

Diversities of American Life eBook

Diversities of American Life by Charles Dudley Warner

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CERTAIN DIVERSITIES OF AMERICAN LIFE

By Charles Dudley Warner

This is a very interesting age. Within the memory of men not yet come to middle life the time of the trotting horse has been reduced from two minutes forty seconds to two minutes eight and a quarter seconds. During the past fifteen years a universal and wholesome pastime of boys has been developed into a great national industry, thoroughly organized and almost altogether relegated to professional hands, no longer the exercise of the million but a spectacle for the million, and a game which rivals the Stock Exchange as a means of winning money on the difference of opinion as to the skill of contending operators.

The newspapers of the country—pretty accurate and sad indicators of the popular taste—devote more daily columns in a week's time to chronicling the news about base-ball than to any other topic that interests the American mind, and the most skillful player, the pitcher, often college bred, whose entire prowess is devoted to not doing what he seems to be doing, and who has become the hero of the American girl as the Olympian wrestler was of the Greek maiden and as the matador is of the Spanish senorita, receives a larger salary for a few hours' exertion each week than any college president is paid for a year's intellectual toil. Such has been the progress in the interest in education during this period that the larger bulk of the news, and that most looked for, printed about the colleges and universities, is that relating to the training, the prospects and achievements of the boat crews and the teams of base-ball and foot-ball, and the victory of any crew or team is a better means of attracting students to its college, a better advertisement, than success in any scholastic contest. A few years ago a tournament was organized in the North between several colleges for competition in oratory and scholarship; it had a couple of contests and then died of inanition and want of public interest.

During the period I am speaking of there has been an enormous advance in technical education, resulting in the establishment of splendid special schools, essential to the development of our national resources; a growth of the popular idea that education should be practical,—that is, such an education as can be immediately applied to earning a living and acquiring wealth speedily,—and an increasing extension of the elective system in colleges,—based almost solely on the notion, having in view, of course, the practical education, that the inclinations of a young man of eighteen are a better guide as to what is best for his mental development and equipment for life than all the experience of his predecessors.



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In this period, which you will note is more distinguished by the desire for the accumulation of money than for the general production of wealth, the standard of a fortune has shifted from a fair competence to that of millions of money, so that he is no longer rich who has a hundred thousand dollars, but he only who possesses property valued at many millions, and the men most widely known the country through, most talked about, whose doings and sayings are most chronicled in the journals, whose example is most attractive and stimulating to the minds of youth, are not the scholars, the scientists, the men of letters, not even the orators and statesmen, but those who, by any means, have amassed enormous fortunes. We judge the future of a generation by its ideals.

Regarding education from the point of view of its equipment of a man to make money, and enjoy the luxury which money can command, it must be more and more practical, that is, it must be adapted not even to the higher aim of increasing the general wealth of the world, by increasing production and diminishing waste both of labor and capital, but to the lower aim of getting personal possession of it; so that a striking social feature of the period is that one-half—that is hardly an overestimate—one-half of the activity in America of which we speak with so much enthusiasm, is not directed to the production of wealth, to increasing its volume, but to getting the money of other people away from them. In barbarous ages this object was accomplished by violence; it is now attained by skill and adroitness. We still punish those who gain property by violence; those who get it by smartness and cleverness, we try to imitate, and sometimes we reward them with public office.

It appears, therefore, that speed,—the ability to move rapidly from place to place,—a disproportionate reward of physical over intellectual science, an intense desire to be rich, which is strong enough to compel even education to grind in the mill of the Philistines, and an inordinate elevation in public consideration of rich men simply because they are rich, are characteristics of this little point of time on which we stand. They are not the only characteristics; in a reasonably optimistic view, the age is distinguished for unexampled achievements, and for opportunities for the well-being of humanity never before in all history attainable. But these characteristics are so prominent as to beget the fear that we are losing the sense of the relative value of things in this life.

