

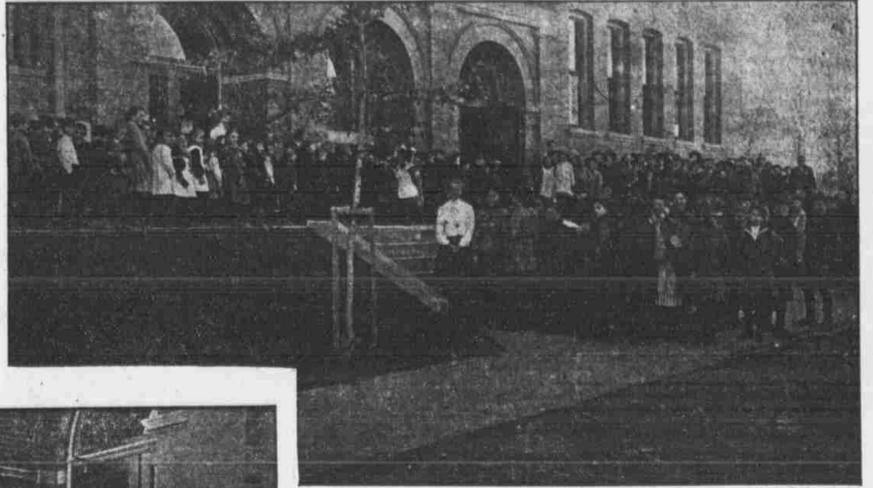
Play Side of Our Most Wonderful Modern Public School System



PLAY OF VARIOUS SORTS OCCUPIES THE BOY WHEN AT LIBERTY DURING RECESS.

The cherished memories of happy childhood hours are always among the brightest pages of the book of life. They are never effaced and never superseded, no matter how rich in experience the subsequent career may afterward prove to be.

Did you ever hear of the fairies who dwell
In the beautiful City of No Where?
Well, if not, listen and I shall tell
Each one of you how to go there;
Right up the counterpane road you go,
Till you come to a gateway; you're sure to know
This place, for three fairies stand there, in a row,
And guard the City of No Where.



IN LINE AT THE SAUNDERS SCHOOL, WAITING FOR THE WORD TO ENTER THE BUILDING.

The ancient proverb that "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy," holds as good today as it ever did. The play period is as important a part of the school curriculum as are the required lessons in the subjects taught in the class room.



KINDERGARTNERS AT THE SAUNDERS SCHOOL.

If you want to see a pretty picture, just stop somewhere so you can be unobserved, and yet watch the children at play in the school yard before lessons begin or during the recess hour. Nowhere else is to be found so much whole-souled enjoyment.



RUSH AT FRANKLIN SCHOOL WHEN THE ASSEMBLY BELL RINGS.

Here we go round the mulberry bush,
The mulberry bush, the mulberry bush,
Here we go round the mulberry bush
On a cold and frosty morning.

Whatever the years may have revealed for those of us who are today bearing the brunt of the world's work and are in the heat of the fray, it is not hard to hark back to those days spent in the school yard. Whatever may have been our lot since, those happy and care-free days will ever loom up with a luster peculiarly their own. Through storm and calm, in the after years the days passed in the school yard remain like an everlasting flower in the rose garden of life. With the poet we are wont to sing, as we watch the gossamer clouds of our cigar smoke, "Backward, Turn Backward, Oh Time, in Your Flight."

Many of our tenderest recollections of childhood cluster around those halcyon days, where we played with all the enthusiasm of childhood—tops, marbles, leap frog, hop scotch, crack-the-whip, tag, jacks, hide-and-seek and many other games which afterward had their counterparts in the arena of man's estate. Gone beyond recall are the days when we reluctantly stopped in the middle of an interesting game and lined up to march into the school room, panting and puffing and, those of us of the sex that plays the rougher games, with barked shins and sore knuckles.

The sight of a group of boys and girls happy at play on a school ground has been a scene to conjure with ever since Chris Columbus came to this country. Whether it be on the commodious campus of the district school or the more restricted quarters of the city school, one common quality prevails—the enthusiasm and freedom of childhood, to which the world always bows in obedience.

Thousands on the Playgrounds

The boy and girl of the school yard are known all over the length and breadth of the land. Neither parallels, meridians, politics, religion nor nationality affects their status on the school playground. Omaha has 16,000 little folks who make the welkin ring five days of every school week on the playgrounds of the public schools. A visit to some of the schools just before the morning or afternoon sessions, or during the recesses, would prove a sure cure for that languid feeling.

Over at the Pacific street school, where 533 pupils are enrolled, a representative gathering of young Americans were seen enjoying themselves on the playground the other day. The youngsters were playing what might be termed the "between season" games, as this is about the time of the year between the regular summer games and the winter sports. It was learned from some of the older teachers that school sports have not changed materially in the crucible of time. There have been some modifications in the old games and new ones have been introduced, but in the main the old reliable games are still in vogue.

