BRIGHAM YOUNG ACADEMY.

An Interesting Visit to This Pioneer Normal College.

Everywhere in the Territory, and, indeed, in many towns of neighboring states and territories, one hears of the Brigham Young academy, the leading Mormon institution of secondary education.

Is there a young Elder who speaks particularly well; a man pushed far in advance of his years into responsible positions in political, social or business life; a youth here and there pointed to by fathers and mothers as a pattern? The odds are he will be named as you as having been a student of this famous institution.

Famous alike it is for its name and the nature of its teachings. As to the latter it is enough to say that its motto has evidently been: Character first, knowledge afterwards.

Having occasion to pass through Provo on my way to the capital, I determined to pay the school a visit. Ten years ago I stopped off for a similar purpose. Then it was located on Center street, in a commercial building which had evidently been projected on too large a scale for the town, or the builder's purse. At any rate, it was not stocked with goods, but purchased by President Young for a school. The upper floor had served the purpose of a theater. At the time of my visit the whole building inside had been remodeled and suggested nothing so much as a complete beehive filled with workers. Already the quarters had become too narrow for the attendance, and splendid additions had been projected by the board—additions which were no sooner completed a year later than the whole structure was destroyed by fire.

"What will they do now?" thought I, when I read the sad announcement. "Practically, the intellectual tool, so to speak, has been burned over the heads of 400 students. Most they all dispersed for their homes?" In a few days came the news that the school was in full blast; it had lost but one day. President A. O. Smoot, whose bank building was just completed, and Mr. R. S. Jones, who was just ready to move into a new store, generously turned over the use of their houses till better accommodations could be secured. Nor can one conceive of a more noble house-warming than this. These rooms will serve yet old again.

When I alighted from the train, my companion, who, by the by, was a last year's student, but like me upon visiting the academy, pointed out a tasteful structure near the depot, apparently covering an acre of ground.

"That is the Z. C. M. I. warehouse," said he. "In the upper halls, the B. Y. Academy has been—shall I say camping?—since '84, six months after the fire. Seriously, I ought only to speak with gratitude of those vacant halls. In reality they were more roomy than the old ones, and we soon got accustomed to the clamor of the locomotives and the hissing of steam.

"I shall never forget the morning we vacated. It was the 4th of January a year ago. Picture 500 students arranged in marching file in the large assembly room, singing as they stand with heads uncovered, 'Praise God from whom all blessings flow;' led by that grand old man, Dr. Karl G. Maeser, whose head had grown white in making the academy what it is, and whom every student loved as a father.

"The reception in the new building," continued my enthusiastic companion, as we walked along, "was more imposing but less touching—save when Dr. Maeser almost broke down with emotion in delivering up the charge given him by President Young sixteen years before, to assume his present wider field of usefulness as general superintendent of church schools.

"The greatest comfort said he, that helped to sustain him in thus tearing himself away from endeared associations was the thought that his successor, Prof. Benj. Cluff, whom, as student and teacher, he had known from boyhood, was fully qualified to fill his place in the institution, a confidence which the last two years' work shows was well placed. Altogether the day is not easily forgotten. Prominent visitors from all parts of the Territory, among whom were Governor Thomas and the First Presidency of the Church, added their cheerful presence to help the warming. But here we are in sight of the building, so I need not attempt to describe it."

I regret that I cannot present my readers with a better picture of the academy than the before-mentioned head of this article; however, it must serve in lieu of a description of the outside. One of the first facts I learned on entering was that the building was made to accommodate about 600 students, and that 800 young aspirants had actually been enrolled this year.

One of the features that first strikes the visitor is the spacious halls and wide stairways. I am told that the architect, Mr. Don C. Young, a son of the founder, had in view the "rushes" that characterize eastern colleges. "Rushes" are, however, entirely unknown in the academy's history. Nor are they likely to be encouraged.

