

APPENDIX TWO

A JOURNALISTIC REPORT OF THE
FIRST COMMENCEMENT¹

*State Agricultural College Exercises of the First
Annual Commencement—Graduation Day*

(EDITORIAL CORRESPONDENCE OF THE REGISTER)
State Agricultural College, Near Ames, Nov. 13, 1872

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Two o'clock of the afternoon of Wednesday found assembled in College Chapel, an interesting and interested audience, comprising many of the most eminent men and women of Iowa. Opened by an invocation for divine blessing from Dr. Thatcher, President of the State University. The exercises of commencement proper were introduced by the oration of Mr. John L. Stevens upon the "Economy of Labor." The subject of science was his key note—applying it as the basis of wealth and the instrument of labor. His delivery was distinct and good, and his exercise was well received.

His successor was Mr. C. L. Sucksdorf, Scott county, who spoke on "Physical Deterioration." The cause of physical deterioration is fashion and ignorance. So closely are the mental and physical organs united that so surely as the body is crippled the mind will become stupid and indolent. This is an age of reading and also an age of sitting. Machinery supplies the place of muscle. We have too much culture in our hands and not enough in our feet. He who possesses a sound body has the foundation of a sound mind, a fountain of energy. In health there is joy in every look, courage in every enterprise, and it is our choice whether we take this or the opposite. Prevention demands more attention than cure. Proper eating, drinking, and dressing is the cure for the whole catalogue of mental and moral and physical disease.

The oration was a staunch argument for the practical in education, and for the combination in education of labor and study, delivered well and warmly applauded.

The College choir then rendered the chorus, "Far Away the Camp Fires Burn," in a delightfully pleasing manner, followed by the delivery of "Encourage the Beautiful" by Mr. J. C. Arthur, of Floyd county. The

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preference for the practical in education is rapidly asserting itself in America to the disregard of the beautiful, in home surroundings and personal and public taste. It is thought that it is a weakness to indicate a love of the beautiful, but the real tendency of aesthetics is to ennoble the mind and to furnish the genuine pleasures of life. Following the physical sciences for imparting polish to education is the study of the ancient and modern languages and to these next come the fine arts. May the time never come when from our colleges will be demanded the sending forth of educated boors. The speaker evinced a thorough love for the aesthetical part of life and nature, and was very successful in creating alike enthusiasm in the hearts of his audience. His delivery and bearing upon the stage was easy and graceful and his oration well received.

"Science and Faith" was the subject chosen by Mr. C. P. Wellman, of Winnebago county. The idea that the advancement of science tends to the destruction of faith is a mistaken idea. The fear that Darwinism will undermine Christianity is groundless. Science must not be trammelled in the search for truth. Let science develop the resources of nature and the key of true progress, giving to man nobler purer thoughts, and through the transparency of nature will he see the design of nature and the grand purpose of life.

The next speaker was Mr. G. W. Ramsey, of Buchanan county, whose subject was "Climatic Influence." Vegetation and climate are so closely connected that any change in climate produces its corresponding change in vegetation. And not only in vegetable life is the effect of climate shown, but in man. It is an observed fact that there is a close analogy between the plants and the people of a country. The most industrious man removed to the tropical climes becomes as indolent as the most indolent of the natives. Mr. Ramsey's production showed close observation of his subject, united with good original thought of his own.

An instrumental duett [sic] preceded the oration of Mr. E. M. Hungerford, of Wapello county, whose subject was "Our Own Literature." The address indicated an enthusiastic fondness for, and interest in, literature, and the speaker paid a just tribute of admiration to that of our own country. The subject-matter betrayed the mind of the true student and the knowledge of the history of literature from its earliest times to the present. We liked it well and enjoyed it; and so did the audience. The literature of our country evinces the sturdy, common sense, practical mind that speaks the dignity, the manliness, the independence of our race. We plead for the study of our own literature as being the handmaid of beauty and virtue. It is the literary men and women who give complexion to their times. Our literature is not a column reared upon the sand; the elements in its nature give its immortality of time. In its fullness we cannot yet hope, but the

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promise of our nation is all brilliance, through its literature. Mr. Hungerford was succeeded by Mr. F. L. Harvey, of Humboldt county, whose subject was "Scientific Agriculturists." Men have utilized every plan for the economy of labor, until the laborious process of farming has been replaced by one of ease and pleasure and profit. The idea that science and practice are antagonistic is fallacious. Farming is all scientific, and hence, in order to thoroughly cultivate a farm it is necessary to thoroughly investigate the elements of the soil. Agriculture is both a science and an art, and requires the application of a science with individual tact and energy—hence the necessity of agricultural schools. The speaker was very earnest in his advocacy of the combination of human thought and science with agriculture, and he believed that the result of such schools as this would produce a regeneration. It was a well written, well delivered oration. The next speaker—Miss Fannie H. Richards, of Hamilton county—one of last winter's efficient Legislative clerks—chose for her subject "Deonominal Christianity." Christianity is love, nothing but love, and the dogmas of men avail nothing against it. Religious belief is no subject of harsh investigation. The society formed by Christ was able to march out and conquer the world; and his words as soon as formed into a creed, fall like a dead weight upon us. Many doctrinal statements exist in entire conflict with each other. In the heart of many of the churches of to-day, we may see the dragon head. Sects should be abolished. Christ was content with such an organization and evinced a plain contempt for every religious limitation. Let us cultivate that true spirit of Christianity which makes all believers in Christ one in Him. The subject matter of Miss Richards's oration was a plea against the sectarianism and dogmatism which in so large a degree now characterizes the religious bodies of the world. With a bearing upon the rostrum of womanly ease and grace, with a good voice and with earnest, sensible words, the speaker won her just deserts, the warmest plaudits of her audience.

