

**HIGH SCHOOLS IN
LOUISIANA AND
TULANE UNIVERSITY**

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High Schools in Louisiana and Tulane University by Wm. Preston Johnston

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WM. PRESTON JOHNSTON

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—AND—

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TULANE UNIVERSITY.

WM. PRESTON JOHNSTON.

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THE DEMAND FOR HIGH SCHOOLS IN LOUISIANA.

ADDRESS OF

PRESIDENT WM. PRESTON JOHNSTON,

TO THE

CONVENTION OF PARISH SUPERINTENDENTS, AT LAKE CHARLES,
LOUISIANA, WEDNESDAY, JUNE 28, 1893.

GENTLEMEN—The invitation from the State Superintendent of Public Education to address you on "The Demand for more High Schools in Louisiana" met an immediate response in my breast. It is a subject that has been near my heart for the last thirteen years, and I have awaited anxiously the hour when the public mind could be aroused to a sense of its exceeding importance. Indeed, next to the establishment of a great central university, diffusing light and knowledge and stimulating intellectual activity in every department of life, a general system of Public High Schools seems to me of paramount importance to the interests of education in this commonwealth. Without criticising the benevolent intention and the excellent results of the magnificent endowment of Mr. Peabody for public schools, I have often thought that its achievements would have been still more fruitful and inspiring if its large expenditures had been concentrated upon a certain number of Graded High Schools or Academies, centres of light, so that in each State there might have arisen seven golden candlesticks, as it were, shining with the splendor of eternal truth and guiding the feet of the young in the ascending pathways of knowledge. Without the High School we have no bridge or causeway across the chasm between the lowlands of the Primary Schools and the heights of Collegiate edu-

cation. That such a connecting link is necessary is readily demonstrable, if we attach any value to the Higher Education.

Without going into details it may be said that all education that prepares for active life can be graded into Primary, Secondary, Collegiate and University education, the last including professional studies. These grades rest upon each other in regular sequence, and any attempt to evade or skip this natural succession is surely punished by an imperfect and fragmentary preparation, which shows itself in weakness somewhere in later life. The house must be built upon a rock or it will not stand. Education must rest upon a solid basis of thorough preparation, of early discipline, of a continuous advance, or it will lack that essential something which makes the all-round man so formidable to every opponent.

The Primary School is for all the people. It teaches what no one can do without and yet be up to the full measure of citizenship. To know how to read, to write, to count, to calculate; to have at least a glimmering of the great world we live in and of the human family that inhabits it; this much, at least, society owes to every human being that it intends to hold responsible and expects to be useful. Even among the stolid Orientals we find this much knowledge conceded as a necessity, and much of it generally diffused among all classes. But upon those subject masses there is no demand except for obedience, while with us society continually calls upon its humblest members for the performance of duties that require much information that comes from instruction and a sound discretion that is the result of training only. But I am not here to argue for general education before this intelligent body committed to its service.

It is the demand for High Schools—the need of this secondary grade of education—that I am now advocating. And in this cause, too, I may presume that my audience is generally in sympathy with my views; but, as it is almost a new feature in Louisiana, the discussion of it may not be unprofitable. And the first point that arises is, why should there be Public High Schools at all? Why should not public education stop

at the close of the primary grade; or if it is to go on, why should the people concern themselves with the question? Why not leave it to parents? Why not leave it to private benevolence or private enterprise? I think I might claim that all these questions are already practically settled as facts in American polity by the sure, the inevitable trend of public opinion. They have been argued before that high tribunal for half a century, and may now be considered *res adjudicata*. Other commonwealths have repeatedly gone over the ground; and, in the end, it always turns out the same way. The decision is in favor of giving every child a chance to develop all that is in him. The graded High School is everywhere built upon the broader basis of the primary schools, and has become an important part in the school system of every progressive State in the land. If the weight of authority counts for anything this consensus of opinion among American educators and legislators should have settled the question of the need of High Schools.

