

The procrustean public schools do their best to mould the small, soft-boned bodies into an average shape. That they succeed so poorly is to the credit of the children, and fertile, unconquerable nature.

Concerning this rule of non-admission to the building until, nine o'clock or whatever the hour of recitation, whenever it has been proposed that the doors be opened for the admission of early stragglers, and in pity of the forlorn little loafers, hanging about the schools, it has been said that it would be a hardship on the teacher, etc. The same argument would apply to the locking up of the university buildings, until the first recitation hour. It would be much more convenient for the teachers, janitors and curators of the university if the students stayed outside on the campus until the beginning of the regular hour of recitation or lecture. Such a rule could not be enforced, because the students are old enough to quickly resent an unjust hardship. Little children do not know they have any rights. Most of them know only the statutes of the law of love, and when the teacher is indifferent to their cold hands and feet, they get their first vision of a hard world, and associate that revelation with the processes of education. The child's persistent reference to the dismissal of school as the time when school "lets out" reveals the universal childish regard of the school as a house of detention. It is idle to try to teach them to adopt the less picturesque and graphic word, so long as the pursuit of knowledge is undertaken by children with a ball and chain dragging from each little lagging foot.

#### The True Basis of Promotion.

An article in the September "Education," by Superintendent Gordon of Lincoln, is a forcible plea for a change in the unit of measure of public school scholar's yearly attainment. The article is primarily distinguished by common sense and the rejection of dogma in regard to the grades. There is no question but that the state university is a stimulating influence in Nebraska, and especially in Lincoln, but, with all loyalty to the institution, it has lifted the grade of the Lincoln high-school and of the grammar schools beyond their place of highest usefulness to the pupil, a very small percentage of which go from them to the university. The effort to graduate pupils from the high-school stuffed with facts enough to pass the entrance examination at the university has prejudiced the whole system.

Superintendent Gordon suggests, in "The Reorganization of the Grammar-School," that the pupil be graded according to the increment of power he has gained, rather than upon his ability to pass a certain examination at a stipulated time. "The basis of promotion should be effort rather than subject matter. The pupil who has faithfully and conscientiously applied himself to his work, has probably gained out of that work, if the work of the teacher has been well done, all that is possible for him to get at that stage. For him, therefore, the work should be marked 'Satisfactory,' no matter how many questions he may be unable to answer at an examination. Going over the same ground again would have little value, and, in the long run, would be anything but advantageous. The thing of primary importance here is the increment of power gained in relation to the pupil's capacity for growth, while the increment of knowledge is of secondary importance. A system of marking based on the amount of facts which a pupil has acquired depends on his

ability to answer questions designed primarily to show how completely the pigeon holes of his mind have been stuffed with facts. In my estimation the most important thing is what has the pupil gained, considered from the standpoint of his possibilities."

Concerning the introduction of university methods into the high-school and grammar-schools, every parent who has watched the bewilderment of his sons and daughters at the first application of the source method, or the loss of balance when the youngsters, for the first time, go from one recitation-room to another, will understand Dr. Gordon's strictures upon the introduction of the scholastic spirit into the grades. "In these schools the general tendency is to regard the subject taught as of transcendent importance; while the pupil himself is of secondary consideration. This is due to several things, chief among which are, (1) The employment of college graduates, with neither experience nor pedagogical training. And, generally, as a result of this, (2) The copying of college and university methods. Teachers come from the college to the high-school, very often without a distinct realization of the importance of the pupil himself. Between them and their knowledge of the grammar-school intervenes eight years of work, during which their studies and experiences have profoundly impressed them with the great importance of the subject matter, and the very small importance of the individual. By reason of this, I view with much apprehension the extension of the high-school downwards."

The soundness of Dr. Gordon's views and the correctness of his statements in regard to the point of view of the inexperienced university graduates may be tested by the graduates' own confessions. It is corroborated by my memory of my own post graduate view of the relative importance of the subject and the scholar.

The conclusions expressed in the whole candid, sensible article, responds to personal experience and experiments in the same way. As the conclusions of a man of much pedagogical experience who is frank enough and sure enough of the results of his observations to be willing to advocate and adopt them, the article is an admirable contribution to the literature of teaching.

#### Octave Thanet.

Miss French is expected in Lincoln sometime in October to deliver an address to the Nebraska State Federation of Women's Clubs, which meets here on October 9, 10 and 11. Miss French wrote a Nebraska story, a few years ago, which was unfair to Nebraska and lacked the *plein air* effects of most of her studies of real life. The sketch was made from a distance, and from report. Her views of Nebraska were Bryanesque. The club women mean to show her that Nebraska is full of prosperous, successful and happy people. It is possible to be happy, temporarily and by determination, in this vale of tears, and Nebraska people appreciate the gospel, and take the medicine of cheerfulness with intention. Miss French herself is the wholesomest of women and of writers. Her drawing is generally faithful and spirited. On her return to Davenport I hope her sketch-book will contain some faithful likenesses of Nebraskans.

