Industrial Education in the South

Mayo Amory Dwight
INDUSTRIAL EDUCATION

IN

THE SOUTH

BY

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 CONTENTS. 

Letter of the Commissioner of Education to the Secretary of the Interior ...... 5
Purpose Stated .......................................................... 7
General Discussion of Conditions of American and Southern life............. 7
Discussion of Southern Resources, Natural Wealth, Rising Industries, etc., with
Disadvantages in Existing Labor System, Illiteracy, etc.—Negroes Improving,
Acquiring Property, yet often Ignorant and Shiftless—A Portion of the
White Laborers not much Better—General Education the Prime Need ....... 12
Statement of Southern Achievements in Popular Education .................. 16
Industrial Schools, and Manual and Industrial Training in Public Schools and
Private Academies .................................................. 18
Consideration of Means and Methods of Aiding, Promoting, and Improving such
Training............................................................... 27

APPENDIXES.

I.—STATEMENTS RESPECTING LEADING SOUTHERN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS WHICH
HAVE ADOPTED INDUSTRIAL TRAINING.

Agricultural and Mechanical College of Mississippi .............................. 45
Alabama Polytechnic Institute (1 Illustration) ...................................... 47
Clayton College of Agriculture and Mechanics’ Institute ....................... 49
Clark University ........................................................................ 50
Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute ......................................... 52
Howard University ........................................................................ 53
Industrial Institute and College for the Education of White Girls of Mississippi. 55
Maryland Institute School of Art and Design ........................................ 56
McDonogh School ........................................................................ 57
Tougaloo University ..................................................................... 59
Tulane University of Louisiana (14 Illustrations) .................................. 60
Washington University Manual Training School .................................. 76

II.—EDUCATED LABOR IN THE SOUTH.

The Need of Educated Labor in the South; an Address by W. H. Council ...... 80
LETTER.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,
BUREAU OF EDUCATION,
Washington, D. C., January 6, 1888.

Sir: The accompanying monograph, prepared at the request of the Bureau of Education by the Rev. A. D. Mayo, relates to the subject of industrial education in the South. For the past eight years Dr. Mayo has been engaged in a ministry of education through all the Southern States. With no official relations, and with the sole end in view of observing educational affairs in the South, together with all forms of service and labor found to be practical in the communities visited, with the most hearty co-operation of the leading educators and public men everywhere, and the most kindly reception by teachers and pupils, his opportunities of studying the situation have probably not been surpassed.

The great interest in the subject of the industrial education of both races through the school systems of the South, the extent to which this form of instruction has already been carried, the means available for its further development, and the practical ways of engrafting it upon the present school life of that region, have all been the subject of careful observation and anxious inquiry from the beginning of the ministry of Dr. Mayo.

The present monograph is not a discussion of scholastic methods, or an attempt to give a premature opinion on many important points now under advisement by the foremost teachers and educational authorities of the country. The author has assumed the more useful task of setting before the Southern people the reasons for the growing interest in industrial education through the whole country, and the special needs of this type of educational work in the development of the great resources and the organization of the labor system of the Southern States, with a brief account of the principal institutions that have already undertaken the work.

An important part of this essay is concerned with the consideration of the present condition of the educational facilities in the country districts, where a large majority of the children and youth of the South are living. Particular attention is invited to this portion of the monograph, which contains a variety of suggestions for awakening public interest
to the inauguration of this work where it is most needed, and where, if properly directed, it may be made most effective.

In connection with the treatise of Dr. Mayo, it is proposed to publish a group of brief statements by the leading representative schools of the South that have already made experiments in the different departments of industrial training. These statements will be of great value, not only for the information given, but in the way of suggestions in the organization of courses of instruction in other institutions.

Believing that this monograph and its accompanying documents will be valuable and timely, I beg leave to recommend its publication.

I have the honor to be, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

N. H. R. Dawson,
Commissioner.

The Secretary of the Interior,
Washington, D. C.

Department of the Interior,
Washington, January 17, 1888.

Sir: Acknowledging the receipt of your letter of the 6th instant, I have to inform you that your recommendation for the publication of a monograph by the Rev. A. D. Mayo, upon the subject of industrial education in the South, is hereby approved.

Very respectfully,

H. L. Muldrow,
Acting Secretary.

The Commissioner of Education.
INDUSTRIAL EDUCATION IN THE SOUTH.

PURPOSE STATED.

The present essay is not offered as a discussion of the details and methods of Industrial Education, or as an exhaustive record of what has been already attempted in the South. The writer believes that the educational life of the country is to be enlarged and enriched by the incorporation of a judicious system of industrial training, both in its practical and artistic applications. An eight-years' observation of the educational needs and achievements of Southern American society, including both races and all classes, has revealed to him the great necessity for this type of instruction, and convinced him that the present condition of Southern educational affairs affords peculiar facilities for its organization and development. The account of Southern industrial schools has been largely verified by personal observation, the writer having visited every Southern State within the past eight years and inspected the majority of the institutions described. In other cases, he relies on printed reports and the testimony of competent visitors. Any omission of important schools or apparent failure to do justice in any direction can easily be corrected by a communication addressed to the writer, at the Bureau of Education, Washington, D.C. Meanwhile, the object of this essay will have been accomplished if the younger educational men and women of the South are inspired to a thorough study of this broad subject, so interwoven with the whole future of the Southern people.

