

The Woman's Club Movement in Nebraska

It was in March, 1868, that Sorosis, the pioneer woman's club, was organized in New York City with twelve members and with Alice Cary for president. It was in March, 1889, that Sorosis, to celebrate the attainment of her majority, called together all the clubs she could hear of, ninety-seven in number, and proposed to them that idea of a permanent national organization which developed a year later into the General Federation of Women's Clubs. It was in 1894, under the policy of Mrs. Ellen M. Henrotin, president of the general federation, that associations of clubs into state organizations became general. The history of what is

it. Of these several are devoted to American history, and two at least, the clubs of Fairbury and Norfolk, are studying Spanish history, grouping with it the literature, art and music of Spain, while one, the Fortnightly of Lincoln, is making a similar study of Russian. Literature ranks next to history in point of popularity, not less than forty-three clubs reporting upon it. In this department Shakespeare and Browning have many disciples, but more than one club is reading American literature and at least one, a small, new club at Wakefield, is pursuing those led by a zealous admirer and com-

Sorosis of Stanton has just followed their example. Domestic interests are shown in two ways. A large number of clubs have departments for child study, where they undertake to make a scientific and sympathetic study of childhood. They report the good fortune of lectures and correspondence from specialists and assistance from educators everywhere. Here is one of the points where the women of the home and the women of the school touch each other to their mutual profit. Numerous departments of domestic economy are also reported, not for the study of cooking merely, but for the consideration of all that has to do with the physical well-being of a family. The club at Columbus is conspicuous for its work in that direction.

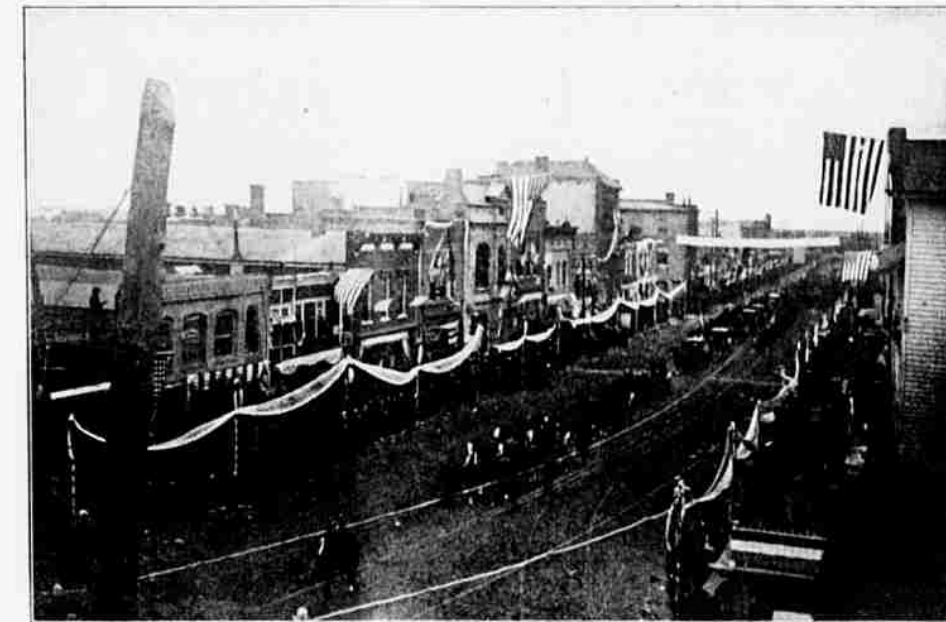
The study of music and of art is being fostered throughout the state by standing committees appointed last year by the federation and for the first time at an annual meeting the program at York included a musical afternoon and an art evening. Mrs. D. A. Campbell of Lincoln presided over the former session, as chairman of the federation committee on music, and another member of the committee, Mrs. H. F. Doane of Crete, made a plea for the study of music as an art among the clubs, while Mrs. Beals of Norfolk illustrated such study in a paper entitled "The Philosophy of Music." The remainder of the afternoon was devoted to the three great divisions of opera—Italian, French and German. Comprehensive papers were read upon these respective topics by Mrs. Frawley of Stromsburg, Mrs. Hearsh of Seward and Mrs. Campbell and illustrations of each were given by piano, violin and voice. The performers were chosen from within the clubs rather than from the professional class without them, though several of them were real artists. The program therefore served to strengthen the idea that musical study as to content and history may be prosecuted in the smaller towns as well as in the cities where opportunities for hearing music are greater.

