

Omaha's New High School Principal

Professor Masters Has Some Positive Ideas of His Own on Education and How to Apply Them to the Conduct of the Great and Growing School of Which He Has Recently Been Put in Charge

By A. R. GROH.

THE new principal of Central High school, Prof. Joseph G. Masters, is the average man in personal appearance. One looks in vain for an outstanding physical characteristic. He has no Marlborough back of a nose. His nose is average. He has no Abraham mouth. His mouth is pleasantly average. He is neither bald nor prematurely gray, nor has he an enormous shock of hair. His hair is average, dark brown and sanely combed. He hasn't an Abraham Lincoln figure. His figure is average, neither very fat nor very lean. He isn't careless about his dress, nor is he foppish. He dresses in the neat average.

The wise and experienced painter of men in words doesn't attach much importance to outstanding characteristics of this kind in gauging a person. We once saw a most impressive man in a hotel lobby. He had a "strong" nose, a "firm" mouth, beetling brows. His raiment was of the most costly. He moved with the air of a king. We figured he must be president of half a dozen railroads and a general of industry. That afternoon we saw him on a street corner beneath a large red umbrella selling a sure corn cure "at the special advertising price for today, gentlemen, of 10 cents. Who else wants a package? All supplied?"

Personal Appearance of the Principal

Prof. Masters' manner isn't "impressive." He doesn't look at you with "piercing eyes" nor from beneath "beetling eyebrows." He doesn't pose as though upon his shoulders rested the burden of empires. He doesn't pose at all.

At first appearance he strikes his visitor as thoroughly honest. His manner is almost diffident and his ready smile is as ingenuous as that of a schoolboy. His clear eyes and healthy color bespeak the man who lives out of doors as much as possible. His speech is tolerant. He never says, "We must do so and so. It is the only solution of the problem." He has the judicial temperament which weighs questions in the scale of a well-balanced mind and then decides them. And he has the energy which puts practical ideas into execution. It's a way these country boys have, the boys who grow up on the farm, trudge through the snow to the rural school after the morning chores are done and they've husked half a wagonload of corn, finally manage to get to "normal" and then teach school and get money to go to college and travel abroad. All this Prof. Masters did. He became principal of the Council Grove (Kan.) High school, next was superintendent of schools in Tulsa, Okla. for five years, and then principal of the Oklahoma City High school for three years, coming from there to Omaha.

High School Problems Ahead

Asked about his plans and ideals for the Omaha High school, Prof. Masters smiled and said:

"One of the biggest problems we are coming face to face with here is the problem of room. We are using every foot of space in this fine big building. If we had another teacher I don't know where we would put her. Next term we will have 200 or 300 new pupils from the eighth grade and I don't see where we will accommodate them."

"What is your attitude toward the so-called 'practical' studies compared with the 'classical'?"

"This is decidedly a classical high school," he said with a smile. "The manual training equipment is decidedly poor, compared with what we had in Oklahoma City. Here woodwork is about the only thing taken up. There we had carpentry and cabinet-making, forge, foundry and machine work. I have seen a boy take an ordinary file, take the temper out of it and shape it into a carving knife and fork, temper these utensils and fit them with artistic handles. Our equipment here in cooking and sewing is good."

"Another problem that I consider important is vocational guidance. We must consult with the pupils who are doubtful and study their aptitudes so as to guide them as swiftly and surely as possible to concentration of their energies on their life occupations."

