

WORK OF NEBRASKA FEDERATION OF WOMEN'S CLUBS

Review of the Late Convention in Omaha, With Some Personal Reference to the Distinguished Women Who Took Part in the Program, and Something About the Object of the Movement

THE Nebraska Federation of Women's Clubs has completed the fourteenth year of its service and has to its credit accomplishments, and a whole long list of them, of which it may well be proud. Libraries in two score of towns and a state traveling library, civic improvements that have transformed scores of villages from bleak, unattractive places to well cared for, well improved spots that a few years and the civic pride that has been aroused will make beautiful towns; manual training and domestic science in many of the schools; lecture courses that bring culture and first class entertainment to the smaller towns during the winter; a compulsory education law, a child labor law, a juvenile court law, a good decedent law and a pure food law, for all of which the women's clubs have been directly or indirectly responsible, besides the general culture that necessarily radiates from study organizations scattered through the state—these are the things for which the Nebraska Federation stands and that its influence upon the women, and through them upon the other citizens and coming citizens, has helped to make possible.

When the big arch across Farnam street blazed forth its welcome recently to the "N. F. of W. C." the majority of men, and many women, who observed it inquired for what the letters stood, and to many it was a revelation that the "woman's club" was more than a local institution. Learning what it is, they went home and looked up the papers to see what it was all about.

The day for treating the club movement lightly, however, has passed among the well informed, and the man or woman who would cheapen it now-a-days stamps himself as ignorant of one of the greatest moral and educational forces of the century, or possessed of some ulterior motive.

It is a question, however, if the average man or woman fully appreciates all that the woman's club movement has brought about. There is still a surprisingly large number of persons in each community who picture the club woman an aggressive, masculine sort of individual, who goes about demanding things and looking upon man as her natural enemy. Naturally it is difficult for these to associate her with the things that she has actually accomplished. As a matter of fact, the club woman is the highest type of her sex. She is cultured, keenly intelligent, educated, womanly and, above everything else, she has placed the home as the object of woman's best and most faithful service. She is not the woman who is devoted to matinees, and her club meetings are not occupied with bridge or tea or gossip. They are hours taken from busy lives and they are devoted to study, self-culture and the consideration of other serious subjects. Libraries, good schools, good laws and civic pride all, in her opinion, contribute to better homes and so have claimed her efforts, but because she has worked so quietly and so tactfully, striving for results instead of credit, she has often failed to be recognized as the means that has brought about all these good things.

In spite of the extravagance and irresponsibility in money matters with which women are so often charged, the convention of the State Federation held in Omaha recently is an admirable example of what practical women can actually do with a very little money. Out



MRS. F. H. COLE.

braska Federation was organized in this city. In 1894 members of the Omaha Woman's club, which had been organized the year before, and the then few other clubs scattered over the state realized that by joining forces much might be accomplished that as individual organizations they were unable to even attempt. A meeting was called in the autumn and the State Federation formed. Mrs. James B. Campbell, wife of Chancellor Campbell of the University of Nebraska, was the first president and did effective work in organizing and directing the original working body. The next year the first annual convention was held in Lincoln, and Mrs. A. W. Field, wife of Judge Field of Lincoln, was elected president. The following year Mrs. Belle M. Stoutenborough of Omaha was elected president and served two years. Fremont and Beatrice entertained the two conventions, and the following year, 1898, it was held in Omaha, Mrs. C. S. Langworthy of Seward being elected president and serving one year. The next year, at York, Mrs. William Apperson of Tecumseh was elected, and the following year, at Lincoln, Mrs. Draper Smith of Omaha was made president, serving two years and presiding at the Wayne and Columbus conventions. Mrs. W. E. Page of Syracuse was the next president, serving two terms and presiding at the Fremont and Seward meetings, and Mrs. H. M. Bushnell of Lincoln came next, also serving two years and presiding at Lincoln and Kearney. At the Kearney meeting Mrs. H. L. Keefe of Walthill, at that time residing at West Point, was elected, and her term of two years has just expired, she having presided at the convention held last autumn at Hastings and at the convention held recently in

Omaha, at which Mrs. F. H. Cole of Omaha was elected president. Each of these women in turn has met her share of hard work and expense of time and money, and every year has brought some substantial accomplishment.

