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IS IT WORTH WHILE TO EDUCATE THE NEGRO?

THE last few days have seen the rather unusual spectacle of a prominent New Englander decrying higher education for the negro, and the niece of a Confederate general coming to the negro's defense. The New Englander is Charles Dudley Warner, who was born in Massachusetts and has lived in Connecticut nearly all his life. In his address as president of the American Social Science Association before their recent annual meeting in Washington he contrasted the beneficial effects of slavery upon the negro with the injurious effects wrought by the attempts to give him a higher education; declaring that under slavery "the negro was taught to work, to be an agriculturist, a mechanic, a material producer of something useful," while "our higher education applied to him in his present development operates in exactly the opposite direction." He continues:

"When the negro colleges first opened there was a glow of enthusiasm, an eagerness of study, a facility of acquirement, and a good order that promised everything for the future. It seemed as if the light then kindled would not only continue to burn but would penetrate all the dark and stolid communities.

"Have these colleges, as a whole, stimulated industry, thrift, the inclination to settle down to the necessary hard work of the world, or have they bred idleness, indisposition to work, a vaporous ambition in politics, and that sort of conceit of gentility of which the world has already enough? If any one is in doubt about this he can satisfy himself by a sojourn in different localities in the South.

"The condition of New Orleans and its negro universities is often cited. It is a favorable example, because the ambition of the negro has been aided there by influence outside of the schools. The federal Government has imposed upon the intelligent and sensitive population negro officials in high positions, because they were negroes and not because they were specially fitted for these positions by character and ability. It is my belief that the condition of the race in New Orleans is lower than it was several years ago, and that the influence of the higher education has been in the wrong direction."

Mr. Warner's address has attracted considerable attention in the press, and no reply to it has received wider notice than a letter written to the Springfield *Republican* by Miss Caroline H. Pemberton, niece of John C. Pemberton, the Confederate general. Miss Pemberton is an able defender of the colored race, and is the author of the recent novel, "Stephen the Black." After a graphic description of the sad condition of the negroes under slavery, and the small likelihood of their obtaining there the industrial education that Mr. Warner speaks about, she says:

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"I take exception to Mr. Warner's attitude toward the colleges that have been started for the advancement of negro education. It is fashionable to deride them. It is considered in good taste to sneer at the negro who can read Latin or Greek, or who aspires to be anything more than a hewer of wood or a drawer of water. Does Mr. Warner not know (along with the other good people who sincerely want to help the negro) for what purpose these colleges were started? Has he forgotten that there were no public schools in the South for either race at the close of the war, and that up to the present day every school-teacher of colored children south of Maryland must be drawn from the negro race, in deference to a universal Southern sentiment, which proclaims it a degradation for white people to teach them? Not only is it the vocation of these struggling colleges to provide teachers for the whole of the black South, but on their efficiency depends also the training of negro clergymen to minister to the moral and spiritual needs of the people. Where else are these people to look for guidance, if not to their teachers and pastors? And are the blind to lead the blind, and both to stumble along in dense ignorance together?

"There is not the slightest danger of the Southern negro becoming overeducated. In the first place, many of the so-called colleges are little more than high schools, and the amount of learning they impart is not likely to make the negro 'top-heavy,' or otherwise injure his capacity for waiting on table. In the second place, the negro masses, except in the towns and cities, have little opportunity to obtain even the rudiments of an education. A public-school system of three-months' schooling, without text-books or school-houses, and which opens its schools in deserted log cabins or colored meeting-houses five, ten, or fifteen miles apart, is not likely to prepare many pupils for the 'negro colleges' that Mr. Warner so much dreads. The public schools in the Philippine Islands would probably compare favorably with those provided for negro children in many of our Southern States —that is, for negro children on the plantations, where illiteracy often claims 70 per cent. of the population."

The Boston *Transcript* says of Miss Pemberton's letter.

"In this woman's quick intelligence, sound intuitions, deep sympathy, and undoubted knowledge of the facts of the situation there seem to be gathered up more truth and justice than in any of the labored and pretentious attempts to state the problem and furnish a solution that we have seen. The discouragements are so many that it has become easier to treat it as an academic question than it is to admit the hard facts and accept the responsibility and perhaps the sacrifices that they involve. We wish Miss Pemberton could have presented her views with equal fulness at the Montgomery Conference. We are not sure but they would have been worth more than the whole output of wisdom that was the result of that three days of deliberation."

Some interesting facts about the schools for negroes in the South are given in an article which Mr. T. Thomas Fortune, editor of the New York *Age* (Afro-American), contributes to the New York *Sun* in reply to Mr. Warner. He writes:

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"I say deliberately that the 169 academies and colleges supported for the Afro-Americans in the Southern States have stimulated industry, thrift, the inclination to settle down to the necessary hard work of the world, and the man who asserts the contrary does not know what he is talking about. To say that they have stimulated 'idleness, indisposition to work, a vaporous ambition in politics, and that sort of conceit of gentility of which the world has already enough,' is a malicious perversion of fact, which could only proceed out of dense ignorance of the facts. There are 27,000 Afro-American public school-teachers in the Southern States; there are 1,095 instructors in the 169 academies and colleges, many of them Afro American graduates; there are 40,000 Sunday-school teachers, most of them women who have gone out of the schools into homes as wives of honest men, who will not sell their children to pay their gambling debts, as Mr. Warner's 'intelligent and sensitive population' of New Orleans habitually did before the war; there are 5,000 men in the ministry who have graduated out of these schools; there are 1,300 lawyers; there are 1,200 reputable physicians; there are 150 editors who are publishing weekly newspapers and magazines; and if Mr. Warner would go with me to so small a place as Jacksonville, Fla., I will point out to him at least ten men in business, on a small scale it is true, but in business, who are graduates of the schools he 'whistles down the wind.' And it is so all over the South. The Afro-Americans who are making character and reputation and money as a basis of race credit are not graduates of the plantations but of the academies and colleges; more, the men who fill the chain gangs, and who are lynched for 'stealing chickens,' 'sassing white folks' and 'committing criminal assault,' are not graduates of the academies and colleges planted in the South and supported by Northern money."

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