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NATIONAL EDUCATORS.

Teachers Asseciation at Los Angeles California in Session.

Important Problem of the Religious Question in Education is Discussed.

The general sessions of the National Educational Association convention were resumed with R. S. Bingham, of Tacoma, Wash., in the chair. Mr. Bingham introduced Rt. Rev. George Montgomery, bishop of Los Angeles, who spoke in a highly interesting way of the religious element in the formation of character. Among other things Bishop Montgomery said:

"Teachers themselves concede that the formation of character is the most important feature of education. This is essentially true where government is brought close to the people. That the welfare of the individual and of society depends upon an enlightened public conscience we have no less an authority than Washington himself. In his farewell address he says: 'Of all the dispositions and habits that lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensible supports. In vain would that man claim the tribute of patriotism who should labor to subvert these great pillars of human happiness, these finest props to the duties of men and of citizens. Let it simply be asked, where is the security for property, for reputation, for life, if the sense of religious obligations deserts the oaths which are the instruments of investigation in courts of justice? And let us with caution indulge the supposition that morality can be maintained without religion. Whatever influence may be conceded to refined education on minds of peculiar structure and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail without religion.'

"Here Mr. Washington declares that public and private welfare depends not upon the extent of territory, its fertility or its climate, upon trade, commerce, large armies or mighty navies, nor upon universal or refined education, but upon a simple, silent principle of the soul, namely, a religious conscience. Our relation is regulated by law. Law is made and executed by legislators and judges taken from the people. The purpose of legislator and judge ought to be to mete out equal justice to all men. The only guarantee that they will do so is their conscientous convictions. If these convictions are not stronger than the temptations to betray their trust they will betray it. The religious obligations of an oath spoken of by Washington are based on the belief in a personal God, to whom men owe service, and who will reward and punish in another world. The sanction of an oath is these rewards and punishments; without them it is meaningless. To form this conscience in the individual, and through the individual to build up a public conscience, man must be taught to make conscience paramount to every other characteristic. The private school where these principles are taught along with secular knowledge is the nation's strongest bulwark."

Bishop Montgomery was followed by Professor George W. A. Luckey of the University of Nebraska, who spoke on the development of moral character. Prof. Luckey said in part:

"Progress in civilization is the result of man's continual effort to realize himself in higher and nobler conceptions of life. Change is written everywhere, stability nowhere. It is well for the individual if through all these changes he continues in harmony with the highest conceptions of his age and brings his efforts to bear in the direction of true progress. All education should tend to make the individual more of a man as well as more efficient and more useful both to himself and to others. For this reason whatever be given as the true aim or ideal of education, the development of moral character will always play an important and ever increasing part. We often hear it said that the character of the people is becoming weaker, that the men of our times lack decision, purpose, courage, perseverence, discipline and religious convictions. But before accepting these statements as final we should consider the age in which we live. Ideals and conditions of life have changed. We are living in a different age, under a new sky, and breathing a different atmosphere. Civilization has carried us forward. We could not go back if we would, and we would not if we could. If character really means the distinguishing qualities of individuals, the personality, the originality, the independence of thought and action, the nobleness of purpose, the persistence of effort, the faithfulness to duty and the loftiness of ideal, then there is a greater degree of character manifested today than in any other period of the world's history. The character of every community as well as of every nation depends upon the character of the individuals of which it is composed. It can neither be better nor worse. As to the time when we shall begin to develop the character of our children, I agree in part with Aristotle when he says that the state should begin the education of the children before the marriage of their parents. Before birth and before prenatal life the formation of the character of the child rightly begins. Common sense in selecting life companions, proper cultivation of mind and heart, congeniality of home surroundings and careful observance of the laws of health all tend to strengthen the character of the offspring. Passing to the next important period of the child's life, the one extending from birth to at least the fifth year, we enter upon the first period that is usually taken into consideration in the education of the child. During these first five years the individual has lived faster, learned more and established a greater degree of character than will be possible again in any other five years of his life. The years of childhood come but once, but the lessons they teach and the experiences they give can never be eradicated. Character like morality and religion is not something that can be assumed or rejected at will. It is the very essence of the individual's life. Would you establish noble characters in your children begin by laying the foundation for strong and healthy bodies. Not only the physical features but all the muscles of our bodies come to indicate the lives we have led.

