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UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

BULLETIN No. 7

Practice Teaching In the School of Education, University of Illinois

1893-1911

BY

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PREFATORY NOTE

The Academy of the University of Illinois was discontinued at the close of the academic year, 1910-11. It had been established in the early days of the University as a preparatory department. With the growth and development of the high schools throughout the State, the necessity which, for several years, had made its maintenance imperative no longer existed; and the lack of room for its adequate housing in the University buildings made its discontinuance advisable.

During the two years preceding the closing of the Academy, however, a system of practice-teaching had been organized by the School of Education. The Academy classes were utilized as a training school, and the principal and five of the Academy instructors were appointed supervisors of practice-teaching in the School of Education. It was hoped that, with the discontinuance of the Academy, the practice-teaching organization could be transferred to a high school which would be established and operated by the University not as a preparatory department but as a laboratory of the School of Education. The plan met with general approval from the public-school teachers of the State and from the faculty and administrative officers of the University. The budget proposed in 1914 to the Assembly carried an item of \$125,000 for the erection and equipment of a building which should house the School of Education and in which the secondary-school classes constituting the training department should find suitable quarters. With certain other items of the buildingbudget, however, the appropriation for the School of Education was not approved by the Assembly.

The discontinuance of the Academy in June, 1911, meant, therefore, the discontinuance of practice-teaching for at least a biennium. The work that had been organized and developed was necessarily abandoned, and the supervisors, who had gained much from their experience in the two years during which the system had been in operation sought new fields of service. With a view to preserving the valuable increments of the experience accumulated during these two years, Miss Frances Morehouse, Supervisor of the Teaching of History, held a number of conferences with her colleagues on the supervisory staff.

In these conferences the methods of supervision were formulated, discussed, and compared; and upon the basis of this material Miss Morehouse prepared the following paper.

W. C. BAGLEY.

October 18, 1912.

PRACTICE TEACHING IN THE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION, UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS, 1893-1910.

HISTORICAL

When Professor F. M. McMurry, now of Columbia University, was at the University of Illinois, in 1893-94, he introduced there. what was probably the first practice-teaching in any American university. It was on a very limited scale, utilizing a primary school with two teachers which was established in the basement of the old Main Hall. It was planned to extend the work, however, in the next year; money had been set aside for that purpose, and every arrangement made. The State Teachers' Association, influenced by the active efforts of Dr. John W. Cook, then of the Illinois State Normal University, was in favor of the establishment of a practice school at the University of Illinois. But the reorganization incident to a change of administration made it necessary to abandon the plan; nothing further was attempted for a number of years, and when the idea was revived, it was specialized in a way to suit it peculiarly to the needs of the State.

High-school practice-teaching at Illinois is of comparatively recent development, as indeed it is everywhere. In 1905-06 there were observation classes in the School of Education, but courses in practice-teaching were not offered. In 1906-07 Professor E. G. Dexter, at that time Director of the School of Education, introduced the first practice-teaching, with the University Academy as a field of operation. Mr.Hamsher, then Principal of the Academy and Dr. E. L. Norton, who had charge of the observation classes, conducted this course. It consisted of a series of observation lessons in classes taught by regular teachers, with about three weeks of actual practice in instruction toward the close of the semester. The work was largely experimental, and was so limited in scope and in the numbers registered for the course, that no definite results were recorded.

"Review-Classes" for Practice Teaching.—The next year saw the introduction of the "Review-class" form of practice-teaching. After the usual preliminary course in visiting classes, the stu-

dent-teacher was given charge of a review class, made up of Academy students in English, mathematics, language and history, who needed or desired tutoring before taking the final examinations in these courses. The practice-teacher met his pupils three times a week during the last three weeks of the course, and presented a brief analysis and summary of the cardinal features of the course, a rapid drill upon them, and a final quiz. As a means of training high-school teachers, this system had several objectionable features. Especially, it required of the novice a mastery of the course and a skill in organization and presentation that would tax the resources of a trained and experienced instructor, without giving him any compensatory approximation to real high-school conditions and requirements. It was at that time, however, the best offering that could be made and a number of students in education availed themselves of it with profit. Only four students took the course during the first year. 1908-09 there were eleven registrations in the first semester and fifteen in the second, and in 1909-10 five registrations in the first semester; in the second semester the system was abandoned entirely in favor of the more effective whole-semester plan. The simultaneous offering of the short and long practice-courses in 1909-10 gave an opportunity for comparison which demonstrated clearly the advantages of the long course.