One frequently hears the insinuation that the prestige and the honor attached to the office of state president more than compensate for the tax upon the incumbent, but the women who have born this honor know better. It means work of the kind that requires the finest tact, and this is too frequently unappreciated. It means the giving of time to attend district, club and state meetings, all of which necessarily entail expense, and it means the writing and answering of hundreds of letters and postal cards, answering questions and helping along clubs that require assistance from a more experienced counselor than their own ranks afford.

Mrs. F. H. Cole, the newly elected president, is too well known in Omaha to need introduction. She served two years as president of the Omaha Woman's club, and during her administration the club afforded some of the best things its membership has ever enjoyed in the way of special programs. For several years Mrs. Cole had served as leader of the English literature department and had also been a prominent member of the art department. As a speaker she has several times come before the clubs of the Second and Third District Federations, and last year she served as chairman of the committee that furnished the program for the Hastings convention. This year she again served on the program committee, so she is not unknown to the clubs of the state. As chairman of the state civil

service reform committee, Mrs. Cole did work that attracted attention outside of Nebraska. When Mrs. Sarah Platt Decker retired from the presidency of the General Federation of Women's Clubs she established a precedent by going back into the ranks to work. She accepted the chairmanship of the national civil service reform committee, and she asked that Mrs. Cole be appointed to serve with her and Miss Anna Clarke of Missouri, whom she had succeeded in the chairmanship. This honor Mrs. Cole has accepted.

In retiring from her office of state president, Mrs. H. L. Keefe goes up to higher honors. At the biennial convention of the General Federation of Women's Clubs, held in Boston last June, Mrs. Keefe was elected one of the eight directors of that organization of 800,000 women. Her election will give to Nebraska for the first time actual representation on the national board. Twice before this honor has come to the state, but both times the state has been deprived of its benefits. Mrs. Frances M. Ford, one of the founders of the Omaha Woman's club, was one of the earlier directors, but owing to continued illness in her family was unable to participate in any of the councils. Mrs. Belle M. Stoutenborough of Omaha was elected a director at the St. Louis biennial, but left the state immediately, and as she did not resign the office that appointment profited Nebraska nothing. Mrs. Keefe was one of nine members present at the first meeting of the present executive board, held at Colorado Springs in September, and she has been recognized with the chairmanship of one of the committees.

In turning over the affairs of the State Federation, the retiring executive board leaves things in promising condition. The federation now includes 127 clubs, with a membership of about 6,000, in about 100 towns. Reports of clubs and district organizations at the recent convention held in Omaha were substantial contradiction of the claim that the woman's club movement is on the decline. Club interest has never been stronger and the membership has never been so closely in touch. It is true that there will not be as much asked in a legislative way this year as there was two years ago, but having gained so much then there is less to ask for now. The women will, however, ask for an increased appropriation for the State Traveling Library commission, an increase of \$2,000 a year, or a biennial appropriation of \$10,000 being desired. This they will ask upon recommendation of the secretary and other members of the commission, who consider the present biennial appropriation of \$6,000 inadequate. Having organized and supported the original circulating library in Nebraska, the club women feel that their continued active interest in it is justifiable. The clubs in many towns support the local station, that is, provide the annual funds that bring the books to their towns. As councilors with school boards and others interested in library extension, the women are more closely in touch with the library work than almost any others in the state, and often have occasion to realize how handicapped the work of the commission is for want of sufficient funds to properly carry it on.

In a local way, clubs will ask much this year in the way of improved school conditions. Manual training and domestic science have already been introduced in many towns at their request, and in sev-



MRS. C. E. NEVIN.

of a fund of less than \$125 the program was provided, this including the expenses or a fee for several speakers of national prominence. The majority of the speakers were, however, from the ranks of clubdom and some of them are in constant demand as authorities in their respective lines.