There are about thirty recitation rooms furished and most of them furnished with seats having arm tablets for taking notes. The library will seat about 300 students. The building is trimmed in oak and maple and finished in oil. The rooms on three floors are completed, but the halls and skylight rooms still need the finishing touches of the plasterer and carpenter. Outside there is a most beautiful lawn, etc., surrounded by a neat iron fence (not yet visible to the naked eye), donated, as I am informed, by the Provo Chamber of Commerce—on paper.

I was most strongly interested in the boiler system of heating and ventilating. In the basement two 30 horsepower engines generate the steam which heats up a compact system of radiators piled one above another. The cold air comes in on the top and is drawn through the fine interstices of the radiators by a powerful fan. Thus heated it is drawn through pipes into every room where it forces out through openings near the floor, the cold and foul air which being heavy always lies low. A temperature equable as that of spring is thus maintained.

No wonder President Eliot, in a recent address before the students, expressed his surprise and declared that for over 200 years Harvard had stood in a relaxing interior to this.

But what sudden prosperity has overwhelmed the academy, the visitor is ready to ask, that it should all at once be so finely housed. Especially to the visitor somewhat acquainted with the institution's financial history, is this question prominent. President Young meant to do great things by this worthiest of the offspring of his genius. But the good man died ere he could sign the instruments his generosity had set apart for it. He gave it home, which the fire reduced to ashes, and a name, above the reach of the flames. There these are a few acres of real estate which time is likely to make valuable. But for fourteen years the academy depended solely upon tuition for the payment of teachers, and upon the influence of its board for furnishing of buildings and apparatus. Also both board and faculty have done their duty nobly. It is difficult to say which deserve the greater praise, the trustees, who, like true missionaries, contributed the work first, and the pay, or, if it be what it might, seemed to the trustees, who, time and again, have gone into their own pockets for means to avert some crisis.

The splendid building, slightly as the like may strike the reader, is a product of faith—Mormon faith. I am particular to point out the species of faith, for none but the kind that moves mountains could accomplish such a work. Mormon faith especially in that it contains less per cent prayer and tears and ninety per cent work. The spire now points the direction that prayer and hope led, but it was something but that made it point so.

To be less figurative and more accurate, the members of the board pledged their private property to get money to erect this building. What was their security? The belief that God through his people would see that the venture did not fail. There was a faith that took tangible shape in stone, mortar, brick and wood—a faith that appeals to the eye, the intellect and the heart.

Poor security? It judged by the rule of investment or it generally. True, but these men evidently reasoned that if worst came to worst, and it brought them financial ruin, it would by no means be a bad investment. The merely taking such a risk for the good of a whole people was then by no means a bad investment. But if any man think President Smoot and his associate trustees visionary men, who do not calculate coolly their venture, let him come here and let his fortune fumbling in competition with their business tact and ability. The end of this experiment is not yet, nor may the road be very distinct for any distance ahead; but yet this is certain: Hundreds of young people are enjoying the blessings quite as if the building was unencumbered. Did a mortgage on the farm ever destroy the flavor of the apple in the orchard?

The faculty is remarkable for being composed almost exclusively of young men, the principal being but 34 years—all student students themselves—I naturally think as one feature more prominent than any other resulting from such a conjunction—enthusiasm. But enthusiasm is contagious! If the teacher have it, the students will catch it; and judging from the adjectives of some of my friends now attending, they have caught it in earnest. It is a form of contagion which one will do well to go out of his way to be exposed to. Under its exhilarating influence, life fairly gallops through one's veins, and all the world is beautiful.

Another splendid qualification these teachers have—one which neither books nor colleges can supply, and which is currently counted a disadvantage—they have "laughed" it in farm and workshop, canyon and trail. That they have used their eyes and ears well while job-hunting with dame nature is best evinced by the positions they hold. Most of them have taken thorough courses in colleges and universities and while the culture of the school has no direct done much, the fact that scholastic training could do much is chiefly owing to the same rugged pursuits having opened the way.

