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# PASSAIC COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

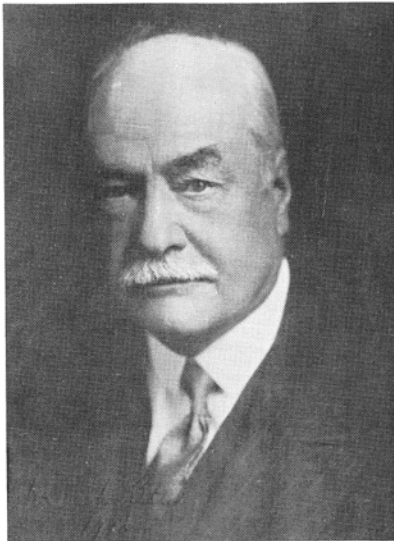
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## *Nicholas Murray Butler*

by ALFRED CAPPIO



On June 28, 1875, Paterson High School held its first commencement. Among the handful of graduates, sat a thirteen year old proudly holding the diploma just presented to him by George L. Catlin, president of the Board of Education. As the program went on, he thought over the ambitious plans he had made for his future. He would attend Columbia College in New York City, receive a degree and become a teacher.

But in the years ahead, the lad, Nicholas Murray Butler, would achieve all three of his boyhood dreams, and many more. He would receive not one but three degrees from Columbia. In addition, 38 of the most famous universities in the world would award him further honors and degrees. He would be appointed a professor, but he would quickly be promoted to Dean and then President of Columbia, a position he would fill with distinction for 45 years. And as President of Columbia, he would win recognition as the greatest educator of his era.

When he died in 1947, the entire world mourned the loss of one of the most respected men of the 20th century.

He was born in Elizabeth, N.J. in 1862, while his mother, a resident of Paterson was visiting relatives there. From the Paterson public schools, he received his grammar and secondary school education. On graduation from Columbia in 1882, he was appointed a Fellow in Philosophy. Continuing his studies, he earned his Master of Arts and Doctor of Philosophy degrees by 1884. The next year, Doctor Butler studied in Paris and Berlin.

On his return to Columbia, he was given the assignment of planning and organizing a new Teacher's College there. His task completed, he was appointed its first President in 1886, and served in that capacity for five years. In 1901, Columbia needed a new President for the University, and Doctor Butler was the unanimous choice of the entire Board of Trustees for the position, held until his retirement in 1945. During that period, he built Columbia into the largest university in the world. To its halls, he attracted what was probably the most learned and efficient faculty ever assembled under one roof, a group that included such famous educators as Dewey, Kilpatrick, Strayer, Thorndyke, Gates, and Muzzey. Students poured into New York to gather learning in every field of knowledge.

From Teacher's College came the men and women who completely transformed the educational system of the United States, and of most countries throughout the world. The School of Journalism graduated the writers who edited and published many of our great newspapers, magazines, and periodicals. Leaders in business and industry were trained in the School of Business, while many of the great advances made in the fields of health and medicine were the results of research conducted by graduates of the School of Medicine. The other branches of the University under Doctor Butler's strong leadership kept pace with these vocational units. Together all the parts of the University spread his philosophy of education throughout all corners of the nation, thus influencing the lives of every American to some degree.

Even as he progressed in his chosen field, Butler never forgot his early days in Paterson. He served as President of both State and City Boards of Education and while President of the Paterson Board, he inaugurated a system of departmentalized instruction that was copied all over the United States.

In politics, he was a staunch Republican. At the National Convention of 1888, he was one of the delegates who selected General Benjamin Harrison as the party's nominee for President. Beginning with the convention of 1904, he attended eight consecutive conventions and his voice was one of the most influential in the party's councils. Following the death of Vice-President Sherman, just before the 1912 election, Republican electors voted for Butler in the Electoral College of that year. At the 1920 convention, he received 69½ votes, and his cause was strongly advocated in the "smoke-filled-room" caucus which finally selected Warren G. Harding as the party's candidate.