Few persons come to middle life without some conception of these relative values. It is in the heat and struggle that we fail to appreciate what in the attainment will be most satisfactory to us. After it is over we are apt to see that our possessions do not bring the happiness we expected; or that we have neglected to cultivate the powers and tastes that can make life enjoyable. We come to know, to use a truism, that



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a person's highest satisfaction depends not upon his exterior acquisitions, but upon what he himself is. There is no escape from this conclusion. The physical satisfactions are limited and fallacious, the intellectual and moral satisfactions are unlimited. In the last analysis, a man has to live with himself, to be his own companion, and in the last resort the question is, what can he get out of himself. In the end, his life is worth just what he has become. And I need not say that the mistake commonly made is as to relative values,—that the things of sense are as important as the things of the mind. You make that mistake when you devote your best energies to your possession of material substance, and neglect the enlargement, the training, the enrichment of the mind. You make the same mistake in a less degree, when you bend to the popular ignorance and conceit so far as to direct your college education to sordid ends. The certain end of yielding to this so-called practical spirit was expressed by a member of a Northern State legislature who said, "We don't want colleges, we want workshops." It was expressed in another way by a representative of the lower house in Washington who said, "The average ignorance of the country has a right to be represented here." It is not for me to say whether it is represented there. Naturally, I say, we ought by the time of middle life to come to a conception of what sort of things are of most value. By analogy, in the continual growth of the Republic, we ought to have a perception of what we have accomplished and acquired, and some clear view of our tendencies. We take justifiable pride in the glittering figures of our extension of territory, our numerical growth, in the increase of wealth, and in our rise to the potential position of almost the first nation in the world. A more pertinent inquiry is, what sort of people have we become? What are we intellectually and morally? For after all the man is the thing, the production of the right sort of men and women is all that gives a nation value. When I read of the establishment of a great industrial centre in which twenty thousand people are employed in the increase of the amount of steel in the world, before I decide whether it would be a good thing for the Republic to create another industrial city of the same sort, I want to know what sort of people the twenty thousand are, how they live, what their morals are, what intellectual life they have, what their enjoyment of life is, what they talk about and think about, and what chance they have of getting into any higher life. It does not seem to me a sufficient gain in this situation that we are immensely increasing the amount of steel in the world, or that twenty more people are enabled on account of this to indulge in an unexampled, unintellectual luxury. We want more steel, no doubt, but haven't we wit enough to get that and at the same time to increase among the producers of it the number of men and women whose horizons are extended, who are companionable, intelligent beings, adding something to the intellectual and moral force upon which the real progress of the Republic depends?

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There is no place where I would choose to speak more plainly of our national situation today than in the South, and at the University of the South; in the South, because it is more plainly in a transition state, and at the University of the South, because it is here and in similar institutions that the question of the higher or lower plane of life in the South is to be determined.

To a philosophical observer of the Republic, at the end of the hundred years, I should say that the important facts are not its industrial energy, its wealth, or its population, but the stability of the federal power, and the integrity of the individual States. That is to say, that stress and trial have welded us into an indestructible nation; and not of less consequence is the fact that the life of the Union is in the life of the States. The next most encouraging augury for a great future is the marvelous diversity among the members of this republican body. If nothing would be more speedily fatal to our plan of government than increasing centralization, nothing would be more hopeless in our development than increasing monotony, the certain end of which is mediocrity.

Speaking as one whose highest pride it is to be a citizen of a great and invincible Republic to those whose minds kindle with a like patriotism, I can say that I am glad there are East and North and South, and West, Middle, Northwest, and Southwest, with as many diversities of climate, temperament, habits, idiosyncrasies, genius, as these names imply. Thank Heaven we are not all alike; and so long as we have a common purpose in the Union, and mutual toleration, respect, and sympathy, the greater will be our achievement and the nobler our total development, if every section is true to the evolution of its local traits. The superficial foreign observer finds sameness in our different States, tiresome family likeness in our cities, hideous monotony in our villages, and a certain common atmosphere of life, which increasing facility of communication tends to increase. This is a view from a railway train. But as soon as you observe closely, you find in each city a peculiar physiognomy, and a peculiar spirit remarkable considering the freedom of movement and intercourse, and you find the organized action of each State sui generis to a degree surprising considering the general similarity of our laws and institutions. In each section differences of speech, of habits of thought, of temperament prevail. Massachusetts is unlike Louisiana, Florida unlike Tennessee, Georgia is unlike California, Pennsylvania is unlike Minnesota, and so on, and the unlikeness is not alone or chiefly in physical features. By the different style of living I can tell when I cross the line between Connecticut and New York as certainly as when I cross the line between Vermont and Canada. The Virginian expanded in Kentucky is not the same man he was at home, and the New England Yankee let loose in the West takes on proportions

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that would astonish his grandfather. Everywhere there is a variety in local sentiment, action, and development. Sit down in the seats of the State governments and study the methods of treatment of essentially the common institutions of government, of charity and discipline, and you will be impressed with the variety of local spirit and performance in the Union. And this, diversity is so important, this contribution of diverse elements is so necessary to the complex strength and prosperity of the whole, that one must view with alarm all federal interference and tendency to greater centralization.