The next address was by Mr. L. W. Noyes, of Linn county. Subject, "How to Build a State." It is with mind, not matter—men, not things, that we build a State. Industry and intelligence are essentials. We must develop intelligence in our people rather than build three hundred thousand dollar State houses. There are two policies in the government of a State—the material and the intellectual. The advocates of the one use every effort to increase material wealth and greatness; those of the other policy seek to elevate and perpetuate the State by fostering the intellectual and industrial interests, providing general intelligence by placing its means within the power of all. What shall be the future of Iowa? Shall she be bowed with struggle and contention, or rise to strength and power?

Mr. S. R. Churchill, of Scott county, delivered the next oration on the "Necessity and Benefits of Military Instruction." Connected with every

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educational institution in the country should be a thorough department of military instruction, the exercise of the drill being beneficial to students and making men of them when nothing else can. This instruction deserves an equal footing with every other department and should be made compulsory. "The Pride of Scholarship" was the subject chosen by Mr. J. [I.] W. Smith, of Floyd county. Scholastic education is but secondary after all. Mr. Smith took a very common-sense view of life and the various duties and missions of its victims on earth. With good delivery, a clear, rich voice and first-rate thought, he made himself exceedingly entertaining to his audience. Mr. L. Foster, of Wapello county, was the next orator—his subject being "Self-Government the Highest Wisdom." It was an earnest plea, especially for restraint in morals, the tone being one of mental healthiness throughout. The subject of Mr. T. L. Thompson, of Fayette county, was "The Pnyx and its Lessons." The speaker deriving many practical applications to our form of government from the Pnyx—the throne of Athenian oratory—evolved a fine scholarly address, which the audience warmly applauded.

The subject of the next oration was "Journalism"—the speaker, Mr. C. A. Smith, of Clinton county. While the press is responsible for very few of the evils of society, society is responsible for nearly all the evils of journalism. Make society pure and high-toned and there will be a corresponding change in the journalism of the country. Mr. Smith possesses a manner of delivery both easy and pleasing, and his address was one of entertainment and good interest throughout.

Mr. O. Cessna, of Story county, next spoke. Subject: "Failure, the Law of Progress." Man improves by the knowledge gained by failure, and when the point comes where there is no failure, the time has come when there can be no human progress.

Mr. H. C. Spencer, of Poweshiek county, gave an interesting, historical sketch of "The National Banking System of the United States." For ten years the present system has been before the public, well balanced in the public mind, and found not wanting. The first advantage is the uniformity of its notes throughout the country; the second its security; the third the strict regulations and examinations of the national banks. No banking system has ever shown itself so excellent and secure as has this. Mr. Spencer spoke with a vivacity and strength which impressed his audience very favorably. He evinced a deep-felt interest in the pursuit of banking, a good understanding of the questions it involves, and very properly has chosen it for his straight path in this crooked world.

Mr. Spencer was followed by Miss Mattie A. Locke, of Benton county, also of Legislative fame, last winter. Her subject was "Education for Women." If woman wants domestic, social, and political equality with

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man, she must attend to the requirements of these conditions. Woman must first be taught to know herself, her physical system, for the brain cannot be used as a working body when the functions of the body are impaired. Woman also must have as decided a purpose in life as her brother. The sooner every college door is open to woman, the sooner will she be upheld in her work by public opinion. The world must first learn that in woman's heart there are longings for better things. We want it understood that we are neither dolls nor drudges, but participants in a common humanity. Miss Locke's production was a sincere appeal to women for a better physical condition—for the care and attention to bodily conditions of which the majority are so neglectful. She held that this was the first real step to the development of perfect womanhood. In choosing a subject so practical, in discussing it so ably and sensibly and in her delivery so agreeable and so good, Miss Locke received the kindest possible expressions of praise from her audience. She certainly acquitted herself with high honor both to herself and her beloved Alma Mater.

"The Ages" was the subject of Mr. E. W. Stanton, of Story county, and this we considered one of the two best exercises of the day. As a writer Mr. Stanton's style is vigorous and versatile, indicating a strength of mind and a culture of intellect which gives him bright prospects for the future.

And now *nineteenthly* comes Mr. S. H. Dickey, of Henry county, with an exposition of the new system of education introduced by the Agricultural School system, entitled "The Old and the New." He skillfully contrasted the two systems of education, yielding the palm to the "New," and if his enthusiasm failed to convince all his listeners it failed to interest no one. His style was classical and his delivery excellent.

Mr. J. K. Macomber, of Cass county, delivered the final oration of the class, his subject being, "Culture, the Showy and the Solid." His attempt was to prove that the study of the sciences is superior to the study of the languages. This is a licensed argumentative point which, perhaps, never will be settled satisfactorily in the minds of all; but Mr. Macomber's dissertation thereupon was both well written and delivered.

Six of the graduates were excused from speaking, the first class of graduates which closes behind them the doors of the State Agricultural College, numbering twenty-six in all. The presentation of the diploma conferring the Degree of Bachelor of Science over, the exercises were closed by a parting song to the out-going class, composed by Mr. Hungerford, one of its members, and the benediction. In tomorrow's issue we will draw our conclusions, relative to the system of agricultural training in schools, from the data of our observation.

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