

Boys Given New Light on Life at State Industrial School



BOYS AT WORK IN THE BEET FIELD



THE SCHOOL BAND



SHOE SHOP - BOYS AT WORK



C.B. MANUEL
SUPERINTENDENT



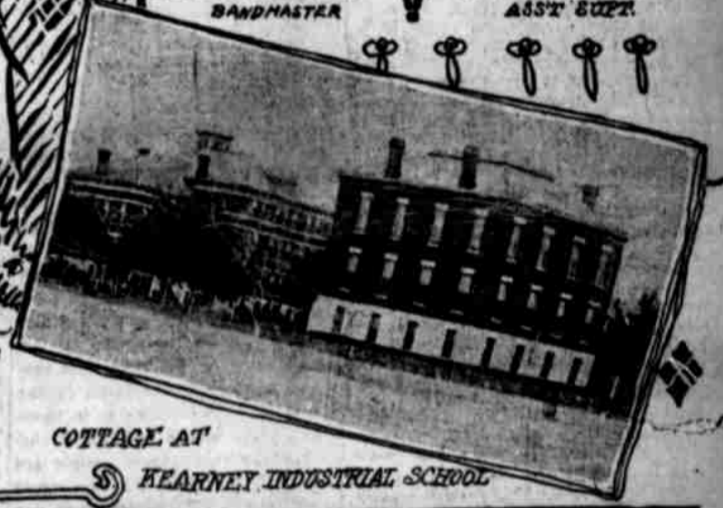
MRS. MANUEL
MATRON



F.P. FITZGERALD
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ASST. SUPT.



COTTAGE AT
KEARNEY INDUSTRIAL SCHOOL



READY TO TAKE A SWIM

By R. MARSHALL M'CLAURE.

WITH the opening of public school buildings in Chicago to dancing and other amusements tending to create social centers to which young men and women will be attracted from the streets and public dance halls come editorials from the press of the country denouncing the step as retrogressive in the ultimate object sought—that of substituting good for bad influences over the future men and women of the country which the home has failed to give.

These editorials deplore the fallacy of all schemes that seek to give the influence by means that lead the growing child away from home. That there is a weakness in the influence of the homes of the land is admitted. The home as the unit of civilization holds the key to the situation, but this failure of the home is a reality nowhere better illustrated than by the inmates of the home provided by the state of Nebraska for boys that have passed beyond the pale of home influence and restraint. This membership has gradually increased in the last twenty-six months from seventy-eight to 188 inmates.

This great family of possibilities is made up of individual members adjudged and committed to the care and keeping of the commonwealth, thus thrusting on the shoulders of the state proteges that cannot be guided and controlled by parental discipline or mother's care; or if denied these, as is true in many cases, then that of relatives or guardians.

State Long Ago Took Heed of Boys' Needs

Nebraska's home for boys, established thirty-three years ago, and made the Nebraska State Industrial school, but popularly known as the reform school, has within the last few years made marked advances toward attaining the desideratum for which it was founded. Today the creed of the institution is stated in the trinity—character building, first; education useful in a business or mechanical career, second; and the mastery of a useful trade, that the young man may become a self-supporting citizen, third.

The policy is changed from the objective point of securing sufficient merits to cancel all demerits so that the boy may be paroled to that of a complete mastery of a trade. Many instances of boys with an "honor" month to their credit asking to remain a month, six months or a year longer that they might complete their training in the trade they are learning, or that they might receive further instruction in their music, serve as proof of this change.

Each inmate when committed is given to understand his equality in every respect to every other boy in the institution. His past record is not inquired into, nor are questions asked concerning it. However, a record of that is secured for the superintendent's reference. The boys are no longer assigned to different grades of punishment by receiving a different number of demerits to work off. The principle of the indeterminate sentence is worked out by giving all boys enrolled an equal number of demerits; the only classification made being one of size. This is necessary for the military drill. It is useful in that the young boy who is overgrown is found better able to associate with fellows of his size than those of his age, and the older boy, diminutive in size, is found lacking in

leadership, so his influence on those with whom he is classed is not necessarily vicious.

Boys Travel Alone on Honor

The acme of faith in a boy was reached, it was thought, a few years ago, when the superintendent then in charge saw fit to have boys committed to the school make the journey from the place of commitment to the institution unattended by an officer. A further step is in practice today. Even a bad boy, one who is not yet on his "honor" month, is granted a furlough of one or two weeks' duration. He is allowed to go to his home on a visit and returns a better boy. Since the inauguration of this plan two years ago there has not been a boy who has failed to return from such a furlough. There have been many instances of escaped boys voluntarily returning to the institution; some arriving at 1 or 2 o'clock in the morning.

While all these changes seemingly denote laxer methods than those employed under the penal system that aped the penitentiary, it is paradoxically true that the methods are even more vigilant than formerly. Instead of allowing the boys to spend the nights in the dormitory bedrooms alone, where soundless orgies might be possible, additional night watchmen have been employed to the extent of having one in each building.

Inmates Live as Families

The inmates are divided into five families or grades. At the head of each grade, living in the grade cottage, is the grade manager. His duties are multifarious, having general supervision of those under his charge; seeing that each inmate deports himself in a proper manner; that each maintains proper cleanliness. Truly a task, for these are American boys. He is their teacher, giving regular class room instruction. He looks after each inmate's diet, reports all cases of sickness, sees that the requirements of the attending physician are carried out, looks after their clothing as a mother would, keeps a daily record of the department of each and reports any infringement of the rules and regulations to the superintendent. He is held responsible by the superintendent for the discipline of the members in his cottage. All of this he does for the bountiful stipend of \$66.66 a month. Where it is possible to secure a manager with a wife and no children the wife holds the position of house matron. She fills in the lack of feminine love and foresight by such touches here and there as her maternal instinct prompts in the alleviating of discomfort in the lives of boys in her cottage. She has general supervision of the cottage, doing that "and-so-forth" element of housework which takes so much of a woman's time without any apparent result; which, being translated into Nebraska English may mean "going back and forth."

