

AN ABLE ARTICLE.

THE CATHOLIC SUMMER SCHOOL OF AMERICA.

The History of the Organization; Its Aims, Methods, and Success—The Prospects for the future—One of the Grandest Catholic Educational Institutions in the World.

When Emerson wrote "America is another word for opportunity" he supplied a motto—a motive power, a silent force for the accomplishment of new and even greater achievements. Every element that contributes to strengthen the commonwealth is conscious of the truth of his words. Individual members of a nation contribute either for good or evil, for growth or decay, for its glory or shame, just as they use this opportunity. The Catholics of America have of late years consolidated their force, and with an almost universal determination have agreed that the opportunity America gives them is to make their country from sea to sea Catholic. This grand idea was first cherished in the heart of the late Very Rev. Father Hecker, the founder of the Paulist Fathers. The same idea has again and again been repeated by one who is singularly and truly the apostle of the age, Archbishop Ireland—"Your mission is to make America Catholic." The Apostolic Delegate at the recent Congress in Chicago, speaking to the thousands of men and women, who listened spell-bound by the magnetic force of his words, when he said: "Go forward fearlessly on your mission, with the Gospel of Christ in one hand and the Constitution of the United States in the other," stereotyped for ever the same counsel.

One of the chief forces towards the fulfilment of this high destiny has been a larger and more general co-operation of the laity. Among the organizations in which the laity are prominently represented are the Catholic Truth Society, which vigorously assists the apostolate of the Press and designed particularly to spread literature among non-Catholics; the Catholic Young Men's National Union, the Columbian Reading Union, and the Educational Union with their reading circles have widely diffused Catholic literature and encouraged higher studies.

The various movements fostering and producing marked intellectual progress contribute to the marvellous success of the Catholic Summer School of America.

For many reasons the vacation time had to be selected for the work of the school, as the lecturers, with few exceptions, were drawn from educational institutions. The plan adopted was the lecture system, as it existed in the time of St. Thomas Aquinas in the University of Paris. To find the first origin of the Catholic Summer School we have to go back to 1892.

In January of that year, the Paulist Fathers assembled in their parish hall named after Columbus, a national gathering of Catholic laymen, mostly literary workers, journalists and philanthropists, and formed the "Apostolate of the Press."

"To mention the Paulist Fathers," says Katherine E. Conway, in her admirable paper read at the recent Catholic Congress in Chicago, "is to recall an American Catholic literary movement of missionary intent, long preceding and preparing the way for our reading circle movement, and Catholic Summer School, that was begun by Very Rev. Isaac T. Hecker when he founded the Catholic Publication Society, the Catholic World and Young Catholic, and faithfully and fruitfully carried on ever since by his disciples, the Paulist Fathers."

The dominant thought of the Apostolate of the Press was to manifest, through the printed page, the Church of Christ to the non-Catholic American people. There gathered from every side co-workers in the field of literature. They looked into each other's faces and deeper, into each other's hearts, and found that for the first time they stood bravely out into the light and thrilled to the thought that they were Catholic. For long years before, Catholic writers especially had been unable to proclaim their Catholicity, as a profession of faith was apt to be followed by a depression of finances. The Apostolate of the Press gave these workers, whose names were not unknown to fame, an opportunity to stand for what they were—to fearlessly proclaim that they were Catholics. Names such

as the following were proud to own themselves Catholic in such an assembly: Mrs. M. E. Blake, of Boston, Massachusetts; Alice W. Baily, Amerherst, Massachusetts; Miss D. A. Boone, Baltimore, Maryland; Katherine E. Conway, of the Boston Pilot; the Misses Cary, of Cambridge, Massachusetts, well known for their philanthropic prison work; C. W. Copley, of St. Paul, Minnesota; Miss E. Cronyn, Buffalo, New York; Caryl Coleman, New York; R. A. Cra. Boston, Massachusetts; Mdm. M. V. Dahlgren, Washington, D.C.; Louise Imogene Guiney, Auburndale, Massachusetts; George Parsons Lathrop and his wife, Rose Hawthorne Lathrop, New London, Connecticut; Mrs. Margaret Lawless, Toledo, Ohio; Mrs. Serrano, New York; Richard Malcolm Johnston, Baltimore, Maryland; and hundreds of others. The whole convention was tinged with the spirit of intellectual aggressiveness. "We are right and we can prove it," is the attitude of the Catholic mind in America to-day.

As a natural outcome of this convention came the Catholic summer-school. Here was inserted the thin end of the wedge, but it was by a zealous young layman, Warren E. Mosher, of Youngstown, Ohio, that the first effort was made to realize the idea. He seized all Catholic occasions, local and national, for furthering his plan of the Catholic Educational Union and Summer-school. His persistent initiative was quickly approved by priests and laymen ready to co-operate with him.

