

**EDUCATION IN THE
SOUTH: SOME
DIFFICULTIES
AND ENCOURAGEMENTS**

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Education in the South: Some Difficulties and Encouragements by Julius D. Dreher

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SOME DIFFICULTIES AND ENCOURAGEMENTS

BY

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A PAPER

READ BEFORE THE

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AT

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EXPLANATORY.

This address is published in this form, at the suggestion of friends, to give it a wider circulation than it will have in the *Journal of Social Science* in which the full proceedings of the Saratoga meeting of the Association will appear. It is hoped that by directing attention to some of the difficulties in educational work in the South, this paper may stimulate those who read it to greater efforts for the removal of defects and evils, and that the substantial progress already made in the face of so many obstacles may serve as a source of encouragement to such efforts.

Salem, Virginia, Sept. 25, 1895.

EDUCATION IN THE SOUTH

SOME DIFFICULTIES AND ENCOURAGEMENTS.

In undertaking to discuss "Education in the South; Some Difficulties and Encouragements," it is hardly necessary to say, by way of introduction, that it is impossible, within the limits of a paper like this, to enter upon a general discussion of so comprehensive a subject. The most that can be attempted is to touch upon certain features that stand out in bold relief. Some comparisons with the North will be necessary in order to present the difficulties encountered in educational work in the South. When not otherwise stated, these comparisons are based on the statistics of the Census of 1890 and the latest Report of the Commissioner of Education, that for 1891-92.

THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

The chief difficulty in maintaining good public schools, as well as good schools of all kinds, in the Southern States, is the lack of money. The South sustained immense losses by the war, while the North came out of that great struggle richer than at its beginning. The Southern people are mainly engaged in agricultural pursuits, in which money is accumulated slowly; and, notwithstanding the recent rapid increase in manufacturing industries, factories are not yet common in the South.

Although a wonderful recuperative power has been shown and considerable material progress made, it is, nevertheless, true that in comparison with the North the South is still poor. According to the Census of 1890, the six New England States, with an area of 66,465 square miles and a population of 4,700,745, had an assessed valuation of \$3,567,947,695; and the six Middle States (including Maryland and the District of Columbia), with an area of 116,530 square miles and a population of 14,142,075, had an assessed valuation of \$7,813,052,992; while the thirteen Southern States (not including Missouri), with an area of 818,065 square miles and a population of 17,914,290, had an assessed valuation of only \$3,731,097,264. That is, the New England and the Middle States combined, with an area only two-ninths that of the Southern States and a population greater by only 928,530, have an assessed valuation of real and personal property more than three times as large as that of the South. It will be seen from this comparison that the rate of taxation which will provide public schools for ten months in the year at the North, will be sufficient to maintain such schools at the South for only three-and-a-third months in the year. The assessed valuation of Massachusetts in 1890 was \$2,154,134,626, or nearly three-fifths the total assessed valuation of the thirteen Southern States, while the single State of New York (including the City) had an assessed valuation greater than that of these thirteen States together. If some Northern and Southern States be compared, the difficulty of the situation in the South will become still more apparent. Massachusetts, with less than one-fifth the area of Virginia, has an assessed valuation five-and-a-half times greater than that of the Old Dominion. Texas, although five-

and-a-half times as large as New York, has an assessed valuation less than one-fifth that of the Empire State. Pennsylvania has an assessed valuation more than seven times that of Kentucky; Connecticut more than double that of West Virginia; and Rhode Island, one-forty-seventh the area of Georgia, has eight-ninths as much taxable property as that great State. Such comparisons enable us to appreciate how easy it is to maintain good schools for ten months in the year at the North and how difficult it is to support such schools for a much shorter period in the South.

The sparseness of population throughout the Southern States is another difficulty in the problem of providing good schools. New England has 71 people to the square mile; the Middle States, 121; the Southern States, 22; Massachusetts, 278, and Virginia only 41; Connecticut, 154, and Georgia only 31; Pennsylvania, 117, and Alabama only 29. As it is necessary to maintain throughout the vast territory of the South separate schools for the two races, the foregoing comparisons which are based on the total population do not fairly represent the serious obstacle encountered in maintaining good schools by reason of the sparseness of population in the South. For instance, Alabama, with a total population of 1,513,017, has, as we have said, an average of 29 people to the square mile; but Alabama has 833,718 white people, or 16 to the square mile; and 679,299 colored people, or 13 to the square mile, making it practically two States, so far as the maintenance of schools is concerned, with the exception of the cost of superintendence.

Although the Southern States are supporting Normal Schools, there is, as yet, inadequate provision for the training of teachers, and as the school year is only from

three-and-a-half to five months, and the pay for that time far too small, comparatively little inducement is held out to competent and ambitious scholars to adopt teaching as a profession. Of course, many of the towns and cities maintain good schools by special taxation and pay fair salaries for eight and even ten months in the year. In the South, however, there are few cities compared with the North; and it must be added that, owing to the lack of efficient local government and the individualizing tendency of the old-time Southern society, the people have not yet generally learned to submit to local taxation for public purposes, and hence the schools, and especially the high schools, in many towns and cities are not properly sustained by such taxation, which is common at the North and the West. In some of the larger cities of the South, however, the public schools will compare favorably with those in any other part of the country.

Although the colored people pay an insignificant part of the taxes, they share in proportion to population equally with the whites in appropriations for school purposes. It is not yet time to expect any great results from the efforts made to educate the colored people. As Dr. J. L. M. Curry well said some years ago: "The elevation of this race to complete manhood and womanhood, to the full appreciation of the responsibilities and duties of the parental relation and of the privileges and prerogatives of American citizenship, is a great problem, requiring generations to solve." The negroes are eager for education, and they are advancing; with faltering steps, it is true, but nevertheless they are making steady and substantial progress. And we believe, with Dr. A. D. Mayo, that "they will respond in reasonable

time, if we furious Anglo-Saxons, a thousand years ahead, will only have the Christian patience to bear with the blundering steps of the last child of the centuries, standing on the threshold and facing the fierce electric light of American life." That this "last child of the centuries" should not know well how to use his freedom should not surprise us when we see how white men abuse it; and when we bear in mind that thousands of white men wish to live without work, we ought to be slow to condemn the colored man for indolence. It is quite natural that he should be influenced by example; his mistake is that he often undertakes to be a gentleman of leisure on too little capital. That the negroes are fairly industrious, however, is evident from the large crops produced throughout the South. As, in the nature of the case, they must be for years to come chiefly manual laborers, it is important that industrial schools should be provided for them. The Trustees of the Slater Fund act wisely, therefore, in restricting appropriations to such schools. With good schools, the continued sympathy and aid of the white people, and more wise leaders like Booker T. Washington, President of the Tuskegee Institute, in Alabama, the colored people will, in due time, justify every effort and expenditure made for their advancement.

There is another feature of the situation that is interesting. In the early days of the Republic, that great fundamental idea of the fathers of the Constitution, that a republican government can rest safely only on the virtue and intelligence of the people, took practical shape at the North in the establishment of free schools, supported by taxation. Higher education, though aided at times by various States in the North, was left to be