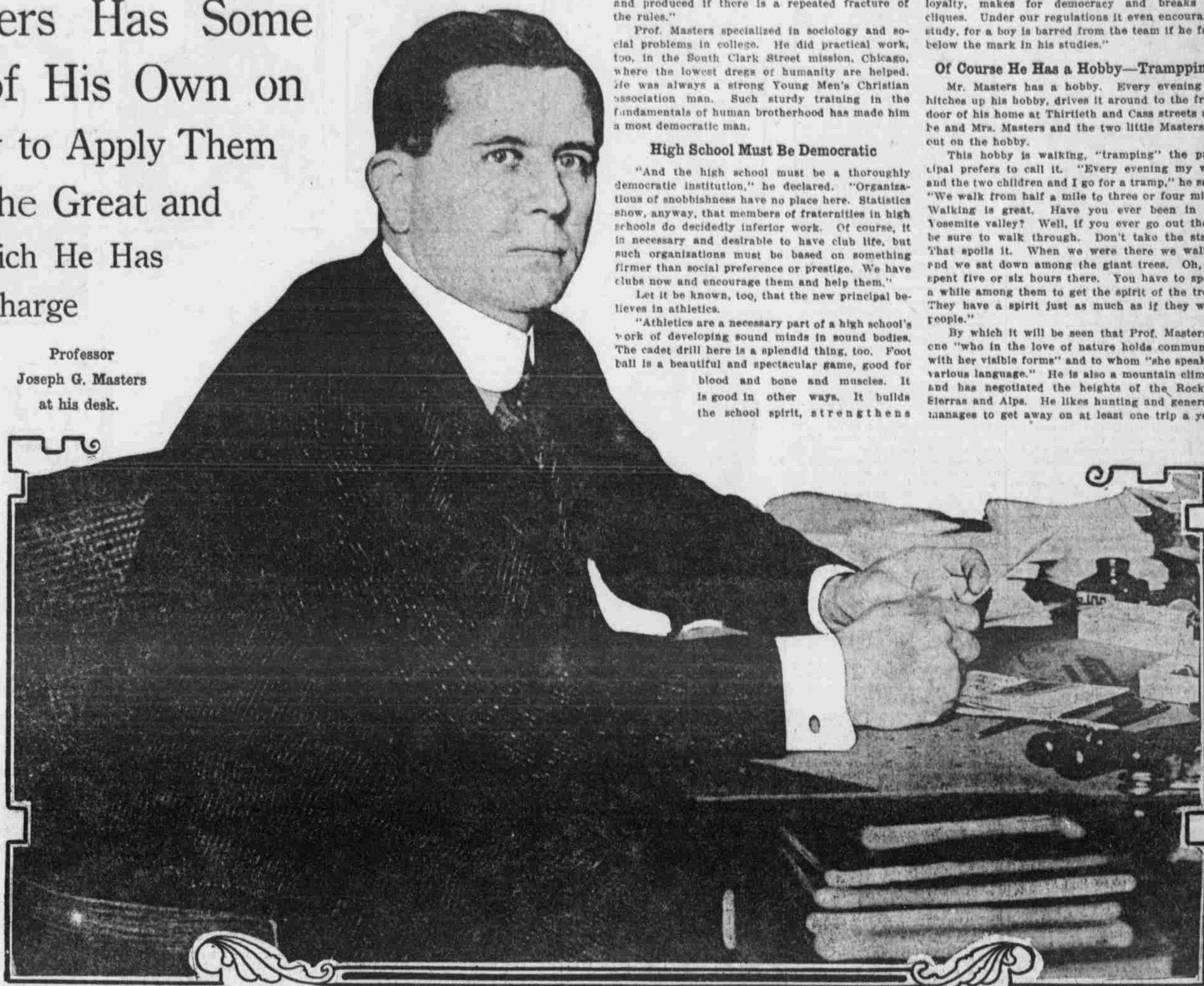
Supervised Better Than Outside Study

"What is your observation of outside study? Do the pupils do enough of it?"

"Some decidedly do not," smiled Prof. Masters. "And as the solution of that problem we are seriously considering supervised study. We have, even now, a special study room supervised by a teacher every afternoon, but attendance on this is voluntary and those who really need it are often not there."

"Another method of overcoming this laxity of outside study which we are considering for adoption is a change of the school periods from forty-five minutes to sixty-five minutes. There would be five such periods in a school day in place of the present six periods of forty-five minutes each. It would increase the school day by about fifty-five minutes and it is possible that under this program

Professor Joseph G. Masters at his desk.



we would begin school at 8:30 a. m. instead of 9. as now.

"Under this plan the first twenty minutes of each period are devoted to study of the lesson to be recited. Such study has the advantage of being under the supervision of the teacher. The pupil does not grope blindly, but is shown by the teacher just how to 'attack' the problems of the lesson."

"The great mass of students do their studying well, but the fraction who do not are the ones to be considered. Moving pictures and automobiles and a general laxity of discipline in some homes make this a special problem of the day."

Question of Separating Boys and Girls

"Segregation of boy and girl students is another possible innovation in the Omaha High school, though the faculty at present is opposed to it, about two-thirds voting against it at a recent meeting. I am inclined to look upon co-education as best. The boys need the example of the girls in hard study and application, while the girls need the example of the boys in practical application. Girls study harder and learn more by memory or rote. There are far fewer failures among girls than among boys. In Seattle, where segregation was tried, the boys distanced the girls. In certain studies like chemistry it would be a good idea to have separate courses of study beyond the elementary course, so that girls, for example, could take up the chemistry of foods and boys could study chemistry in other lines."

Prof. Masters is "strong" for scientific management, card systems and the like.

"I am hoping to get time for working out the high school's problems in a scientific and statistical way," he said. "We ought to get the comparative cost of educating a student here and in other high schools and so on. We should systematize the giving of grades as far as we can, taking into consideration the respective personal equations of the teachers. We should determine, by the law of averages, how many 'A's' and 'B's' and 'C's' should be earned in a class that is doing satisfactory work. Some teachers give too many, some too few. We must get a standard by which all can work."

Believes in Corporal Punishment

Listen, fellows, Principal Masters believes in corporal punishment.

"Application of the rubber hose once in a while is very effective," he said, smiling. "I used to think it ought never to be done, but there are cases which seem to yield to no other treatment. I believe in the policy of 'watchful waiting' with a student. I try to impress on him self-control and to rouse him to exercise that valuable quality. I get students to sign cards promising to live up to the ideas of school efficiency and these are filed away

and produced if there is a repeated fracture of the rules."

Prof. Masters specialized in sociology and social problems in college. He did practical work, too, in the South Clark Street mission, Chicago, where the lowest dregs of humanity are helped. He was always a strong Young Men's Christian association man. Such sturdy training in the fundamentals of human brotherhood has made him a most democratic man.