This letter from Miss French to Miss Julia Haskell, of the program committee, is printed herewith, that the Nebraska club women may know how good a friend and charming a woman

we are to have the honor of hearing:

"I have wanted to go to Nebraska for three years; I have been two or three times, but not a real visit where I see the 'folks.' Mrs. Stoutenborough made me fond of Nebraskans; and nice Mrs. Ford at Omaha, so to speak, 'rubbed it in;' and the other nice Nebraskans finished the fixing of the picture in my mind. Unless something unexpected should happen I shall be happy to go to Lincoln and to talk to you all or to give you a monologue of The Bewildered President or any other little thing that you may like. As to conditions, I shall charge exactly what I charged the federation—that is nothing at all; and as my maid will be with me and possibly a friend, I shall ask my kind friends to let me go to a hotel (I hear you have good ones in Lincoln) at my own proper charges; and let them engage me a couple of rooms with a private bath for a day and a night. I have a good friend in Lincoln, Mrs. Henry Lewis, who would, I know, put us all up, but you see I long ago adopted the inevitable rule of going to the inn; and I can't break it. But my friend and I will be only too pleased to be asked to break bread with any of you; and I hope we shall see a great deal of you all. If these terms, no money, and love and affection, are satisfactory, I shall try to arrange things so that I may see you the middle of October. Until the second of July my address will be here; after that, in Litchfield, Conn.

"Always cordially yours.

"ALICE FRENCH."

#### Galveston Pluck.

In the Netherlands, as everyone knows, the land is low, much of it is below the level of the sea. The rivers and canals being elevated above the surrounding country. Along the west coast the low lands are protected from the sea by a line of sand hills or dunes, but elsewhere on the ocean coast the land is protected by dikes, which require a large expenditure annually to keep them in order. Engineers, called the officers of the Waterstaat, take special charge of the dikes and national hydraulic works, at a yearly cost of about two and one half million dollars.

It is a question of how much the location of Galveston is worth. The island is slightly above the water, which is a gulf of the same ocean that would drown Holland, but for Dutch defiance. A sea wall must be built to the Gulfward of Galveston, deep enough and wide enough to keep the ocean back in those rare storms that wash over it. Galveston pluck is no degree less determined and daring than Dutch obstinacy, and Galveston will rise again, a new walled city. Unless the wall is built, the old citizens will be afraid, and new ones will not come.

#### The Calaveras Trees.

Destruction is the first law of the philistine. In Nebraska he cuts down trees. If there is any place in the world where there is something more beautiful, more poetic, more comforting, more historic and monumental, or more richly benignant than trees, be sure there are philistines destroying it. The big trees of California, that are not protected by the government, are being chopped down by men who are worse than cannibals, for thirty years is enough to grow a fairly useful man, and it has taken from four to five thousand years to grow those gigantic trees of California. The largest trees in the Calaveras grove came into the possession of a lumberman last April, and he has begun to cut

down the wide boled, whispering green trees, older than the pyramids, tall enough when Nebuchadnezzar was a baby to have shaded his infant curves. It is said that an effort will be made in congress to set aside these groves as a park and save the trees from the lumbermen, who reverence only lumber and the price of it—bad luck to them!

#### City Lighting.

If the city of Lincoln cannot afford to pay more than \$13,000 a year for lighting, that is all it should pay. If the number of lights must be reduced in order to bring the bill within the ability of the city to pay, then the localities which have been light must hereafter go dark, on moonless nights, or at best only lighted by the never-fading stars. For the first time Lincoln has a mayor who has, up to the present time, refused to authorize the spending of money not in the treasury. For this reason there is every reason to believe that the city of Lincoln will not now, as in 1895, contract a debt larger than the annual income of the city warrant.

#### The Shoemaker to His Last.

Once upon a time a barber of Lincoln married a waitress in a western hotel. His business in Lincoln grew and grew until he made \$2,400 a year. At first his wife was proud of her husband, her husband's business, and his good judgment. At first she brought him his meals, but after awhile the serpent, in the form of social distinctions, tempted her, and she would no longer enter the barber-shop and was ashamed of her husband's business. He has laid up a few thousand dollars, and she is urging him to buy a business of which he knows nothing, in order to get out of the "barber class." The hero of this story is hesitating, which means that he is lost. He is a good barber and understands the conduct of the business, but that knowledge will not help him in the real-estate or undertaking business, in which his wife thinks there is an opening.

Once upon a time there was a man who came to Lincoln with a few thousand dollars and an exhaustive knowledge of one business. He put all his money and all his energy into that business and his capital grew and grew until he had a hundred thousand dollars. Then he thought he was not making money fast enough, and he decided to start and develop another enterprise. One man out of a million is a universal genius, and can run simultaneously and profitably four or five unrelated shows. But such men are rare that it is much safer for every mother's son to conclude that he is but an average man with his limitations. This man's spirit fitted a genius' ability, but that half was lacking. The profits of his original business were deflected to operate his new ventures, which, one after another, he started. He is now, after twenty five or thirty years' residence in Lincoln, where he started, on the shady side of fifty, and lacking in the increment of a life of activity.

There are many others in Lincoln who have lost money by diverting their earnings from their legitimate business into something which plenty of other men have made their specialty, and with whom, therefore, they cannot compete.

There is much sympathy expressed for Mr. Kimball, the director of the University School of Music. Mr. Kimball has built up a large and successful school. Under his administration the school is growing and becoming an institution, attractive to ambitious students in other states. But