PAPERS AND PROCEEDINGS OF THE THIRTY-SECOND ANNUAL MEETING OF THE AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION HELD AT MACKINAC ISLAND, MICHIGAN, JUNE 30 - JULY 6, 1910, PP. 593-811

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AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

HELD AT

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JUNE 30—JULY 6, 1910

AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION
1 WASHINGTON STREET
CHICAGO, ILL.
1910

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MACKINAC ISLAND CONFERENCE

JUNE 30–JULY 6, 1910

FIRST GENERAL SESSION

(Grand Hotel, Friday, July 1, 1910, 8:15 p. m.)

The first general session of the Thirty-second Annual meeting of the American library association was called to order by the President, N. D. C. Hodges, on Friday evening, July 1, in the Casino of the Grand Hotel at 8:15 o'clock.

The PRESIDENT: It is my duty and pleasure to call to order the Thirty-second Conference of the American library association. The first business of the Association is to listen to the President's address, the title of which is:

AN ANATHEMA UPON FINGER-POSTS

I appreciate that my title needs an apology. It came into existence in this way. I had finished my address, as I supposed, and had sat down in satisfaction to look over the reports of the opening exercises of previous conferences. Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall. My fall came as I read the words of other presidents: "The subject of my address." There was no subject at the head of my address. I ran it through hoping to find its subject somewhere in hiding; I searched dictionaries of quotations and dictionaries of synonyms, thinking that possibly they might know, when it dawned upon me that, floundering in my inkwell, I had brought forth an anathema upon finger-posts; and all my life through I had thought myself fond of finger-posts, they are in their idiosyncrasies so human. But not a word had I said about finger-posts, and I doubted whether my anathema would stand unless the name were inserted, so back to the beginning I went, to make a fresh start.

In attacking a sociological problem I have often thought of some fabric, made not only of the warp and woof, but with threads worked into it running hither and thither in intricate design. Such a fabric is the interlacing of the many influences which combine to make the lived-in world. The fabric is without edges; there is no beginning or end, no first or last, it may be lifted anywhere, and the meandering of the threads followed, but with a comprehension of the whole far from complete.

There is an unendingness to sociological work, to library work. We are striving not for perfection, for beyond any stage of development we may reach there are yet many others which may be seen, and an infinitude of stages far beyond our powers even of conception. A great college president lays down his burden after forty years of successful effort, and we see not the stagnation of perfection, but the younger successor stepping in with fresh ideals, which he proceeds to realize as if the work of his predecessor had been merely preliminary.

It has been said, over and over again, that as a librarian no one need hope for fame; that as a historian or creator of literature one might reap such a reward, but only bread and butter by labor as a librarian. First and last, this aloofness of fame has given me not a little concern, from which there was a short respite the other day, when I learned, on the word of Confucius, that the philosopher Kiung—wise enough in books—to remove the reproach that he was doing nothing to make his name famous, took to charioteering.

Within a few weeks the vulgar conception of a librarian was given in "The Nation" as a "distributor of books for recreational purposes, and conservator of material for the scholar and investigator." It was added that librarians are wont to regard themselves as workers in the educa-

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tional field, and may be credited with the wish to spread their ideas of the mission of books, and their influence as missionaries of the book, though all the while conscious that they are not recognized as a profession to the same extent as teachers. To account for this lack of recognition, librarians were described as writing or speaking too exclusively of matters of technical detail, and of treating their subjects in a somewhat namby-pamby fashion. If this characterization is just, it is fortunate that few of them contribute articles on library matters to the periodical press at large, and that the number of books on library affairs and management is small when compared with the literary output of the teaching profession. The writer in "The Nation" softens this arraignment with some mild excuses, which you can look for, if you like.

Crossing England from London to Liverpool, wrapped most of the way in fog, it was my fortune to have the fog lift for a few moments as we passed an old country church. The church was set apart, with no scar of modern industrialism upon the rural landscape, of which it was the center. Aside from its use as a place of worship, such a church has a story to tell—the story of the joy of effort on the part of its builders—a joy which seems to have been unbounded. More than a church, as we understand that term, it was a center of social life; about it the people gathered by day to dance and play; and under the moonlight, we are told, fairies came to concoct their pranks for the good or ill of a happy-go-lucky folk.

Then our modern world was born, and all was stilled: the musical rounds of the games were stopped, and the fairies driven away. It had all been the invention of the devil; grown men and women should not play, the world was passing into a new phase. Cromwell's soldiers, possibly through force of circumstance, beat down the exuberant ornament as manifesting only the enticing power of the evil one.

About that time, when raw manhood was trying to obliterate the conception of life's beauty, which had been little by little chiseled into stone, there was an idea rampant that books were doing more harm than good, and this largely because clever penmen had made them wondrous beautiful. While it is not strictly true, still beautiful things were looked upon as the devil's, and it was deemed safer to be without them. The libraries were broken up, and the books scattered. But books asserted themselves; they were not to be downed, were soon coming together again, were joined by those which had long been forgotten, and are generally credited with having contributed in no small degree to the re-birth of the world.

