

Children's Corner in Omaha's Public Library

One large, lightsome room at the Omaha Public Library the children call their own. It opens to the south and east and is lined with bookshelves so high that all the smaller tots must climb a flight of three steps to reach the upper row. The room is on the second floor and contains 5,000 volumes. Before it was seized by the children it was used as a lecture room. From the platform dull people read tiresome treatises.

The juveniles were crowded into a small chamber on the floor below. Here they were cramped; they jostled elbows; they cherished an injured feeling. Their old quarters behind the circulation shelves had been preempted as the library grew and their pride no longer rose as they entered their allotted space. They glowered at the Olympians who were privileged to use the general circulation shelves and wished they were grown-up. "When Aunt Jane used to come to visit us," complained one small rebel, "I took her to the library and the fire engine house; now I only take her to the fire engine house."

Once more, however, the children's room is worthy of any aunt's inspection. New shelves have just been erected around its entire length and all the child's books have been transferred from downstairs. In the center long tables with comfortable chairs on either side offer their hospitality to the visitor. Here one may devour rich feasts out of huge volumes. Here are the year's issues of *Our Young People*, the *Youth's Companion*, St. Nicholas, Harper's Young People and many other faithful histories of strange and delightful occurrences. And then, most precious of all, are the scrap books compiled at great pains by the young woman whose word is law.

Counsel Freely Available.

But the attendant is no awful dignitary; she is not even a teacher. She is only a helpful friend, a wise counsellor, a sympathetic confidant. She meets her guests on their personal side when they are off their guard and her influence is beyond that of a teacher. Over half of the books taken from the shelves are chosen at her suggestion and the others more or less directly at her instance.

It is intended, however, that each patron shall learn to discriminate, to pick and choose for himself. Much has been accomplished along this line. Children who began on adventure have been led to read stories of travel and have even advanced of their own free will to history in moderate quantities. Boys who would have passed over the scientific department of a catalogue without a second glance come naturally to such topics when they have the run of the shelves.

It is a tribute to the honesty and cleanliness of young America that it is allowed to handle the books and wander among the shelves without restriction. This privilege is not extended to men and women, who are compelled to stand in file at the windows with lists of numbers. Although 4,000 children are entitled to draw books from the library and another 1,000 are in the habit of reading at the tables, less than a dozen books have been missed during the last four years. The tidiness of the patrons is also more than could reasonably be expected. The Brownie books and others in constant service show occasional scars and finger marks, it is true, but are still presentable. For in the eyes of the high priestess uncleanliness is the sin cardinal which water must instantly wash away.

The groups shown in the illustrations were taken without any choice of occasion, and there is scarcely a moment in the day when the room is not comfortably filled, the attendance reaching 300 and on Saturday almost double that number. There is no bar as to age and there are many visitors in kilts whose knowledge of the art of reading may be summed up in three letters. They come with their brothers and sisters and absorb gradually a love for books which will play its part in later days.

Amusement as Well as Instruction. Recently on a chilly afternoon an intruder watched a group engaged in a fascinating pastime at one of the tables. It was not a new play; it was the favorite of Kenneth Grahame's children in "The Golden Age," and of many others before and since. The center of attention was a huge volume full of pictures in which there was plenty of action. Everybody had his turn at choosing first.

"That's mine," announced the biggest boy, after mature deliberation. A bearded physician sitting at a child's sick bed became his personal property, and he in turn was bound to stand sponsor for any apparent shortcomings in the object of his choice. He was the doctor's champion as regarded the length of his nose or the style of his garters.

"That's me on the bed," proclaimed the child with the second choice, putting his finger on the unconscious patient.

Then the father and mother, standing sorrowfully in the background, were rapidly appropriated and finally the family dog. The latter would have been chosen much earlier in the game except that he labored under the handicap of being obscured to the head and shoulders by the housewife's skirt.