The inmates of the cottage sleep in the dormitory, located on the second floor, more for precaution than for convenience. A general undressing room outside of the main bedroom is provided with hooks, on which the boys hang their clothes by night and their nighties by day.

All Dine at Same Time

Boys assemble in the morning in time for breakfast, which is served at the general dining room in the industrial building. All inmates dine in the same room simultaneously, under the supervision of managers. After breakfast the boys go to their details and school is called.

Permission is granted for a short play at the

noon hour on the athletic field. In the evenings the play rooms, one located in each cottage, are opened for their amusement and diversion. The school also has a nice skating pond nearby. Base balls, bats, masks, gloves, foot balls, boxing gloves, etc., are hanging on the hooks of the owners. A strict enforcement of the right to private property is enforced, no one taking the other's catching glove, bat or skates, without permission.

In the administration building a well equipped library is at their disposal, but, contrary to expectations, the books preferred are not those of fiction. The boys favor books of travel, outdoor life and biography, especially that of great Americans, with Lincoln and Washington, holding prominent places.

The school system begins with the primary grades, some coming to the school unable to write their own names. Instruction is given in all subjects usually taught in grammar schools. The greatest number of the inmates are in or below the seventh grade, but studies are offered as high as the capabilities of the individuals admit, some students receiving as high as tenth grade high school instruction. They attend school four hours daily, the forenoon usually being devoted to class room instruction. There is practically no difference in the methods employed in their instruction and that given in the best public schools.

Vocational Training is Featured.

When a boy arrives at the school he is at once assigned to some department for work. If he "fits in" and takes to that particular kind of work, he is kept at that trade during his whole stay in the institution, or until he has thoroughly mastered it. If he fails to make good at this first assignment, then he is tried at something else, practically following the lines of the vocational schools now being established in different cities of the United States. This plan has been in vogue in several countries of Europe for a good many years.

In the laundry, for instance, which is equipped with all modern appliances of a first class steam laundry, a boy can become skilled in laundry work, and if he so apply himself faithfully, on being paroled he need not fear to accept a job anywhere. The tanning and cooking for the in-

stitution is all done in one department, with an up-to-date plant, and a boy with any sort of natural bent for baking or cooking has ample opportunity to become proficient. It is a boast of the institution that as good bread is produced here as can be made. The negro inmates are especially fitted for this class of work and many of them are employed here. The result is that when they again go forth into the world they have a practical working knowledge that fits them to take places as cooks or bakers.

In the tailoring department, where those who show any skill with the needle are given a chance to perfect themselves, all the clothing used by the inmates is made, except underwear and socks. The output of this shop is no small item, since each boy has two suits of clothes, one of rough khaki for everyday use and a neat dress suit of gray. The caps to match are also made in the tailor shop. Here, too, all the patching is done, and every morning there is a pile of clothing at hand waiting repairs. When a boy leaves for home he is given a neat suit of civilian clothes made to his measure.

Made Pair of Shoes for Governor.

Governor Chester H. Aldrich was presented with a pair of shoes, last Christmas, made in the shoe shop of the Industrial school. He has testified they are delightfully comfortable. The great handicap here, in the view of the authorities, is the absence of shoemaking machinery. All the work is done by hand. The juvenile shoemakers turn out a goodly tale of work just the same. Each inmate has two pairs of shoes, one for working in and another for dress occasions. Besides, each lad gets a new pair when he leaves the school.

Boys with a hunch for farming or dairying can have the benefit of practical work and instruction in both branches of agriculture; a skilled farmer and dairyman gives systematic instruction, and farm economics are emphasized in the teaching. On rented land adjoining the school grounds the farmer boys raise vegetables, alfalfa, sugar beets and other crops. They also have the task of doing the hauling and caring for the outside work.

Besides supplying the needs of the school family, the farming is so successful there is always a goodly surplus for sale.

One of the most popular trades with a good many of the inmates is that of learning music and to play an instrument. When a competent director was employed for the school this "trade" began to pick up at a wonderful rate. He found a long-limbed, ungainly boy doing chores about the place, and at once said, "I'll make a cracker-jack trombone player out of that chap. Today the former chore-boy, after sixteen months' instruction, will play an entire selection of a heavy overture, under critical inspection, with but a casual glance at the score. Others have been quite as successful with the cornet, clarinet, baritone horn, flute and other instruments. Sixty boys are now enrolled in the band, and not a few have asked permission to remain after their "honor" month to perfect themselves as musicians.

How a Boy Works His Way Out.

In the matter of discipline, it may be summarized thus: On being enrolled, each boy is given 6,000 demerits. He can win ten merits per day for good behavior, and these go to cancel his demerits. A perfect record for a month wins twenty-five extra merits. Three months of good conduct win an extra 100 merits, making 175 extra merits for each quarter of perfect deportment. Extraordinary service of any kind wins still other extra merit marks. When he has canceled all his demerits he enters upon a final month, called "honor" month. Usually the boys pass through this final period without spoiling their record, and if a good home is awaiting a lad he is paroled for four months. If everything is "right" at the end of four months, the parole is extended for one year, and this is again extended, from year to year, until the boy reaches his majority.

Corporal punishment may be given, upon order of the superintendent, for attempts to escape, for immorality and for insubordination. This is limited to a good sound spanking on the one appropriate place provided by nature. The occasions for administering this form of punishment are few and far between.