Doctor Butler was at the height of his fame as an educator when World War I ended in 1918. With all the prestige of his position, he threw himself into the battle to prevent future wars. A President of the Carnegie Endowment for Permanent Peace, he was, in a large degree, responsible for the Kellogg-Briand Peace Pacts, and for the Disarmament Conference which halted the naval arms race among the great world powers. So effective were his contributions, that he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for 1931.

Because of his efforts to build a world that would be free of war, Doctor Butler became an intimate friend of many of the international leaders of his day. Eight presidents of the United States knew him well — Benjamin Harrison, William McKinley, Theodore Roosevelt, William Howard Taft, Woodrow Wilson, Warren Harding, Calvin Coolidge, Herbert Hoover, and Franklin Delano Roosevelt. All frequently solicited his advice on national and world problems. Royalty was proud to welcome him as a guest — Albert of Belgium, Wilhelm of Germany, Frederick of Denmark, Haakon of Norway, Nicholas of Russia, and Edward and George of England among others. Pope Pius XI, Pope Pius XII, Cardinal Mercier, and Dean Inge were among his friends. Doctor Butler probably corresponded with more statesmen than the Secretary of State. Whenever these men and other world leaders in business, arts, and letters, came to New York, they beat a path to his home on Morningside Heights.

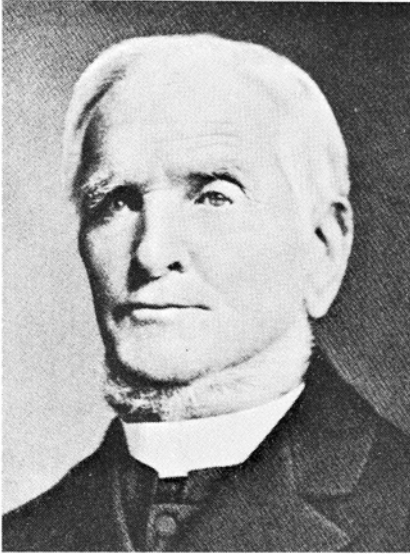
Country after country paid tribute to the man and his work. Italy, Germany, Hungary, Greece, Yugoslavia, Belgium, Poland, Romania, Austria, Czechoslovakia, Holland, Chile, Cuba and China honored him with their highest decorations, and France presented him the Great Cross of the Legion of Honor, an award seldom made to a foreigner.

During the years between retirement in 1945 and his death in 1947, Nicholas Murray Butler could look back on a life in which most of his ambitious dreams had been realized. One alone had eluded him when World War II broke out to shatter his dream of peace throughout the world. Yet, at his death at the age of 85, the little boy who had graduated from Paterson High School, 75 years earlier, had grown into one of the most outstanding world figures of all times.

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# Dean William McNulty

by ALFRED CAPPIO



Following the "potato famine" years of 1848 and 1849, many Irishmen immigrated to the United States in the hope of finding a better life here. One of these immigrants was William McNulty, born at Bollyshannon in 1829. Desiring to enter the priesthood, young McNulty came here in 1850 to register at St. John's College, Fordham. Upon graduation in June 1853, he sought advice from Father Bayley, then secretary to Archbishop Hughes of New York, who suggested he attend the Divinity School at Mount St. Joseph, Emmetsburg, Maryland. On August 6, 1857, the same Father Bayley, now the first Bishop of Newark, ordained him a priest at St. Patrick's Cathedral, Newark, and immediately assigned him to the staff of Seton Hall College, then at Madison, N.J., as Vice-President, Professor and Prefect of Discipline.

In 1859, when the college moved to South Orange, the young priest remained in Madison as Chaplain of the Novitiate of the Sisters of Charity. During the next four years, besides serving as chaplain, he conducted missionary services at Mendham and Basking Ridge where he organized and began the erection of the Churches of St. James, Basking Ridge, and St. Joseph's, Mendham. In the years ahead, he would build other churches and would become known as "Father of Churches in New Jersey."

