

Nebraska Federation of Women's Clubs



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UST where and when the woman's club movement of Nebraska had its origin is one of the bits of valuable and interesting information that will probably never be added to the unfortunately meager early record of the present prosperous State Federation of Women's Clubs, but it is safe to suppose, judging from the comparison of hopes and efforts that always attends the annual meeting of that organization that it began long ago and was the natural outgrowth of that craving for some other woman's sympathy and companionship in the homesickness that was a part of the experience of the great majority of the women who gave up their eastern homes and the various luxuries that attended them to make new homes in Nebraska years ago.

The story of the evolution of the woman's club is an old one now, and its particulars in Nebraska afford little variation aside from those incidental to locality, but by the close of the spring of 1894 the clubs of the state had attained such importance in their respective communities, with such marked results for betterment and improvement, that the women, seeing the possibility of further and more extended good by co-operation, determined to unite their efforts.

With the advantages that naturally attend educative and progressive work in the large towns and cities, the Omaha Woman's club, though but little over a year old, was the strongest club of the state and having in its membership Mrs. Z. T. Lindsey, then state chairman of correspondence for the General Federation, was perhaps in closer touch with the other towns than any, and it was but natural that some definite plan for state organization should come from this club. The plan was talked over and on July 25 a committee was appointed to locate and communicate with the clubs of the state. Mrs. Lindsey was made chairman of this committee and for want of a more definite

means of locating the clubs, sent a circular letter to the postmasters of all towns of over a certain population, requesting them to give the inclosed letter to the representative of any club, society or other woman's organization of which he knew. The letter to the clubwomen explained the plan for organization and asked that a delegate be sent to a convention to be held in Omaha on December 10.

The response to this letter surprised even the most sanguine members of the committee. Everywhere enthusiastic cooperation attested the eagerness of the clubs and about fifty women attended the December convention, of which Mrs. Lindsey was appointed chairman and Mrs. A. H. Somers, also of Omaha, secretary. Mrs. Frances M. Ford, then president of the Omaha Woman's club, made the address of welcome; Mrs. Ella W. Peattie, Mrs. Belle M. Stoughtenborough, Mrs. C. S. Langworthy of Seward, together with the able representatives of the Lincoln club and others, contributing to the enthusiasm and the plans that were the foundation of the organization.

An executive committee was elected consisting of Mrs. J. H. Canfield of Lincoln, wife of Chancellor Canfield of the University of Nebraska, president; Mrs. Ella W. Peattie of Omaha, vice president; Mrs. C. S. Langworthy of Seward, secretary; Mrs. J. W. Dawes of Crete, treasurer, and Mrs. J. N. Woodford of Weeping Water, auditor. During the first year the constitution was drawn up, definite communication established among the clubs and plans made for the first annual meeting, and only those who have had a part in the executive work of the Federation can have any idea of the hard, unselfish work that task entailed.

The first annual meeting, which was held in Lincoln, left the work well established, with Mrs. May C. Field of Lincoln as president. At the second meeting, held in Fremont, Mrs. Belle M. Stoughtenborough was elected president, and re-elected the



MRS. F. H. COLE, PRESIDENT OMAHA WOMAN'S CLUB.

following year at Beatrice. The fourth meeting was held in Omaha and Mrs. Langworthy of Seward became president, Mrs. Anna L. Apperson of Tecumseh succeeding her by election at the fifth convention, held at York. At Lincoln, two years ago, Mrs. Draper Smith of Omaha became president and was re-elected at the seventh annual meeting held in Wayne last year. At the eighth annual meeting, held in Columbus, October 7, 8 and 9 of this year, the affairs of the Federation were given into the management of a new set of officers, whose pictures accompany this article.

During the eight years of its existence the Federation has increased from an association of ten clubs to ninety-nine, with an approximate membership of 4,000 women, representing seventy towns of the state.

Nineteen of these clubs hold individual membership in the General Federation, the State Federation having joined it immediately after its own organization.

"Not to demand success, but to deserve it," has been the motto and the women have lived up to this, working unostentatiously for everything that was uplifting. There are at present eight standing committees for the advancement of special lines of work, including art, household economics, civic, education, industrial, music, library extension and a reciprocity bureau. In addition to these there are seven special committees appointed annually.

Of the ninety-nine clubs in the Federation thirty-two have included library work with their other efforts, several having established town libraries. Through the efforts of Mrs. Belle M. Stoughtenborough and others the Federation traveling library of 320 volumes was established and maintained for several years, but realizing the necessity of an extension of this work, the women set to work for the creation of a state traveling library commission and when this was established by the last legislature they turned over to it their collection of books. The reciprocity bureau includes 160 manuscripts and the names of twenty-five lecturers, while one of the most complete collections of art portfolios in the country is in constant circulation among the clubs of the state.

