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W HATEVER the cause, the white people found much of the country west of Indiana treeless. Sailing along the water courses, whose winding way across the prairies was outlined by a growth of indigenous timber, the broad plains stretching away from east of the Mississippi river to the Rocky mountains without trees. When the Missouri had



THE LATE JAMES M. HACKER, A PIONEER OF NEMAHA COUNTY, NEBRASKA.

been crossed the native timber dwindled away to almost nothing. It was evidently not due to natural causes, for the soil on the uplands was as favorable to the growth of timber as that of the river bottoms. Foresters have classified many different varieties of forest trees in the region, and as all conditions for natural propagation and growth existed except within the area known now as the semi-arid zone, the logical conclusion is that the growth of trees had been prevented by artificial means. Just what form this took is still a matter of speculation, but the most commonly accepted theory is that fire, starting in the grass that grew so luxuriantly on the alluvial plains, wiped out once a year the tender sprouts and prevented the trees from getting started. These fires may have had their origin in lightning strokes or spontaneous combustion, or may have been set by primeval hunters. It is only certain that the fire did not start from the sparks of a locomotive. Now, the uses of standing timber and its value to agriculture were gradually borne in upon the tiller of the soil on the broad prairies of these states, and here and there individuals set out and gave attention to small groves. Sometimes as windbreaks, sometimes for ornament, but always supplying the want, until the nation, through the energetic agitation of one man—Hon. Julius Sterling Morton, whose motto is "Plant Trees"—became general and finally crystallized into Arbor day. For many years Arbor day was observed in a haphazard sort of way, until about a decade ago the several states most concerned enacted laws designating dates suited to the climate as Arbor day, setting aside one day on which all good citizens are adjured to plant at least one tree each. In Nebraska this day falls on April 22. Results of the observation of Arbor day are visible all over what was but a few years ago the treeless region of the west. It is no longer possible to ride for miles without seeing growing timber large enough to make a walking stick. Instead, majestic clusters of umbrageous forest kings invite the wayfarer to the grateful seclusion of their bosky depths, and, assisted by the energy of man, nature has taken on not only the appearance but the life of well ordered variation of woods and plain. In older states, where the pioneer with ready axe

and firebrand, "like the base Indian, cast away a pearl richer than all his tribe." Arbor day is observed in a measure as a penitential feast, wherein the present is trying to atone for the mistakes of the past, and by intelligent reforestation to make amends for the outrage on nature ignorantly committed by the men who destroyed acres of walnut, oak, hickory and other valuable timber that they might break ground on which to raise corn, wheat and potatoes. Arbor day is distinctively a day marking the advance of humanity in wisdom.

Spring vacation doesn't always mean vacation for the school teachers. On the contrary, the week of idleness in the school room is generally a week of much activity among the tutors, who gather together at their association meetings, where an interchange of ideas and experiences gives them new views and a broader outlook in their profession. It is only by keeping close in touch with each other that the teachers can hold themselves abreast the progress that is made in methods of imparting knowledge to the children. Attendance, therefore, on a session of a teachers' association is not wholly a holiday. Rather it is where the keen edge of the teacher's wit is renewed by contact with the wit of others, where ideas are brightened by attrition and where zeal is given fresh zest through comparison of results. Teachers learn from each other and the occasional gatherings of the teaching corps of one or another of the several sections of the state always result in an advance for the schools.

While the teachers are exchanging their bits of wisdom the pupils are also given an opportunity for trying on what they have been taught, and, by actually testing in the fire of competition, determining the value and permanency of their accomplishments. This generally takes on the shape of debates or contests of oratory or declamation. One of the features of school life is still "rhetoric" and boy and girl orators are still being developed. During the recent Easter week holidays the North Nebraska High School Declamatory association held its competition at Norfolk and every prize was won by a girl. Not enough data is at hand to enable deduc-

School Superintendents Honored by Teachers



H. E. Mason, Stanton, Neb., President North Nebraska Teachers' Association.



Paul N. Goss, Ord, Neb., New President Central Nebraska Teachers' Association.

tions sufficiently exact to warrant the conclusion that this result is due to the natural advantages of the sex in the matter of ability to express language in words, but it is a cliché that the boys were lacking in some respect.