Games Go in Cycles

"The games of the schoolyard go around the year in a cycle with the seasons," remarked Principal McCarthy of the Pacific school the other day.

The first breath of spring brings out the marbles and tops. Many a boy has felt the first flush of victory or learned the first lesson of accepting defeat with resignation over a game of marbles or tops. The elements of speculation and skill enter particularly into these games because the boys still play "keeps," just like the older boys do on the board of trade. The system of playing marbles and tops for keeps has never been eradicated from the schools. Pedagogues have wisely declared that playing marbles and tops for keeps is a necessary evil which, if prohibited, would mean some boys would play with the thought they were deceiving the teachers when they kept the spoils of the game. So the "evil" is regulated.

Not long ago a small boy with large tears went to his teacher and reported the loss of all his marbles which were won by older boys. It was beyond the ken of the small boy why the older boys should retain

his glasses, chinas, potters and the rest of his assortment of "nigs" his Uncle Rudolph staked him to a few days before on the occasion of the seventh anniversary of his birthday. The teacher kindly placed her arm around the boy's neck and wiped away his tears, while the older boys peeked around a corner of the school house, giggled and rattled their marbles. The teacher called one of the older boys over to her and asked for an explanation.

"Well, Willie said he would play for keeps, and we won his marbles," was the reply of the older boy.

Willie Learned His Lesson

A new day dawned for Willie. He then knew what it meant to play keeps, and he practiced assiduously every day on the quiet, until one day he proudly walked up to the older boys and informed them he wanted to play keeps. He won all the marbles the older boys had and then gave each back six with which to begin life anew.

The boys still play marbles with grades from the poorest clay variety to the beautiful agates costing 10 cents and upward each.

Story About Grant Before He Obtained Greatness

WHILE I was in Denver last month Major John Davidson told me a story about General Grant's service as a deputy sheriff at Prairie du Chien, Wis., in 1860. Davidson lived in Prairie du Chien at that time. He is now a resident of Junction City, Kan.

"A merchant named Ammen encountered financial troubles and his store was closed.

"Among those Ammen owed was the firm of Grant & Co. of Galena, Ill.," said Major Davidson, "the head of the firm being U. S. Grant's father. As soon as the Galena firm heard that the store was closed Grant, then 'captain,' was sent to Prairie du Chien to look into the matter. Reaching there he learned that Mr. Ammen had armed himself with a shotgun, taken a stand in the store, and let it be known that he would shoot down any man who entered the place.

"Everybody in town was excited over the situation, and when Captain Grant arrived it was predicted that he would not risk his life in an attempt to enter the place of business.

"A lot of us young fellows decided to see the whole show. We stood in the street in front of the law office of O. B. Thomas (afterward a captain in a Wisconsin regiment, and then in congress, where he had been four or five years), while the former regular captain reinforced himself with the required legal papers. That done, we followed him to the sheriff's office, and when the sheriff, Lawyer Thomas and Captain Grant started for the store, where we were sure somebody would be killed, we followed at a respectful distance and closed in when the store was reached.

"The sheriff commanded Ammen to open the door.

"I will not open the door, and I will kill you or any of your crowd if you force your way into the building," was Ammen's reply.

"The sheriff said the old man was desperate and would be pretty sure to kill some one.

"There was hesitancy upon the part of the sheriff, whereupon Grant quietly said: 'If you don't want to risk it, make me a deputy and I will try it.'

"That was done. Our gang crowded up closer to the door.

"As an officer of the law, Mr. Ammen, I command you to open this door," said the newly made deputy sheriff.

"I refuse, and again warn you and your crowd that death awaits the man who breaks into this store."

"Captain Grant stepped back a couple of yards, and, springing forward, planted both feet against the door, hurling it from its hinges.

"There the old merchant stood, shotgun in hand, but he seemed to be dazed. Captain Grant walked past him and proceeded direct to the office, at the other end of the store, the old man following, carrying his

gun in his right hand. At the office Captain Grant removed his hat, hung it up, and, turning to the merchant, said: 'Mr. Ammen, put your gun away and help me take an account of our firm's part of this stock of goods,' and Mr. Ammen obeyed like a soldier.

"We youngsters were looking for tragedy, not comedy, and dispersed, a good deal disgusted.

"I did not see Captain Grant again until March, 1864, when he came to the army of the Potomac, in Virginia. He was Lieutenant General Grant then and he had a much harder job on hand than that one at Prairie du Chien, but, backed by Uncle Sam and a powerful army and a wide-awake navy, it took him only a year to kick the confederacy into worse confusion than old man Ammen's store was that morning in 1860."

When Captain U. S. Grant was selling goods in southwestern Wisconsin the year before the war he disposed of a bill to a shoemaker at Spring Green, Grant county. It developed that the shoemaker was a much better buyer than payer. Grant made numerous attempts to collect the bill, but without avail, in spite of the fact that he was known as a remarkably good collector.

After the seller of the leather had become famous as the head of the army and was winning great battles, the Spring Green shoemaker had a good deal to say about his personal acquaintance with General Grant.