Father McNulty was transferred to St. John's Church, Paterson, on October 23, 1863. In addition to his pastoral duties, he carried on a missionary program in Bergen County that resulted in the organization and erection of St. Luke's Church, HoHoKus in 1864. When his own congregation grew too large for the church then located on Oliver Street, he began working for a new St. John's to be built on Main and Grand Streets. Less than two years after his arrival in Paterson, land for the new structure was bought, and its cornerstone was laid September 10, 1865. He quickly raised \$10,000 in less than two months, and with the use of parishioners who dug the foundation in their free time without pay, the building began to take shape. Father McNulty spent his days supervising the construction, and his evenings collecting money to meet the bills for labor and materials. Finally, on July 31, 1870, Bishop Bayley dedicated the new edifice. The Church was finally consecrated on June 29, 1890, after the spire and a chapel had been added to the original building, and the mortgage completely paid.

Paterson was growing rapidly, and Father "Mac" as he was now affectionately called, moved to meet the religious needs of the newcomers to the city, organizing additional parishes and building still more churches. St. Joseph's was organized in 1869; St. Agnes' in 1870; and St. Mary's in 1871. The same year, a Dominican convent was also built. For the foreign-speaking groups, he helped organize Our Lady of Victories in 1882; St. Michaels in 1903, and St. Ann's in 1919.

Father "Mac" never forgot his own parish. In spite of the heavy financial load imposed by the new church, he organized the Holy Sepulchre Cemetery and St. Agnes' Institute, a girls school in 1867. In 1872, he added a rectory to St. John's. New school buildings were erected in 1889 and 1893. Convents for orders of teaching sisters were built in 1890 and 1896. A home for the Christian Brothers was put up in 1894, the same year *Entre Nous* Lyceum was organized. St. Frances' Home for Working Girls became a reality in 1897. The Little Sisters of the Poor came to the city and their Home for the Indigent Poor and Aged was opened in 1906. At the celebration of his golden jubilee on August 6, 1906, Father McNulty was presented with a purse of \$24,000 which he used to build the Mount St. Joseph Home for Boys.

Using an old building that had been a home for boys, Father "Mac" organized St. Joseph's Hospital in 1867. One year later, he moved the hospital to its present location on Main Street, erecting the first of the buildings which make up the present plant of the hospital.

Ecclesiastical honors came his way. His Bishops made him Vicar Forein, or Rural Dean of Passaic County, and Irremovable Rector of St. John's Church. The Pope made him a Papal Chamberlain. Bishop O'Connor once told how the Dean has refused to be made a domestic prelate.

When Dean McNulty came to Paterson, he was 34 years old and the city had a population of less than 23,000. When he died at 93, after 59 years here, the city's population was over 140,000. At 92, when St. John's celebrated it's 100th anniversary, June 5, 1921, the Dean was still very active and well preserved both mentally and physically. He conducted morning and evening services at the church, visited the schools twice each day, and when required, paid visits to the sick of the parish.

As the Dean grew older, he became a tradition in Paterson and was as much a part of the city as the buildings he had built. Legends sprung up around him, legends that are still being related today – how the saloon keepers along Grand Street feared him more than they did the police, how he collected pay envelopes before the money would be spent for drink, how he fed this family or sent that boy through college, and how he stopped the "May Day Riot" on Garret Mountain in 1880.

When the Dean died on June 18, 1922, the entire city mourned. Today he lies in front of his beloved church, beneath a bronze monument which depicts him in his favorite role of advising a youngster.



*Mr. Cappio is President of the Passaic County Historical Society and a frequent contributor of historic articles. He was Superintendent of Recreation in Paterson, now retired. He has served as Vice-Chairman of the League of Historical Societies of New Jersey and is presently a member of the Passaic County Heritage Commission.)*