James M. Hacker, who recently died, was one of the pioneers of Nemaha county, coming there in 1858. He was a native of Ohio, but spent his years of manhood in the west, first a citizen of Iowa, then of Nebraska, then of Kansas, but returning shortly to Nebraska, where for forty years he was honored among his fellow citizens as a man of integrity and ability. He was a civil engineer by profession and held the office for many years. He also held other offices of trust and responsibility in Nemaha county. Mr. Hacker was married, a wife and five children surviving him.

Good roads form the subject for perennial discussion, but so little actual progress had been made up to the time of holding the Transmississippi Exposition at Omaha that the effort seemed to be of almost no avail. Hon. Martin Dodge had been appointed chief of the division of road inquiry under the secretary of agriculture, and he

by his own persistence had drawn attention to the work that should be done and actually was being accomplished. With his exhibition of good roads at the Omaha exposition he gave people an object lesson and set the public to talking more than ever on this topic. Good roads conventions were held and ideas began to crystallize, until the good roads train was started out about two years ago on its errand of practical missionary work through the southland. It merely gives object lessons in methods and results, but it has accomplished a great deal of good by showing the people what can be done with the material at hand and what an assistance it is to have thoroughfares that are practicable in any sort of weather. In the more progressive regions of the west and north the people have not yet been called upon by Mr. Dodge's missionary workers, for they are constantly being spurred along by the demands of competition. The good roads movement is growing faster than surface indications seem to suggest, and there is ground for the hope that the first quarter of the new century will see the neglect of the past atoned for in a large measure by the American people, who are now noted for being satisfied with the poorest of country roads.

School Girls Who Won Honors at the Competition of the North Nebraska Declamatory Association



Miss Della Clark of South Omaha, First Prize in Dramatic Class.



Miss Jessie Kreidler, Fullerton, Second Prize in Dramatic Class.



Miss Bessie Smith of Schoyler, First in Oratorical Class.



Miss Elizabeth Hale of Battle Creek, First in Humorous Class.



H. E. Funk, Fullerton, New President North Nebraska Declamatory Association.

Burglary Made Easy by Electrical Torch

THE Treasury department will buy no more of the expensive safes that for years have been supposed to be of sufficient strength to resist the scientific burglar. It will in the future adopt a system of automatic electric bells and redouble the safeguards that can be provided by private watchmen, one keeping check on the other. All of this is because there is no longer a burglar-proof safe, reports the St. Louis Republic. An invention by Julius E. Haschke, a Chicago electrician, will enable the man applying it to cut through the hardest steel plate as a boy with a knife would cut St. Lawrence county cheese. Armor plate, such as is used on the United States battleships, can be perforated as an auger would bite its way through a plank of northern pine. Mr. Haschke calls his invention a carbon point. He did not produce it for the purpose of aiding the dark lantern fraternity to open bank safes. His object was to supply a means of cutting steel and iron bars in the construction of buildings, bridges, etc. But all the same, the burglar who gets into a bank with this apparatus, if he be an expert in its use, can get access to the strongest safe, between the hours of dusk and midnight, and possess himself of its contents. Similarly, if the burglar should be captured, his confederates, using this invention, could cut asunder the bars across his cell window and place him at liberty.

out tearing down a portion of the walls. And it was seemingly impossible to cut the plate into pieces. Someone mentioned the new process of cutting steel like soft butter, and the inventor was invited to go to Milwaukee and make a test. The inventor encased himself in a little steel house, placed two pairs of blue spectacles on his eyes, and, after connecting his carbon point with an electrical current, touched the steel plate. Spectators saw a brilliant flame shoot up. It was a white light, producing extreme heat, and nearly blinded the onlookers. The operator was well protected and did the work with apparently little discomfort. At the rate of a foot in five minutes, cutting or burning a wide space in the plate, the carbon point with its wonderful power worked along and in a short time the enormous mass of steel had been reduced to fragments that could be easily handled. The matter was reported to bankers of Chicago and Milwaukee and they investigated it carefully. They at first found some comfort in the belief that the value of the carbon point as a criminal agency was virtually nullified by the fact that considerable voltage was required and that a bright light is caused by the carbon point when it is in operation. This comfort, however, has since been removed by experiments which have been conducted by the inventor himself and by an investigation which has been made by Treasury department experts. These experts in their report have reached the following conclusions, which are on file in the office of Assistant Secretary Taylor: First—That the best types of safes or

vaults are not invulnerable to the attack of the expert burglar.

