THE KIND OF EDUCATION THE YOUNG PEOPLE NEED

"I have noticed a growing tendency in the writings of those whites who discuss the racial question, in the newspapers, towards helpfulness and kindness to the Negro race. Some articles are very bitter, abusive, and unfair, the writers seeming to be either playing to the galleries of a maudlin sentiment or venting personal spleen -- but in the main this is not so. The Negroes, who withal had rather love than hate white people, are generally thankful for all expressions favorable to themselves. They realize as a mass that there has grown up within the last thirty years an idle, vicious class of Negroes and whites whose acts and habits are of such a nature as to make them objectionable to the law-abiding people. What to do with this class is a problem that perplexes the better element of Negroes, more, possibly, than it does the whites; since their shortcomings are generally credited to the whole Negro race, which is wrong as a fact and unjust in theory.

"This vivious element in the Negro race is a constant subject of discussion in Negro churches and in private conversation. It is a mistake to say that crime is not condemned by the better class of Negroes. There may be a class that attend the courts when their 'pals' are in jeopardy and who rejoice to see them exonerated, but the real substantial Negro man is seldom seen 'warming the benches' of court rooms. Unlike the white spectators, who are men of leisure and spend their time there out of interest in what is going on, and often to earn a per diem as jurors, -- the leisure class in the Negro race is generally composed of those who have 'served time' in prison or of their associates.

"The Negro problem, as now considered, seems, so far as the
discussion of it is concerned, to be entirely in the hands of white people for solution, and the Negro himself is supposed to have no part in it, other than to 'wait and tend' on the bidding of those engaged at the job. He is 'a looker on in Venice.' I therefore offer my suggestion as to method or plan with fear of being asked to stand aside. Yet, in my zeal for the work and in my anxiety to have it accomplished as speedily and correctly as possible, I venture a few suggestions which may apply to both races, the result of twenty years' observation and experience in teaching, which appear to my mind as the best way to go at this Herculean task.

"In the first place I suggest that the boarding school is one of the best fitted for the final needs of the young of the race -- a school where culture and civility would be taught hand in hand with labor and letters. The main object in education is training for usefulness. 'Leading out' is the meaning of the term education, and what the young of the race needs is to be lead out, and kept out of vice, until the danger period is passed. The public schools turn out the child just at that period when temptations are most alluring. From the age of puberty to twenty-one is the danger time, and the time of forming character. The kind of character then formed remains. If the child can be steered over this period, under right influences and associations, the problem of his future is comparatively settled for good, otherwise for bad. Too much is expected of the public schools as now constituted, if it is presumed that they can mould both the mind and the heart of the child; when they usually drop him just at the period that he begins to learn he has a heart and a mind! He is mostly an animal during the period allotted to him in the public schools. Many are fortunate enough to have parents who have the
leisure and ability to train them properly. Some follow up the course in the schools with a season in a boarding school -- these are fortunate, but where is the great mass? They became bootblacks, street gamins, runaways, 'dudes', or temporary domestics, in which calling they earn money more to satisfy their youthful propensities than for any settled purpose for the future of their lives.

"Out of six hundred pupils who had left one public school in Virginia I found only 85 who had settled down with any seemingly fixed purpose. I counted 196 who had become domestics, and, either married or single, are making orderly citizens. The rest have become mere bilge water and are unknown. Among the girls fourteen are of the demirep order. The public schools are doing some work it is true -- a great work, all things considered -- but their 'reach' is not far enough. What the young people need, beyond all things, is training -- not only of the head, but of the heart and hand as well. The boarding school would meet the requirements, if properly conducted. The girl and boy should remain at useful employment under refined influences until the habit of doing things right and acting right is formed. How can the public school mould character in a child whom they have for five hours, while the street gamins have him for the rest of the day? And further, as before stated, when the child leaves the public schools at the time when most of all he is likely to get into bad habits?

"Good home training is the salvation of any people. Many children, white and colored, are necessarily lacking in this respect, for the reason that their parents are called off to their places of labor during the day and the children are left to shift for themselves. Too often when the parents are at home the influence is not
of the most wholesome, thus there is a double necessity for the
inauguration of a system of training that will eliminate this evil.
The majority of working people do not earn sufficient wages to hire
governesses for their children, -- if they should quit work and
attempt the task for themselves the children would suffer for bread,
and soon the State would be called upon to support them as paupers.
The State is unable in the present condition of public sentiment to
pass upon the sufficiency of wages from employer to all employees,
but it can dictate the policy of the school system. All selfish or
partisan scruples should be eliminated and the subject should be
approached with wisdom and foresight, looking solely to accomplishing
the best results possible.

