Ford Hall Forum Folks newsletter, vol. 2, no. 13, 01/18/1914

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TWO Addresses ON THE PUBLIC SCHOOL SITUATION

A FORWARD STEP WHICH HAS BEEN SUCCESSFULLY TAKEN IN FITCHBURG.

By Margaret Slattery.

Teaches him the same thing for many years. It says, "Never mind how you get there; get there!" Until the world learns that this is only one-half the problem it will never be at peace with its brothers. (Applause.) It came to me at last that I had not to teach arithmetic to Jimmy, but I was to teach Jimmy arithmetic. Jimmy is the centre, arithmetic is only a tool. His studies are all tools, with which he is to earn more than a livelihood—a living and a life.

I was in a school recently where the principal said to me of a new teacher, "I don't know what I am going to do with her. This is the third time today that she has asked for permission to open a window, because the children are hot. She knows she must keep windows closed for the sake of forty-five boys, with which she is to earn more than an expensive heating system." Well, teachers must obey systems, but if I had an expensive heating system on one hand and forty-five children's welfare on the other, I should open that window—"for the sake of forty-five children's welfare. The child must come before the system.

You can turn spoons of thread out by system, but you can't teach children. The rights of the child must be realized and recognized. Not that Jimmy is to be allowed to stand on his head in the middle of the aisle—but he is to have his chance. I am thinking now of the real Jimmy. His teacher said to me, "I can't stand Jimmy; there isn't anything he doesn't do; he must go." "Well," I said, "wait till I see Jimmy's mother." So I went up to the tenement where Jimmy lived, and got acquainted with his mother. It is funny how different both mothers and teachers are when you get to know them. And yet I know women who dare to give their children for a whole year into the care of a woman they have never seen. I heard two boys talking recently, "She wants to see my mother," said one. "Aw," answered the other, "I'd have my mother write her a note. She'll never keep me in again in good skating weather!" "No good," answered the first; "she and my mother belong to the same club, and chum around together all the time." When the teacher and the mother "chum around together all the time" the boy can't go very far wrong.

Well, I said to Jimmy's mother, "I've come to talk to you about Jimmy." "Have you?" she answered. "Say, ain't he great, though?" I nearly fell off my chair. And then she told me that Jimmy's father had deserted her before she was born, and that Jimmy got up at four o'clock every morning to help the milkman distribute milk that at noon he got washings for her and took them back, and after school had a newspaper route. Next day I said to his teacher, "Say, ain't Jimmy great?"—and when I had told her about him she agreed with me. We kept Jimmy, and as this wasn't in a book, he wasn't good forever after. But sometimes when I watched him and thought of all he did, I realized that if Jimmy was to play at all he had to play in school hours. Today Jimmy is a fine, gentlemanly, Christian fellow behind a counter, and is waiting to get married until he can finish putting his little finger through high school so she can support their mother. I would rather have some share in helping a boy like that than to have helped make any man whose name fills the newspapers. We can get along without one, but not without the other. We have to have Jimmy! (Applause.) It seems to me that the welfare work of the public schools,

OUR HEART'S CRY.

In the public school we come the nearest to our ideals of democracy. There all our children receive according to their need and capacity and
In the public school we come the nearest to our ideals of democracy. There all our children receive according to their need and capacity and without regard to their worth or merit. As brothers and sisters in one great family they receive from the community as a father some of the richest gifts that money and ability and devotion can bestow. All that is asked of them is that they make the most of it and recognize the source from which it comes and pay for it in the coin of good citizenship.

Our cry as a people, unto the God of our fathers, is that the day may be hastened when in the interest of the state all its citizens of all ages and both sexes may be given an equal opportunity to earn a living and make a life just, as we now give the children an equal opportunity to get an education and develop their powers. May we jealously guard and intelligently promote the welfare of our public schools, so that we shall be able to give the boys and girls who will later be the men and women who will help to usher in the days of greater democracy toward which we are all looking and yearning.

GEORGE W. COLEMAN.

(Continued on Page 4.)
THE QUESTIONS

Q: So long as the school committee has the authority to apply the gag rule, how can we expect the best results from the teachers?

A (Mrs. FitzGerald): I hope they do not consider they have the right any longer. A bill was put through the Legislature last year which very definitely modified that rule.