The shoemaker had a son who was lacking in wit. One evening, when half a dozen patrons were in the shop, the old man told interesting stories about Grant's visits and chats in his place, much to the delight of his hearers. The boy was also an attentive listener.

Mrs. Shoemaker called her husband to the house. During his absence the son took his father's place as a talker about the great general.

"You bet pop'll never forget Captain Grant," remarked the lad, who said no more until one of the visitors asked why.

"Pop wouldn't pay Captain Grant for some luther pop bought. I'll bet he ast pop morn a hundred times to pay for that luther, and pop just told him he didn't hef ter. One day, after the captain had ast pop real hard for the money, pop said he would never pay it. Then Captain Grant went right out of the shop and unhitched his team. Just before he got into his wagon he called pop out, and he said: 'So you won't pay that bill?' 'No, I won't,' and pop started back to the shop. Quicker'n you could say Jack Robinson, Captain Grant came up behind pop and gave him four of the hardest kicks I ever seen a man git, and then he got into his wagon and druv away. I notis pop don't tell you about that when he gits ter talkin' about Grant.'—Lieutenant General J. A. Watrous in Chicago Journal.

Many of the boy qualities are manifested at the marble ring; in fact, the life of the average boy is oftentimes epitomized in a game of marbles.

As for the other games, they are as varied as the game of real life and are played by the little folks with as much zeal. Tops, one of the oldest in the category, is still as popular as ever. The boy who can manipulate a top with dexterity is always a cynosure in the eyes of his fellow schoolmates, and usually is a boy who will succeed at most anything. Then there are such games as base and foot ball, bull-in-the-ring, hop scotch, hop, step-and-jump, spot jack, crack the whip, mumblepeg, jacks, hoops, ring around, tag, hide-and-seek, pussy wants a corner, leap frog, fox and geese, and so on down the line. In the outer schools of the city, where the yards are larger, scrub games of base ball are common, while catch has to be substituted where the grounds are smaller.

Playgrounds are Small

Excluding the public schools in the outer parts of the city, the playgrounds are generally too small for the enrollment. This is strikingly true in some instances. Fortunately the pupils at the Pacific

school have a vacant lot at the north of the school on which to play; otherwise they would be closely confined during their seasons of play. The school yard proper is inadequate for the number of children. The Board of Education is placing cladders in the yards of the various schools and making the playground as comfortable as possible. At some of the schools turning poles have been placed for the boys.

Restriction of Play

No specific instructions are issued by the superintendent relative to the games played by the children, this matter being left entirely to the discretion of the principals and teachers, who use their own judgment as occasions arise. Superintendent Davidson realizes that the average boy is fearfully and wonderfully made, and that while it is well and proper to direct him along certain general lines, it is a futile proposition to burden him with too many rules and regulations regarding his play. "Just turn him loose and he will find his own in good time," says Mr. Davidson. "What a boy really knows is past finding out. God bless the boys. There are no really bad boys; some are merely better than others."

As for the girls and their play at school, they continue to play jacks, tag, hop scotch, button, button, who's got the button, hoops, skip to my Lou, pussy wants a corner and others of the milder sort. They still bring the teachers flowers and apples in season, while many bring their dolls, and in the winter months sew doll clothes.

Play for Littlest Ones

Some of the kindergarten classes of the city are taken out during the recesses by the teachers for a walk away from the school and to some point of child interest. It is interesting to note the enthusiasm of even the "littlest" boys and girls on these outings. Their little eyes dance when the teachers tell them they are going out for a nice walk.

The teachers generally appreciate the value of play to the pupils and they do all they can to encourage it in the right manner. The truism, "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy," holds as good today as the day it was written, and none realize it better than the public school teachers.

"The play of a child is the real tonic of his existence," remarked one teacher the other day.

Spirit of the West

It has been said that western boys and girls carry the "spirit of the west" into their play in a manner that is refreshing. Take any group of Omaha school children at play and you have one of the happiest scenes to be found anywhere. There is a dash of independence in every move and the glow of happiness on every cheek; the merry laughter of childhood mingles with the sunshine and in that little world all is joy. But few are the pains and heart-aches to mar the serenity of childhood's happy days on the school playground. Sometimes a doll's head will break or some boy will tell another boy he has a brother who can whip the other boy's brother, but such things are but trifles compared with the passing joys of the playground.

Cut off both legs of a boy and even then he will be happy in the school yard. A striking instance of this fact was noted last week in the person of little Milton Hoffman, a pupil of the public schools and who hobbles around on two crutches. This little boy asks for no sympathy, but enters into the games so far as he can with an enthusiasm that is remarkable. He is an inspiration to many boys with two sound limbs.

Scientists have thus far been unable to determine just what proportion of energy a boy will expend in one hour of play as compared to the amount expended during the same time of work, but it is a psychological fact that the words "play" and "work" do not produce the same effect on the mind of a boy, although, in many instances, the physical part of the proposition may be precisely the same.