

subject. The high prices of those books were given, showing the necessity of legislation to place them within the reach of those dependent upon them.

The proportion of the blind to the rest of the population in the temperate zone was given as one to one thousand. The people of China and India were said to be the most afflicted in this way. The earlier institutions for the blind were mentioned, and what had been done for them in other countries beside our own. The room set apart for their use in the congressional library at Washington, which is so perfect in its appointments, was described.

Extracts from the recently published "Life of Helen Keller" were read, showing her pleasure in rowing and other sports and amusements and giving the unfavorable impressions made upon her by the noise and narrow streets of a large city. Samples of the New York Point alphabet, the best modern method of printing for the blind and of the writing of the blind themselves by the same method, were looked at with much interest.

The leader expressed regret that Miss Morton, a teacher in the Nebraska institution for the blind, was unable to be present and talk to the ladies as she had expected.

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The fact that young girls are frequently injured by too vigorous physical culture exercises, and that modern athletics are as likely to harm as to help young people, is receiving thought and attention from high sources.

"The Abuses of Athletics in Secondary Schools for Girls and Boys" was the topic discussed at a meeting of the Boston Physical Educational society held in the Walker building, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, last week.

Miss Lucile Eaton Hill, head of the physical culture department at Wellesley, took as her text, "If Advocates of Athletics are Strenuous, Opponents of Athletics are Strenuous." She said that there should be no opposition to outdoor sports for girls, provided they were carried on properly, but she recognized that evils were creeping in, and that the time was ripe to stop them.

Regarding basket-ball, she said that unless it was carefully supervised, the game could work havoc with young girls. She asserted there were too many incompetent teachers of athletics in secondary schools; that a system must be provided for proper instruction and that unless the same could be arranged athletics for girls and boys should be prohibited.

Intercollegiate contests, she said, should be tabooed; likewise interscholastic affairs of skill and strength, which she said could not be otherwise than harmful.

Miss Hill severely criticized the society women who gave a black eye to athletics by becoming too "sporty" in their efforts to attract publicity by their fads, as the sins of the latter had to be borne by the big majority of women.

In closing, Miss Hill stated that attention of reformers should be centered on the physical culture developments for girls, as the boys were not to be compared with girls for a minute, since it was absolutely necessary to have healthy girls to make good mothers.

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Iowa is the only state in the union which has a state medical society of women. The state society of Iowa Medical Women was organized in 1898, and it numbers among its members the leading women physicians of that state. The society has at present forty-three members. It is supplemental to the Iowa State Medical Society and was organized by women attending the meetings of that organization, who felt the necessity of greater opportunities for consultation on things of direct interest to them as well as to promote sociability among the medical women of the state.

The constitution provides that the meetings shall be held in the same city as the Iowa State Medical society on the day previous to the opening session; and that it shall be governed by the same code of ethics. Without any antagonism to the Iowa State Medical society, to which most of its members belong, the Women's society strives to

"Bring into closer touch the isolated medical women over the state, to bind them together in fraternal helpfulness toward each other, to encourage them in the arduous work of their profession, and to develop a greater interest in the local, state and national medical societies in which men and women physicians are working together in harmony, emulating each other in good works, and together advancing the noble profession of medicine."

The sixth annual meeting of the society will be held in Sioux City, on the four-

teenth and fifteenth of April. Some of the subjects which will be discussed are "Medical Ethics," "Duty of Physicians to Disseminate Hygienic and Sanitary Knowledge," "The Prevention of Insanity," "The Value of Physical Culture and Manual Training in Our Public Schools," "Acute Ilio-Colitis," "Cholera Infantum," "Nephritis Albuminosa," "Iritis Spongiosa."