All human and animal life in the picture had been exhausted before the last participant could express his choice. He was obliged to be content with possessing the lamp with the tilted shade, which shed a soft effulgence over the scene, but was consoled with first choice in the next picture. This had a more cheerful setting and presented a knight on a charger. The knight

could have little hope of escape; he was fair prey and was seized before all others.

Dewey the Children's Idol.

At another table sat a small lover of bold deeds engrossed in the life of Dewey, idol of the child-world, and of more mature and commonplace realms as well. The youth was disinclined to talk; he had only gotten the admiral as far as a lieutenancy and was pushing on toward the climax in Manila bay. "You ought to read a chapter back a ways," he interrupted himself to say. "There's a place there where Dewey had a scrap with a fellow and gave him a blue eye. You could see right there what he was going to do to the Spaniards."

All of the children whose opinions were invited had marked preferences as to authors, and each knew where his favorites were located on the shelves. As an aid to such identification small placards are tacked upon each shelf. There are Henry, Marryatt, Trowbridge, Alcott, and dozens of others. Other books are classified by subjects; under science are electricity, astronomy, physics and chemistry, and there are endless travels in Japan, in Africa, in the tropics, in Europe and various other places.

Between the shelves panels have been placed on which good engravings or photographs are displayed. One is devoted to a series of Lincoln pictures, tracing the war president from his log cabin birthplace to



"BURIED IN BOOK LORE"—CHILDREN'S ROOM AT THE OMAHA PUBLIC LIBRARY—Photo by Louis R. Bostwick.

the chief executive's chair. An effort is made to give variety to the displays and make them significant of the season. This week the predominating decorations naturally typify Easter. Reproductions of all the best Christ pictures are shown, besides lilies, eggs and chickens.

Stories About Preachers

Relating his experiences as "A Missionary in the Great West," in the Ladies' Home Journal, Rev. Cyrus Townsend Brady tells of two weddings in the same town on the same day—one in the morning and one in the afternoon—at which he officiated: "The first wedding fee I received was \$10—a very large remuneration for the place and people.



"NOT SEATS ENOUGH AFTER SCHOOL HOURS"—CHILDREN'S ROOM OMAHA PUBLIC LIBRARY—Photo by Louis R. Bostwick.

After the second wedding the best man called me into a private room and thus addressed me: "What's the tax, parson?" "Anything you like, or nothing at all," I answered. I have frequently received nothing. "Now," said he, "we want to do this thing up in proper shape, but I have had no experiences in this business and do not know what is proper. You name your figure." I suggested that the legal charge was \$2. "Pshaw!" he said, "this ain't legal. We want to do something handsome." "Go ahead and do it," I said, whereupon he reflected for a moment or two and then asked me how much I had received for the wedding of the morning. "Ten dollars," I replied. His face brightened; here was a solution to the difficulty. "I'll see his ante," he remarked, "and raise him \$5," whereupon he handed me \$15."

Last summer Right Rev. Thomas U. Dudley, Episcopal bishop of Kentucky, thought he would make a journey through the mountains of eastern Kentucky, reports the New York Post, and look up the scattered members of his flock and endeavor to get a foothold for his church among the mountaineers. But as he journeyed from settlement to settlement without meeting a man who had ever even heard of the Episcopalian church, he grew somewhat discouraged. At last he came to a village where, upon inquiry, he was told that there was "an Episcopal" in the neighborhood, and so the good bishop proceeded to look him up. After introducing himself and disclosing the object of his visit, Bishop Dudley asked the mountaineer if it were a fact that he was an Episcopalian.

"Oh, yes," replied he, "I'm an Episcopalian."

"Where were you confirmed?" inquired the bishop. The poor man had never even heard the word. "Where, then, were you baptized?"

"I know all about that," replied he, "though precious few folks is baptized in these parts, but I don't know whether I was ever baptized or not."

"Then why do you call yourself an Episcopalian?" continued the bishop.