The Whole-Semester System.---When Dr. W. C. Bagley became Professor of Education in 1908, he bent his energies toward establishing a more thorough and adequate practice-teaching system. Coöperating with him, Mr. C. M. McConn, then Principal of the University Academy, formulated in 1909 "A Plan for the Trial of Practice Teaching in the Academy in 1909-10." This plan was approved by the faculty of the College of Literature and Arts and was put into operation in the second semester of 1908-09. It involved no radical change in the administration of the University Academy. Sections of the large classes in English, mathematics, history, and foreign languages* were assigned to practice teachers, who were either graduate students or seniors in the University. These "assistants" as they were called, applied for their positions the semester before entering the practice school. Only those were accepted who gave promise of effective service.

The university credit given was disproportionately small considering the amount of work necessary. This may have worked

^{*}To those were added in 1910-11, botany and zoology.

some injustice to the students, but it had the happy result of eliminating all save those who were vitally interested in securing the training offered. The cadet-teachers attended Academy facultymeetings, their classes were scheduled on the program with those of the regular teachers, and in their relations with the stuents they were treated in no way differently from other instructors.

The Plan of Supervision.—The supervision of the practiceteachers was carefully organized, and involved the coöperation of the Director of the School of Education, the members of his staff, the Principal of the Academy, and the department supervisor. The last named had in charge the direction of the course, which was usually parallel to one he was himself teaching; and to him was intrusted the greatest degree of responsibility for the success of the student teacher. The Academy Principal criticized from the standpoint of the man who was directly responsible for the maintenance of a high standard of work in the school, and to whom the needs of its pupils was a matter of paramount interest. Lastly the Director, either personally or through associates with whom he kept in closest touch, gave unity and definiteness to the entire system, which was closely and consecutively connected with the courses in educational theory and in observation.

Incidentally, all of this supervision resulted in a definite and appreciable raising of the standards of instruction in the Academy, which never offered better opportunities for preparatory students than during 1909-10 and 1910-11. Under this system, which, after Mr. McConn's resignation, was carried on by his successor, Mr. F. W. Thomas, about forty teachers were trained for high school positions. Many more applied, but the limited resources of the Academy prevented the carrying out of the plan on an extensive scale. The following paragraphs represent, then, the results of an experiment which has been intensive rather than broad.

Methods of Selecting Practice Teachers, and Methods of Supervision.

In view of the freedom allowed to the department supervisors, it is noteworthy that, after the first year, which was partially experimental, the methods of supervision came to present many common features. Requirements for the different courses corresponded in a general way. General principles governing visiting and conferences, were established. Matters for criticism, adverse and otherwise, do not greatly vary in the different courses. The following paragraphs represent the conclusions of the workers who had charge of the practice-classes during 1909, 1910, and 1911.

The prerequisites for practice-teaching, which were set by the Director of the School of Education, the Principal of the Academy and the heads of university departments, were (1) elementary courses in education including one course in observation, and (2) a "teachers' course" in the university department in which the student was majoring, when such a course was offered. Elementary courses in psychology, although not required, were considered an additional advantage. Teachers of wide experience were excused from the course in observation. No cadetteacher was appointed without the indorsement of the university department representing the subject matter taught. Even if all requirements were met, peculiarities of personality might cause the application to be refused; while the comparatively small number of practice-teachers whom it was possible to accept, owing to the size of the Academy and its limited quarters, made careful selection necessary.

Preceding the beginning of the semester the cadet-teacher made careful preparation for his work under the direction of his supervisor. He was required to demonstrate his familiarity with the text to be used, and a working knowledge of supplementary material. A thorough review of the special points emphasized in secondary-school courses, but omitted from college courses, was insisted upon. Having completed this, he made the general plan, covering the work of a semester. This plan was the work of the cadet-teacher as far as his ability or experience made it possible, although in content and arrangement it corresponded with the parallel model course which was almost always given by the supervisor. The making of the comprehensive, unified semester plan is the first real test of the practiceteacher's ability, and serves as a guarantee of that mastery of content, aim, and means which a thoroughly competent teacher must have. In the making of these plans the supervisor sometimes took a more active part than in any subsequent process of conducting the course. Relative emphasis, educational values, order of development, length and nature of assignments, and standards of accomplishment, are subjects which the student

teacher learns carefully to consider in making his plans.