And not less to be dreaded than monotony from the governmental point of view, is the obliteration of variety in social life and in literary development. It is not enough for a nation to be great and strong, it must be interesting, and interesting it cannot be without cultivation of local variety. Better obtrusive peculiarities than universal sameness. It is out of variety as well as complexity in American life, and not in homogeneity and imitation, that we are to expect a civilization noteworthy in the progress of the human race.

Let us come a little closer to our subject in details. For a hundred years the South was developed on its own lines, with astonishingly little exterior bias. This comparative isolation was due partly to the institution of slavery, partly to devotion to the production of two or three great staples. While its commercial connection with the North was intimate and vital, its literary relation with the North was slight. With few exceptions Northern authors were not read in the South, and the literary movement of its neighbors, such as it was, from 1820 to 1860, scarcely affected it. With the exception of Louisiana, which was absolutely ignorant of American literature and drew its inspiration and assumed its critical point of view almost wholly from the French, the South was English, but mainly English of the time of Walter Scott and George the Third. While Scott was read at the North for his knowledge of human nature, as he always will be read, the chivalric age which moves in his pages was taken more seriously at the South, as if it were of continuing importance in life. In any of its rich private libraries you find yourself in the age of Pope and Dryden, and the classics were pursued in the spirit of Oxford and Cambridge in the time of Johnson. It was little disturbed by the intellectual and ethical agitation of modern England or of modern New England. During this period, while the South excelled in the production of statesmen, orators, trained politicians, great judges, and brilliant lawyers, it produced almost no literature, that is, no indigenous literature, except a few poems and—a few humorous character-sketches; its general writing was ornately classic, and its fiction romantic on the lines of the foreign romances.



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From this isolation one thing was developed, and another thing might in due time be expected. The thing developed was a social life, in the favored class, which has an almost unique charm, a power of being agreeable, a sympathetic cordiality, an impulsive warmth, a frankness in the expression of emotion, and that delightful quality of manner which puts the world at ease and makes life pleasant. The Southerners are no more sincere than the Northerners, but they have less reserve, and in the social traits that charm all who come in contact with them, they have an element of immense value in the variety of American life.

The thing that might have been expected in due time, and when the call came—and it is curious to note that the call and cause of any renaissance are always from the outside—was a literary expression fresh and indigenous. This expectation, in a brief period since the war, has been realized by a remarkable performance and is now stimulated by a remarkable promise. The acclaim with which the Southern literature has been received is partly due to its novelty, the new life it exhibited, but more to the recognition in it of a fresh flavor, a literary quality distinctly original and of permanent importance. This production, the first fruits of which are so engaging in quality, cannot grow and broaden into a stable, varied literature without scholarship and hard work, and without a sympathetic local audience. But the momentary concern is that it should develop on its own lines and in its own spirit, and not under the influence of London or Boston or New York. I do not mean by this that it should continue to attract attention by peculiarities of dialect—which is only an incidental, temporary phenomenon, that speedily becomes wearisome, whether “cracker” or negro or Yankee—but by being true to the essential spirit and temperament of Southern life.

During this period there was at the North, and especially in the East, great intellectual activity and agitation, and agitation ethical and moral as well as intellectual. There was awakening, investigation, questioning, doubt. There was a great deal of froth thrown to the surface. In the free action of individual thought and expression grew eccentricities of belief and of practice, and a crop of so-called “isms,” more or less temporary, unprofitable, and pernicious. Public opinion attained an astonishing degree of freedom,—I never heard of any community that was altogether free of its tyranny. At least extraordinary latitude was permitted in the development of extreme ideas, new, fantastic, radical, or conservative. For instance, slavery was attacked and slavery was defended on the same platform, with almost equal freedom. Indeed, for many years, if there was any exception to the general toleration it was in the social ostracism of those who held and expressed extreme opinions in regard to immediate emancipation, and were stigmatized as abolitionists. There was a general ferment of new ideas, not always fruitful in the direction taken, but hopeful in view of the fact that growth and movement are better than stagnation and decay. You can do something with a ship that has headway; it will drift upon the rocks if it has not. With much foam and froth, sure to attend agitation, there was immense vital energy, intense life.