It is the Puritan world which most concerns the public librarians, at least it did concern them. In that world books of a kind were not eschewed. Harvard college was founded at once on their arrival by the American Puritans; and, on the wall of my New England high school was a tablet giving the school's lineage back to a Latin school started in 1640 odd as a feeder of the college. I doubt the devil's relishing Puritan books; and surely he would have denied the illuminations of the New England primer, to the decipherment of which by generations of infants may be traced much of Yankee ingenuity.

The whole Anglo-Saxon world has been a busy world. For two centuries preceding the last that world was constantly expanding. It stretched away to America, and in America towards the Mississippi, it carried its trade to China, to Africa, to South America, and the Pacific. There were romance and adventure in that expansion, but when the world had been tracked over, and the adventure subsided, and factories were building, there arose the library cry, and it came from Ohio the same year as from Massachusetts, and from the industrial counties of England. We look about and laud ourselves and our immediate predecessors for the creation of our type of public library, but is this type of library not a creation of its environment, while we are rather the ready husbandmen who nurture?

On the village greens of old England the people, invigorated by their outdoor

life, gathered in their free hours for their games. They flocked to their churches, and, by their crudely voiced public opinion compelled the recording in these of their happiest inspirations. That old life gone, there was recompense in the stirring adventure by sea and land. The bread-earning hours of the modern industrial operatives are devoid of everything that is human. It is not surprising that there is little love for work, and that a tendency to mediocrity is manifested. As Münsterberg puts it: "Every feature of our social life shows an unwillingness to concentrate attention." The public press offers sensationalism; amusements degenerate; we even pay professional athletes to play our games—something which seemed hardly believable when, as a child, I was told this of the Chinese. Having reached this point let us follow a thread leading in the opposite direction.

Tramping through the woods of New Jersey, on the top of the palisades overlooking the Hudson—it was in bicycle days—I came upon a young fellow, say seventeen, stretched at full length, his wheel beside him, and holding a book over which he could look upon one of the fairest views in America. The book had its place in this vision, though as likely as not more life insight passed over the pages than through them into that young brain. It may be that the boy had a long read, but I suspect not. It seems more likely that the book was but one element in the entourage with which the boy's mind was in harmony.

The philosophy of idleness is given by Dr. Gulick in his "Efficient life" somewhat as follows: "The best work that most of us do is not begun in our offices or at our desks, but when we are wandering in the woods, or sitting with undirected thoughts. From somewhere at such times there flash into our minds those ideas that direct and control our lives—visions of how to do that which previously had seemed impossible, new aspirations, hopes and desires. Work is the process of realization. The careful balance and the great ideas come largely during quiet, and without being sought. The man who never takes time to do nothing will hardly do great things. He will hardly have epoch-making ideas or stimulating ideals." If our books in some subtle way may draw us from ourselves, are they not serving a good purpose?

There is another manner of reading, and that is the manner of him who can follow a course of reading. The beings with this gift are to be seen, in no small numbers, in our reading rooms day in and day out. Upon them I gaze with ill-concealed awe. I calculate upon the volume of erudition passing in, and so carefully preserved. Such, as I understand it, are the perfect readers. It is our effort from one year's end to the other to make of our young patrons good readers. I think that I have never known anything but the utmost scorn manifested for the dreamy reader. "Don't let your thoughts wander, read the best hundred books." Such is the advice we lavish.

Finally, the library is a great storehouse of knowledge, and there are co-operative store-houses, or ought to be, and busy men and women dip here and dip there to gather bits of wisdom, which aid in the concoction of new and wondrous elixirs. To all this I subscribe.

There is one important characteristic of our work, there is a chance that the knowledge contained in books can be labeled, and that we are trying to do. The effort leads to our technique, which is fascinating but not inspiring. It does not appeal to the public. It is not worth writing about in the magazines. Other social workers are studying human beings, especially the weaknesses and foibles of human beings. The classification and labeling of these multifarious weaknesses and their combinations, even if it could be accomplished, would be of little avail. It is a question of personality in the student whether results worth while are obtained.

Looking through the program for one of the season's congresses, I saw repeated over and over again the purpose to send people home with definite ideas which could be applied to the day's work. The

inference is that from previous congresses people have been sent home without definite ideas. I wonder whether the greatest good will not be from the overpowering of ideas, half thought out and half inchoate, which will carry the people through the day's work.

The prominence given those words, "something to carry home," gives me reason for querying whether the aid we can render in the development of mankind does not resemble that which the farmer gives his growing crops. The farmer does not seize upon his corn and draw it by main force from the seed through the various stages of its growth. First, selecting good seed, the offspring of good ancestors, he plants this in well fertilized and plowed soil, protects it from drought, from overpowering weeds, and from marauding insects, making the conditions of growth the most favorable, but leaving the resulting product to the inherent capacities of the plant. With some, sound husbandry is instinctive; others may gain by practice a certain degree of skill. There is a German proverb that "the stupidest peasant has the largest potatoes," always supposing that the largest are the best. The congresses plan to send their members home with full knowledge of how to get results; but the best workers show us results, seldom giving generalizations which can be followed by the uninspired.

