

Nebraska's Public School System

Artistic Element in the School

A question which for many years has had a leading place in the school world, and in fact is far from solution today, is: What subjects are most deserving of a place in the course of study?

Opinions differ widely, from the extremist on the one hand, who claims that it makes no difference what the material is, if it is studied, to the one who says that the time of our schools should be devoted to no subjects save those which have a direct bearing upon practical business life. A few time-worn studies hold their place with undisputed right, but as the pendulum of public opinion swings to and fro some of the less stable ones must be left aside.

In Nebraska music study has been among the last to be added, but it is steadily advancing in popularity. A few years ago the question of the advisability of teaching music came before the school board of Grand Island. It was decided either to drop it altogether or to employ a special teacher and give it a prominent place on the program as any other branch. The latter plan was adopted and as a result the music of Grand Island compares favorably

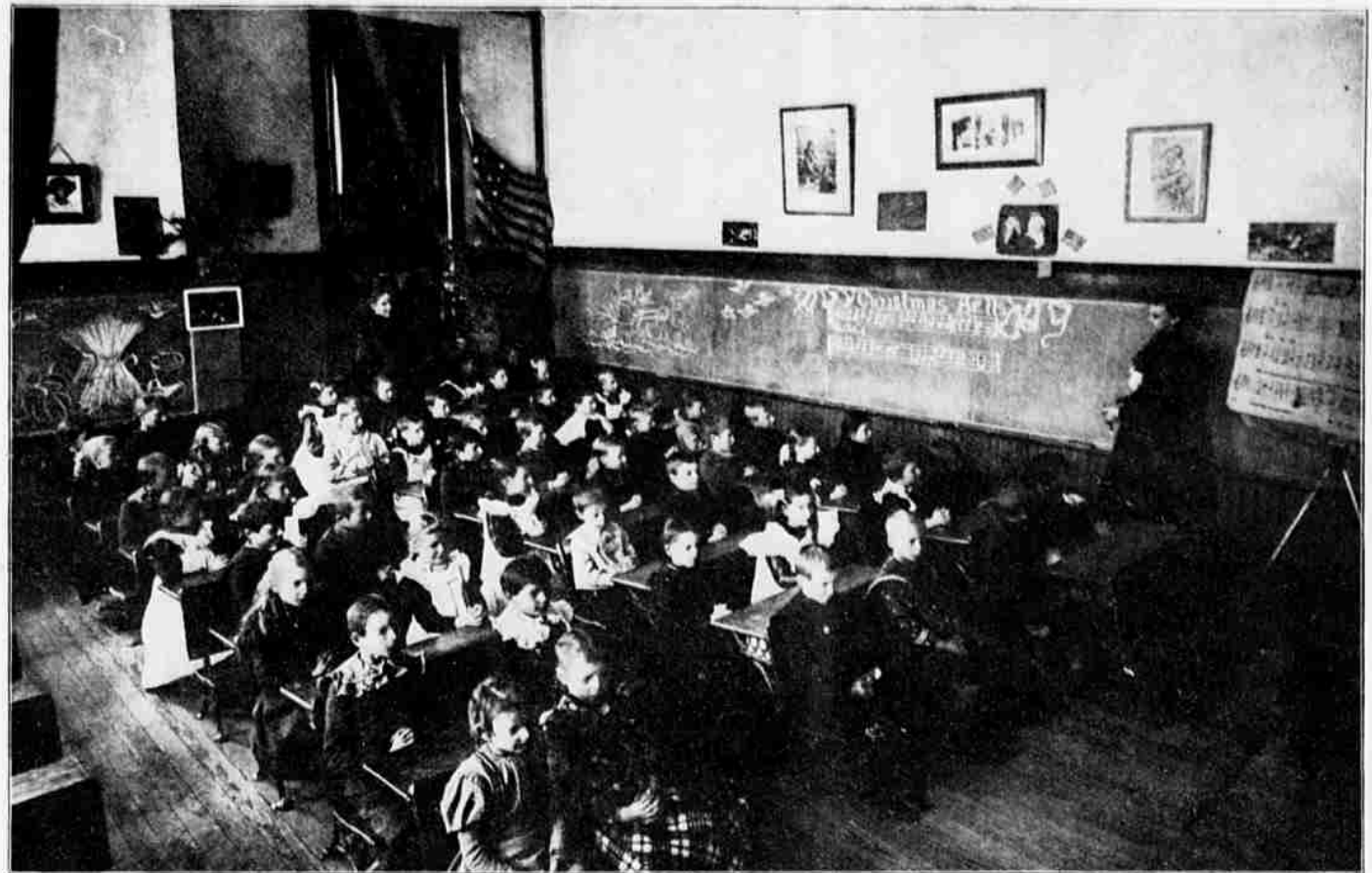
of having the class raise the money either through voluntary offerings from its members or by means of an entertainment. Children appreciate a picture which they feel that they have had a share in purchasing, and in one school no money is accepted save that which the child has earned or saved from his own allowance.