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Out of this stir and agitation came the aggressive, conquering spirit that carried civilization straight across the continent, that built up cities and States, that developed wealth, and by invention, ingenuity, and energy performed miracles in the way of the subjugation of nature and the assimilation of societies. Out of this free agitation sprang a literary product, great in quantity and to some degree distinguished in quality, groups of historians, poets, novelists, essayists, biographers, scientific writers. A conspicuous agency of the period was the lecture platform, which did something in the spread and popularization of information, but much more in the stimulation of independent thought and the awakening of the mind to use its own powers.

Along with this and out of this went on the movement of popular education and of the high and specialized education. More remarkable than the achievements of the common schools has been the development of the colleges, both in the departments of the humanities and of science. If I were writing of education generally, I might have something to say of the measurable disappointment of the results of the common schools as at present conducted, both as to the diffusion of information and as to the discipline of the mind and the inculcation of ethical principles; which simply means that they need improvement. But the higher education has been transformed, and mainly by the application of scientific methods, and of the philosophic spirit, to the study of history, economics, and the classics. When we are called to defend the pursuit of metaphysics or the study of the classics, either as indispensable to the discipline or to the enlargement of the mind, we are not called on to defend the methods of a generation ago. The study of Greek is no longer an exercise in the study of linguistics or the inspection of specimens of an obsolete literature, but the acquaintance with historic thought, habits, and polity, with a portion of the continuous history of the human mind, which has a vital relation to our own life.

However much or little there may be of permanent value in the vast production of northern literature, judged by continental or even English standards, the time has come when American scholarship in science, in language, in occidental or oriental letters, in philosophic and historical methods, can court comparison with any other. In some branches of research the peers of our scholars must be sought not in England but in Germany. So that in one of the best fruits of a period of intellectual agitation, scholarship, the restless movement has thoroughly vindicated itself.

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I have called your attention to this movement in order to say that it was neither accidental nor isolated. It was in the historic line, it was fed and stimulated by all that had gone before, and by all contemporary activity everywhere. New England, for instance, was alert and progressive because it kept its doors and windows open. It was hospitable in its intellectual freedom, both of trial and debate, to new ideas. It was in touch with the universal movement of humanity and of human thought and speculation. You lose some quiet by this attitude, some repose that is pleasant and even desirable perhaps, you entertain many errors, you may try many useless experiments, but you gain life and are in the way of better things. New England, whatever else we may say about it, was in the world. There was no stir of thought, of investigation, of research, of the recasting of old ideas into new forms of life, in Germany, in France, in Italy, in England, anywhere, that did not touch it and to which it did not respond with the sympathy that common humanity has in the universal progress. It kept this touch not only in the evolution and expression of thought and emotion which we call literature (whether original or imitative), but in the application of philosophic methods to education, in the attempted regeneration of society and the amelioration of its conditions by schemes of reform and discipline, relating to the institutions of benevolence and to the control of the vicious and criminal. With all these efforts go along always much false sentimentality and pseudo-philanthropy, but little by little gain is made that could not be made in a state of isolation and stagnation.

In fact there is one historic stream of human thought, aspiration, and progress; it is practically continuous, and with all its diversity of local color and movement it is a unit. If you are in it, you move; if you are out of it, you are in an eddy. The eddy may have a provincial current, but it is not in the great stream, and when it has gone round and round for a century, it is still an eddy, and will not carry you anywhere in particular. The value of the modern method of teaching and study is that it teaches the solidarity of human history, the continuance of human thought, in literature, government, philosophy, the unity of the divine purpose, and that nothing that has anywhere befallen the human race is alien to us.

I am not undervaluing the part, the important part, played by conservatism, the conservatism that holds on to what has been gained if it is good, that insists on discipline and heed to the plain teaching of experience, that refuses to go into hysterics of enthusiasm over every flighty suggestion, or to follow every leader simply because he proposes something new and strange—I do not mean the conservatism that refuses to try anything simply because it is new, and prefers to energetic life the stagnation that inevitably leads to decay. Isolation from the great historic stream of thought

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and agitation is stagnation. While this is true, and always has been true in history, it is also true, in regard to the beneficent diversity of American life, which is composed of so many elements and forces, as I have often thought and said, that what has been called the Southern conservatism in respect to beliefs and certain social problems, may have a very important part to play in the development of the life of the Republic.

