

TWENTY-FOURTH ANNUAL CONFERENCE.

*Wednesday Morning, 11-30.*

The HON. MRS. FRANKLIN in the Chair.

At Miss Mason's second address Mrs. Franklin presided. Mrs. Franklin said they had all heard from Mr. Household how Miss Mason had given to thousands of children the entry into wide realms of thought, through the medium of literature and history, so that she would not again dwell on that. The night before they had seen what the P.N.E.U. did to give children their right of inheritance in the world of music. That morning they had seen how the P.N.E.U. tried to diminish that host of sight-seers, who, to quote Mr. Lyttelton, "wander round a picture-gallery, checking the catalogue." Children who had worked in the P.U.S. and who had learnt to know six pictures by a great artist every term, greet these pictures with joy when they meet them for the first time in the original in a gallery.

Many parents, too, owed much to the chapter in "Parents' and Children"—"The Great Recognition" and were led to apply Ruskin's interpretation of the frescoes in the Spanish Chapel in Sta. Maria Novella in Florence to their own educational philosophy.

Not long ago, Mrs. Franklin said she had been in a Gloucestershire village on Whit-Monday. Some elementary school children—all working in the P.U.S.—occupied the same bench with her and they started talking. They spoke of the books they were reading and the pictures they were studying—"I like Fra Angelico best," said one little girl of about seven. This was true democracy where all classes shared the same intellectual and artistic joys.

Again, in an out-of-the-way part of Donegal, two little daughters of a doctor were being shown some photographs by a friend who had just come from Italy. These children had never left their village, but they were able to recognise with delight the work of Giotto, Botticelli, etc. They had studied them in the P.U.S.

Miss Mason put the book on the "British Museum" into the School. It might be said, what good could it be to children out of London, but when Mrs. Franklin was in Leeds, one of the children there told her that it was his favourite book—that it had led him to go to his local [p 517]

Museum "where nobody goes," he added. Sir Frederick Kenyon had been greatly surprised when he saw the "Books of Centuries" kept by children in a London elementary school and by the work they were doing in connection with the Museum.

P.U.S. children were always in close communion with Nature. A little elementary school child, who had always lived in the country, said she had never "noticed" the flowers until Miss X—came (the mistress who brought P.U.S. methods with her).

Mrs. Franklin in conclusion said that our true friends were the people who cared for the same things as we did. We often differed from our friends, but at least we had the same mental background. Through Miss Mason's work every class of child growing up to-day—from children who lived in slums of towns, or in cabins in Ireland, to those who lived in Government House in many places abroad, were coming to care for the same things. "She gave us eyes, she gave us ears, and love and thought and joy." Many parents owed their first introduction to nature-lore to the P.N.E.U. Natural History Clubs and Rambles, and one heard of girls educated in the P.U.S., taking Nature-Note books with them on their wedding tour.

Mrs. Franklin read the following letter from Mrs. Perrin, and referred with deep appreciation to her munificent gift of "British Flowering Plants." "Please tell Miss Mason that it was through the P.N.E.U. Natural History Club that they (the wild flowers) were started, which led to the publication of the books: when M. and M. were doing their drawings of wild flowers for their schools and P.N.E.U. annual show of children's work, I used to do mine at the same time to encourage them and keep up their interest. So you see I feel it is just a little thank offering for all I have gained from the P.N.E.U. from its commencement."