

6-27-1874

Graduating Exercises of the State Normal School

Providence Journal

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.ric.edu/risns_early_docs

Recommended Citation

Providence Journal, "Graduating Exercises of the State Normal School" (1874). *Early Documents*. 9.
https://digitalcommons.ric.edu/risns_early_docs/9

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the College History at Digital Commons @ RIC. It has been accepted for inclusion in Early Documents by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ RIC. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@ric.edu.

Graduating Exercises of the Normal School.

The platform of the Normal School Hall this morning, was adorned with a row of luxuriant ferns in pots and fuchsias, with orange trees at the back, forming a beautiful background for the white dresses of the young ladies. A bouquet of roses on the table was especially charming, because of the sprays of a delicate white blossom, so arranged with it as to give it an airy, graceful appearance.

Following the religious exercises and singing, Miss Ida M. Gardner of Pascoag, read the Salutatory, which treated of compensations. At the close of the address, Miss Gardner was presented with several large and beautiful bouquets by members of one of the other classes.

Miss Dranna E. Nichols, of Providence, then read an essay, entitled "The Light of Intelligence," and treated of the growth of the world in scientific and philanthropic directions. The next essay was upon "Descriptions," by Miss Orra A. Angell, of Greenville, R. I. The power of graphic description was extolled as a means of enjoyment and culture, both to its possessor and to those who listen. When parents and teachers are more careful to train children in the correct and elegant use of language, society will have more of these fine conversationists, whose presence is its greatest charm.

Miss Susie E. Huling, of Oxford, Mass., next read an essay upon Kindergartens, which described the methods of Froebel's system.

Miss Lydia S. Durfee, of Providence, treated of "Ruined Castles" in an imaginative manner, closing with a moral and its application to our public schools. The school then sang a song of summer, after which Miss Ella A. Taylor read an essay entitled "Luther and Erasmus," contrasting the conscientious, heroic qualities of Luther with the more brilliant intellectual gifts of Erasmus.

Miss Lillis D. Phillips, of Pascoag, treated of "Harvesty and Sowing," and was followed by Miss Alice E. Thompson, of Newport, upon the "Heroism of Woman." The primal elements of heroism were determined to be such love and power of self-sacrifice as lifts the soul above fear and weakness.

"Anticipation" was the subject of an essay by Miss Mary E. Eaton, of Providence.

After another song by the school, Miss Lydia S. Rathbun, of Providence, treated of "The Real and the Ideal."

The next essay was entitled "In and Out of Place," by Miss M. Belle Clark, of Pawtucket. "All Roads Lead to Home" was the subject of the one following, by Miss Jessie Kerr, of Lonsdale, as in the story, whether true or fabulous, which gave rise to this adage, prompt decision was requisite. So at the outset of life one must resolve by which road the goal shall be sought. Success is secured only by persistence in a well defined purpose.

Miss Clara L. Hull, of Providence, followed in an essay upon "Women's Work." The physical incapacity of women for the hardest parts of mechanical and agricultural labor was conceded, but she might well perform the lighter parts, and should receive equal pay with men. Women should prepare for their life work as early and as thoroughly as men do. None should attempt teaching without a decided vocation for it, a love for children, and a deep sense of responsibility.

Mr. Greenough then read his report as follows:

Gentlemen: Trustees of the State Normal School: In compliance with your regulations, I submit the following annual report:

Whole number in school during the year.....	141
Number entered first term.....	39
Number who had previously taught.....	15
Number entered second term.....	28
Number who had previously taught.....	10

Employment of parent or guardian—Mechanics, 54; farmers, 35; merchants, 10; grocers, 6; manufacturers, 6; clerks, 4; agents, 3; teachers, 3; hotel-keepers, 2; sea-captains, 2; undertakers, 2; railroad conductors, 2; florists, 2; bookkeepers, police officers, letter-carriers, cooks, designers, butchers, millers, surgeons, milliners, teamsters, one each.

Some of the more important results of the normal training of a teacher, are a clear knowledge of that which one is to teach, skill in teaching, and a genuine enthusiasm in teaching. The last two are results which specifically belong to normal training.

In a Normal school, the pupil supplies his lack of knowledge of any branch, so that he may the better make himself the master of a good method of teaching it. The study of the natural methods of teaching, and the actual practice of the normal pupil in teaching while a member of a normal class, must awaken enthusiasm in teaching, or the pupil is by nature ill-adapted to teaching. Enthusiasm also results from the unity of purpose and effort that must characterize those who are pledged to the duties of a vocation second to no other in its opportunities for usefulness.

Enthusiasm in the work of the school has never existed in greater degree than during the past year; consequently, intellectual acquisition and increased skill in teaching have, with few exceptions, been commensurate with the several ability and opportunities of the pupils.

With few exceptions, one hour each Saturday of the present term has been occupied with a lecture upon some subject related to one or more of the studies of our course.