After the semester's course had been outlined, the more detailed plans for individual lessons were marked out; in most cases those for the first week being completed before the opening of school. After that, at intervals of one or two weeks, or periods approximating that time but varying according to the requirements of a topical division of the subject, the practiceteacher submitted to the supervisor sets of recitation outlines for daily lessons. These were examined and returned with such corrections and comments as might be helpful to the teacher. In some cases rewriting of the outlines was required, but this was seldom necessary, especially if the general plan and method of the course were well understood.

The sets of outlines for language, history, civics, English and science, were by topics; in mathematics invariably by the week's work.* In every case the outlines must be submitted in time for revision and return before the beginning of the set of lessons covered. Variations from these plans were sometimes necessary but the aim was to hold to them closely. They differed much in different subjects, but commonly included lessontitle, statement of the aim of the recitation, of text assignment, references and aids used, an outline of treatment or development, and appropriate schemes for generalization, application, summary, and drill. Special emphasis upon "star points", to be fixed in the students' minds above all else—usually central truths, about which the remainder of the recitation may be unified constituted a feature of many lesson plans.

Having superintended the careful planning of the course, the supervisor's further function lay in criticism of the actual work done. Practice-teachers at the University of Illinois are intrusted with a maximum of responsibility, in that they take entire charge of a class for an entire semester. The conditions under which they work more closely approximate, therefore, those of the schools in which they are placed when they become regular teachers, than in a practice school where the cadet takes charge of a class or classes during a few weeks only. The authority of the supervisor was never obtruded in any way, nor that of the

^{*}The supervisor of foreign language in 1910-11 departed from this general usage in his conduct of the practice course in first-year Latin. Here the close following of a well arranged text, as well as the formal nature of the grammar and exercises, resulted in a deviation from the usual group or topical arrangement in favor of daily submission of recitation outlines, which were criticized and returned just before the cadet-teacher's recitation. This course was also an exception in the matter of semester plans, which were not required.

practice-teacher questioned or weakened by any active interference or comment before members of the class. Supervisors visiting classes occasionally participated in a discussion or raised a question, but only as any interested visitor might. The occasional disadvantage of this policy, in that an unforeseen blunder on the part of the practice-teacher goes uncorrected so far as the immediate recitation is concerned, is amply compensated by the ease, confidence, and pride in efficiency, incident to the attitude of unquestioned authority which such a cadet may safely assume before his class. The mistakes were, of course, invariably discussed after the recitation in conference, and provision made for correction.

This policy of allowing cadet-teachers every possible responsibilty resulted in a general, almost an invariable custom of not visiting classes for a day or two after the opening of the semes-After that, supervisors visited classes two or three times a ter. week on an average, with daily visits where advisable, until the student teacher could safely be left to teach with less constant supervision. Visits varied in length from ten or fifteen minutes to the entire hour; they were never arranged for any regular schedule of days, and were always sufficiently frequent to enable the supervisor to keep the closest account of the students' progress and needs. With the purpose of promoting a feeling of independence and personal responsibility, of noting the practiceteacher's growth in strength and skill for a given time, or of "checking" results, classes were sometimes purposely not visited for as long a period as a week; very rarely, even at the end of the course, was this limit of freedom from direct supervision passed. In no case was any comment on the teaching made in the presence of pupils, nor did the supervisor interpose his authority between the student-teacher and the members of the class

Conferences of Special Supervisors with Student Teachers.

The observation of the supervisor forms the basis for discussion at the conference. Here the method perhaps varied more than in any other one feature of the work. Most supervisors made two regular appointments with their student-teachers each week, these to be supplemented by almost daily conferences during the early part of the semester, when corrective criticism is most needed. The conferences varied, from ten minutes for suggestions following a visit, to regular conferences covering at least an hour. The small number of cadet-teachers in the school, who taught different sections of the same class, made the individual rather than the group conference the rule. In history and English, however, group conferences were used with most satisfactory results. They had the double advantage of saving time and of affording student-teachers an opportunity of comparing methods, and of profiting by each other's experience. The value of group conferences depends largely, of course, on the personality of students and supervisors. One supervisor considers them especially valuable where one or more cadet-teachers are supersensitive to adverse criticisn, inasmuch as reproof or praise may be indirectly given in such a way as to do good without wounding.