In addition to stimulating a general interest in domestic science among the clubs, the household economics department is working for the improvement of the food laws of the state with encouraging prospects.

The efforts of the educational committee were largely instrumental in securing the new compulsory educational law and this winter the industrial committee is promised the co-operation of many of the state legislators in securing the establishment of a court for juvenile offenders. The entire Federation will work this year to

secure a more equitable property rights law for women. With a most creditable list of attainments back of it and an abundance of enthusiasm and determination for the work before it, the present year promises to be one of the most important in the history of the Federation.

In the past the clubs have been largely made up of women from the towns of the state, but with the work reaching out into the branches, the women on the farms and in the most remote neighborhoods are beginning to feel its effects and recognize its possibilities and the town clubs are being swelled by members who have many miles to come. This interest is illustrated by a club of women in the extreme western part of the state, ranchmen's wives and daughters, who live so far apart that they can only meet from May until November, when the weather will admit of their making the long trip. There is another club in Saunders county, whose members live from two to five miles apart.

From these small towns and the rural districts have come some of the strongest women of the state, and in the selection of its president this year, the Federation promises to do more to interest, help and encourage these women than ever before. For several years past Mrs. Page has been identified with the work of the standing committees and as a member of the club extension committee, last year she did much to interest the women in the smaller villages and on the farms, in organizing clubs. Her own home, which is one of exceptional completeness, is located about three miles from Syracuse, and is the center of a club interest that extends for miles about, stimulating the women to the improvement of self and everything with which they come in contact. Her interest in the women of the remote districts promises to draw many into the organization that have in the past held aloof while her wide acquaintance will be most valuable in extending club work and club interest to those who are in most need of it.

Necessity of Art Education in America

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FROM a material standpoint alone there is nothing so important to our people at this time as a thorough education in art. We have become the greatest agricultural and manufacturing nation on earth. We raise more corn and wheat and beans and barley, we turn out more steel rails, steam engines and bridges than any other nation on the face of the globe. In that respect, then, we have reached the ultimate. The only field in which development remains, and, I repeat, I am now speaking from a material standpoint only, in art. In that we still lag, and in that there lies more wealth, more comfort and more enduring greatness than in all the other pursuits beside. France today is a great nation of artists. Its centuries of education in art developed a hundred great and profitable industries that without this education would have been impossible. Her feather workers, milliners, silk weavers, all owe their existence and prosperity to the fact that art took a strong foothold in France long before any of these industries were dreamed of. They are simply an offshoot, or rather an evolution of the art sense that was inculcated in the masses through the example of the masters.

Let our people, as a rule, become art lovers, and all our conditions and relations in life will be improved and beautified. The surly, brutal policeman will pass away. He cannot survive in such an atmosphere. Even the complaints of bad street car service, over-crowding, under-lighting, the barbarous worries of a city, etc., will disappear.

But it is in our industrial life and progress that the greatest improvement will come. As an illustration of what can be done by applying art and an art sense to ordinary vocations, I can think of no better example than that of a well known carriage builder. This carriage builder found that in order to get really handsome carriages he had to import his trimmings and finishings from France. He could build as good a carriage as any man in the world, but he could not compete with the French artistic finish. So he brought over a

Frenchman, who was an artist in his line, and set this man to work teaching the rudiments of the art to the workmen in the American shop. The result is that today the manufacture of carriage trimmings is a great industry in the United States employing thousands of workmen and cutting off practically the necessity for importing from France. This is practical art.

All this bears on the material aspect of art. Quite as important is the intrinsic value of art in developing and enlarging and improving mankind. If literature benefits him and if music benefits him, then art certainly benefits him. Of course there is bad art and harmful art, but so there is vile literature and harmful music, and bad knowledge. But wholesome art is one of the great factors in elevating the human character. The foolish assertion that art weakens the character of a nation, an assertion that has at times been advanced, is so utterly absurd that it should hardly be seriously discussed. It has been pointed out that when art was at its highest in Greece, the state was at its lowest; that the love of art had begotten sensuousness and indulgences; that all forms of vice were rampant and that the manhood of the nation had been sapped. What folly! Nations have their duration of life just as individuals, as the trees of the forest have. The sensuousness of the decaying energies of the Greeks debased their art, instead of their art debasing them. Greece became decadent not because of art, but in spite of it. The love of art maintained it for a long time at its best. The nation in its political, commercial and industrial development had come to a standstill. Art alone remained to offer a stimulus to make possible progress. When the acme was reached in art, then began the retrogression which had been arrested and stayed by art alone. No nation, any more than an individual, can stand still.

