

THE CRETE CHAUTAUQUA

While all Nebraska is scorching, there is one place where ample shade and cool river breezes abound and bring rest and comfort. It is the beautiful spot near Crete, half encircled by the Blue, on which the Chautauqua grounds are situated. And it is more beautiful and more delightful than ever this year. Greater care has been taken with the grounds than in time past. The lawn is in better shape, the trees trimmed, the lower park cleaned and freshly sodded. Indeed this last spot which heretofore has been rather neglected on account of its lowness this year is the most desirable ground of the entire place. Here the Hall in the Grove, as it is called, has been repaired; new benches have been put in, and places cleaned for tents. Other improvements have been made—on the Auditorium, the Dining Hall, the walks, the pontoon bridge and in many places. The whole ground gives the camper a sense of rest and coolness and perfect content the moment he crosses the bridge and enters the gate.

This week at the Chautauqua has been a week of "days"—the Fourth, editor's day, Odd Fellow's day and Chautauqua day. Each has had fitting special exercises and has proved a great success. The largest crowd of this year, of course, came on Monday. It was a crowd that came for enjoyment, a good rest, and an escape for a few hours from the city. Many came down from Lincoln Saturday and spent three days on the grounds, while others came down but for the day—to row, visit friends, or attend the lectures and entertainments. No special attractions were offered on the Fourth but simply an opportunity for quiet recreation.

The Sunday service was one of the most enjoyable and impressive of the sessions. The day was cool and pleasant and nearly all the church-goers from Crete came over for the day. The time was years ago when the grounds were closed on Sunday as tight as a barred door, when none were admitted or allowed to go out from midnight Saturday to Monday morning, when not a paper or a bit of mail came into the place. But of late years with wiser and more liberal management the grounds have been open on Sunday as well as other days, and the method has proved beneficial and successful.

Last Sunday a praise service was held at 8 in the morning and Sunday school at 9:30. Then at 11 the annual sermon was preached by Rev. Willard Scott. This sermon is one of the most enjoyable parts of the whole assembly program. In the afternoon, the Slaytons gave a sacred concert of melodies that helped the slaves of war times to hold up under their burdens, and at 5 a vesper service was held at which Miss Marian Treat sang from the leading oratorios and English and Scotch ballads. The evening service was a familiar talk by Dr. Mackenzie on Ian MacLeran and the scenes of "Beside the Bonnie Briar Bush" illustrated by stereoptical views.

Dr. Mackenzie, by the way, is a typical Scotchman, a native of Edinburgh and a graduate of Edinburgh University. He is now professor of theology at the Chicago Theological seminary, and his course of lectures on the subject is one of the best features of this year. Dr. Mackenzie has the brogue of his country, but it is delightful to listen to him. He looks much like pictures of Prof. Henry Drummond and has the same sunny disposition. Dr. Mackenzie is a hard student, even here at the grounds arising at five o'clock to prepare for the day's lecture.

Miss Marian Treat has made herself a favorite at Crete as she does wherever she sings. She is rather reserved at first acquaintance, but a bright conversationalist. Her singing in Lincoln at commencement time of the State University struck many as being rather cold, but those who have heard her at the Chautauqua the past week have reversed the decision. She fully demonstrated that she has a voice which with greater maturity will place her among the leading singers of the west. Her voice is flexible and powerful; she is a beautiful woman and her stage presence is very impressive and winning.

Maro, the Wizard, who gave three entertainments of magic the first of the week is an interesting character. He is a very young man whom you would never take for a magician. Most people's conception of such artists is based on the pictures of Herman the Great, whose face resembled that of his satanic majesty about as much as was possible. But Maro is a surprise to one with such an idea. He has a round face with light curly hair and looks more like a college student than an adept in magic. He probably studies and works harder than the average student, for he shuts himself up and practices the art for hours. He says it takes fifteen years to perfect some tricks and that he is but beginning. Some tricks he has worked on for years and never attempted before the public. Maro is assisted by a man who calls himself "The Riverself Whistler" and is really remarkable in imitating calls and cries of birds and fowls. Both Maro and his friend have made many friends, especially among the host of children on the ground.

Perhaps the people by whom the Chautauqua is most thoroughly enjoyed are the tired ministers of the state whose only let-up from the year's work consists of the ten days spent on the grounds. It is their only chance for recreation and rest and up-lifting and broadening of the mind. And these ministers always come to Crete, for here they find a clear, honest program, such as they want and need, no sensational attractions nor noted speakers that fail to show up, but lectures and class work on subjects in which they are vitally interested. They bring their families and spend the ten days and go back refreshed in body and mind.