## Alpha Chapter of Phi Kappa Psi

The national chapter of Phi Kappa Psi was founded at Washington and Jefferson college in 1852, by Judge W. H. Moore and J. P. T. Letterman. It is now one of the most progressive of the western fraternities and has chapters in thirty-six of the principal colleges in the country. Nebraska Alpha of Phi Kappa Psi was installed in the University of Nebraska on March 22, 1895, and has enjoyed a very prosperous existence ever since. There are twenty-six active members in the local chapter now occupying a large house at the corner of Sixteenth and K streets. The following is the active membership:

Don J. McLennan, Burdette Lewis, Lewis Folts, Alex Hitchman, Herb States, Art Scribner, Herman Lehmer, Rex Moorehouse, Charles E. Angle, Russell Harris, Chas. E. Shimer, Newton Buckley, Dean Ringer, Allen Prescott, Phil Bross, Harry Reed, Earnest Allen, Harry Hargraves, Homer Southwick, John J. Ledwith, Earl Hubbard, George E. Douglas, Herb McCulloch, Roy E. Dumont, John K. Morrison, Ralph Christie, Will Ramsey.

## A Russian Bi-Centennial

In May next two centuries will have elapsed since Peter the Great founded St. Petersburg, and elaborate preparations are being made to commemorate with befitting solemnities and festivities the two-hundredth birthday of the capital of the vast Muscovite empire, which stretches without a break across Europe through Asia to the Pacific coast. It is a celebration which cannot fail to arouse the most profound interest and sympathy far beyond the czar's frontiers, especially in the United States. For it will serve to call attention to the fact that the transformation of Russia from an oriental into a European power and the change from Tartar barbarism to western civilization, is of comparatively recent date, a circumstance which is too frequently forgotten when Russia is criticized for being inferior in popular enlightenment and in national development to other countries nearer to the setting sun. In the latter the methods of government, as well as the economic and intellectual condition of the people, are the result of the gradual growth of a civilization dating back ten centuries or more; whereas in Russia only two hundred years have passed since Peter the Great autocratically forced upon the orientalism of his reluctant subjects a brand new western civilization, incidentally endowing the empire with an entirely new capital constructed on western lines, and destined to remain as the centre of western ideas in Russia.

It is difficult when one sees St. Petersburg today to realize that two centuries ago, the territory on which it stands did not even belong to Russia. The region between Lake Ladoga and the gulf of Finland formed part of the possessions of the kingdom of Sweden. Peter the Great drove the Swedes out of the country in the winter of 1702 and 1703, and in May of the latter year laid the foundation of St. Petersburg, which he described as his "window looking out into Europe." It was only a monarch possessed of the indomitable will and of the despotic power of Peter the Great who could ever have succeeded in building a metropolis on a site such as that of the capital of modern Russia. It is perched on a swamp on the banks of the Neva at the mouth of that river, and when viewed from any lofty height, such as, for instance, from the dome of St. Isaac's Cathedral, conveys the impression of a huge float laden to the very water's edge, and riding on the surface of the waves.

So low, indeed, is the level of the city that heavy westerly gales from the gulf, as well as the big floods brought about by the melting of the ice and snow in the spring, are apt to inundate extensive portions of the town. In fact, so grave

is the danger to which St. Petersburg is exposed from these inundations that whenever the river begins to rise guns are fired from the fortress of St. Peter and St. Paul, in order to warn the occupants of the cellars and basements to seek refuge upstairs, while the naval authorities set to work to establish a system of boat patrols for the rescue of those in danger of drowning in the flooded streets. There are some who declare that St. Petersburg is destined some day or other to be completely engulfed by the waves, and to be swallowed up by the waters of the gulf of Finland. But, although the city has been subjected to innumerable inundations, some of an extremely disastrous character, it has survived all dangers to celebrate its two-hundredth birthday, and may therefore look forward with a certain degree of confidence to an existence of at least two more centuries.

Of course the swampy character of its site has from the very outset rendered St. Petersburg extremely unhealthy, especially at certain seasons of the year. In fact, there is no capital in Europe where the death rate is so high. It has been only by the most wonderful perseverance that the material obstacles and difficulties presented by the marshy nature of the soil have been overcome, and until recently a law enacted by Peter the Great was still in force, requiring every vessel arriving at St. Petersburg to bring a quantity of stone commensurate with her tonnage, for use in paving the streets and in forming the foundations of buildings, esplanades, etc. Another law enacted by Peter the Great, and which, of course, has long since become obsolete, was that exacting of all proprietors of more than five hundred serfs in any portion of the Russian empire to build a house at St. Petersburg, and to spend the winter there.