There may never have been a merry past, though it is our fancy to think so. It makes little difference whether we are striving to regain that which we have lost, or are striving to bring into existence a human state of greater joy than any so far realized. I will even turn back and scratch out "striving," and insert the simple word "living." Striving people irritate me. With the first and controlling element in the struggle for existence, a good measure of human selfishness, we need not concern ourselves. Of the useful drudgery of the world, we do our part in furnishing information, mere bald facts from our stores of facts. For the hours of recreation we have something to offer in our fiction, biography, and travel. For the inspirational moments, our best books—best in matter, best in style, and best in mechanical execution—should be ready.

St. Jerome has been called—unjustly, if you like—"the patron saint of leisure." He can be seen in most of his pictures gazing across the pages of a folio, through an open window, at green trees and flowers—at some object of art on the wall of his faultlessly furnished study, or, best of all, at his dog, who knows him for a trifler and is ready for another caress. The inspirational value of folios is no more. Twentieth century inspiration, so far as it is to come from books, must be looked for over duodecimos.

There is the delightful lawlessness of human nature in this inspirational value of books, as there is in the love of song and dance and play, in the love of wandering through woods, though one does not catalogue the trees. We shall hear more of this in the symposium on recreation. Perhaps in this, as in our story telling, and our picture gazing, we may find a way out of our old character of distributors and keepers of books.

Last year co-operation among libraries was the feature of the program. The principle of co-operation has been generally approved in its various forms as already practiced or proposed. Co-operation is a question of administration. The public is interested when told of its existence, and is pleased when reaping some of its benefits; but co-operation in the handling of books is no more than a duty of the distributor and conservator of books.

How is it with co-operation in the handling of human beings? The public libraries have been called into existence in industrial communities apparently to assist in relieving the strain arising from the monotony of modern industrial development. Playgrounds, sensational journalism, dance halls, moving picture shows, ball games, sunshine societies, social settlements—are all coadjutors. It would be well if some day we were to have a co-operative conference, at which we should lay aside, for the most part, consideration

of our administrative snags, and have heart to heart talks with those who are answering in such varied ways the unspoken appeals of the lever haulers and pedal kickers. We shall have some of this in the session of the Children's Section, and some in Mr. Taylor's address on Playgrounds. The need of recreation for ourselves will be brought out in the symposium at the third general session.

The recreational reading which we cater to, does good. The inspirational reading, bad as it is according to some standards, yet has its advocates. The perfect reading, the result of the growth of voluntary attention, maketh a full man. What mattereth it if this full man's mind be obsessed by the printed book? Such reading is no more than a harmless vice. It is hardly conceivable that through much reading the mental powers of observation and reason could be atrophied, when there results the brilliantly crystallized mind which we all know in one class of these full men, whom we call doctrinaires. The doctrinaires give us pause, they seem to see so much further than ordinary mortals. I cannot say that I ever heard of a library doctrinaire. Perhaps one might be found, and we should then have a bellwether to lead us out of the maze in which, as mortals, we are involved.

Only another vain hope! The doctrinaire's clear sight is in fields in which he himself is not called upon to wander. In his own field he has no clearer vision than his every day associates. Let us gaze with St. Jerome upon a world full of beauty, and contentedly follow that blind guide, the idealist—

> "Whose soul sees the perfect
> Which his eyes seek in vain."

The next item on the program is vocal music by William J. Fenton and Francis J. Campbell.

The PRESIDENT: It seemed natural that as host we should have the Michigan library association. I have the pleasure of introducing Miss Nina K. Preston, President of that Association.

Miss PRESTON: Mr. President, Members of the Association: It was with great rejoicing that we in Michigan greeted the announcement that the American library association would hold its conference within the borders of our own state, and there has been joy in our hearts ever since we heard this announcement. If you have not seen and felt our welcome by this time no words that I might add, were they ever so eloquent or chosen ever so wisely, would convince you of the truth of the statement, for deeds count more than words even in the library profession. If you have felt our delight in your presence here, what need of words? We do not claim that we have the best state in the Union, but one of our desires has been that you might know us and our state better, and so we ask you to listen to our early history and legend as related to us this evening by Mrs. Hulst. If, after hearing her, you admit our claim to state pride, far be it from us to dispute you—you are for at least to-day our guests and you may say what seemeth best to you. (Applause.)

Mrs. HENRY HULST of Grand Rapids, Mich., then read a paper on "Early legends and history of Michigan."

She traced the development of what was to become the state of Michigan through the azoic and later ages, until there descended from the north the ice sheet which plowed the soil, and hollowed the beds of lakes Michigan and Huron. The speaker related the Indian legends of Michigan and Mackinac Island in particular, and of the early Indians she said: "The primitive men of our country were not only a picturesque people—how picturesque we hardly realize even now—with passions terrible in anger, of which we have heard much, but they were a people with many noble ideals and traits also, of which we have heard too little, as acute unbiased observers like Benjamin Franklin and James Fenimore Cooper have testified."

Indian legends were given by Mrs. Hulst and the coming of the white men was described.