High School Must Be Democratic

"And the high school must be a thoroughly democratic institution," he declared. "Organizations of snobbishness have no place here. Statistics show, anyway, that members of fraternities in high schools do decidedly inferior work. Of course, it is necessary and desirable to have club life, but such organizations must be based on something firmer than social preference or prestige. We have clubs now and encourage them and help them."

Let it be known, too, that the new principal believes in athletics.

"Athletics are a necessary part of a high school's work of developing sound minds in sound bodies. The cadet drill here is a splendid thing, too. Football is a beautiful and spectacular game, good for blood and bone and muscles. It is good in other ways. It builds the school spirit, strengthens

loyalty, makes for democracy and breaks up cliques. Under our regulations it even encourages study, for a boy is barred from the team if he falls below the mark in his studies."

Of Course He Has a Hobby—Tramping

Mr. Masters has a hobby. Every evening he hitches up his hobby, drives it around to the front door of his home at Thirtieth and Cass streets and he and Mrs. Masters and the two little Masters go out on the hobby.

This hobby is walking, "tramping" the principal prefers to call it. "Every evening my wife and the two children and I go for a tramp," he says. "We walk from half a mile to three or four miles. Walking is great. Have you ever been in the Yosemite valley? Well, if you ever go out there, be sure to walk through. Don't take the stage. That spoils it. When we were there we walked and we sat down among the giant trees. Oh, we spent five or six hours there. You have to spend a while among them to get the spirit of the trees. They have a spirit just as much as if they were people."

By which it will be seen that Prof. Masters is one "who in the love of nature holds communion with her visible forms" and to whom "she speaks a various language." He is also a mountain climber and has negotiated the heights of the Rockies, Sierras and Alps. He likes hunting and generally manages to get away on at least one trip a year.

Nebraska Teachers' Association

FROM a little organization of a dozen, or maybe two dozen, teachers in a meeting in 1865, the Nebraska State Teachers' association has grown to a magnificent educational body of 4,565 members.

This great body of educators of the state of Nebraska is to hold its fiftieth annual convention at Omaha this week. The half century mark has been reached and a great march of progress in the educational system of the state has been recorded in that length of time.

Yes, the institution was founded back in 1865, although the records really begin with the meeting of 1867, when the association met at Brownville, Neb. Robert W. Furnas, principal of the Brownville school at that time, was president. Next year it met at Nebraska City. In 1869 the little organization first made its appearance in Omaha. Immediately afterward it returned again to Brownville for its next meeting, and the following year again ventured out from the shell and met at Lincoln, both 1871 and 1872 meetings were held in Lincoln.

Then the association went to Fremont, Tecumseh, Omaha and Nebraska City for a series of years, and back to Lincoln again. Then the smaller towns got a chance at it again for a few years, until in 1884 it went to Lincoln, and was held there successively until 1903, with the exception of two years, when it went to Fremont and Hastings, respectively. In 1904 Omaha got the convention again. Then it went back to Lincoln until 1911.

Following this date the convention went to Omaha and has been meeting here regularly since. The democratic principle injected into the association with the referendum vote on officers and place of meeting has kept the meeting place in Omaha.

Yet, after all, in the half century of its existence the association has met in Omaha only nine times, and five of the nine have been the last five successive years. The small towns are now out of the running in this matter, as the association has grown too large to be accommodated by anything short of a metropolitan city.

Some figures along this line are interesting. Before the convention came to Omaha the highest attendance it had ever attained was 1,800. The high mark in attendance was reached two years ago, when 4,565 active teachers of the state were enrolled for the convention in Omaha.

Today the association ranks with the best in the western hemisphere in point of numbers and importance of work. Iowa has recognized this fact to such an extent that its teachers are allowed

to attend either the Nebraska or the Iowa association at their own option and are given credit equally at either place.

The Nebraska association has been instrumental in lifting the standard of the schools of the state, and it is to the State Teachers' association that much of the credit is given for the low percentage of illiteracy for which Nebraska has long been famed. The influence of the association has been for a better grade of teachers throughout the state.

The presidents of the association have been pretty well distributed over the state. Among the former presidents are a number of men who have since grown to some eminence in their field. The late Dean C. E. Bessey of the University of Nebraska was a past president of the association, as

was also C. G. Pearse, former head of the Omaha schools, now head of the Milwaukee normal, and J. W. Crabtree, former head of the Peru State normal, now head of the normal at River Falls, Wis.

W. W. Jones of Lincoln, J. M. McKensie and C. E. Palmer of Beatrice are the only men who ever succeeded themselves in the presidency. Jones was president from 1882 to 1886, McKensie from 1871 to 1873, and Palmer from 1876 to 1877.

In all the history of the association there have been but two women presidents. Only one of these, Miss Kate McHugh of Omaha, was elected to the office, while Miss Edith A. Lathrop of Clay Center succeeded to the presidency from her position of vice president, when the then president, William A. Davidson of Omaha, resigned to go to Washington, D. C.



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