"My idea is to supplement the term of the public schools, which
might be reduced to four years, by a three years' term in a boarding
school in which the pupil could do all the work and produce enough
in vacation to make the school self-sustaining; except the item of
the salaries of the teachers, who could be employed by the State.
Make three years in these schools compulsory on all who are not able
to or do not, select a school of their own choice. Three years'
military service is demanded of the adults in most of the European
States, which is time almost thrown away so far as the individual is
concerned, but a three years' service in schools of this kind would
be of the greatest advantage of the child and State as well.

"HOW CAN IT BE DONE?

"There is idle land enough to be used for the establishment of
such schools in every township in the country, and with the proper
training in them, the pupils from such institutions would come out
and build up hundreds of places that are now going to waste for lack
of attention. The solution of the juvenile problem cannot be effected by talk alone, nor by a reckless expenditure of public funds, but if the State is to undertake the education of its children with good citizenship in view — thus becoming as it were the parens patriae, then let the job be undertaken as a parent would be likely to go at it for his own children. In well regulated communities wayward children are placed in homes which the wisdom of experience has found to be the best place for them, and they come out useful citizens. If the youth of today is incorrigible because of instinct or environment, or both, the place for them is in some kind of home where they can be protected against themselves and society, and trained and developed. Let them have four years of training in the public schools and emerge from these into 'a boarding and working school'. This would be far better than furnishing a chain gang system for them to go into after bad character has been formed. Those who desire to take up higher or other courses could do so.

"An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure" right here, and is a cheaper and a more substantial investment. Experience shows that the vicious become more vicious by confinement in prison among vicious criminals, and it not infrequently happens that individuals after having been degraded by a first sentence, become outcasts and spend from a half to two-thirds of their lives thereafter in prison. The system of confining young people with hardened criminals temporarily, can hardly be urged in any sense as a reformatory, and from the frequent returns thereto of the criminal class can be hardly styled as a first-class preventive of crime. It is simply an institution in which criminals can be kept temporarily out of their usual occupations. While they are so confined crime is that much
decreased, but it opens up again on their exit.

"The value of the boarding school idea as a supplement to the public school system is borne out by the statistics of the boarding schools already established throughout the country. The pupils turned out by these schools are a credit to the Founders and the State. They are good citizens, they accumulate property, they are industrious and upright. There is not one case in a thousand where you find them on the court records. They are the genuine 'salt of the earth', so far as the product of the schools for young people are concerned. The public schools have been the feeders in a large measure of these boarding schools, but only a small percentage of those who leave the public schools ever reach boarding schools. Under the plan above suggested, all pupils will spend three years in a boarding school, or a school of that nature which will accomplish the same end.

"If the young people of the present day have a greater native tendency to crime than formerly, as is urged by some, then it is necessary to take more care in protecting them against it. If their disease is of a more malignant type than ordinary when it attacks them, then the more heroic should be the remedy. It is as illogical to apply a system of education to a child who is not prepared for it as it would be to treat a patient for appendicitis when he has the eczema. Results are what the State wants, and if the schools now established are not giving them, the system should be changed to one like the boarding school system which for many years has been a success. The money sent South by Northern charity has not been wasted. Some people think it has destroyed some farm hands -- this may be true, but it has created larger producers in other lines fully as
beneficial to the State as farming.

"The States are suffering because of their criminal class, both white and black, and they will continue to do so until this cloud is removed, and in undertaking the education of its citizens, the State is not working for the farmers or manufacturers especially (as some seem to imply by their arguments on this subject) but for a higher type of citizenship along all lines. 'More intelligence in farming, mining, manufacturing, and business' is the motto; a general uplift in which all shall be benefitted. Neither the farmer, the miner, nor the manufacturer can hope to build up a serf class for his special benefit. The State has not established the school system for that purpose, and should the theory once obtain that it was so established, the handwriting would at once appear on the wall. The ideal school system is that in which each citizen claims his part with all the rest. No line should be drawn in the division of the funds to the schools, and as a fit corollary to this, they should not be established to foster the financial interests of any one class of citizens as against another. Pro bono publico is their motto and may it ever remain so!"