Q (Mrs. Solomon): What do you think of the great number of boys and girls who would like to go to High School whose parents cannot afford to send them?

A (Miss Slattery): I truly believe that increasing the age limit, while it would be hard on the parents at first, would give the children a much better chance. If children from 14 to 18 have shorter hours, they can attend the evening High Schools.

Q: In the case of Selma, what becomes of eugenics?

A (Miss Slattery): I believe it is a sin for a man to bring into the world a child who must suffer for his wrong-doing; but I believe it is possible for human nature to rise above any handicap you can put upon it.

Q: How soon shall we be educated up to the social centre ideal in the schools?

A (Miss Slattery): I do not know, but I know that if we can create public sentiment it will come 25 years sooner than if we cannot.

Q: Would not economics as taught from the present-day standpoint be opposed by the present authorities?

A (Mrs. FitzGerald): I must ask you to ask the present authorities. I hold no brief for them.

Q: What is your attitude toward the action of the Board of Education in Chicago barring the teaching of sex hygiene?

A (Miss Slattery): I do not believe in the teaching of sex hygiene in the public schools. Most teachers are not qualified to teach it. The thing to do is to teach the mothers what to say. I know, moreover, that knowledge alone does not save.

Q: What effect will it have on democracy when the Roman Catholic Church fulfills the withdrawal of its children from the public schools?

A (Mrs. FitzGerald): I think the withdrawal of the students will have a serious effect upon the progress of the science of democracy.
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Q: What effect will it have on democracy when the Board of Education in Chicago bars the teaching of sex hygiene?

A (Miss Slattery): I think the withdrawal of any large number of children would be very unfortunate, but I do believe that this is going to happen in any general way. I do favor a national child labor law?

A (Miss Slattery): Yes, yes! (Applause.)

Q (Mrs. Blanchard): Last summer the Woman's Club of Dorchester had Dr. Evan-geline Young talk on sex hygiene to mothers and daughters. Why not at our school we have a school that would be useful for every child?

Q: Do you favor a national child labor law?

A (Miss Slattery): Yes, many parents do not know or care to know about their children. We are working definitely now to encourage their interest.

A (Miss Slattery): I think it is fine, especially for young fellows who have to leave school early. But I believe in the teaching of sex hygiene in the public schools.

Q: What is your attitude toward manual training in the schools?

A (Miss Slattery): I don't know just where it should begin, but for manual training, most certainly yes.

Q: Should something be done for older people who might be very useful citizens, or is it too late for them to get training?

A (Mrs. Fitzgerald): I believe that something ought to be done, and is being done.

A (Miss Slattery): I think the thing to do is to teach the thing to do, but for manual training, most certainly yes.

Q: Do you not think that the military sentiment in young boys, as shown in the Scout movement, is very harmful?

A (Miss Slattery): I don't think that boys will ever get over the desire to be soldiers, and I don't think it helps them.

Q: What do you think about school gardens, particularly in large cities?

A (Miss Slattery): I think they are fine — splendid in every way.

A (Miss Slattery): I must ask you to ask the present authorities. I hold no brief for them.

Q: Have you thought out a plan of democratic social training, in which children can enjoy the learning of social occupations?

A (Miss Slattery): Yes, but it would take a whole speech to give it. Isn't it true that a disproportionate measure of money is spent on the High Schools, so that the burden is being borne by the poor people for the benefit of the man who has more?

A (Mrs. Fitzgerald): I don't believe we spend too much on our High Schools, but that we don't spend enough on our grade schools.

Q: How many should be on the school committee?

A (Mrs. Fitzgerald): As I said, I think the best solution we have so far.

Q: What is the comparative merit of the Parent-Teachers' Association and the welfare teacher?

A (Miss Slattery): The welfare teacher must be at the head of the Parent-Teachers' Association.

Q (Mr. Foster): Don't you think the cooperative educational plan of Fitchburg and Gary is a good thing for Jimmy?

A (Miss Slattery): Yes, I think it is the best solution we have so far.

Q (Same): Would lengthening the school year and possibly the school hours increase the educational value to the child?

A (Miss Slattery): At our school we have a six-hour section, three hours' academic, three manual; and this summer we are going to have a full summer session and see how it will work.