Very rarely did the subjects of the conferences follow any predetermined plan; they were germane to points brought up by observation of the lessons, and so almost wholly incidental. Nor was much time given to the preparation of the teacher in the subject matter of the course, which is supposed to have been mastered either in prerequisite university courses or in special preparation before the beginning of the semester. Occasionally a teacher does need such instruction, particularly in the matter of interpretation of facts learned, but the policy or the administration in selecting the best prepared of the applicants for practice-school positions, made such cases exceptional. On the other hand, the reading of references to texts on pedagogy, to current technical magazines, and to approved treatises on either the subject or its presentation, was frequently required.

With regard to that type of criticism which is the most valuable and necessary part of the supervisor's work, methods differ considerably. Criticism may be classified briefly and convenietly as of two kinds, the positive or constructive criticism which aims to build up in each teacher a comprehensive, correct, and effective technique of presentation, and the negative or corrective criticism which aims to eliminate faults. The two are commonly used simultaneously, and so united as to tend to substitute good methods for bad ones, and to give to the use of good methods a maximum effectiveness.

The following elements of a good technique in the conducting of recitations have proved in the experience of our supervisors to be of basic significance. Their relative importance has been indicated by their order, in as close approximation as the tabulation of several differing opinions would permit.

1. Clarity and logical order in the topical arrangement of subjects presented to the class. This involves the differentiation of fundamental and auxiliary points, the careful avoiding of "side issues", conciseness in definition, and emphasis of "star" points, these are characteristics of the pupils' recitation which must find their example in the lesson presentation of the teacher.

2. Questioning. This must be clear, definite, and forceful, and so phrased as to direct attention to the cardinal points of the topic in hand. It should also be stimulating, aimed to arouse definite and lively thought, sometimes leading and sometimes surprising the pupil into new fields of speculation. It may degenerate into a lifeless or pointless catechizing, or lead skilfully to an orderly synthesis of topics, built up under the teacher's guidance by the response of actively interested pupils. The whole character and value of the recitation may depend upon this detail alone.

3. Coherence. This is particularly important in connecting the day's lesson with that which has already been mastered, in recalling processes or facts of a previous lesson in review, and in the skilful introduction of advanced work.

4. A just and sane appreciation of the efforts of pupils even when these efforts are not altogether successful. Cadetteachers usually underestimate at first the value of an appreciation which is carefully fitted to the case, and so accurately gauged to the value and nature of the recitation offered, that the judicious giving or withholding of praise becomes in itself suggestive and stimulating. Nothing else can so quickly establish a good atmosphere, a feeling of friendliness between teacher and pupil, as this sympathetic appreciation of the spirit and value of the students' response to the teachers' questioning.
5. Ability to "keep track of" the class. The teacher must

5. Ability to "keep track of" the class. The teacher must see that all are fulfilling minimal requirements; that notebooks, supplementary reading, laboratory work, and special assignments are not neglected; that individual difficulties are overcome; and that each student gains in power as the semester passes.

6. Life, variety, and naturalness in the recitation.

7. Ability to divine the difficulties of students, quickly and accurately. This ability, intuitive in some teachers of sympathetic, imaginative nature, is not incapable of development in those temperamentally less gifted.

8. An abundance of illustrative knowledge. Especially important are concrete illustrations of things abstract, parallel cases, even anecdotes and quotations where they add interest and value to the subject in hand. In history, English and science this auxiliary information is a necessity: everywhere it is help-ful.

9. In science courses, orderly arrangement and adequate care of apparatus.

10. The projection of a strong and wholesome personality into the work in hand, resulting in the setting up of helpful ideals and moral prejudices in the minds of students. Since the ethical values of all educational subjects are at least among their most important values, and since the inculcation of habits, ideals, and prejudices must depend largely upon the personality of the teacher, it is important that the beginning teacher should learn early the art of making his personality a dynamic factor in his teaching. No methods have been formulated for the communication of so intangible and individual a thing as a teacher's feeling of moral responsibility.