In May following the convention of the Apostolate of the Press, a committee of thirty met in the magnificent building of the Catholic Club, New York City, and resolved to form a temporary organization. A board of studies was appointed, a president, vice-president, treasurer, and secretary. On July 30th, 1892, the first session opened for three weeks at the pretty rural city of New London, Connecticut, the home of those well-known writers, the Lathrops. The most sanguine among those most interested expected a small attendance at the start. On the first Sunday two hundred and fifty were present at the opening services. The next morning work began in real earnest. The first lecture was at 9.30, the next at 11, one at 4 p.m., and one at 8 in the evening. The board of studies proved its great efficiency by its selection of lecturers. The success of a school depends upon teachers and students—the teachers must be learned and the students must be studious. Because these two requirements were fulfilled the session was a complete success. At New London such eminent men as Rev. P. A. Halpin, S. J., who gave ten lectures on Ethics; Rev. Thos. Hughes, S. J., of St. Louis, six lectures on Anthropology; Maurice Francis Egan, of Notre Dame University, Notre Dame, Indiana, three lectures on Shakspeare; the late brother Azarias, one lecture on "Our Catholic Heritage in Literature"; Richard Malcolm Johnston, of Baltimore, Maryland, five lectures on Shakspeare; C. M. O'Leary, LL.D., of Manhattan College, N. Y.; Rev. J. Loughlin, D. D., Chancellor of the diocese of Philadelphia; Richard Clarke, LL.D., of New York; Marc Vallette, LL.D., and Charles Herbermann, LL.D., all on history; and twelve other lectures on miscellaneous subjects delivered by those well up in the matters touched upon. When it is considered that all of these lecturers of the first session volunteered their services no astonishment is felt at the unusual success of the trial experiment. Nothing was guaranteed them—not even an audience—but yet they came, and the students, over six hundred strong by the last week, profited by their generosity.

In looking over the syllabus of lectures before the session began, nearly everyone determined to avoid ethics and anthropology, and take the course in literature and history instead. By the usual law of contraries the two former subjects proved the most absorbing, presented as they were in such a luminous way to eyes accustomed to the semi-darkness of irreligious training. An admirable institution, and one very popular with the students was the Question Box. Into this were dropped all inquiries relating to the lectures. The practice was encouraged by the professors, and the number and nature of the questions proved the great interest and intelligence of the listeners. The principle of university extension is now spreading throughout the world. The educator formally confined within the four walls of the lecture-hall has enlarged the sphere of his work, and has

come out on the public platform to deliver his lecture. A university training has given a wide range of knowledge by which men of thought have accomplished the end they had in view. University extension is so closely allied to the summer-school that the two should almost be considered as one; the latter making possible the best workings of the former. The plan of University extension, first given a trial in England in 1872, has taken deep root in American soil; there is no nation more eager for advancement than the youngest sister of nations. Following out this line, the Rev. P. A. Halpin, S. J., in 1891, began a course of ethics in St. Francis Xavier's College in New York City, which was on the extension plan. He announced that this course was not for graduates exclusively, but for all desirous of hearing the subject discussed scientifically; that no charge was to be made for attendance, and merely a fee of fifteen dollars for those who passed the examination, and wrote three satisfactory dissertations on the subject-matter of the course and on whom the degree of A.M. would then be conferred, and that any bachelor of arts from any college, Catholic or non-Catholic, could take the examination. Father Halpin's course at the Summer-School was but the outcome of this University Extension plan. His subjects were eminently practical in both courses and covered a wide range, including Duties and Rights of Man Moral Science and Religion, Religious Worship, Revelation, Intellectual and Moral Development, Suicide, Charity, Humanity, Benevolence, Veracity, Self-Defence, Duelling, Communism, Socialism, Employer, Employees, Wages, Society, Marriage, Education, Public Schools, the Family, Masters and Servants, Civil Society, Government, Universal Suffrage, Penal Laws, Lynch Laws, Liberty of the Press, Free Thought, Duties of Nations, Methods of War, etc.

An impartial observer has declared that New London, Connecticut, was in August, 1892, the scene of an experiment watched with more than common interest by Catholics of the entire country, and the successful outcome of which was greeted with hearty applause by all having at heart the cause of higher Catholic education. The results of that experiment show beyond the possibility of a doubt that the project of a Catholic summer school meets the unqualified approval of the Catholic body throughout the United States, and is on the high road to a well-merited success. Within a year it has developed from the embryo state, and is now firmly established. The venture has been successful beyond the most sanguine expectations of its promoters.