Great thoughts come to us only when we are on the heights, but they soon die if they are not taken down into the valley and put to work among men.
FORD HALL FOLKS

AS IT LOOKS TO ME

By George W. Coleman, Director of the Ford Hall Meetings

The first session of the Ford Hall town meeting fully met our expectations, both in the number present and in the enthusiasm manifested. Mr. Coleman made a splendid opening address with a story of the training-school and a fine sounding-board for public opinion. Mr. Foster, as temporary chairman, brought us through the excitement and a motion ofMiss Crawford in very creditable fashion. At the second meeting we shall experience all the excitement and anxieties of an election as we make our choice of officers and committeemen.

There are now one hundred and fifty "first citizens" on the roll. Others are eligible to be counted among this select group until the meeting votes to call the list closed.

In addition to Mr. Bodfish we have among our regular attendees at Ford Hall two other blind men. Mr. Simon Robinson, who lives in the West End, has only enough eyesight to distinguish between light and dark, but he looks just as cheerful as Mr. Bodfish and can laugh as heartily as I can. Mr. Robinson is a quiet, little, gray-haired man who always sits in the central section on the floor and often asks a question.

Mr. Cosgrove, the other one in the group of our three blind men, has often sat on the balcony at the end of the front row on the chairman's right hand. Cosgrove seldom misses asking a question. We must get Miss Crawford to write him up and tell us something of the awful tragedy in a Mexican mine that deprived him of his eyesight.

That was a good Irish program last Sunday night with Slattery, Fitzgerald and Coleman all figuring in it. In spite of my name, however, I was again taken for a Jew in one of the recent West End political rallies.

Wouldn't you have liked very well to have been a pupil under Mr. Slattery? It would seem that she could make such a pleasant and interesting and worth while.

I have asked Mr. W. H. Foster, whose home and office address is 41 Huntington Avenue, to tell his story.

VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE THE TOPIC AT THE FOLKS MEETING.

J. Adams Puffer, who will be remembered for an excellent talk he once gave at the Ford Hall Meetings on "The Boy and the Gang," is to be the speaker at the Folks Meeting next Sunday, his topic being "How to Help a Boy Find Himself." Mr. Puffer is a breezy personality with humorous enthusiasm over boys and their problems. He has written a number of books on vocational guidance, and will be sure to give us an inspiring half hour. The Folks Meetings, held down stairs in Kingsley Hall at 3.30 every third Sunday, are open to all who are interested to come. But if you want to stay and have supper with us ($2.50 each) drop a line to Miss Crawford, Room 707, Ford Building, by next Thursday.

THE BOSS BOSSED.

Says a paragraph taken from the Boston Traveler one day last week: "George W. Coleman may be the 'boss' at the Ford Hall meetings, but at the first town meeting recently Mr. Coleman learned that he could be otherwise. During a heated debate, Mr. Coleman rose and submitted a motion. 'You're out of order,' shouted Chairman William Horton Foster, and with a mumbled, 'I beg your pardon,' Mr. Coleman subsided into his chair."

THE GOOD CITIZEN.

"The first requisite of a good citizen," says Theodore Roosevelt, "is that he shall be able and willing to pull his own weight; that he shall not be a mere passenger, but shall do his share in the work that each generation of us finds ready to hand; and furthermore, that in doing his work, he shall show not only the capacity for sturdy self-help, but also self-respecting regard for the rights of others."

It is a wise employer that can tell the difference between loyalty and servility.

Other Meetings


Public Library, Thursday, Jan. 15, 8 P. M.
Mr. Cosgrove, the other one in the group of our three blind men, has often sat on the platform, but of late has taken a seat in the balcony at the end of the front row on the chairman's right hand. Cosgrove seldom misses asking a question. We must get Miss Crawford to write him up and tell us something of the awful tragedy in a Mexican mine that deprived him of his sight.

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I have asked Mr. W. H. Foster, whose home and office address is 41 Huntington avenue, Boston, to help me as best he can in my personal relations with the people who attend Ford Hall. I wish, particularly, you would let him know of any serious cases of illness, accident or trouble of any sort among our regular attendants. If you want advice of any sort, and do not know which way to turn for it, seek out Mr. Foster and he will help you all he can. Mrs. Foster will be delighted to help too. They can be found on the platform any Sunday night, and their telephone number is Back Bay, 4896-W. I want to see a closer personal relationship growing up between all of us who feel so disposed.