Peter actually went to the length of issuing a ukase prohibiting, under the most dreadful penalties, the construction of stone houses anywhere in his dominions, save at St. Petersburg, and commanding all provincial authorities to dispatch every stone mason on whom they could lay hands to the new metropolis. Not content with this, he caused tens of thousands of his subjects to be conveyed, without any regard to their wishes or interests, from their homes in even the most remote portions of his dominions, to his city at the mouth of the Neva, depopulating for the purpose whole villages and towns. For a long period forty thousand men were drafted annually from other provinces to St. Petersburg, and employed in constructing the new capital, Peter superintending the work in person, and making his home in a small cottage, which is believed to have been the first building in St. Petersburg, and which is still preserved on its original site and in its pristine condition in the island citadel of St. Peter and St. Paul, carefully protected by another structure built over and around it.

The erection of this house was followed by that of the fortress, which received the name of Petersburg, and two months later, in June, 1703, the czar laid the foundations of the present cathedral of St. Peter and St. Paul, in which all the sovereigns of Russia, with the exception of Peter II., are entombed, the bodies being deposited under the floor of the cathedral, the marble tombs above only marking the site of the graves. No one will ever know the immense number of lives sacrificed in the construction of St. Petersburg during the reign of Peter the Great. Untold thousands must have perished. For, in spite of the enormous numbers whom he had brought to the city, its population at his death did not exceed one hundred thousand. It has grown to-day to near a million and a half inhabitants, in spite of the disadvantages of every kind to which it has been subjected, and to its terrible mortality.

Two things have contributed to retain for St. Petersburg its rank as metropolis of the empire. The first has been the fact that until the recent development of the railroad system St. Petersburg was the great export market for the Russian empire, the rivers to the southward being interrupted by rapids like those of the Dnieper and shallows like those of the Don. Another important factor in the growth of St. Petersburg has been the fact that, with the exception of Peter II., who preferred Moscow, and who died there, all the Russian monarchs since Peter the Great have established their residences at St. Petersburg or in its immediate neighborhood, and in consequence it has remained the centre of that system of absolute government to which the vast Muscovite empire is still subject. The ends of all the threads of that colossal administration by means of which the czar exercises his rule, from the frontiers of Ger-

## A SULTAN OF OUR OWN



This is an authentic photograph of his imperial majesty, Hadji Mohamed Kirum, sultan of Sulu, who is under the suzerainty of the United States. The sultan owns a harem and is fond of toys and of robbing his subjects.

many and Austria to the shores of the China sea, are concentrated in St. Petersburg, whence the entire bureaucratic machinery receives its direction and impulse.

Everything throughout the empire leads up to St. Petersburg; every eye, every thought, and above all, every fear is centered upon it, and to a greater extent than any other Western capital is St. Petersburg the hub of the nation. It is the headquarters of the political, social, military and administrative life of all the Russias; and it is probably the only metropolis in the civilized world which, owing its creation to the whim of one monarch, is dependent for its existence to-day upon the caprice of another. For in the same way that Peter the Great made St. Petersburg Nicholas II. could unmake it by a mere stroke of the pen—by putting his signature to a ukase transferring back to Moscow the seat of the government, the residence of the sovereign and the dignity of the metropolis of Russia.

It is by no means an impossible move, and in many respects it would be a popular one. Indeed, it has been repeatedly urged upon the late czar and upon the present emperor by advisers who pointed out that the revival of Moscow as the capital of the empire would bring the autocrat into closer touch with his people, would promote both their orthodoxy and their loyalty, would facilitate the administration of the government, since Moscow is much more central and less remote than St. Petersburg, and, above all, would strengthen the hold of the crown upon the goodwill of the old aristocracy; for the great nobility may be



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