The same evolution has been going on for nearly a century in Europe. In Germany it has proceeded slowly, as one might expect among a slow-going, but sound thinking, people; yet thoroughly, so that educated men abound there, and Germany supplies other countries with both thinkers and leaders in business. Even in conservative England the great battle has been virtually won, and no one doubts now that free general education will soon be granted to the whole people. England has, however, always recognized the benefits of higher education, and her secondary schools are of ancient date. But it is in France that the most wonderful awakening has taken place. Imperialism was a nostrum to delude the people into the belief that despotism and democracy are one. Its essence was the right to declare by universal suffrage, not who should be ruler, but that the incumbent was master by right. It was a fraud and had to perish. But while it lasted, it juggled with education as with everything else, and left it rotten and mouldering in France. France was overthrown by Germany in a titanic struggle. To what was the victory due? Everybody

saw that the superior education of Germany was at the bottom of it. Von Stein, the great statesman of education, had organized victory; and sixty years later Bismarck and Von Moltke achieved it. All France saw, with the lightning intuition of that great people, that a nation must be educated from the bottom up, as the only sure way to make it great and powerful; and so France adopted a system the most radical and far-reaching ever yet attempted. The republic had the courage of its convictions, and, with the exhaustive and unerring logic of the Gallic mind, established a system of education, the freest and the most searching, systematic, thorough and complete among civilized nations. But where was the money to come from for such a work? When you are bound to have a thing you are apt to get it. Taxation till the mossbacks groaned and sweated, debt till the eyes of financiers stretched with wonder; but the work went on. A generation has passed; a new France has been born; the republic is stronger than ever before. France is richer and more powerful and no man sees the end, but it certainly has a hopeful outlook for the French people and the human race. Now in that French system the High School and the College are considered as much a part of what the State owes to its children as the Primary Schools. Nothing in the way of free education is too good for the child of France; and so it should be here.

But we need no appeal to authority, to precedents in other States or other nations. Our whole theory of government, with the application to it of the law of common sense, justifies the High School as part of our public school system; indeed, requires it. Persons are not wanting, it is true, who, while admitting that the State owes the rudiments of an education to every individual, still claim that it owes no more and ought to give no more. I have given you the answer of the civilized world to this proposition, but we may as well look at it from our own point of view. Why do we owe any child anything? Society, represented by the organized State, owes the child an education, not on the broad, philanthropic ground that it is a child, but because it is a child of the State. It belongs not

only to its parents, but also to the State into which it is born and of which it is a member. It can not disengage itself from these obligations while it continues in the State. Nor can the totality of society, the State, free itself from its whole responsibility to that child.

Nobody doubts the duty of parents to their child. It is also generally conceded that every one should strive to fit himself for the best work he is capable of in the world, and do it. That seems to be the plain meaning of the parable of the ten talents. But it seems clear that parents can not owe a less care to the development of their children than to culture of themselves. If existence is to be a blessing instead of a curse, it must come from a growing, not a stunted, nature. But the case is even stronger, in some aspects, with the State than with the family; for the family may dissolve into its individual components and form new combinations, father and son governing each his own household. Abraham and Lot separated and yet lived in peace. But when a child is born, it is at once a member of the body politic, as much as your hand is a part of your body, and it must be cherished to usefulness and honor, or cut off and cast out, to the maiming of the whole body. By all means then train the child to do its full part as a useful member of the State.

But if we look at the question, not merely as Christians and gentlemen, from the point of view of duty, but as political economists from the side of self-interest only, we must see that it is profitable to the State to teach the young all they are willing to learn. There is an old aphorism that knowledge is power. Of course, it is power. It is power for good, or for evil, as the case may be. Those who assume that moral elevation necessarily follows acquired information err, as we all know. Give an Indian a gun and teach him how to shoot it, and you simply make him a more dangerous enemy, though not a worse man. He merely has more power. Now if you can train his heart and mind not to use it for murder, he becomes a better, as well as a stronger man. You can not have failed to notice how modern mechanical skill has multi-