Negative Criticisms, Discipline, and Drill.

Negative criticism is directed toward the correction of the faults and mistakes that are common to most beginning teachers. Such faults are of two kinds, those arising from a poor mastery of subject-matter, and those which are the result of some fault or lack in personality. In the following summary of these shortcomings, the order given is no index to relative importance, since those causing most trouble will naturally be attacked first.

1. Confusing questions, and repetition of answers.

2. Unfortunate attitudes and mannerisms; particularly the domineering manner, the taskmaster attitude, inherited from past generations of teachers who were school-masters or "school-ma'ams" rather than teachers.

3. Lack of sympathy and appreciation of the work of students; poor class presence, resulting in poor class response and spirit.

4. Blunders and inadequacy of interpretation,—a sin, strong both in commission and omission with immature teachers. Here the work of the supervisor must aim to direct the student-teacher toward such experiences, personal or vicarious, as will give a broader, saner, deeper insight into meanings and values, to be communicated to the class in wholesome interpretations, and judicial estimates of the values of facts or theories studied.

5. Technical blunders in the mechanics of class management, mistakes in English, poor spelling, and poor class routine, including such matters as ventilation, temperature, and seating. All of our supervisors have especially emphasized in this connection good English, good spelling, and correct pronunciation, points in which experience shows the majority of beginning high-school teachers sadly deficient.

Faults in manner or personal appearance are the most 6. difficult of all to attack, and require especial skill and tact effectively to correct. The voice is a factor of almost supreme importance; few cadet-teachers do not need especial help in the process of adapting it to classroom requirements. Since a strained and harsh voice results often from nervousness, direct work is usually not begun until a degree of ease in appearing before and conducting the class has been attained. Then the difficult problem is attacked by definite criticism and suggestion. Emphasis on the informal conversational method of conducting a recitation, on private conferences with students which tend to encourage friendly and unstrained relations, and exercises in adjusting the voice to rooms of varying size, have been found very useful. Clarity, pitch, and modulation are improved by imitation and strength grows with practice, while animation and variety of expression come from a very real sense of the interest and significance of the lesson content. Personal appearance, dress, and manners, are corrected when necessary. In eliminating mannerisms some preventive criticism has been found advisable, since teachers are likely to fall into classroom ruts as classroom habits become established.

Discipline. In training high-school teachers for efficiency in maintaining classroom order, in the management of classes and in corrective discipline, the supervisors at the University of Illinois were severely handicapped by atypically favorable conditions. The average age of academy students was, little over ninteen years, about three years above that of the typical highschool pupil. This comparative maturity of the student body, together with the general earnestness of the majority of the students, who are anxious to complete their entrance requirements and enter university courses, and the close and effective supervision of the principal whose authority is unquestioned, makes the maintenance of good order in academy classes an easy matter. Consequently the usual disciplinary problems of a high school were met by practice-teachers here, far less frequently than in the average secondary school, and training on this point is likely to be more theoretical than in other phases of the work. Nevertheless disciplinary problems were carefully discussed, and preventive measures suggested. Minor offenses, arising from carelessness or defective early training were corrected privately and as tactfully as possible by the practice-teacher in private conference.

Drill work. A common fault of beginning teachers in secondary schools is their weakness in fixing points by effective drill methods. This lack of impressive repetition in the teaching of college graduates has resulted in an incalculable loss to the great body of high-school students, who have only dim and hazy ideas of things which should be thoroughly mastered. In an effort to forestall the usual tendency, the importance of the drill lesson and of the review lesson were emphasized at every point in the University of Illinois training school. Student-teachers are taught to compare different methods of drill in order to determine relative efficiency, to adapt these methods to the needs of their classes and the nature of the subject taught, and to use them continually.

Quiz and examination questions were criticized in detail, by the supervisors and the correcting and grading of the first sets of papers by the supervisor was also the rule. The aim of this precaution is to cause the young teacher conciously to formulate definite and reasonable standards of grading. He must learn to set a fixed and consistent, although not an unalterable, proportionate value on daily class recitations, tests, notebook and laboratory work, and examinations. He must learn to compare a student's work at any given time with the work of that student in the past, with that of other students in the class or section, and with the absolute standard of achievement which the teacher has set, and has made known to the class.