GENERAL DISCUSSION OF CONDITIONS OF AMERICAN AND SOUTHERN LIFE.

Any theory of Industrial Education in the United States will depend on the opinion of its author concerning the past and present condition of educational affairs and the result of all the school life of the American people on the growing industries of the country. And just here is a fruitful cause of misunderstanding—the difficulty of a fair estimate of what has actually come from the past educational training of our people. Every thoughtful believer in the American order of society and government holds that the American life of the past two centuries has been the most stimulating, the broadest and most profound uni-
versity in which a people has ever been schooled since the dawn of history. Especially is this true of the past revolutionary epoch, whose results, at home and abroad, are already so apparent. In a civilization where every path to success in every realm of human life is thrown open to the humblest child, where every man is a sovereign and every woman “the power behind the throne,” nobody can accurately say what the schools of any grade have or have not accomplished. For the people, directly or indirectly, make the schools, and their merits or failures are on the same line as achievement and disaster in every other department of American life. No American institution can be sentenced as the scapegoat of the national sins, and sent off into the wilderness under a curse. The people are the only scape-goats, and the people do not propose to abdicate at the summons of any earthly tribunal. Lord Macaulay, a generation ago, affirmed the profound truth that the foremost mind of every people uses the educational agencies at hand and, somehow, gets its training for life therefrom. Our human nature, like the all-surrounding air, “abhors a vacuum,” and whatever American human nature does not find in the school-house, it makes haste to supply in any one of a hundred ways peculiar to itself. The pedant or narrow schoolman who fancies that American children and youth only learn what is included in “a course of study” and a text-book and is certified by “examination papers,” will do great injustice; for here, as nowhere else, the educating influence of American life environs the school, supplies its deficiencies, and often makes its defects the suggestion of the most intense effort outside.

We are not, therefore, disposed to press the importance of Industrial Education in our country on the ground that our past educational systems have been a failure, and our present methods are working a widespread demoralization, especially among the industrial classes of our cities and populous districts. We fail to see the necessity, anywhere, of dropping one good thing when we pick up another, and believe a great injustice will be done by a judgment of this sort. Every intelligent friend of Industrial Education must acknowledge that the training and informing of the mind by good methods in any school is, to that extent, an outfit for the application of mental power to the work of life. Ignorance and mental stupidity are the bottom curse of individual or national industry. We hold that, while there have been the same defects in the schools as in every department of American affairs, they are entitled to a reasonable share of praise for that majestic development of industry which has made the Republic not only the richest, but incomparably the most active, enterprising, and progressive of nations in the development of national resources and the general enjoyment of comfortable living. Were it worth the while it could easily be shown that every American State, city, or locality is industrious, prosperous, and progressive in proportion to its interest in the schooling of all its children according to the best ideas and methods at hand.
Indeed, the new and wide-spread interest in Technical Instruction and the whole matter of Industrial Training is, in considerable degree, the outgrowth of those natural methods, especially of elementary instruction, which for the past twenty years have been gradually introduced into the superior schools of all parts of the country. Under different names—kindergarten, object teaching, normal methods—all included in the popular term, "the new education," a prodigious advance has been made in the direction of a true theory of instruction and discipline for young children. The characteristic of "The New Education" is the attempt to train the faculties in their true order of development by those natural and divine methods whereby the infinite wisdom is schooling all men in the university of life. The logical outcome of all such work, when well done, is in the direction of the broadest and finest discipline for superior work. A great deal has been well done, and the thanks of the country are due to a large and increasing class of women teachers, who, with the patience, fidelity, enthusiasm, tact, skill, and instinctive knowledge of childhood peculiar to their sex, have done so much, in all ways, for the enlargement and humanizing of school life in general and the industrial tendency in particular. On them and all teachers who work in the spirit of these natural and divine methods of education the friends of industrial training must rely for the beginnings of their work in all classes of schools.

But the whole thoughtful side of the American people, within the past twenty-five years, has been wonderfully stirred by the rapid development of the resources of the country, in contrast with the inadequacy of organized labor to face the demand for their development. Since the close of the great War the illimitable western world, beyond the frontier, has been explored, interlaced with railroads, brought under the observation of experts, and, from the Mississippi to Alaska, spread out like a magical picture before the eyes of an astonished people. The vast central mountain realm of the East, from Harper's Ferry in Virginia almost to Montgomery in Alabama, as extensive as the German Empire, has been revealed as by the lifting of the mist, and its extraordinary resources for grazing, forestry, mining, and manufactures have, for the first time, been made known even to the people of the surrounding States. At the same time the American people have first come to an adequate conception of the vast realms of our Southland yet untilled—Yazoo valleys, Texas prairies, western Arkansas hills, boundless forests, countless miles of coast, with water power to whirl the wheels of numberless manufactures. And along with this revelation, more like a change of scene in the Arabian Nights' Entertainment than a sober reality, has come the realization of the incompetence of our labor system to deal with the stupendous task of the development of this new world, to say nothing of the improvement of what is now in hand. Of our sixty millions of people, any man who cares can find out how many millions of laborers are still among the ignorant and unskilled