

The Peabody Volunteer

Published Monthly by the Students of the Peabody Demonstration School

VOL. VII

NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE, MARCH, 1925.

No. 4

New Building Dedicated with Great Speech by Dr. Alexander

As students of the Peabody Demonstration School we were all deeply interested recently in the Peabody Semi-Centennial celebrations. The program of events brought together many noted people including alumni of the College, the British Ambassador, various professors and Supreme Court officials, and other celebrities. And truly the sights were impressive as the dignitaries, arrayed in appropriate dress, paraded about the campus to attend the various exercises. It was only right too, that the fiftieth anniversary of the College should have gone off so successfully because the South as a whole owes much to the Peabody College for Teachers.

We Demonstration School people could not of course participate very much in the College celebrations. Our role mainly was to stand off and respectfully admire. But in the midst of all these impressive ceremonies there came one great event which was for us—an event long anticipated and one that marked an epoch in the life of the Demonstration School. And that was the dedication of the new Peabody Demonstration School Building, with a speech by Dr. Thomas Alexander.

Thursday, February the nineteenth, was the great day. Two o'clock was the hour. The beautiful new auditorium, seating over six hundred people, overflowed with parents and friends, and the fine, large stage held two or three hundred P. D. S. students and alumni. Familiar faces were everywhere—former faculty members and students. Dr. Payne presided in an able manner. Of course there were other numbers on the program—music and speeches—very pleasing in themselves, but the one thing that everyone impatiently awaited came last—Dr. Alexander's address.

When he arose there was an outburst of applause which might have continued indefinitely but that everyone wished to catch his first words, so the outburst finally subsided. And then he started. There was the same old Dr. Alex, just as he used to be in the classroom—perfectly at home, speaking with snap—frank, plain, ironic, almost sarcastic when he wished, and withal as humorous as a sensible man might possibly be. Beginning with the birth of the Demonstration School he told of the first year—of the financial difficulties, of the people who aided—how the first students were recruited (recruited is correct) and how the school's expenses that year, with nine college graduates as teachers, reached the startling sum of three thousand dollars! Then coming down thru the years he told of the growth, of the new people and new teachers—how that his quaint Presbyterian belief in the doctrine of "pre-destination" had made thru it all every event work out to the good and upbuilding of the school. He led the audience thru both the sunshine and the shadow—he told of the dark days when classes were held in basements, when College people

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complained of the "noisy Demonstration School bunch," and when "Keep off the Grass" signs frowned forbiddingly from every green spot. He repeated the old "New Building" legend, which for a while had been relied upon by some, then cast aside by all, and which finally had redeemed itself by coming true.

Throughout the talk Dr. Alexander had the attention of everyone. He drew applause and laughter that would have made a professional entertainer turn dark green with envy. At the conclusion of the regular speech he mentioned the names of a number of people who have played important roles in the early history of the school. Many of them were present and the audience heartily applauded each one. Dr. Alex thanked them all, both faculty members and parents who had been brave enough to send their children to P. D. S. the first year. He explained how that their cooperation and in some cases criticism has made the school what it is today. Then, in a somewhat blunt and at the same time adequate manner he turned to Dr. Payne, thanked him for this opportunity to express his views, and sat down. Why try to describe the applause?

Of course that isn't all Dr. Alex said. We have merely given some of the high spots. Nearly all of it was high spots. His introductory remark was that he had been preparing that speech ten years. Perhaps that was a slight exaggeration. However, ten years more work on it could not have made it more entertaining. It's a pity that Dr. Alexander is not back with the Demonstration School. Several things about his talk pleased us especially. He still said "we" when talking about the school, he affectionately used the term "these kids" when speaking of the students, and he wouldn't speak at all until he had "these kids" on the stage to back him up. Previous plans had arranged for the students to sit in the gym and hear the speech thru loud-speakers.

At the conclusion of the dedicatory exercises a general get-together among the Alumni, Seniors, and former faculty members was held in the new gymnasium. Mr Swanson, Mr. Hillman, and Dr. Alex talked over old days with the old graduates. Mr. Yarbrough industriously wended his way about, spreading free ice cream and much satisfaction in his wake. Then, after a few tours about the building to see how truly fine it was, the party broke up.

It was a great occasion, a great speech, and a great bunch there to hear it. But then, wasn't that rightfully expected? The New Building was dedicated.

SAM Y. CALDWELL

(The accompanying sketch of Dr. Alexander in a characteristic class room pose was loaned us by Mr. Roller, of the Peabody Reflector.)