I suppose the chorus is getting ready to lead us in the singing of our new hymn and tune by Schnittke and Goldberg.

Last Sunday afternoon I visited the Civic Service House on Salem street with a few friends. As Mr. Davis showed us about through the different rooms among the various classes and clubs we found it a veritable beehive for the making of good citizens.

PROF. ALBION W. SMALL ON OUR PLATFORM

Dean Small of the University of Chicago, who will speak to us next Sunday evening on "The Strength and Weakness of Socialism," has written a novel, "Between Eras," that is well worth looking up. The Socialists, of course, have not accepted the book wholeheartedly, but they have cared enough about it to give it liberal space in their various publications, and it is generally conceded that the Socialist-author has done his cause a great deal of service in this piece of fiction. Dr. Small is a Baptist, he is, also, a warm friend and close comrade of Prof. Zuehlkin. A good combination.

Why be so impatient? If you wanted to go to San Francisco and found that the only train for that city was five days late, would you wait or would you walk? Many of us in our journey toward our port of Success are compelled to obey train schedules.

Ford Hall Folks
Edited by Thomas Dreier.

PUBLISHED weekly by the Ford Hall Associates, whose work is to create, assemble, and distribute ideas that will help men and institutions grow more helpful in serving society, and which will promote "peace on earth, good will toward men." It is the official publication of the Ford Hall Meetings and is to be distributed among all who will feel so disposed.

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Other Meetings

Lowell Institute, Huntington Hall, Monday, Jan. 18, 5 P.M., America and France in Contact in the Past, by Fernand Baldensperger. Monday, Jan. 19, and Thursday, Jan. 22, 8 P.M., The Man Behind the Vote, by Graham Wallas. Tuesday, Jan. 20 and Friday, Jan. 22, 8 P.M., Sound Analysis, by Dayton C. Miller.

Public Library, Thursday, Jan. 15, 8 P.M., Rome, by Cora Stanwood Cobb. Sunday, Jan. 18, 8 P.M., The Stage of Today, by Frank W. C. Hersey.

Sunday Commons, Huntington Chambers Hall, Sunday, Jan. 25, 3:30 P.M., Dr. Charles Fleischer, leader.

School of Social Science, Monday, Jan. 19, 7:30 P.M., American Literature and Dollars, by Abraham Cahan. 10 cents.

STATESMEN'S MEETING

At which Mrs. O. H. P. Belmont will preside, and Sen. Chip, Sen. Kenyon and Sen. Thomas will speak. Tremont Temple, Saturday, January 24, at 8 P.M.

Reserved seats, 35 cents to $1.00 now on sale at the hall.

ADVERTISING

A space of this size—one inch high and two and one-half inches wide—can be had for advertising purposes for one dollar per issue. For information regarding advertising apply to Jacob London, Room 707, Ford Building, Boston, Mass.
THE STORY OF SARA A. SMITH.
By Mary C. Crawford.

Twice this season Miss Sara A. Smith has officiated as hostess at the Sunday afternoon gatherings of the Ford Hall Folks, showing in this capacity the executive ability and cheerful spirit of co-operation we have all learned to admire in her. Perhaps her terms into the service of the treasurer of the Cambridge Socialist Party helped her to be an especially effective member of the Folks. Or perhaps it was the practice of going to the regular Ford Hall Meetings which fitted her to do valuable work for the Socialists. Certainly she was a member of the Ford Hall congregation. She, too, had been a constituent number since that evening when Lincoln Steffens was the speaker on our platform some three or four seasons ago.

Miss Smith was brought up a Congregationalist and from her early childhood had been wont, as a member of a Cambridge church, to “do good” to the poor; like many other Christian folk she interpreted that saying, “The poor ye have always with you,” as a text which Christ set the seal on. In justice, she had always been Numbers 6:27. Consequently her faith was roughly shaken, when, in the course of business experience, she saw large numbers of able-bodied men displaced by the introduction of machinery and realized heart-breakingly that men and women, who had been working, could never find another job. Poverty so brought about is NOT the Lord’s will, she decided; there must be something wrong with society as a whole. She said that there was something wrong, too, with a church which counsels submission to such injustice. So, instead of going to church, she followed the many workers who were agitating and became a member of the Folks. One of the credit cards of the Folks is that they have become a political body behind them. (Applause.) The present campaign has shown us that this is true of other public offices also. I hope that the requirement for 5000 certified names on the nomination paper will be so changed that it may be possible to put a candidate over in the field who does not have a large and well-organized political body behind him. (Applause.) To keep the schools out of politics it must be possible for candidates to run for the school committee without this political affiliation.