The results of these lectures extend beyond the school. Many teachers of the city and its vicinity have availed themselves of the advantages thus offered. The first lecture was given by Rev. Augustus Woodbury, D. D., of this city. The subject, "Italy," was presented in its historical, political and educational aspects. This lecture was especially valuable in its clear outline of the progress made in Italy during the last ten years. The careful observation of Dr. Woodbury while in Italy, his thorough knowledge of its history, and his genuine interest in popular education, enabled him to trace the remarkable development of free institutions in that country, in a way most interesting and instructive to teachers.

Prof. Chas. H. Gates, in a carefully written lecture upon Belgium, not only gave us much information gathered during his two years residence in that country, but excited new interest in its geography and history. His recent study of its educational institutions enabled Prof. Gates to present a full account of the universities and of the normal and other schools of Belgium.

The course of lectures upon history given by Prof. J. Lewis Diman, LL. D., has been of rare interest and profit to the pupils. To most pupils in our schools, history and geography, as presented in a majority of our text-books, are but a wilderness of facts. These pupils need a living teacher who can present and emphasize the general facts and principles, of which the myriad minor facts are so often but trivial exponents. Prof. Diman has endeavored to aid in forming such teachers, by presenting clearly the grand features of human progress, when the institutions, and the arts which have ennobled the Anglo-Saxon race were evolved from the seeming confusion of the Middle Ages.

Rev. A. D. Mayo, D. D., late of Cincinnati, but now of Springfield, Mass., a gentleman enjoying and deserving a national reputation as a leader in educational reform, gave us one lecture upon the "Childlike Spirit in the Teacher." This spirit was proved to be the primal element of success in a teacher of children, and the power of a teacher in sympathy with her pupils was vividly portrayed with a rare felicity of language and aptness of illustration.

For a statement of the special lectures and other work of the first term of the present year, I will refer to my semi-annual report in January.

The special classes on Saturday have enabled several graduates, and others actually engaged in teaching, to continue their studies. The arrangement of the sessions of the school, by which one session each week is open to the teachers of the State, is advantageous, not only to them, but to the pupils of the school. It affords opportunity, by special exercises given by teachers of other schools, to present methods of teaching which they have proved to be useful in their own schools.

The demand for teachers of wider information and broader culture, imposes the necessity of continued study upon those already engaged in teaching, who are determined to keep pace with the educational progress of the age. Such teachers will gladly avail themselves of the benefits of the special Saturday classes.

As soon as more suitable accommodations are provided, we shall be able, by special classes on Saturday, to make the school a more productive source of culture and professional skill to those already employed in teaching in different parts of the State.

If we had rooms fitted for the purpose, we could without any, or with slight additional expense, instruct additional classes of teachers in those branches of natural science, which are almost constant requisition in so many of the productive industries of the State.

The course of study in the Normal School, as in the common schools of the State, must consist mainly of those studies which directly promote what is termed a good English education; but the large increase of manufacturing interests, the many forms of skilled labor now required in order that we may successfully compete with the workmen of sister States, demand that the teachers in our public schools shall be able, by teaching the simpler elements of natural science, to prepare the pupils for the practical duties of life.

From the day the school was opened, in September, 1871, the necessity of more suitable accommodations has been evident. No one can consider it wise, or really economical, to carry on any important business with inconvenient or unsuitable appliances. The brief period allotted by the course of study to prepare for so important a work as teaching,—a work which touches every vital interest in the State,—demands that both teachers and pupils in this school should do their best, and it also demands that suitable rooms be had for doing the class work of the school in the best manner.

It is my pleasant duty, in behalf of both teachers and pupils of this school, to accord to the Board of Trustees, and to the Board of Examiners, our hearty appreciation of their efforts to render the school an efficient means of promoting the interests of public instruction.

Members of the Class of '74:

You have chosen a profession second to no other in its relations to the welfare of the people of this State.

Every department of useful industry needs hands guided by well-informed and disciplined minds, while the social, the political, and the religious, interests of the State demand, not only intelligent, but thoroughly honest men.

It is your work to teach those who are soon to manage our material interests, and it is yours to mould the character of those to whom must soon be entrusted those institutions that have honored and blessed the past. Your work involves interests of the gravest importance, imposes the most sacred duties, and requires the most patient and persistent effort.

The conditions of success that pertain to the teacher, are, scholarship, skill in the use of right methods of teaching and discipline, and excellence of moral qualities.

The more thoroughly you understand a subject, the better you can select what should be taught, and the better you can adapt your teaching to the minds of your pupils. Without the requisite scholarship, a teacher must be a timid, and uncertain guide in the paths of knowledge, blindly ruling his doubtful steps by the worn way, however devious. Scholarship will enable you to make text-books, in your classes, helpful servants instead of tiresome masters. Your diligent study here has enabled you to harvest much valuable truth; but how much, that may be useful to you and to your pupils, is yet ungarnered.

