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## THE VACATION ASSEMBLY.

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The vacation assembly held annually at Manila for Filipino teachers, is the means used by the Bureau of Education to meet certain definite needs. Systematic efforts are made to improve the attainments and to increase the efficiency of the teachers attending; also to prepare them to solve satisfactorily the many problems constantly arising in connection with their work in the classroom. Special emphasis is given to the training of instructors for the division normal institutes.

The assembly this year will be the twelfth one conducted by the Bureau. It is to be held in the Philippine Normal School building from April 16 to May 18, 1917, inclusive. Both professional and industrial courses will be offered as in previous years, but some of the subjects formerly given have been abandoned and a few new ones have been added.

The advancement made in methods of instruction and the results achieved in the public schools of the Philippine Islands are clearly indicated in the quality of the teachers who attend the annual vacation assembly and in the character of the different assemblies held during the past twelve years. The first two were intended primarily for American teachers, and many of the courses offered were of university grade. On account of the heat prevailing during the months of April and May and because of the inadequacy of transportation facilities at that time, the attendance was not so large as might have been wished, and this necessitated a change in plan. In 1907 it was decided to hold two assemblies; one in Manila especially planned for Filipino teachers, and another in Baguio for both American and Filipino teachers.

The Manila assembly of 1908 was noteworthy. The 612 teachers in attendance came from thirty-three provinces. In addition to offering the usual academic courses, an attempt was made to give systematic instruction in music, gardening, school-house decoration, and industrial work including courses in cooking and in sewing. The minimum entrance requirement for Filipino teachers at that time was the completion of the fifth grade.

During the succeeding years the assemblies continued to grow

not only with respect to the number of teachers matriculated, but also in the variety of courses offered, in the character of instruction provided, and in the quality of results obtained. Courses were improved; academic attainments of teachers were advanced; and new subjects were added. The attendance increased so rapidly that in 1912 more than 1,700 teachers matriculated, notwithstanding the fact that several other large institutes or assemblies were conducted at centrally located points.

In 1913 it became apparent that radical changes in the organization and plans were imperative if over-crowding was to be avoided, and if a high standard of instruction was to be maintained. In that year the attendance was materially reduced, and those permitted to matriculate were selected because of superior attainments and special professional aptitude. The practice of holding large assemblies other than the one at Manila was discontinued, and division normal institutes were prescribed for all provinces. It became necessary to change the work of the vacation assembly so as to make it a training school for men and women into whose hands must be placed the instruction at the provincial institutes. There was an imperative need for standardizing and correlating industrial instruction; so in the 1913 vacation assembly, emphasis was placed on industrial subjects, especially domestic science, embroidery, lace, basketry, and gardening. The general plan of this assembly proved so successful that there has been little further change in the scope and character of the instruction offered; but since 1913 increasing attention has been given to academic and professional courses.

The 1917 assembly will be similar to the one held in 1916. Plans to insure its success are already complete. A large amount of preliminary work must be done in order to make sure that a vacation assembly will begin promptly and proceed without loss of time. The courses to be offered are determined months in advance so that the printed outlines and the required materials may be ready for use on the opening day. Material, much of which is purchased in distant provinces, is ordered and shipped to Manila early, so that everything will be available when needed. Foreign goods are purchased, blue prints and perforated patterns prepared, designs and models determined, and blocks and forms made ready. All loss of time must be avoided, because the period of five weeks allotted to the assembly is so short that every minute must be utilized in order to obtain results commensurate with the expenses incurred.

It is very necessary that the instructors be in close touch and sympathy with the teachers in attendance, and that they be

thoroughly conversant with conditions prevailing in the field. For this reason, wherever possible, they are selected from among the teachers in the provinces who are most successful in the particular work which they are expected to handle at the assembly.

In order to avoid monotony, social features, receptions, excursions, lectures, entertainments, picnics, and even dances are each year made a regular part of the assembly program. The teachers from the provinces get a broader view of life through a five weeks' stay in Manila. They come from all parts of the Philippines and speak many different dialects; but owing to the diffusion of English throughout the Archipelago, they are able to converse in a common language, which serves as nothing else could do, to promote unity in purpose and spirit. The progress of the schools is discussed, ideas are exchanged, old acquaintances renewed, and new friendships formed. The teachers return to their homes with increased energy and a much higher conception of their duties and their mission. The assembly is indispensable because of the opportunity it affords to the Bureau of Education to promote efficiency and to put into the field new work and the most modern methods of instruction.

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Altman & Co., of New York, on being visited recently by a representative of the Bureau of Education, gave all the information that they thought would help lace makers in the Philippines. Among their employees there is a Belgian woman, who was considered one of the best lace makers in her own country. She exhibited a bobbin which is much smaller and lighter than those used here, and which avoids much snapping of threads. She also submitted a piece of green mounting board which is claimed to be the best as far as color and weight are concerned. The Belgian workers reel either 2 or 3, usually 3, threads on the upper edge of valenciennes or finer laces to keep it from pulling out of shape. In ironing such lace, the iron is not rubbed over but is put down and raised repeatedly; later each point is pulled and rubbed outward with the finger nail. All real valenciennes laces are made of thread that is cotton with a linen finish. The Belgians do not speak of pairs of bobbins but say exactly so many bobbins. They never use frames for any embroidery, as it is considered that these pull the work out of shape.