Second—That the ordinary or obsolete types of safe or vault constructed relatively a few years ago are not invulnerable to the attacks of the tyro or amateur burglar.

Third—That should, by any combination of circumstances, sufficient opportunity be afforded expert cracksmen, any safe or vault can be opened.

Fourth—That a satisfactory form of electrical protection is both obtainable and desirable for all vaults and safes wherever applicable, and constitutes a form of protection superior to that afforded by the construction of the vaults or safes themselves.

On the point made by some bankers that high voltage is required and that the bright light would give notification of any burglarious attempt, the inventor himself makes the statement that his apparatus is simple and can be operated by a current of only fifty volts. Such a voltage can be obtained by tapping the wires of almost any large building. The modern office building is alive with electric wires, and a shrewd operator could easily find a surface main and get from it all of the power needed to use his carbon point. The inventor, however, has obviated the necessity of tapping wires by constructing a little storage battery which he uses in connection with his work. This battery has twenty-eight cells, and the inventor gets just as satisfactory results with this as with a direct or alternating current. The power contained in an ordinary electric automobile would be sufficient to do the

SERIOUS injury inflicted wantonly will not enrage one to anything like the degree that a practical joke at his expense will. A French observer of mankind affirms that man takes more pleasure in the thought that he is not a dupe than in any quality of mind. Hence the indignant fury of the man who has been trapped. In the freshness of the wound to his self-esteem he would make practical joking a capital crime.

Last week a young woman of Brooklyn visited a New Jersey town and there conceived the idea of a capital joke on her family. She sent a telegram announcing her own sudden death and instructing her brother to come for her with an undertaker. Her parents were prostrated with grief. The joking young woman met her brother and the undertaker at the door and went into convulsions of laughter. When the father learned the truth, which revealed the brutal heartlessness of the girl, he exclaimed: "My daughter's joke breaks my heart!" Jokes of this kind perpetrated by others than blood relations are not uncommon. A woman who had gone to Europe for her health was recently brought back to this country on the first ship by a fraudulent cable message which announced the sudden death of her brother. Such stupid wickedness is proof that there are depths of idiocy hitherto unexplored and unsuspected.

More in the nature of a joke, yet very serious to its victims, was the trick played by a wag who estimated correctly the ignorance and cowardice of some of his fellows. It was known to them that he had been bitten by a dog and they had

speculated on the probabilities of his having hydrophobia. Entering a saloon where they were congregated, he growled and barked like a dog, ran about on all-fours, frothed at the mouth (by means of soap) and made furious attempts to bite everybody in reach. Although it has been explained by medical men a thousand times in the newspapers that the person who is afflicted with hydrophobia does not imitate a dog, the joke was an eminent success. The men were panic stricken and conducted themselves in a way to make them blush at the memory to their dying days.

It is notorious that the confirmed practical joker is the least tolerant of jokes at his own expense. He is never able to see any fun in being duped. This adds much to the enjoyment of those who manage to trick him. On one of the big days at the Buffalo exposition the hotels were forced to make new arrivals double up. A drummer who was an inveterate practical joker proposed to have a room and a bed to himself. He suggested to his friend, the clerk, that should any applicant for half his bed prove persistent he should be told that the drummer was just convalescent from smallpox. The drummer was aroused from his first deep sleep by a man getting into the bed. "Hold on, there!" he cried. "Didn't the clerk tell you I have smallpox?" "Yes," replied the newcomer, drawing up the covers, "but that's all right—I've got it myself!" With a yell the drummer leaped from the bed, seized his clothes, dressed in the hall and spent the night in a chair, longing for the morning so he could get himself disinfected. In the morning he discovered that the other man was a joker himself. The drummer was infuriated by such shabby treatment.

Practical Jokes and Impractical Jokers