"Teach the child to become a careful observer of the phenomena of nature, to classify and remember the important features, to dispresent relations and invent new ones, to make accurate generalizations, and finally to express his knowledge in clear but terse English, and you will have given the foundation for a strong character. In all education the teacher must be guided in her efforts by the interests of the child. It must be a growth from within rather than a filling up from without, an assimilation and an appreciation rather than the mere accumulation of knowledge. The great step in the development of the will is to surround the child with proper conditions of life. Sufficient nutrition and healthy environment is sure to call forth innumerable movements, both natural and pleasurable, laying the foundation for versatility and evenness of disposition. The factor that has most to do with all voluntary action is imitation. We grow to think, to feel and to act like those with whom we would have him imitate. Having thus outlined as the requisites of an ideal character, good health, a sound body, a thoroughly trained intellect, keen sensibility, pure motives and a well developed will, I should add but one other requirement, a lofty ideal, with sympathy and love for humanity."

Prof. Sydney T. Skidmore, of the Philadelphia Normal School followed with a paper on evolution and ethics, which was in part as follows:

"Practical ethics is largely concerned with the 'problem of evil' and the elimination of evil from the world. Whether the procedure against it be properly militant or educative depends on the nature of evil itself. If evil be a principal antagonistic to good its operations should be resisted and its operators forced under arrest and punishment. If evil be but the contrast of material realities with ideals of perfection or if it be the contrast of inferior character or conditions with superior, than its proper treatment calls for developmental stimuli to carry the being from lower to higher condition. The principal points made, are the following: We rise in the scale of being on stepping stones within ourselves and not by climbing over others.

"Evil has no positive reality. The present is the early dawn of human day. The full human type is largely undeveloped and its imperfections are phases of rudimental conditions.

"The genus is emerging from an imalism from which it is distinct by reason of its intellectual supremacy over material conditions and the degree of its emergence is measured by the development of this supremacy.

"This development is promoted by all that promotes selfhood, as self-illumination, self-respect, self-responsibility, self-cantrol, and self-directiveness, and it is hindered by applying to humanism that which fitly applies only to animalism, as the despotic assertiveness of external mastery, pain, penalty, fear and favor.

"The teaching profession is the trustee of this evolution and should be the high expert commission of the world for framing its moral codes. It should be guided by what it finds in the ever present problem and be in no degree subject to prejudices, traditions, dogmas, or deceitful interpretations that ignorance has given to human nature. In this sphere its peculiar mission is to set forth the latest, best and most saving gifts of intelligence to the world."

While the foregoing addsesses were being listened to and discussed by the teachers assembled in Hazard's Pavilion, an equally interesting program was carried out in Simpsons Tabernacle, where the general session was presided over by E. B. McElroy of the University of Oregon. The first speaker in the Tabernacle was President Robert B. Fulton, of the University of Mississippi, who took as his subject: Growth of confidence between high schools and colleges. President Fulton spoke in part as follows:

"The fact that more than one hundred colleges and universities in the United States have each within the last ten years entered into a formal alliance with from ten to more than one hundred high schools represents an educational movement of extent too great to be ephemeral. It is an evolution, and can never lead back to former conditions. If present plans and results are unsatisfactory we will develop out of these something new and better. The extent of this co-operation is shown by the fact that the University of Michigan, deservedly honored in having first achieved a plan that yields satisfactory results, has now 200 schools upon its list of formally accredited schools. The University of Wisconsin reported last year 127; the University of Indiana 123; the University of Nebraska 71; the University of Mississippi 53; the University of Tennessee 45; the University of Minnesota 43; South Carolina College 36; the University of Alabama 29; the University of Colorado 23; the University of South Dakota 22; West Virginia University 13; University of Washington 11; Tulane University 10; the University of Missouri 70; University of Illinois 135; University of California over 67; Lake Forest University 35; University of Kansas 138; University of Iowa 146. Besides the institutions above named, the following have each a well organized system of co-operation with preparatory schools, most of which are public high schools: University of North Carolina, University of Pennsylvania, University of Vermont, University of Utah, Ohio State University, Cornell University, Washington and Lee University, University of Texas, University of Nashville and Vanderbilt University.