A few school boards, fearing the avarice of designing persons, have prohibited the raising of money in the schools for any cause whatever. Other boards have modified this rule by making it allowable for purposes approved by the superintendent. In most of our schools, however, this is not a point which has to be considered and teachers are free to stimulate pupils to improve their school rooms in every way.

School Art Collections.

The full beauty of truly artistic decoration may be seen in several of the large schools of Omaha. Here the collecting of pictures has been going on for many years and the classes of today are reaping the benefits. At first pictures of almost any quality were used, but these have been gradually displaced by high-grade pictures, till few remain which are not worthy of admiration and study. Even the available space in halls and stairways is filled, until the entire building is a gallery of the world's masterpieces.

An eastern picture company is largely responsible for the great movement toward



NEBRASKA'S PUBLIC SCHOOLS—A CLASS IN MUSIC IN A SECOND GRADE AT GRAND ISLAND.



NEBRASKA'S PUBLIC SCHOOLS—DECORATIONS IN WEST SCHOOL, BLAIR—MISS MINNIE C. LUND, TEACHER AND PRINCIPAL.

with the best of the state and the young people who have received their training in the schools are filling the city choirs.

Special Music Teachers.

What Miss Arnold has done for the Omaha schools Miss Mullen is doing for the schools of South Omaha. In the Hawthorne school the last twenty minutes of each Friday afternoon are devoted to a little musicale. The doors of the various rooms are thrown open and as the singers stand in the central hall the music may be heard and enjoyed by all. Teachers have felt amply repaid for their time and trouble by the keen enjoyment which the children have displayed and the refining effects of these little musicales are felt throughout the whole school.

Of many branches it is true that the discipline of acquiring them is more important than the knowledge acquired, but there is probably not another subject taught today that brings more genuine satisfaction and pleasure to the one who has studied it and those who are associated with him than the subject of music.

Scarcely half a dozen towns in the state have as high as fifteen teachers where a special teacher of music is not employed, and in several places much smaller in size the people realize that it is too important a subject to be left out of their course of study. Indeed many people express the hope that the day is not far off when all will consider a knowledge of music as essential as the practical "three Rs" of former days.

The Study of Pictures.

Closely akin to music in the refining influence it imparts is the study of pictures. The power which beautiful surroundings exert in developing the finer sensibilities has, till recently, been ignored so far as it related to the school and too many times

The warping floor, the battered seats, the jackknife carved initial

were not entirely confined to the school house by the country road. Bare walls looked down upon the pupil, relieved, perhaps, here and there by a cheap chromo which, not being good enough for the home, was generously donated to the school. Yet this was the place where boys and girls spent nearly one-half of their waking hours.

In the Nebraska schools, with the exception of Omaha, the movement toward making the school rooms the attractive places they should be is still in its infancy. A few schools have done nothing, but a large per cent have within a year or two adopted some plan whereby a good picture (which usually means a copy of a masterpiece) may be added to a room each year. In some few schools the teacher has purchased the picture, but the plan in most general use is that

the better understanding and appreciating of art which is sweeping our whole land today. Fair copies of genuine works of art may be placed in the hands of the child for the incredibly small sum of 1 cent each, and, since it is within the reach of all, a knowledge of the world's great artists and their productions will soon be as essential an element of education as a knowledge of good literature.

