

his direction and guidance, in determining the fundamental constants of astronomy, together with the elements of the planetary orbits, and in building upon these tables of the motions of the planets and the positions of the fixed stars that are now in daily use by the astronomers of the world.

Recognition and honors came to him in most unusual degree and from the most diverse sources, but his medals and diplomas, although obviously prized, were rarely exhibited. The ornaments of his home were his three daughters and his wife, Mary Hassler, to whom he was married in 1863. All of these survive him. Although socially inclined and fond of the amenities of life, Newcomb's leonine appearance and conscious dignity of bearing were not infrequently a source of awe to younger men who found it difficult to cross the supposed barrier between them. To the dullard or impostor the barrier was sometimes made real by a word of cutting sarcasm, but toward what he conceived to be real merit Newcomb was always singularly appreciative, seeking to bring out the man of promise and to secure for him recognition through every legitimate means. By none save his own kin will his departure be more sincerely mourned than by his juniors in astronomy whose careers have been furthered by his kindly aid.

G. C. C.

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*THE ANNUAL REPORT OF THE UNITED STATES COMMISSIONER OF EDUCATION FOR 1908*

A FEW years since on the editorial page of the most dignified of our semi-popular magazines it was remarked with facetious seriousness that the annual report of the United States Bureau of Education was without exception "the dullest book in the world." Deserving or not of this charge, it will be generally admitted that the two fat, black-garbed volumes, the issuance of which had become an annual habit of the bureau, did

possess, for both the initiated and the disinterested, a forbidding outwardness, which was not much altered by a survey of the twenty-five hundred odd pages of contents. Whatever their value to the cause of American education, very great in the credited judgment of many, these reports were not for those who would read as they ran. However this may have been in the past, within the brief three years of his commissionership, Dr. Elmer Ellsworth Brown has wrought reforms in the publications of the bureau which are certain to develop a more wide-spread recognition of the genuine service which it is possible for the federal government to render to American schools and American education. The annual report of the bureau for 1908 well illustrates the more important of these reforms; attractiveness in make-up, promptness of publication, condensation of contents, timeliness of topics, simplification and interpretation of the detailed array of statistics, and a cautious editorial supervision.

For the first time since the establishment of the bureau the funereal black binding of the report has been discontinued and the volumes appear in an artistic soft toned olive. This is a reform certainly meriting commendation. Why should not the publications of the Bureau of Education have advantage of an inviting exterior? Perhaps, too, the influence of the example may be felt with the official publications of other governmental departments and bureaus.

The prompt appearance of the report—the first volume being distributed before the close of 1908 and the second early in 1909—greatly enhanced its value. Formerly the annual reports of the bureau were one or two years behind. There were undoubted obstacles in the way of prompter publication which were not easily overcome. That they could be overcome has been effectively demonstrated, much to the relief of those who believe that the Bureau of Education should furnish authentic data and information concerning education at a time and in a form to be of largest service.

By reducing the size of the report from twenty-five hundred pages to somewhat more

than a thousand, chiefly through the condensation of statistical matter, and confining this matter to the second volume of the report, by a skilful selection of topics of wide contemporary interest and of avowed timely value, by simplifying and giving a scientific interpretation of the mass of statistical detail, and above all, by the very noticeable care with which the editorial supervision has been conducted, the report represents the accomplishment of a leadership that appreciates both the opportunities and the obstacles of the work of the bureau.

Commissioner Brown's general introduction in the first volume is a briefly expressed, yet comprehensive, survey of contemporaneous educational conditions and progress, not only in the United States but throughout the principal countries of the world. This, together with the first chapter, in which are given succinct discussions of the more significant educational events of the year, covering the widest range of topics—international educational relations, international congresses, educational commissions, educational boards and associations, teachers' colleges, national university, industrial education, school hygiene, high-school fraternities, teachers' pension funds, being among the important ones—are well worth the reading by every one who would be alive to the educational movements of the day. The classified summaries of state legislation relating to public education for the years 1906–1907 and 1907–1908 contained in the second chapter are invaluable indices of the character and direction of our educational progress. This chapter also contains a statement of the several enactments of the first session of the Sixtieth Congress which have a direct or indirect bearing on education.

The remainder of the first volume of the report is given over to the usual presentation of the more important items of the educational affairs in Porto Rico, Philippines, South America, Great Britain and Ireland, France and central Europe. In these days of comparative study, these chapters will have great value, not only for the student, but for the publicist as well.

Decidedly the most important and most welcome reform of which the 1908 report bears evidence has to do with the statistics of education—the reef upon which many a good official report ship has been wrecked. This reform was begun in the preceding report under the direct supervision of Professor E. L. Thorndike, of the Teachers College, Columbia University. Not only in the present report have the tables of statistical items been rearranged and effectively condensed, but an excellent interpretative summary accompanied by appropriate frequency curves has been prepared by Professor G. D. Strayer, of the Teachers College, Columbia University. Commissioner Brown has effected a much-needed change in the matter of the statistical work of the bureau, and while yet our educational statistics are not as complete or as intelligible as they need to be, this last report exhibits the longest stride of progress yet made.

Were perchance awards of merit made for prodigality of publication and distribution, for ponderousness of bulk and content and for procrastination of presentation, such would, without doubt by common consent go to the generality of annual reports of governmental departments and bureaus. To this generality there is at least one notable exception, and all workers in the field of education are glad to have this exception come from the United States Bureau of Education.

EDWARD C. ELLIOTT

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

*THE MUSEUM EXHIBITIONS IN CONNECTION WITH THE HUDSON-FULTON CELEBRATION*

IN an article published in the *North American Review* seven years ago,<sup>1</sup> the writer prophesied that, if the various museums and institutions in the city of New York could be induced to combine their efforts, a series of exhibitions might be presented which would constitute a most valuable addition to a Hudson-Fulton Celebration. About one year ago the trustees authorized the president of the Hudson-Fulton Commission to appoint com-

<sup>1</sup> "On Expositions and their Uses," *North American Review*, September, 1902.