It has been a pleasure to us to study together the greatest created work within the sphere of human knowledge—the human mind, and, through that study, to apprehend those principles which must underlie all correct teaching. You have also had daily practice in the use of methods of teaching, which are in accordance with what we have learned of the nature of the mental powers and the order of their development. In your subsequent teaching, you will have frequent occasion to invent new methods and to modify those here acquired. The principles of correct teaching are fixed and unvarying as the laws of the human mind, upon which those principles depend. The applications of principles, in methods of teaching, should vary to meet the individual needs of pupils.

During your course of study, you have con-

sidered the principles of school government and the means by which it is secured. Success in school government is so largely dependent upon the moral support accorded to the teacher by parents, as well as upon your own skill, that you can hardly feel assured of your ability to govern well, until you have added to your knowledge, experience.

But a well-ordered school, the scholarship of the teacher, and his skill in teaching, are but means to a higher end—the formation of character.

Character is sometimes defined, "what one is;" but this fails to distinguish nature and character. The character of any one is what he is as the result of his own action. You cannot make the character of your pupils; that is their own work. The occasions of the formation of character, so far as they exist out of the child's own nature, are found in personal influence. Personal influence is rooted in personal qualities. That personal influence which wakens, directs, and strengthens the nobler aspirations of your pupils, must arise from those excellencies which, with divine help, you make your own. The moral result of your earnest endeavor while in this school to perform faithfully your daily duties, is your best acquisition as a means of future usefulness. Continue to strive to realize in your own lives the true, the beautiful, and the good, making this thought of the immortal Milton, who many years honored the profession you have chosen, your own: "I am long since persuaded that to say or do aught worth memory and imitation, no purpose should sooner move us than, simply love of God and love of mankind." But this principle of action is of Divine authority. It was set forth in the life of Him who is our Great Example.

The valedictory entitled "The First Stroke is Half the Battle," was then given by Miss Annie E. Kenyon, of Roslyn, L. I. Many die obscure who, could they have had courage to make a first effort, would have manifested rare abilities and wielded a wide influence. It is therefore of the utmost importance that the teaching in primary schools should be founded upon correct principles. Miss Kenyon addressed the Board of Education, the teachers of the Normal School, the pupils and graduating class in fitting words.

In the absence of the Governor, the Lieutenant Governor, Hon. C. C. Van Zandt, addressed the graduates. He thought it a better thing to be a graduate of the State Normal School than to be a Lieutenant Governor. They were now starting upon the voyage of life, with sails all set, pennons flying, and, he might add, beautifully rigged. He trusted that their lives might be brightened by that faith expressed in the motto of our State, and to which he could add nothing, though he spoke with the tongue of angels. He then presented the diplomas, and Mr. Greenough announcing that the conduct of the remaining exercises would be in the hands of Gen. Van Zandt, that gentleman called upon Rev. Dr. Robinson for an address. Dr. Robinson said that failure in the performance of any part of the work of education might mar the perfectness of the whole. It is possible at the very end of an educational course to do hopeless injury to a pupil who has been well started, but so also might the gravest mistake be made in the primary department. The college has not only an interest in, but a sympathy with all the departments of public teaching. It is not the amount of knowledge which the teacher imparts that is important, for all men and women of value, are self-made, but the skill of the teachers in directing the efforts to acquire that knowledge. The facilities of this school should be enlarged, which statement was received with applause.

Mr. Thos. W. Bicknell, Commissioner of Schools, followed Dr. Robinson in a brief address. He believed that this normal school is as good as any in the country. He believed that the people of the State are in sympathy with this school, and the Legislature would make suitable appropriations for its enlargement and improvement. The day is far in the future when Rhode Island will have a surplus of good teachers.

Rev. Augustus Woodbury was introduced as an eminent divine, a well known educator, and a pretty fair Legislator. Mr. Woodbury expressed his pleasure at the sense of responsibility and the spirit of consecration which breathed through all the essays to which we had listened. Work for the love of work, was a condition of the largest success. Patience, kindness, self-control and fidelity are the qualities needed by the graduates. The objections sometimes made to this school, come from those who do not understand the importance of a special training in the art of communicating knowledge, and training the young.

The Lieutenant Governor hoped that the work of the young ladies would have a certain permanence, and their ideal not too soon become a beau ideal.

Prof. Lyon then spoke of his observations in the schools at Athens. He compared the physical charms of the young ladies of a Normal School in Athens, with those of the Rhode Island school, and gave the preference to the latter.

The ideal teacher of Socrates, was not that of to-day. Moderns waste pity on upon the teacher, whose work is so noble, so important that only those especially called have a right in it.

Mr. Van Zandt called in a humorous manner upon Senator Adams, of Lincoln, who declined to speak, and upon Senator Richardson who followed this modest example.

The exercises concluded with the singing of the parting hymn, written by Miss Mary S. Tilley, of Newport, and prayer and the benediction by Rev. Mr. Graves.

As each young lady finished reading her essay, she was presented with one, or a l in several instances with a number of bouquets.