"Well, now, stranger, I'll tell ye," said he. "Some five or six years ago I was summoned down to Louisville as a witness in one of these 'moonshine' cases, you know. Well, we was kep' over Sunday, and after breakfast, as I knowned nobody that and nobody knewed me, I tuk a walk down the street, from my lodgin's, and directly I saw everybody goin' into a great big fine church, sez I to myself, I'll go too. So I went in and sat down, and in a little while the bell it stopped a-jingling; that was some kind of big music rolled around, and then it stopped, too, and a feller in a long white gown he got up at the other end of

the room from me and said something or a midshipman on board the flagship of a commodore who was accompanied by his family, which included a young and lovely daughter, young Porter allowed no parental commands to frighten him. The orderly was told not to allow the midshipman to enter the cabin without special permission. Young Porter, however, managed to continue his visits to his fair one. One bright moonlight night the commodore, rousing up from an after-dinner nap, discovered young Porter and his sweetheart behind one of the windows of the stern ports.

"Young man," thundered the commodore, "how did you enter this cabin?" The midshipman replied: "The orderly is not to blame; I came over the mizzen chains and through the quarter gallery window."

Midshipman Porter, through the balance of the cruise, was regularly admitted to visit the cabin, and on the ship's arrival home the marriage took place.

A good story is told in West Virginia involving two of the congressmen from that snug little state and Thomas B. Reed, the gigantic speaker of the last house. The two West Virginians are Hon. Blackburn B. Dovener and Hon. Romeo Hoyt Freer. Both are small in stature and wonderfully alike in their general appearance. Together they went up to the ponderous Maine man to be introduced.

"Humph!" said Mr. Reed, "is that the best the persimmon state can do?"

"What do you mean?" asked Mr. Freer.

"Nothing," drawled the elephantine speaker. "I was only wondering at the uniformity of things down your way. I suppose the horses are all ponies and the persimmons all dwarfs —."

"Well," interrupted Mr. Freer, "there is one thing in our favor, the persimmon has more taste than the pumpkin."

The laugh was on the speaker, and he acknowledged it by cordially grasping the hands of the lilliputians and joining in the merriment.

The impression is current in theatrical circles, writes Congressman Kahn in Success, that Mr. Jefferson never guys. He is a stickler for professional etiquette, it is true, and tries to mold his company into one harmonious picture, into a perfect machine. But there was one night upon which he yielded to the temptation to guy. It was during a performance of "The Rivals," in which his matchless portrayal of Bob Acres proceeded smoothly, until the scene is reached in which Falkland, Captain Absolute and Bob Acres have a wordy altercation. At this point the actor playing Falkland ranted violently, raised his voice to an unnecessary pitch, and finally in a burst of anger slammed a door as he made his exit. It is part of the "business" for Captain Absolute to say at this juncture, "Poor Falkland!" He did so, and Mr. Jefferson promptly replied, "The poorest I ever saw!"

An Old Easter Bonnet

Atlanta Constitution.

I wish the Easter days were now like those that once I knew,
When Jenny wore the bonnet plain, with
ribbon bows of blue;
When we walked to Sunday meetin' o'er
the meadows green and sweet,
Where lilles waved in welcome, with violets
at our feet.

It ain't the fancy fixin's I mind so much—
The bils
For birds an' fluffy feathers—all the fine
new-fangled frills;
For I know that fashion changes, that it rules
the world complete;
But the old-time Easter bonnet was so simple and so sweet!

Its ribbons matched the color of the blue sky overhead,
An' the lils that smil'd beneath it seemed to mean the words they said!
The lips that smiled so sweetly—never knowin' any art—
An' the eyes whose sunny glances made a light around your heart!

I've nothin' against the fashions—they've got to have their day;
But I love the simple bonnets of the far an' far away;
An' thinkin' how she looked in 'em—there, in the long ago;
I sigh, an' praise the Lord from whom all blessin's used to flow!



"THE CHILDREN'S ROOM IS THE MOST POPULAR DEPARTMENT OF THE LIBRARY"—OMAHA PUBLIC LIBRARY—Photo by Louis R. Bostwick.