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CORRESPONDENCE

ASSEMBLY OF THE CALIFORNIA C. L. S. C.

By Miss Lucy M. Washburn

“The first Summer Assembly of the California Branch, C. L. S. C. is over. We draw a long breath after the pleasantly crowded fortnight, and have time to sum up the work accomplished, and to look forward to the future. The committee that laid the plans for this gathering worked quite in the dark, uncertain how much of the spirit of the National Assembly at Chautauqua could be developed on the Pacific coast. It is with satisfaction and gratitude that they look back on a session which has more than realized their hopes.

The beautiful bay of Monterey was never more attractive. The white tents clustered thickly under the old pines of Pacific Grove, overlooking the cliffs, spoke of vacation and the leisurely charm of camp life. Yet day after day an eager audience gathered in the large tent to listen to three lectures each morning, and again another lecture in the evening. Afternoons were to be left for the excursions and scientific collections; but during the second week, with so much rich material on hand, a fifth lecture was given each afternoon. The main session, three hours in the freshness of morning, was devoted to science, especially to study of the animal and vegetable life of the coast, for which the cliffs and beaches give us such rare opportunities. Specialists in each of these departments were there to teach us. Dr. J. H. Wythe, of Oakland, was the life of the Assembly, with his fascinating subject—Marine Zoology -his happy faculty of presenting it with clearness and force, and his fine microscope, which he was never tired of adjusting, to give us glimpses into a new world.

Dr. C. L. Anderson, of Santa Cruz, who is possibly more familiar than anyone else with the Marine Botany of the coast, gave us a course of four lectures on Alga;, illustrated with fresh specimens, and others from his extensive collection; besides guiding parties on beach excursions, from which they came back with their hands laden. General botany, with study of the land plants growing in the vicinity, had a like able teacher in Miss M. E. B. Norton, of the State Normal School; while the application of botany to agriculture was brought out delightfully in a course of lectures by Mr. W. A. Saunders, of Fresno, who is doing so much on his own experimental farm, and through the press, to introduce into California the leading food-plants of the world. Professor Norton told us how to keep off the plague of insects that seems ready for our land as for Egypt. In other addresses he plead earnestly for more homes far from the demoralization of cities, and in his talks on chemistry in the household, showed us how to protect these homes from the germs of disease.

Professor More, also of the State Normal School, took us from the earth to the skies. His clear lectures on astronomy were just the help needed by our C. L. S. C. students, who have been pursuing that study without the help of such a life long student of the science. At night, too, dim companies might have been seen on the rocky headlands tracing out constellations Hider Professor Metro's guidance, or trying to catch a glimpse of the shy planet Mercury.

I have tried to sketch out for you these courses of from four to six lectures each, which filled our mornings and afternoons with science. I can only name the subjects of our evening lectures, to show you that the historical, literary and biblical studies of the society during the past year were not forgotten. Rev. Dr. Dwinell, of Sacramento, struck the key note for the whole work of the Assembly in his fine opening address on "Skepticism as a Judgment for the Rejection of Truth." The address by Rev. C. V. Anthony, of San Francisco, on "The Three Books: Science, Experience, Revelation;" that by Rev. G. S. Abbott, of Oakland, on "Paul's Casuistry, or His Method of Dealing with Difficult cases of Conscience;" and the two by the president of the society, Rev. Dr. C. C. Stratton, of the University of the Pacific, on "The Testimony of Contemporaneous History to the Truth of the Bible Records." All these show the spirit in which the Assembly welcomed the combined work of faith and thought. Our studies in English history and

literature were represented by two lectures by Rev. H. H. Rice of Sacramento, on John Wycliffe and Wm. Tyndale, and by Dr. M. C. Briggs of San Francisco, on Oliver Cromwell. Professor Martin, of the University of the Pacific, in two lectures on the Greek language and literature, treated of another of the subjects of our last year's course of reading. A lecture on Crystallization, by Dr. Crary, editor of the "Christian Advocate." should rather have been mentioned among those on science. The morning and Sabbath Bible readings were led by the venerable Dr. Burroughs. During the session, the Assembly had also the rare pleasure of hearing a noble sermon by Bishop Simpson.

"So many lectures and not one dull one!" was the comment I overheard. Indeed, this catalogue like rehearsal of the programme can give you no idea of the peculiar charm of the session. The lecturers from such different fields of work were happy to meet each other. The addresses were of the kind Gail Hamilton sighs for: "Where the congregation can talk back:" questions as to knotty points were freely put; eliciting fuller explanations of just what we care most to hear: while a sly quiz here and there brought the quick repartee, and dissolved the eager attention of the audience into laughter. There was an out-door freshness in the whole session; a mingling of instruction, cordial intercourse, and informal camp life.

After this satisfactory beginning, the committee feel that their way is clear for more definite plans as to next year's Assembly. Already an outline has shaped itself. It will be a good work, indeed, if such an annual Assembly can become a force upon this coast, stimulating to intellectual life, and uniting Christian faith with scientific study. The C. L. S. C. hopes to thus give a fresh impulse every summer to the quiet course of home reading; that is its main work. Many a lonely student, almost disheartened as to self-culture, has been encouraged to systematic reading by the thought that he is one of the thousands of comrades pursuing the same studies. As he fills out his memoranda of work done, and sends it to the central office of the society, there to be tiled till four years of faithful reading shall be recognized by a diploma, he has the college student's feeling of pursuing a worthy course, under careful guidance, and climbing step by step an ascent from which he has a broader outlook on the world. Those C. L. S. C. members who live near each other gain the additional advantage of mental help in their "local circles," associations of two or three reading aloud to each other, or of a dozen meeting weekly to

discuss their studies, or in large towns, of a hundred or more gathering monthly for essays, lectures, illustrations by apparatus, and other helps. Already, within a year of its formation, the California Branch of the C. L. S. C. numbers between six and seven hundred members; the parent society at the East counting more than twice as many thousand. Applications for new members are already coming in from those who wisely wish to get a start before the first of October, when the regular reading begins. Letters of inquiry and applications for membership should be sent to the secretary, Miss L. M. Washburn, San Jose, Cal. During the Assembly, the original members of the executive committee were re-elected for the ensuing year. The course of reading for the next year embraces Roman History, Biblical studies, early English History, Physiology and Hygiene, American History, and Biology, or the Science of Life, both animal and vegetable. Of course, so many subjects are not mastered; but the books to be read are chosen with care, and students who become specially interested in any line receive hints for more extended reading.— Occident.”

REFERENCE

Washburn, L. M. (1880). Correspondence: The California C. L. S. C. The Chautauquan: Volume 1, [From October 1880 to July 1881]. Chautauqua Institution, Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle, M. Bailey, 1881. Page 43.