Let the machinery drop more and more out of sight, so that to the end we dwindle, we can devote the best of our strength.

Fools are all right, if one doesn’t get too many of them together in the same place. An old saying has it, “Rope gets tangled when goats are tied to the same post.”

Let us not misjudge the quiet, self-contained man, and let us not fail to remember that it is ever the empty wagon which makes the most noise.

Friends Who Are Coming

Jan. 25—Dr. Albion Woodbury Small of Chicago University, “The Strength and Weakness of Socialism.”
Feb. 6—Prof. Edward A. Steiner, “The Inter-National Mind and the Inter-Racial Heart.”
Saturday, March, 1911. Then returning to Boston agonized with us here over the Lawrence strike, and realized heart and conscience, she saw large numbers of able-bodied men displaced by the introduction of machinery and realized heart-breakingly that many of these discharged workers would never find another job. Poverty so brought out in the home papers. "Ford Hall was the only thing in Boston for which I was truly grateful when on a certain winter evening that she first heard Debs speak. This was in March, 1911. Then returning to Boston and her beloved Meetings at Ford Hall, she agonized with us here over the Lawrence strike, and soon after that joined the Socialist party. Even today, though, she works harder to make her friends converts to the Ford Hall idea than to Socialism. Perhaps she thinks the former will lead others, just as it led her, into the latter. In any event she proselytizes zealously and continuously for us. "And at the Folks dinner last spring," she declares proudly, "there were present no less than twenty-five people whom I personally had led to know and to love the Ford Hall Meetings."

Isn't it queer how hard some of us are fighting today against having forced upon us that which yesterday we were sure we could not live without?

The greatest social center is not the great structure of stone and steel, but it is the Efficient Man and Efficient Woman—the one who does the little things better.

A FUNDAMENTAL DIFFICULTY IN THE WAY OF IMPROVING BOSTON SCHOOLS.

By Susan W. Fitzgerald.

I am not going to suggest any very definite remedies. It seems to me that the fundamental difficulty with our schools is the same thing that is the fundamental difficulty with so much of our common life—namely, the fact that democracy is more common in speech than in practice, and that democracy is an underworked thing.

It would be better for our schools and for us all if socially the schools were more democratic in Boston today. Of course the schools cannot be the same in all districts, but if we could feel that in each school section the schools really gathered together the whole of the young life and taught them to work together and think together and pull together, we should be well satisfied. I don't know whether we can look to the happy time when that will be true in all parts of Boston. There is nothing more damaging to our public schools than the growth of the private schools, which always stand for separation.

Our schools must be made democratic educationally, and for this the people in the schools themselves must be linked with the homes from which the children come. One of the things which would be a practical help would be somehow in which the parents and the neighborhood could come into closer touch with the authorities in the schools and make them see what seems to the parents a help to the children. Vocational schools and everything that is a departure from the old line of strict academic training helps points of view may be represented. There should be a committee of seven or nine at least, three of them women. Second, our present way of nominating members for the school committee is not democratic. The present campaign has shown us that this is true of other public offices also. I hope that the requirement for 5000 certified names on the nomination paper will be so changed that it may be possible to put a candidate in the field who does not have a large and well-organized political body behind him. (Applause.) To keep the schools out of politics it must be possible for candidates to run for the school committee without this political affiliation.

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Feb. 15—Symposium, "Breeding Men."
Feb. 22—Charles Brandon Booth, "The Case for the Prisoner."
March 1—Leslie Willis Sprague of Chicago.
March 8—Symposium, on "Journalism," A. J. Phillpot of the Boston Globe and others to be announced.
April 5—Mary Church Terrell, "Uncle Sam and the Sons of Ham."
April 12—Dr. Thomas C. Hall of New York.
April 19—Prof. Walter Rauschenbusch.