What indeed distinguishes the teacher from the man equally well informed? Simply the ability to make others sense what he feels to be the thoughts in their minds. To do this the teacher must be fertile himself—fertile in illustrations, the compost that must accompany the seed of thought that the plant may become vigorous and fruitful. I listened to a lecture or one hour on abstract moral principles, and realized for the first time, so truth after truth was put into concrete garb, what an inexhaustible supply of illustrations may be laid up by one who observes accurately the relation of things with which he comes in contact.

Compare for instance the rapid elegancies of the man whose dainty fingers have scarcely touched the thorn in plucking a hot-house rose, with the stiffness, specific, truth-bearing evidences of nature's own pupil who as a lad waded in the pond for pollywogs, and as a youth beheaded the brunche of the forest. Let the authorities of our educational institutions keep this thought in view when they are engaging the preceptors of our children.

But not to be led away by philosophizing, what of the students that fill these halls? For a comparatively small city like Provo, they are numerous. If ten years ago they swarmed in the hive, now they appear to swarm over the entire city. O every street when school hours are over, they are seen in files and groups, greedily sucking the long delayed sunshine. They swell the Sabbath schools and churches on Sunday and make the merchants smile on week days. Several thousand collate. It is safe to say, are spent every week of the school year by this temporary population, and this too without adding the city a single cent additional for police force or other regulation. Indeed, on this point it is safe to say that the moral force of the B. Y. academy is an small factor in defraying expenses of this kind. Nor is this the case of Provo; every town and hamlet throughout the entire Basin is polarized in moral and social purity by the work of this institution.

Specific information concerning the work being done in the academy is widely disseminated through the pages of the Normal, published by the students in pedagogy, and through the business journals, the organ of the commercial department; and are daily thousands of complete documents of finance, etc., to scan the patrons and friends of the institution, so that my readers will scarcely expect me to treat these topics in this full text-book. I intend, however, before closing, to mention a few features lately added to the curriculum.

The most prominent of these is the normal training school. The fact is no doubt well known throughout the Territory, that the Church has made this department practically free, and in consequence about two hundred and fifty young teachers are taking this course. In addition to the usual pedagogic studies, such as psychology, history of education, theory and practice of teaching, these students are given an hour's actual practice daily in teaching successively the classes in the eight grades of the preparatory records. Two observers, students who are with in their turns take the course, and one professor acting as critic teacher, are present in the room making notes. At a monthly meet in the day of students and critic teachers the failures and successes of these students are pointed out in kindly criticisms. I attended these exercises a number of days in succession and much surprise that they seem so admirably adapted to fit the student for his pedagogic calling. The principal informed me that this was no longer a question, students who took the training course prove last year, and are now teaching prove uniformly successful. They other think their work, knowing just what to do and how to do it.

The visitor cannot fail to be interested in the commercial college. Here the fetish of utility closely influences the essentials of actual business life—so closely it seems that the student who being the counting room is likely to be surprised in holding sore in getting a nearly instead of paying a thirsty bill. The students buy and sell the commodities of commerce, and even the green Hessians so in actual business. Class is back at which each student makes his requests and draws on his checks as his business requires. Every day his accounts are overhauled and the business methods inspected by one of the professors. Commercial law and ordinary studies such as penmanship, arithmetic, composition and orthography, is adapted to business needs, brought at the course.

Two new and important features in the academy's usefulness are normal courses for School Improvement association officers and Sunday school teachers. As to the teacher as will to the church. The converting of these officers in the now as well as the West of their values is almost equivalent to securing directly the associations and classes over which they preside. A new era of educational activity is dawning upon the Inter-Ary Stake. It is the opinion of many that the dawn-light of early three-score high schools and state academies throughout the intermountain region. This is a system of schools quite as distinct in aims and methods as the Methodists differ from the sons of re-united Christianity. As success in the past has hinged upon recognizing the insufficiency of theories and choosing that as an antidote for paucity and fulsomeness in energy, and consequently the supplanting moral and religious training. Its dangers in the future lie in the ending of inner institutions, its triumphs in being true to itself.

G. M. C.

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