I shall not be misunderstood here, where the claims of the higher life are insisted on and the necessity of pure, accurate scholarship is recognized, in saying that this expectation in regard to the South depends upon the cultivation and diffusion of the highest scholarship in all its historic consciousness and critical precision. This sort of scholarship, of widely apprehending intellectual activity, keeping step with modern ideas so far as they are historically grounded, is of the first importance. Everywhere indeed, in our industrial age,—in a society inclined to materialism, scholarship, pure and simple scholarship for its own sake, no less in Ohio than in Tennessee, is the thing to be insisted on. If I may refer to an institution, which used to be midway between the North and the South, and which I may speak of without suspicion of bias, an institution where the studies of metaphysics, the philosophy of history, the classics and pure science are as much insisted on as the study of applied sciences, the College of New Jersey at Princeton, the question in regard to a candidate for a professorship or instructorship, is not whether he was born North or South, whether he served in one army or another or in neither, whether he is a Democrat or a Republican or a Mugwump, what religious denomination he belongs to, but is he a scholar and has he a high character? There is no provincialism in scholarship.

We are not now considering the matter of the agreeableness of one society or another, whether life is on the whole pleasanter in certain conditions at the North or at the South, whether there is not a charm sometimes in isolation and even in provincialism. It is a fair question to ask, what effect upon individual lives and character is produced by an industrial and commercial spirit, and by one less restless and more domestic. But the South is now face to face with certain problems which relate her, inevitably, to the moving forces of the world. One of these is the development of her natural resources and the change and diversity of her industries. On the industrial side there is pressing need of institutions of technology, of schools of applied science, for the diffusion of technical information and skill in regard to mining and manufacturing, and also to agriculture, so that worn-out lands may be reclaimed and good lands be kept up to the highest point of production. Neither mines, forests, quarries, water-ways, nor textile fabrics can be handled to best advantage without scientific knowledge and skilled labor. The South is everywhere

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demanding these aids to her industrial development. But just in the proportion that she gets them, and because she has them, will be the need of higher education. The only safety against the influence of a rolling mill is a college, the only safety against the practical and materializing tendency of an industrial school is the increased study of whatever contributes to the higher and non-sordid life of the mind. The South would make a poor exchange for her former condition in any amount of industrial success without a corresponding development of the highest intellectual life.

But, besides the industrial problem, there is the race problem. It is the most serious in the conditions under which it is presented that ever in all history confronted a free people. Whichever way you regard it, it is the nearest insoluble. Under the Constitution it is wisely left to the action of the individual States. The heavy responsibility is with them. In the nature of things it is a matter of the deepest concern to the whole Republic, for the prosperity of every part is vital to the prosperity of the whole. In working it out you are entitled, from the outside, to the most impartial attempt to understand its real nature, to the utmost patience with the facts of human nature, to the most profound and most helpful sympathy. It is monstrous to me that the situation should be made on either side a political occasion for private ambition or for party ends.

I would speak of this subject with the utmost frankness if I knew what to say. It is not much of a confession to say that I do not. The more I study it the less I know, and those among you who give it the most anxious thought are the most perplexed, the subject has so many conflicting aspects. In the first place there is the evolution of an undeveloped race. Every race has a right to fair play in the world and to make the most of its capacities, and to the help of the more favored in the attempt. If the suggestion recently made of a wholesale migration to Mexico were carried out, the South would be relieved in many ways, though the labor problem would be a serious one for a long time, but the "elevation" would be lost sight of or relegated to a foreign missionary enterprise; and as for results to the colored people themselves, there is the example of Hayti. If another suggestion, that of abandoning certain States to this race, were carried out, there is the example of Hayti again, and, besides, an anomaly introduced into the Republic foreign to its traditions, spirit, aspirations, and process of assimilation, alien to the entire historic movement of the Aryan races, and infinitely more dangerous to the idea of the Republic than if solid Ireland were dumped down in the Mississippi valley as an independent State.

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On the other hand, there rests upon you the responsibility of maintaining a civilization—the civilization of America, not of Hayti or of Guatemala which we have so hardly won. It is neither to be expected nor desired that you should be ruled by an undeveloped race, ignorant of law, letters, history, politics, political economy. There is no right anywhere in numbers or unintelligence to rule intelligence. It is a travesty of civilization. No Northern State that I know of would submit to be ruled by an undeveloped race. And human nature is exactly in the South what it is in the North. That is one impregnable fact, to be taken as the basis of all our calculations; the whites of the South will not, cannot, be dominated, as matters now stand, by the colored race.