Lastly, to the supervisors was given the important task of developing in the practice-teacher as complete and comprehensive a conception of the content and significance of his course, of its bearing as a whole on the developing characters of his students, and of the value of that course in the general scheme of secondary education, as it is possible for the student to gain. Not only this, but the practice-teacher should at the end of his course have some practical ideas of high-school administration and management. It is indeed almost impossible for a student of even average ability to teach in a well organized and thoroughly supervised secondary school for a semester or a year, without gaining a knowledge of details of operation, aims, methods, and ideals, which place him, so trained, at a distinct advantage over the student who has had academic training only.

Conferences of Supervisors.

An important factor in unifying the work of supervision and in keeping a close record of the work of each studentteacher was represented by the supervisors' conferences which were held, as far as possible, once each fortnight. At these conferences the work of each student-teacher was discussed in The special supervisor in charge of the work began detail. with a statement of his estimate of the teacher's efficiency and of the points that required emphasis in future supervision. The member of the Department of Education having oversight of the same teacher then offered his testimony. This was followed by a report from the Principal of the Academy, and a final statement by the Director of the School of Education aimed to summarize the specific remarks of the various supervisors. Further discussion revealed the cause of any differences of judgment or opinion that might have characterized the different reports.

While the supervision of the Principal of the Academy, of the members of the Department of Education, and of the Director of the School of Education was necessarily less intensive in its character than that of the special supervisors, it supplemented the closer supervision in a very effective way. All of the practice-teachers were divided between two members of the Department of Education, who aimed to visit the classes of the teachers under their charge at least once a week. The Principal and the Director aimed to visit all teachers at frequent intervals.

At some convenient period soon after the fortnightly conference of supervisors it was the custom of the Director of the School of Education to confer with individual student-teachers, and especially with those whose work showed signs of continued weakness. At longer intervals, all of the practiceteachers were called for a general conference with the Director.

At the close of the semester all supervisors (including the

Principal of the Academy, the special supervisors, and the members of the Department of Education) reported to the Director concerning each student-teacher under his supervision. The following form was utilized for this purpose:

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

FINAL REPORT OF PRACTICE-TEACHING

(N. B.—Please indicate standing by numerical grades wherever possible. Explicit criticisms are most helpful in cases where numerical grades are inadequate. These reports will furnish very important data in recommending candidates for positions.)

I.—Subject taught (indicate year of secondary work if possible.) Periods per week:

> Approximate number of conferences weekly with you as supervisor:

II.—General character of work:

- (A) Instruction.
 - (1) Knowledge of subject matter (indicate explicit points of weakness, if any.)
 - (2) Organization of subject matter for teaching.
 - (3) Response of pupils.
 - (4) Order and discipline.
 - (5) Results. (Progress of pupils, degree in which work planned is brought to successful completion.)
 - (6) Preparation of work.
 - (a) Fidelity of preparation.
 - (b) Efficiency of preparation.

III.—Attitude toward criticism and suggestions.

(a) Disposition to carry out suggestions.

(b) Ability to carry out suggestions.

(c) Capacity for self-discipline.

IV.—Attitude toward pupils.

(a) With regard to sympathy.

(b) With regard to helpfulness outside of class.

V.—Personal characteristics.

- (a) Appearance as teacher.
- (b) Dress (neatness, etc.)
- (c) Manner (address.)
- (d) Voice.

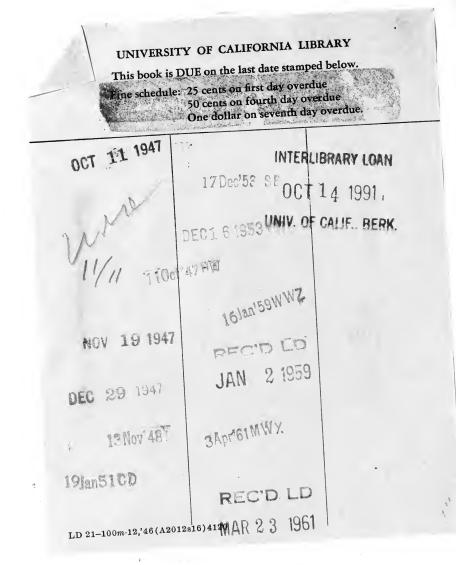
VI.—General remarks.

Signed_____

Position _____







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