A people must go forward or else backward. It was so with Greece. It is so with every nation. But what monuments has Greece left behind to testify to its greatness? Is there any trace left of its

commercial or industrial development? Even in engineering, are there examples that testify to its skill there? No. The things that remain to us of the highest civilization reached by the Greeks are the production of art and literature. They alone endure. Therefore it must be manifest how important a factor art is. The entire world has been influenced and moulded by the work along these lines of the old Greeks. And so we will influence and mould the people who come after us, the rising generation, if we surround them with works of art.

We will elevate their ideas. We will make of them better men and women, nobler citizens. Every statue that is erected to a great man is in itself an inspiration to the right-minded boy. He doesn't know whether it is good art or bad. He sees that the people have honored a man who did his duty, who made sacrifices for his country and his fellows, and he is inspired to do likewise. We have fine pictures, good statuary, and other productions of art, and the eyes of our people are trained involuntarily, so that they become better workmen in their own line, bringing to bear a finer sense of the beautiful. This sense will impress itself upon the most ordinary things that these same people may produce. Almost before we know it, if we beautify our cities with statuary and art galleries, we will be a nation of art workers instead of mere manufacturers. Nothing else in the world creates such value as a fine art sense. You take a piece of bronze that isn't worth three cents, put it in the hands of a French art worker and he changes it into something that is worth twenty dollars.

This is not a call to thousands of young people to rush into art for its direct lucrative results. Unless, with true artistic humility, they are willing, after proper training, to take positions in the industries where art may be applied, the great majority will be not alone doomed to disappointment themselves, but they will in no wise benefit the community.

J. Q. A. WARD.

Mirth from the Courts

IN A RURAL justice court in Georgia recently an old negro whose testimony had been questioned by a lawyer said in his own defense:

"Jedge, I'm a good man. I been a-livin' 'round heah ten years. I ain't never been lynched, en de only hoss I ever stole th'owed me en broke my two legs!"

"Billy" Saunders is a natural born wit, relates the New York Tribune. He is in his 80th year, living in New York, and is still working at his trade, painting. On a recent occasion "Billy" and one or two of his mates were beautifying a lawyer's office. The younger partner, thinking to take a "rise" out of "Billy" said:

"I say, 'Billy,' did you ever know of a painter going to heaven?"

"Yes," replied "Billy." "I knew of one once."

"But do you think he stayed there?"

"Well, I did hear that they tried to put him out."

"And did they not succeed?"

"No. According to latest accounts, they had not succeeded."

"Why, how was that?"

"Well, sonny, it was this way: They couldn't find a lawyer in the place to draw up the papers!"

A brief for the state in an early Nebraska case indulges in the following:

"Plaintiffs in error are afraid that the honor and dignity of the state will suffer, and they invoke for the claimants broad principles of natural equity, and the claim that neither the laws governing courts nor the constitution apply to them. The logical sequence is this—that persons who hold claims against the state are a favored class, who can alone make wings of 'justice and right' to fly to that mystic region above and beyond the trammels of law, and where such unjust things as contracts and written constitutions do not exist; but where for them a straight and narrow pathway leads to the treasury, whose doors, without stint or delay, turn softly on golden hinges to

admit them. Yet if I do not very much mistake this court 'these wings' will unfeather in their flight and claimants against the state must fall to a common level with all other litigants, and stand up to the rack where is fed that good old fodder of 'justice and right' as administered by our courts."

If the late Justice Gray was noted for one characteristic more than another it was for his absolute independence of judgment, a thing upon which he prided himself especially. One day he received a letter from a devout Methodist preacher who was in the habit of printing at the top of his writing paper various texts from the Bible. This time his stationery bore the legend, "Ye are bought with a price."

Justice Gray's acknowledgment was coldly formal and at its close he wrote: "Allow me to suggest that when I next have the pleasure of reading one of your letters I may also have the pleasure of reading a more apposite quotation."

The clergyman did not continue the correspondence.

Sometimes Judge Rufus B. Cowing loses his temper with lawyers who needlessly and at great length cross-examine witnesses, reports the New York Times. Recently an Italian was on trial before him, charged with stabbing a fellow-countryman. On direct examination the complaining witness, with much precision, described how and where the stabbing occurred. A young lawyer started in on a very minute cross-examination, and asked the witness:

"Were you stabbed in the hall?"

"No, sir."

"Were you stabbed in the backyard?"

"No, sir."

"Were you stabbed in the cellar?"

"No, sir."

At this point the judge, with a smile, broke in with the remark: "Counselor, what is the use of asking all those questions when the witness has told us over and over again that he was stabbed in the stomach?"