There are several musical clubs in the state of which the Matinee Musicale of Lincoln is deservedly the best known. The Mozart club of Plattsmouth is also doing good work, and music forms part of the curriculum of clubs at Beatrice, Wymore, Omaha and Fremont, while Columbus is distinguished for its use of the Derthick system, in which it is taking the second year.

The art program at York was weakened by the absence of Mrs. Keyser of Omaha, who was detained at home by illness in her family, though she had expected to lecture on the Boston public library. Her stereopticon slides were used, however, and explanations were made by Miss Lida Wilson of the art department of the Omaha club. Mrs. F. A. Hall of Lincoln, chairman of the federation art committee, also assisted on the program. A feature of the meeting at York was the art room, where Braun and Berlin photographs, as well as Perry pictures were presented for sale, and where there were cases of beautiful ceramics and art decorations of various sorts. This room was constantly thronged. A number of good pictures were purchased for club rooms, school rooms and homes, and if one may judge from the interest expressed, the art committee will have a largely increased number of art study classes under its fostering care next year. The art department of the Omaha club also assists these clubs by the loan of its collection of



PRESIDENT M'KINLEY AT ABERDEEN, S. D.—TROOPS IN PARADE.



PRESIDENT M'KINLEY AT ABERDEEN, S. D.—THE CARRIAGES IN LINE.



OFFICERS-NEBRASKA STATE FEDERATION OF WOMEN'S CLUBS AT YORK.

known as the "club movement" is thus a matter of three epochs—first, the era of individual clubs; second, their union in the general federation, and, third, the development of state associations. In each of these epochs Nebraska has had a part. The Zetetic of Weeping Water is the oldest club in the state, having been organized in 1884, and for several years that club divided with the Omaha Woman's club the honor of representing Nebraska in the councils of the general federation. When, however, in 1894, the clubs were called together in Omaha to form a state federation there were ten to enter as charter members. These included two clubs from Lincoln, two from Crete and one each from Fremont, Kearney, Omaha, Weeping Water, Seward and Aurora.

The Nebraska federation has now accomplished five years of existence, but that fact was not even mentioned at the annual meeting recently held in York. Indeed, the women seemed so intent upon getting ahead as to forget to look back and the gratulation and admiration that so often marks a meeting of women was delightfully absent, although the onlooker would have seen plenty of excuse for it in the reports of officers and delegates.

The federation now comprises about 3,500 women, included in seventy-five clubs, that vary in membership from the thirteen members of the Ladies' Reading club of Scotia to the 500 of the Omaha Woman's club. Each club has its own plans and methods, adapting itself thereby to local needs and conditions, but there is a remarkable uniformity of adherence to what is now established as the purpose of women's clubs—namely, culture for the individual and service in the community.

The first of these ideas is naturally the one upon which most clubs are organized. It is greatly to the credit of Nebraska that every community, no matter how small, has a group of women who are eager for self-improvement, and also a woman, sometimes a college graduate, and often an ex-teacher or specialist, who can lead their studies. These studies of course take a great variety of direction, but they are covered by the broad ideas so well explained by the president, Mrs. S. C. Langworthy, in her annual address at York, when she said: "The domestic, social and intellectual development of women decides the curriculum of the woman's club." The larger clubs provide for diversity of taste by organizing in departments, as the Omaha club, which has no less than fourteen separate groups of women, many of them large clubs in themselves. Other clubs organize for the consideration of certain subjects, history and art affording a popular combination. History, indeed, seems to be a favorite study, and not less than forty-five clubs show a preference for

patriot of that dramatist. Current events form a nucleus for study in many clubs. Sometimes this is effected through a roll call at every meeting, when each member answers to her name by a moment's discussion of some topic of immediate interest, and sometimes through a department, as in the Omaha club, where a hundred women give an afternoon every two weeks to a serious consideration of current history and literature. Two clubs in Lincoln, Sorosis and Sorosis, Jr., the former one of the older clubs of the state, have always given their studies "topics of general interest," and

photographic reproductions of works of art, numbering 300.