It is an unusual thing to enter a school room and not see a group of these pictures and several schools have given picture study a regular place in the course. In Nebraska City a lesson is given once in two weeks. Each child has the privilege of ordering a copy of the picture studied if he so desires (and few do not) and after it is studied it is his to take home. It is surprising to see how much these little people, under guidance of a skillful teacher, get from one of these pictures and the collection of pictures studied is something which they highly prize. The following is taken from a second grade in Nebraska City, but it should be remembered that the examples of school work reproduced in this and subsequent articles are not something especially prepared as exhibit work, but lessons as they come from the hands of the children, in many cases without even having been examined by the teacher:

"Feeding Her Birds."

"This is the picture of a mother feeding her little children. There are three of them sitting on the doorstep. The house is stone.

"The grass and vines tell me it is summer. The man working in the field tells me it is summer, too.

"It is a sunny day, for I see a shadow. The chickens tell me it is daytime.

"The mother is sitting on a stone in front of the children. She is feeding the baby with a wooden spoon. The little girl on the left has her arm around the baby. I think she loves the baby. The girl with her doll wants to be fed next.

"They have wooden shoes like those in Mr. Rodenbrock's store.

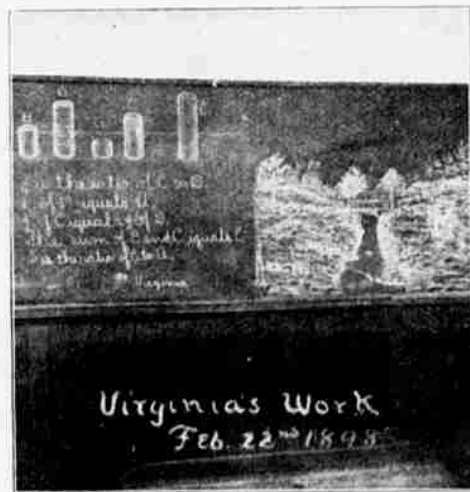
"I think Mr. Millet saw the mother bird feed her little ones when he was plowing in the field. I think he liked little birds and little girls, too. He thought of the mother robin feeding her little robins, so he called this picture 'Feeding Her Birds.'"

The child who knows what to see in a picture and how to see it has a rich treasure mine opened up to him. The casual observer in looking at the picture just described would see an old country woman feeding a little child, but the child who has studied the pictures says: "The grass and vines tell me it is summer. The man working in the field tells me it is summer, too. It is a sunny day, for I see a shadow." For the

time he is transported to the land of the artist's conception, and the soft summer air, the warm sunshine and the various sights and sounds of country life are real things to him.

Fads or Practical Work.

But the question naturally arises: "Are these things to supplant the practical work of the school?" The criticism is not infrequently made that the time of our schools is devoted to fads, but in Nebraska it is a noticeable fact that, with few exceptions, those schools which find time for the newer lines of work are the very ones that are doing the strongest work in the common branches. These studies which lend culture and refinement to the school should supplement and strengthen rather than take the place of the more practical lessons. But because they are supplementary they should not be neglected. It should be the duty and pleasure of the school to awaken and develop all of the possibilities of the child's better nature through the various avenues open to him. It is hardly possible to estimate the silent influence of pictures upon the inner nature, and the child who is taught to appreciate the truly beautiful, and what naturally follows—surround himself with it—has received something which will be a source of enjoyment to him throughout his whole life, enabling him to beautify his sur-



DRAWING BY A PUPIL IN FIRST GRADE, CRETE, TAUGHT BY MISS HANNAH JOHNSON.

roundings wherever he may be placed, and elevate those with whom he is brought in contact. L. S. W.

Bunch of Short Stories

Decidedly the homeliest man in congress is Eddy of Minnesota, according to the Washington Post. He rather glories in the distinction of ugliness, especially as all his other characteristics are enviable.

During his last campaign the enemies of Mr. Eddy charged him with being double-faced. He met the charge in a manner that disarmed all criticism.

"Great heaven!" said Mr. Eddy to his audience, "do you think that if I had two faces I would wear the one I am showing you now?"

Meeting John Allen of Mississippi this morning, relates a correspondent of the Chicago Record, I asked him how he was coming on in the senatorial race.

"I'm afraid they've got me beat," he said. "It looks mighty like it."

"I'm sorry to hear that," I said.

