

Z.X. SNYDER, M.S. PhD. Of the educators of this State, none have secured, so speedily and so universally, such esteemed recognition in the wide field of their profession as Dr. Z. X. Snyder. He is a sound, practical and advanced educator of to-day and president of Indiana State Normal school, at Indiana, Pennsylvania. He was born at Reagentown, East Huntingdon township, Westmoreland county, Pa., August 31, 1850, and is a son of Daniel and Catherine (Reagan) Snyder. His paternal great-grandfather, Snyder, was a native of Prussia, who settled in New Jersey and served as a soldier in the Revolutionary war. Some time after the Independence of the thirteen colonies had been acknowledged by Great Britain, he removed to Westmoreland county, where he purchased a flouring mill which stood on the site of the present borough of Scottdale. His children were: John, Nicholas, Peter, Gasper and Elizabeth. Peter Snyder (grandfather) was born in 1792, married Catherine Bothers and removed to Franklin township, Fayette county, where he died December 25, 1857. Eight sons and two daughters were born to Peter and Catherine Snyder, and the fifth son, Daniel Snyder (father), was born in September, 1824. In 1848 Daniel Snyder removed to East Huntingdon township, Westmoreland county, where he purchased a farm and has been engaged in farming ever since. He married Catherine Reagan, daughter of Alexander Reagan, whose father was Philip Reagan (name originally written MadcReagan), a native of Westmoreland county, who lived to be one hundred and six years of age. Philip Reagan (maternal great-grandfather) was a man of prominence and great courage. He was a conspicuous character in the Whiskey Insurrection—the first rebellion against the government of the United States. In June, 1794, he was appointed as a revenue collector and was threatened with violence by the “Whiskey Boys.” He converted his house into a block-house and withstood several night attacks. Finally one hundred and fifty insurgents attacked his house and he was compelled, after a gallant defence, to surrender, but made his escape from them during the ensuing night.

Z.X. Snyder was reared on his father's farm and attended the common schools until he was nineteen years of age, when he entered Mt. Pleasant institute, where he spent two years in fitting for college. In 1872 entered Waynesburg college, from which institution of learning he was graduated with the honor of his class in July, 1876. In a few months after graduation he became principal of the Wicomisco graded school in Dauphin county. At the end of five years' faithful and successful labor there he was called to the chair of higher mathematics and natural history in his *alma mater*. After one year of pleasant and profitable labor in Waynesburg college, Prof. Snyder resigned in order to go to Scottdale, Pa., where his interests in a hardware establishment demanded his personal attention, and while a citizen of that place he was elected and served as a member of the borough school board. In 1883 he was elected principal of the Greensburg public schools. For four years he labored earnestly and arduously in building up the Greensburg schools, and left them when in a very prosperous condition, in 1887, to accept the superintendency of the schools of the city of Reading. He there succeeded the celebrated Dr. Thomas Balliett. He instituted valuable reforms in the Reading schools, which made him known all over the country and introduced into them those methods of culture and instruction which have made his name prominent in connection with graded school work in every State of the Union. In 1889 he resigned as superintendent of the Reading schools to accept the presidency of the Indiana State Normal school, and entered upon the duties of that important and responsible position on September 1, 1889. Under

his administration the school has gained both in prestige and numerical strength. The school now requires a corps of seventeen teachers in winter and nineteen in summer, while the enrollment of students last year ran up to seven hundred and fifty-six. Calm, deliberate and methodical, Dr. Snyder has brought to the management of the Indiana Normal school governing qualities of a high order and quiet firmness that is felt in every department; whilst his close personal supervision is keeping it true to both the letter and the spirit of Normal education. Besides education work, he has devoted much time to the sciences; 1, a collection of the birds of Pennsylvania; 2, a collection of the insects, plants, minerals and many mammals, etc.