Other branches of study interesting certain clubs here and there and gaining the attention of others are: Parliamentary drill, social science and civics. One club, that of Dundee, is looking into the science of geology, under the direction of an enthusiast on the subject, and one very interesting club known as the Baker Township club of York county is studying English, along with its course in civil government. This club is composed of farmers' wives and daughters and has for its president a former school teacher.

But the club exists not alone for self-culture, but for service to the community, and the fact that this idea is growing stronger among the clubs of the state was not only asserted by the president in these words: "The community feeling is becoming more and more registered, by the loan of its collection of

shown in the reports throughout the meeting at York. In Tekamah the club is working for a public library and the Fairbury woman's club is pledged to a similar undertaking next year. So are the six clubs of Tecumseh. In Columbus 600 volumes are in circulation through the efforts of the club and that number will have additions as the women raise funds by subscription or by giving entertainments. This club is concerned also to have good pictures in its school buildings and clubs everywhere report interest and effort in that line. Village improvement is another vital activity with many clubs. Fairbury owns a drinking fountain, thanks to its Woman's club, and this club, like many another, is working in the early closing movement, regarding it also as a "city improvement" that stores should be closed at 6 o'clock.

But it is impossible to mention the forms in which the activity and public spirit of Nebraska women are expressing themselves. Nor is it possible to quote the practical common sense manifested in the papers and discussions of the York meeting. There was, however, an especially rich program, conducted by Mrs. A. W. Field, chairman of the educational committee of the state federation, which deserves mention. The following were some of the topics upon it: "How to Improve Conditions of Country Schools," paper, by Miss Blair of Wayne; "The Vacation Problem," discussed by Mrs. Page of Syracuse; "Household Economics," treated by Mrs. J. B. LaChappelle, Ashland; "Manual Training," address, by Mrs. Farmer of Albion; "Why Do Men Dislike Business Dealings with Women?" discussed by Mrs. Norris of North Bend; "The Mother's Greatest Need," paper, by Mrs. Kingsley, Minden.

Upon the last afternoon of the meeting the women rested from their labors and listened to a story written by Mrs. Heller of Omaha, after which they returned to the discussion of "Household Economics," "Wage-Earning Women" and "Village Improvement," which topics were handled by three Omaha women, Mrs. Mary M. Pugh, Mrs. C. S. Lobingier and Mrs. Blanche McKelvey respectively. Then the press came in for its share of attention. Miss Sarah Harris of the Lincoln Courier spoke on "Newspaper English," and Miss Ideal MacKeever of Stromsburg explained the aims of the National Writers' association.

The Federation library, until such time as the state provides a circulating library, will furnish the only means for many to secure books for study. It is increased year by year through gifts from the clubs and is the object of a generous annual gift from the Omaha club, which appreciates its own library advantages. The federation books are in charge of Mrs. G. M. Lamberton of Lincoln. They numbered at the beginning of the year 271 volumes.

The officers just elected at York to serve for the years 1899 and 1900 are: President, Mrs. Anna L. Apperson of Tecumseh; vice president, Mrs. Blair of Wayne; recording secretary, Miss Mary Hills of York; corresponding secretary, Mrs. Virginia Arnap of Tecumseh; treasurer, Mrs. H. F. Doane, Crete.

FRANCES F. FORD.



DELEGATES TO THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE NEBRASKA STATE FEDERATION OF WOMEN'S CLUBS AT YORK, OCTOBER, 1899.