Briefly stated, the object of the Catholic Summer School is to increase the facilities for busy people as well as for those of leisure to pursue lines of study in various departments of knowledge by providing opportunities to receive instruction from eminent specialists. It is not intended to have the scope of the work limited to any class, but rather to establish an intellectual centre where any one with serious purpose may come and find new incentives to efforts for self-improvement. Here is the leisure of a summer vacation, without great expense, one may listen to the best thoughts of the world, condensed and presented by unselfish masters of study. The opportunity thus provided of combining different classes of students for mutual improvement will be most acceptable to professors and lecturers who wish to have an appreciative audience to enjoy with them the fruits of the latest research in history, literature, natural science, and other branches of learning. All these branches of human learning are to be considered in the light of Christian truth; according to Cardinal Newman's declaration, "truth is the object of knowledge of whatever kind; and truth means facts and their relations. Religious truth is not only a portion, but a condition of knowledge. To blot it out is nothing short of ravelling the web of University teaching."

The Regents of the University of the State of New York granted an absolute charter Feb. 9, 1893, by virtue of which the Catholic Summer School has a legal existence as a corporation, under the laws of the State of New York, and is classified within the system of public instruction devoted to University Extension. By this charter from the Board of Regents many advantages are secured for students preparing for examination, besides the legal privileges

which could be obtained in no other way. In the official documents relating to the charter ample guarantees are given that the object for which the Catholic Summer School was organized shall be steadily kept in view, and the good work continued according to the plans approved by its founders. The late election of the Right Rev. F. McNeirny, Bishop of Albany, to fill the place formerly occupied by Hon. Francis Kernan in the Board of Regents, is a further indication that Catholic educational institutions will have an official protector.

The location at New London was tentative. Its establishment there put into circulation a great deal of money both in the city and on the railroads leading thither. When it became known that the trustees were looking for a permanent site, several offers were made and many inducements given. The best offer came from Plattsburgh, a town in the northern part of the State of New York. A piece of land of 450 acres on Lake Champlain was deeded to the school (this historic spot was the scene of the first and last naval battles between America and England). When a permanent organization was effected the enterprise was incorporated under the title of "The Catholic Summer School of America." Hon. Smith M. Weed, the wealthiest citizen of Plattsburgh, a non-Catholic, granted the free use of the opera house for the lectures, town, the use of the Plattsburgh high school, and the Grey Nuns, their academy hall for social purposes, pending the erection of the Summer School's own buildings. The second session was held July 15th to August 6th, inclusive, with larger attendance of students, a better programme of lectures, and a great increase of general interest over the first year. The attendance represented sixteen states, New York and New England taking lead. As in New London, a few non-Catholics attended the lectures, and a Jewish Rabbi, Dr. Veld, from Montreal, followed the whole course. "Although in its infancy," said the latter, when interviewed as to his opinion of the Catholic Summer-School, "the work is of a distinctly higher intellectual character than is attempted in other institutions of a similar nature. Here the work is entirely of a University type, and indeed Plattsburgh has taken on for this summer at least the appearance of a university town: Everywhere I was treated as one of their own, and I received every opportunity of getting the information I sought."

At the close of the second session the President, Rev. Dr. Conaty, of Worcester, Massachusetts, made a most graceful address of thanks to all those who in any way contributed to the great success of the school. He spoke particularly of the unfailing kindness and courtesy of the Grey Nuns resident in Plattsburgh, who opened their convent not only to the visiting religious, of whom there were five Orders represented, but to any young ladies who desired to board there during the session. Dr. Conaty referred to the large number of visiting religious, and expressed a hope that still more would come next year, promising that some special lectures would be provided for them, if their numbers warranted it, in the evenings when they do not think it fit to appear in the public lecture hall.

Concluding, Dr. Conaty said, "I think I would be untrue to my position if I did not add my thanks with those of the board of trustees which are due to the board of studies, and especially to Father McMillan, C.S.P., of the Paulist Fathers. To his untiring energy and wisdom we can certainly feel that we owe the successful closing of the summer-school; he has prepared everything that you have enjoyed. He has sought far and near and engaged for you the teachers and preachers, and he has not only prepared the programme for you but has followed you on your excursions. Certainly we all owe him a debt of thanks."

The second course lecturers included Rev. J. A. Zahm, C.S.C., who gave five lectures on science and religion; four lectures on logic by Rev. J. A. Doonan, S. J., Boston College, Boston, Massachusetts; one lecture on the authenticity of the Gospels, by Rev. A. F. Hewitt, D.D., C.S.P., Paulist Fathers, New York City; five lectures on Educational Epochs by the late Brother Azarias; five lectures on Studies among Famous Authors by Richard Malcolm Johnston, of Baltimore, Maryland; two lectures on Longfellow, by Rev. W. Livingston, of St. Joseph's Seminary, Troy, N. Y.; one lecture