"Yes," he replied, "I get a heap of sympathy—more sympathy than votes—but nevertheless I have the consciousness of my own superiority and rectitude, which is a great consolation and support in times of trial and adversity."

She called into the telegraph office and rapped on the counter, reports Collier's Weekly. The clerk remembered that she had been there about ten minutes before

as he came forward to meet her he wondered what she wanted this time.

"Oh," she said, "let me have that telegram I wrote you just now. I forgot something very important. I wanted to underscore the words 'perfectly lovely' in acknowledging the receipt of that bracelet. Will it cost anything extra?"

"No, ma'am," said the clerk, as he handed her the message.

The young lady drew two heavy lines beneath the words and said:

"It's awfully good of you to let me do that. It will please Charley so much."

"Don't mention it," said the clerk. "If you would like it I will drop a few drops of violet extract on the telegram at the same rates."

"Oh, thank you, sir. You don't know how much I would appreciate it. I'm going to send all my telegrams through this office, you are so obliging."

And the smile she gave him would have done any one good with the possible exception of Charley.

At the reception given to ex-President Harrison by the Commercial club of Indianapolis the other evening William P. Fishback told this story of their college days at Miami university, Oxford, O.: "Benjamin Harrison once played a mean trick on me. We boarded with a widow in Oxford and there came to be a discontent among the boys about the food not being sufficiently generous in supply. A meeting was held in Harrison's room to arrange a formal protest. Lots were cast as to who should present the case at the breakfast table. The ballot box was stuffed and I was elected. I spoke at the breakfast table and stated that the boys objected to paying so much for so scant a menu. I expected to be supported by the others. Benjamin Harrison spoke and to my dismay said: 'We don't know how Mr. Fishback has been living at home. He may have been a pampered son of luxury, but as for the rest of us, we have no complaint to make.' And that disposition of fun and humor has never left Benjamin Harrison."

Representative Allen of Mississippi must look to his laurels, says the Washington Post. There is a new humorist in congress. The discovery is Cushman of Washington, whose wit is keen, whose sense of the ridiculous is acute and who tells a good story in delightful fashion. Cushman is tall and lank, of the Abe Lincoln style of architecture, with legs so thin that he himself says he has often been arrested for

being without visible means of support. Another quaint expression is that he was once so poverty-stricken that he sewed buckshot in his summer coat to make it heavy enough for winter wear. He bubbled over with original sayings and he utters them in a spontaneous, unconscious way that adds to their effectiveness.

Mr. Cushman is put down in the congressional directory as a congressman-at-large, his state being without definite congressional districts. This reminds him of a story. He was once approaching a town where he was billed to make a speech and stopped at a house on the outskirts of the town to get a drink of water. He met the farmer's wife at the well.

"What is the political sentiment around here?" asked Cushman.

"I dunno," said the woman. "I don't go to political meetings. They say there is a congressman at large and I think the safest thing for me to do is to stay at home!"

Howard C. Hillegus, whose recent book on "Oom Paul and His People" has attracted wide attention, has been besieged by people desiring information on South Africa and the Boers.

A young woman, a writer in one of the big newspaper syndicates, called on him the other day, relates the New York World. She wished to get material for a Boer article, but had been sadly misinformed.

The little woman was somewhat timid when she entered the room, but finally asked coyly:

"Are you the writer?"

"Yes," replied Mr. Hillegus.

Taking courage, she then burst out in a pleading, sympathetic voice:

"You will not mind, will you, telling me just a few facts about your poor, struggling people?"

"My people!" gasped the young writer. "Why, the last I heard they were prosperous and living in Pennsylvania. Have they met with misfortune?"

The timid woman seized the arm of her chair for support.

"I thought you were a Boer!" she exclaimed. "Indeed I did."

Electric Cloth Cutter

Cloth can be rapidly cut by a newly patented implement which has an electric motor suspended from the ceiling by balanced cords, with a gear wheel at the lower end of the vertical shaft to connect with a horizontal shaft, which carries the cutting disk in proximity to a shoe, sliding under the cloth as it is cut.



NEBRASKA'S PUBLIC SCHOOLS—WALL PICTURES IN LAKE STREET KINDERGARTEN AT OMAHA.