“To fitly describe this model institution as we see it and as its history has been given us would far exceed the limits of this article, and therefore but the merest outline must suffice. The school building is one of the most striking and attractive features of the town. It is situated close to the town on a beautiful elevation which commands a most extensive and picturesque view. The building is constructed of brick, is four stores high above the basement, which is of stone, is 250 feet front and 180 feet back in three sections. The campus, or surrounding grounds, comprise twelve acres and contain a beautiful natural grove of stately oaks, maples and elms, while the ornamental trees and shrubbery are scattered over the lands in profusion, and flowers of every hue and tint, of countless varieties, arranged in the most tasteful and artistic manner, adorn the terrace on which the building stands. The interior of the building is peculiarly adapted to its requirements. From the laboratory and highest class-room down to the kitchen everything is perfect. The various departments are all supplied with everything necessary to comfort or to the intellectual, moral and physical development of the students—at least, everything that such an institution can possibly supply. The rooms are all high, spacious and well lighted, the walls and ceilings frescoed, the furniture new and elegant, the dormitories neat and clean, and their floors carpeted; baths, lavatories and closets are located on all the floors and on both sides of the building, the class-rooms and laboratory supplied with every known accessory to the teacher’s profession, and the whole is subjected to the most careful arrangement and supervision. As might be expected from the location of the building, its sunny exposures, pure air and perfect sanitary arrangements, the health record of the school is remarkable. But every facility and inducement to ample physical exercise is afforded; indeed, the rules of the school require it. The building is furnished with a fine gymnasium and several ball alleys, while out under the trees and on the open lawns there are four or five lawn tennis courts, several croquet, foot-ball and base-ball grounds, with other forms of amusement and recreation.

“The school was first opened on the 17th day of May, 1875, and from that time to this has steadily increased in numbers and influence until it stands to-day in the very front rank of the normal schools of the State. Every year of the fifteen of its existence has witnessed a larger enrollment of students than the one preceding it. The last annual catalogue shows an enrollment of 756. The total attendance during the history of the school was 7,327, of whom 461 took the full course and graduated. Of these, 137 were male and 324 female students. Of these graduates, all but twenty-five became teachers, many of them for several years, while a majority of them are still so engaged. Sixteen of them became professors in normal schools and colleges, sixty-one principals of graded and high schools and three of them county superintendents. In other professions seven became ministers, eight went out as missionaries, five entered editorial sanctums, eleven

studied medicine and thirty-two became lawyers. Several of the last are among the rising young attorney of Pittsburgh.

“That Indiana is becoming a centre of educational influence and normal-school training is not an accident. From its very inception and through all sacrifices the best citizens of the town and county have freely devoted their time and money to the institution. Among its best friends were John Sutton and Joseph R. Smith, widely-known and public-spirited men, who were part of its board of trustees from its first organization until their deaths. Hon. Silas M. Clark, of the Supreme Bench of the State, was also an original trustee, and is now president of the board.”

In 1874, Dr. Snyder united in marriage with Maggie Estella Smith, daughter of James R. Smith, of Westmoreland county. To their union have been born three children: Laura Calloway, Tyndal E., and Clay D., who died January 8, 1890, aged fifteen years.

Dr. Snyder is a member of the Methodist Episcopal church and has ever well preformed every duty of good citizenship. His present field of labor is one for which he is eminently fitted. It is a field adapted to his genius, his varied learning, his skill as an educator and his long experience as a successful disciplinarian; but it is also a field of labor which leaves but little repose for his well-prepared and vigorous mind. His ideal of education is lofty but not impracticable, he would impart to a school the character of a family and would educate so as to fit pupils for intelligent citizenship and usefulness in life as well as for business and professional success. He has studied closely the principles which underlie all true processes of education and has made all his educational methods follow the order of nature. He believes in the natural progressive and symmetrical development of all the powers and the faculties of the pupil, and bends all his energies to the accomplishment of that result. His success has been highly gratifying, and while a leader in the new education, the object of which is to give culture and develop the power of thought, yet he is never carried away by enthusiasm to the introduction or use of any new method that has not been carefully tested and found to be promotive of true development. Dr. Snyder as a teacher in the common schools, as a college professor, as a principal of graded schools, as superintendent of city schools and as president for the last year of one of the largest and most advanced Normal schools in the United States, has had wide and successful experience in studying the needs of our common school system and especially the lack of properly qualified teachers. By correct Norman training of teachers, he would seek to inaugurate the reforms so much needed in so many of the public schools. While seeking for reforms in the common schools he is also active in introducing needed and valuable improvements in normal school work. He is a close student, a clear thinker and a forcible writer and highly appreciated are his labors in behalf of the normal school system, which is a powerful agent in the upbuilding of our national life.