the younger children cannot grasp all that is taught them, they enjoy the week's work and secure from their older brothers and sisters what they were not able to get themselves. As a rule the boys average over fourteen years of age. At the Beaver City short course, held the first week in April of this year, the boys averaged slightly over sixteen years in age. A group of boys averaging that old, practically every one from the country and all eager to learn, make a fine field for the advancement of agriculture. Many of them living so far from Lincoln will be unable to continue their education



JUDGING HOLSTEINS, BEAVER CITY.

beyond the district and high school, and this line of education offered by the department fills a much needed requirement in their future lives. Those few who are able to come to Lincoln and take the agricultural school course are only the more anxious to come after having had a taste of it. Likewise, it is the same with the girls who take the work in the domestic science classes.

These short courses, or schools, as they are called, are sometimes accused of being out teaching the boys how to farm. Perhaps in a way this holds. However, as a matter of fact the prime purpose of these short courses is to get the boys to thinking. Many of the things discussed at these short courses have been discussed by the parents at home. However, the short course emphasizes the why and whereof of everything, and this is the part which interests the curiosity of the developing mind.

The work given to the boys at these short courses consists quite largely of stock judging, rope tying, corn and grain judging, and similar subjects which all American boys are interested in. Stock judging proves perhaps as interesting and of as practical a value as any other phase of the work. Boys like horses. However, when it comes right down to telling the good and bad points of a horse it does not take one long to detect that the boys have been used to merely

making a casual glance at the horse and then passing on. The work which can be given them in a short time at one of these short courses merely teaches them to look at an animal a second time and notice all the points. Many boys do not know the common colors in horses when they see them, and a little work is given along this line, as well as estimating weight, girth and such points. It would be impractical to go into the real depth of horse judging with the boys and endeavor to consider the matter technically. However, in several afternoon's work they are able to become very much interested in the horse and to begin to notice a good many new points which they had not noticed before.

The same method is used with the milk cows, beef animals, hogs and other stock which are available. As a general rule several afternoons in the week are spent in taking the boys on excursions to good stock farms within a mile or two of town. In many cases stock are available which are fully equivalent, if not better, than much of the stock which is available for the boys taking the agricultural course at the state agricultural school.

In the rope-tying work the boys bring 5 cents worth of quarter-inch, three-strand rope and the first afternoon they are asked to tie all of the knots which they know. As a general rule they can all make a common overhand knot, a slip knot, perhaps a square knot and one or two others. It is very seldom that a boy is able to make more than five knots. Before the week is out some twenty knots, including splices, halters and braids, are made. Any boy can make these various handy contrivances and after once learning how to make them will very seldom forget. Of course, the quarter-inch rope is easier to work with than the large rope. However, after mastering the art of making splices and braids with a small rope anyone can make the same splice, braid or knot in a large rope. These are very simple, indeed, and yet it is surprising to go out into districts where men are handling ropes constantly and find how few really know how to make these knots and splices in the correct manner.

An instance of this was called to notice recently at the 3rd short course, where a boy twenty years old came in and stayed until 6 o'clock one night in order to be taught how to make a long splice. When he started to leave the hall for his ten-mile trip



JUDGING A CLASS OF FOUR DRAFT GELDINGS, BEAVER CITY.

home he made the statement that the knowledge he had gained would have proven worth \$100 to him last summer. One afternoon when they were very busy with the hay they broke the main rope and had to go clear to town for another one, simply because no one in the crew, including himself, knew how to splice the rope into a small enough splice so that it would go through the pulley, and, as usual, it rained that night.

The work in domestic science for the girls includes principally work in cooking and sewing. It is needless to say that both of these prove very interesting to girls and extremely practical. In the sewing work the girls make various stitches and before the week is over they make a handbag, apron and various other articles. In the cooking they are given the food principles and many recipes are prepared. They are encouraged to go home and cook the same dishes and bring back samples the next day. Some girls are inclined to look upon the work of the household as beneath them and when they are taught little simple things right in the school room they begin to look upon manual labor in a different light. Likewise with the boys; the little work which is given them is given with the idea of keeping them better satisfied on the farm rather than to try and pull them away.

Some people are opposed to their children being taught the lines mentioned. They seem to think they themselves are competent to teach all the child should know about such things and that the school room is the place where they should learn Latin, algebra, Greek and European history—things which are doubtless valuable to any child from a cultural standpoint, but which they perhaps will never hear of after they leave school, while these simple things which are taught them regarding their own work and work which many of them will pursue throughout their entire lives will constantly come before them.

If these short courses can accomplish nothing more than to get the boys and girls to thinking about the practical things and to make them better satisfied with their own conditions as they are at home, they have accomplished all that is to be expected of them.

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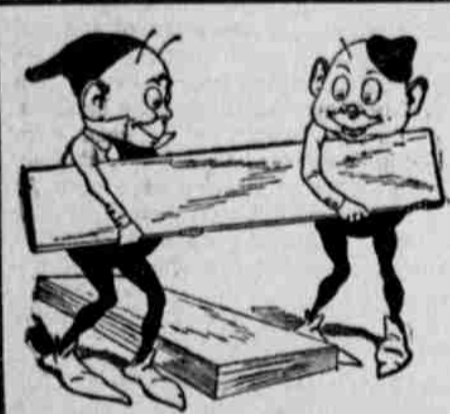
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