"Naturally the state universities have been foremost among the higher institutions in this movement, and the public high schools make up the large majority of the accredited schools in all the states. There has never been witnessed a more decided nor more general advance in educational work that that which has been witnessed during the last decade in the earnest efforts made by high schools, colleges and universities notably in the south and west, by hearty co-operation, mutual concessions, and mutual confidence to bridge the gap between secondary and higher schools. Co-ordination has assumed various forms and will continue to change. But the workers on both sides are surely realizing the hopes, verifying the prophecy and exemplifying the patriotism of Thomas Jefferson, when he wrote near the close of his life eighty years ago 'a system of general instruction which shall reach every description of our citizens, from the richest to the poorest, as it was the earliest, so will it be the latest of all the public concerns with which I shall permit myself to take an interest. Nor am I tenacious of the form in which it shall be introduced. Be that what it may, our descendants will be as wise as we are, and will know how to amend, and amend it, until it shall suit their circumstances. Give it to us then in any shape, and receive for it the inestimable boon, the thanks of the young and the blessings of the old who are past all other service but prayers for the prosperity of our county, and blessings for those who promote it."

President Fulton was followed by Frank J. Earnard, superintendent of schools, Seattle, Wash., who read a thirty minute paper urging the classification of pupils according to ability. Mr. Bernard said among other things:

"The discussion and criticism of the United States army and the need of trained men in our new possessions suggests the thought that in the administration and organization of our schools we may find a remedy and a solution. As school officers we command an army of 15,000,000 pupils, but except in a few instances the plan of organization is obsolete and inefficient. It is true that there are from eight to twelve grades but generally, mental alertness is not considered, and the slow are herded with the quick, suppressing the mental activities of both. No effort is made to enable a bright pupil to gain time or the slow one to have special help. We all admit that for a large number of our boys and girls eight years is too long a time for the work below the high school. The questions of time and quantity are entirely different factors. Quantity is the course of study itself, while time is the number of years necessary to complete it. If, then a certain factor, quantity is required for admission to the high school, why not classify the pupils as to enable them to take the quantity and enter the high school in the shortest possible time? Such a plan would permit many pupils to complete the entire course of study in the elementary schools, and take two years in the high school by the time they are fourteen years of age. How can such a plan be put into practical operation? Stated times for promotion will not accomplish it. In my opinion the only solution is to classify pupils strictly according to abilities, and then allow them to master the quantity in such time as they can do the work well. The only rule necessary to the complete success of such a system is, 'Study the capacities of the pupil.' Some minds develop early, others late. The dunce of the class if kept chained to the 'honor pupils' may always remain a dunce, but if unchained, if studied and allowed to study under proper directions and influence, he may become the wonder of the school, the genius of the age."

The reading of Mr. Barnard's paper was followed by a lively discussion, in which many views on the mode of the classification proposed were advanced.

This afternoon was occupied with numerous department meetings, no general sessions being held. At the department meetings papers were presented by the following:

Elementary Education—C. F. Carroll, Worchester, Mass.; B. C. Gregory, Trenton, N. J.

Art—Josephine A. Greene, Plattsburg, N. Y.; Frances E. Ransom, New York City; Dr. Langdon S. Thompson, Jersey City, N. J.

Manual and Industrial—Gabriel Katzenberger, Chicago; G. C. Young, Salt Lake City; C. B. Gilbert Newark, N. J.

Child Study—Isabel Lawrence, St. Cloud, Minn.; Louise Maitland, San Jose, Cal.; E. G. Lancaster, Colorado Springs, Colo.

Natural Science—Charles Newell Cobb, Albany N. Y.; David Starr Jordan, University of California.

School Administration—E. F. Bradt, Ishpeming, Mich.; E. E. Rossling, Tacoma, Wash.; A. B. Coffey, Seattle, Wash.

Library—Alfred Baylies, Springfield, Ill.; Grace Darling Madden, Milwaukee; J. C. Dana, Springfield, Mass.

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