One of the best known of these club women speakers was Mrs. Jean Sherwood of Chicago, former chairman of the General Federation's art committee and known across the continent for her practical work in the interest of art. Mrs. Sherwood came to Omaha under the auspices of the Society of the Fine Arts, which organization generously shared her with the federation. Her gallery talks and lectures on "Home Decoration" and the collection of original paintings loaned by some of America's leading artists, which she displayed at the library, afforded a treat such as Omaha has not often been privileged to enjoy.

Miss Anna Clarke of Boonville, Mo., was another speaker of national reputation. Miss Clarke served for some time as chairman of the civil service reform committee of the General Federation and is still its vice chairman. She is a woman of broad culture and has spent many years studying public institutions in this country and abroad.

Mrs. Margaret Blair of the University of Minnesota was a speaker on the domestic science program. Mrs. Blair, too, has served as a chairman of one of the General Federation standing committees, having recently given the direction of the domestic science work to another chairman. She is widely known as a lecturer and teacher, and will return to Omaha again this year as one of the speakers before the women's department of the National Corn exposition, in company with other speakers of note.

Miss Rosa Bouton, at the head of the domestic science department of the University of Nebraska, was another speaker on the domestic science program, while Mrs. Sheldon, wife of Governor Sheldon, was present to urge the interest of the clubs in the National Corn exposition next December. And then there was a score or more of women who are known over the state and in neighboring states for their efficient work in various departments. Miss Charlotte Templeton, secretary of the State Traveling Library commission, and Mrs. C. E. Nevin of Laurel, who have done so much for libraries in Nebraska, were both present. Mrs. Nevin was for some time chairman of the library extension committee, and her enthusiasm, which proved so contagious, won for her the name, "the Library Woman." Another state chairman who has done effective work is Mrs. W. A. Harrison of York, otherwise known as the "Tree Woman," for her work on the forestry and civic committees.

It is a matter of pride to the women of Omaha that the Ne-



MRS. GEORGE L. SHELDON.

eral places the clubs are supporting this work, either by providing the equipment or by paying a teacher, or both.

One of the practical helps to school, as well as club, work in the state this winter will be three circulating art collections secured through the influence of the chairman of the State Federation's art committee, Mrs. Anna Morey of Hastings. Mrs. Morey has been chairman of this committee for two years, and will continue in that office under the new administration. An artist herself of wide opportunities and extensive acquaintance, she has been able to interest the various American potteries in contributing to a collection of fine specimens that will remain in Nebraska and circulate among the towns for exhibition and study purposes. The only expense attached to securing this exhibit will be the cost of its transportation from the town where it was last shown. This is, of course, met by the club wishing the exhibit. The collection, while still small, is choice and includes specimens, and fine specimens, too, of the finest pottery made in America. Wherever this collection is exhibited the clubs will, of course, extend its benefits to the schools. Besides this pottery, Mrs. Morey has been instrumental in bringing to the state for circulation two famous collections of pictures. One is a collection of Lorenzo Taft's pictures, and the other a loan collection of oil paintings secured through the courtesy of the Velasquez club of New York. These are two of the finest circulating collections of pictures in the country and their value to students is inestimable. The only expense attached to the exhibits is the transportation and packing. These collections will be retained while there is a demand for them. During the last two years the federation has had other collections of paintings and pictures circulating in the state. These have been the traveling galleries out under the auspices of the General Federation and including work of the foremost American artists. As a result of the interest arising from these exhibits the clubs and others have been able to place copies of famous pictures in many schools, libraries and other public buildings where they may contribute to the education of all.

Domestic science has even been clued to the heart of the Nebraska club woman as the general interest in the pure food and drug bill recently passed attested. Mrs. A. C. Johnson of Ord has been chairman of that committee for the last two years and a general line of household economics study has been followed by clubs all over the state. And these women have embraced it as the really broad subject that it is. Not merely cooking and sweeping and sewing, and those things that make up the routine of the housekeeping have occupied their attention.

Three Women Prominent in Club Work



MRS. MARGARET J. BLAIR. MRS. A. C. JOHNSON. MISS ROSA BOUTON.