Many campers cook at their tents, but a great number take their meals at the dining hall, and there is much complaint over the place. It was leased to a hotel man in Crete who charges a good round price and furnishes as scant a table as possible. He has the people there and they have to submit to the extortion. Some few take a breakfast of coffee and toast at their tents; a lunch at noon of pie and milk at a grocery store on the grounds, and go over to a rival hotel in the city for a good round dinner in the evening.

Up the hill to the west of the assembly grounds is a cemetery known as Riverside, and this is probably the most beautiful spot about Crete. At the highest point one commands a view of the Blue and its valley for many miles, stretching away between banks of leavy trees and fields of waving grain. The city nestles in a big bend of the river, hidden by foliage with here and there a steeple showing, and up the opposite hills, the buildings of Doane college. At one's feet the river bends sharply forming a bluff fifty feet in height. Below are the two iron bridges, one a road bridge and the other that of the Burlington road. To the left lies the Chautauqua grounds, a camp of cottages and white tents and trees and shade. The whole is a scene that one never tires of, and it is always visited by campers and people attending the Chautauqua.

Speaking of this cemetery of "Riverside," there is one tombstone there that old campers generally point out to their friends. It is a small marble slab with the inscription, "Gone before," and below the inscription a hand pointing downward.

The Slaytons, by the way, are a striking group of colored people as you could find anywhere. They were so well

received last year that they feel perfectly at home this season and show more of their sunny southern nature than would otherwise be possible. Mr. Moore second bass, is leader of the group, and he has so long and serious a face that you think the responsibilities must be heavy. When he announces the selections he pulls his chin down and his eyebrows up until he looks like a Chinaman. But he seems to take great delight in announcing his wife, the leading soprano, whose stage name is Miss Palmer—a delightful little lady as bright and charming socially as can be, with the complexion of a mulatto, dark sparkling eyes, and not the least noticeable trace of the negro twang in her voice. The leading alto is as dark as Miss Palmer is light, and has a deep rich voice. Mr. Washington, leading basso, is as black as coal and several inches over six feet. He is utterly unconscious of the audience, sending his voice rolling up and down the platform and see-sawing through all the movements of a camp meeting enthusiast.

A group of six boys about a tent noisily eating dinner recalls the experience of a certain minister from one of the smaller towns of the state, who several years ago brought about twenty boys down to the assembly. The man was tired and overworked and needed rest badly, but he was so generous hearted that when somebody suggested his taking the "Boys' club" of his church to the Chautauqua he took up with the idea and carried it through—but to his infinite sorrow, as you shall see.

It took him two weeks to make preparations—the tents, the gasoline stove, a cook, food and canned goods—and then several days starting. He worked like a Turk getting away and in getting situated at the grounds. Then his troubles multiplied a hundred fold. The boys were constantly getting into mischief or running risks of drowning in the river. They fought like little terriers at their meals, seemed never to go to sleep till midnight and to wake up with the sun. One of them made away with the assembly bell, another got into the food box, ate all the canned green-gages, and had to be worked over all that night by the minister and his wife to keep him from dying. There were constant complaints, and all the neighboring campers pulled out and left that part of the ground. Then the boys' folks got to coming in and spending from three to four days with the party. The provisions ran out and the minister was stuck for several dollars extra on food. The boys wouldn't work and he himself had to carry the water, build the fires and do all the little chore work, so that his rest, his class work, and his attendance at the lectures was cut short. Finally, after they had been there a week, the party had their picture taken by a strolling photographer at fifty cents a picture. It took two hours of worry and fretting to get the group together the minister in the center with the boys gathered lovingly about him, and the cook in a white apron on the left. Every boy said he would take one picture and the photographer struck off two dozen, but when he came around the minister found that the lads had spent all their pocket money, and that he had to stand good for the two dozen at six dollars a dozen.

That picture broke up the party. When they were disclosed it was seen that the cook had sat too far to the left and only her apron appeared in the picture. That made her angry. She took it into her head that they had done this on purpose, and picked up her things and went home. The minister and his wife did the cooking then, for a day and a half longer, but the wife took sick, and that brought things to a crisis. They packed up that night and left, the boys cross, sun burned and dirty, the minister and his wife worn out, sick at heart, and at an expense of many dollars more than they had counted on. And it is firmly believed by many that the cause of that minister's resignation a few months later and acceptance of an Iowa call, was due to that experience with those boys at Crete.

Washington Gladden has been quite a prominent figure on the grounds this week and his lectures on social reform have been largely attended. They have covered a wide range of subjects—the corporation, the city, the railway, the newspaper and the church. Washington Gladden is a true reformer, and it sticks out all over him. He has a clear, fearless eye and an open countenance and speaks with conviction on his subjects.

Two women at the Chautauqua this year have exercised powerful influence on the mothers and children in attendance. Mrs. Mary Foster Bryner, of Chicago, is a charming woman, who



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