But, then, there is the suffrage, the universal, unqualified suffrage. And here is the dilemma. Suffrage once given, cannot be suppressed or denied, perverted by chicane or bribery without incalculable damage to the whole political body. Irregular methods once indulged in for one purpose, and towards one class, so sap the moral sense that they come to be used for all purposes. The danger is ultimately as great to those who suppress or pervert as it is to the suppressed and corrupted. It is the demoralization of all sound political action and life. I know whereof I speak. In the North, bribery in elections and intimidation are fatal to public morality. The legislature elected by bribery is a bribable body.

I believe that the fathers were right in making government depend upon the consent of the governed. I believe there has been as yet discovered no other basis of government so safe, so stable as popular suffrage, but the fathers never contemplated a suffrage without intelligence. It is a contradiction of terms. A proletariat without any political rights in a republic is no more dangerous than an unintelligent mob which can be used in elections by demagogues. Universal suffrage is not a universal panacea; it may be the best device attainable, but it is certain of abuse without safeguards. One of the absolutely necessary safeguards is an educational qualification. No one ought anywhere to exercise it who cannot read and write, and if I had my way, no one should cast a ballot who had not a fair conception of the effect of it, shown by a higher test of intelligence than the mere fact of ability to scrawl his name and to spell out a line or two in the Constitution. This much the State for its own protection is bound to require, for suffrage is an expediency, not a right belonging to universal humanity regardless of intelligence or of character.

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The charge is, with regard to this universal suffrage, that you take the fruits of increased representation produced by it, and then deny it to a portion of the voters whose action was expected to produce a different political result. I cannot but regard it as a blunder in statesmanship to give suffrage without an educational qualification, and to deem it possible to put ignorance over intelligence. You are not, responsible for the situation, but you are none the less in an illogical position before the law. Now, would you not gain more in a rectification of your position than you would lose in other ways, by making suffrage depend upon an educational qualification? I do not mean gain party-wise, but in political morals and general prosperity. Time would certainly be gained by this, and it is possible in this shifting world, in the growth of industries and the flow of populations, that before the question of supremacy was again upon you, foreign and industrial immigration would restore the race balance.

We come now to education. The colored race being here, I assume that its education, with the probabilities this involves of its elevation, is a duty as well as a necessity. I speak both of the inherent justice there is in giving every human being the chance of bettering his condition and increasing his happiness that lies in education—unless our whole theory of modern life is wrong—and also of the political and social danger there is in a degraded class numerically strong. Granted integral membership in a body politic, education is a necessity. I am aware of the danger of half education, of that smattering of knowledge which only breeds conceit, adroitness, and a consciousness of physical power, without due responsibility and moral restraint. Education makes a race more powerful both for evil and for good. I see the danger that many apprehend. And the outlook, with any amount of education, would be hopeless, not only as regards the negro and those in neighborhood relations with him, if education should not bring with it thrift, sense of responsibility as a citizen, and virtue. What the negro race under the most favorable conditions is capable of remains to be shown; history does not help us much to determine thus far. It has always been a long pull for any race to rise out of primitive conditions; but I am sure for its own sake, and for the sake of the republic where it dwells, every thoughtful person must desire the most speedy intellectual and moral development possible of the African race. And I mean as a race.

Some distinguished English writers have suggested, with approval, that the solution of the race problem in this country is fusion, and I have even heard discouraged Southerners accept it as a possibility. The result of their observation of the amalgamation of races and colors in Egypt, in Syria, and Mexico, must be very different from mine. When races of different color mingle there is almost invariably loss of physical stamina, and the lower moral qualities of each are developed in the combination. No race that regards its own future would desire it. The absorption theory as applied to America is, it seems to me, chimerical.

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But to return to education. It should always be fitted to the stage of development. It should always mean discipline, the training of the powers and capacities. The early pioneers who planted civilization on the Watauga, the Holston, the Kentucky, the Cumberland, had not much broad learning—they would not have been worse if they had had more but they had courage, they were trained in self-reliance, virile common sense, and good judgment, they had inherited the instinct and capacity of self-government, they were religious, with all their coarseness they had the fundamental elements of nobility, the domestic virtues, and the public spirit needed in the foundation of states. Their education in all the manly arts and crafts of the backwoodsman fitted them very well for the work they had to do. I should say that the education of the colored race in America should be fundamental. I have not much confidence in an ornamental top-dressing of philosophy, theology, and classic learning upon the foundation of an unformed and unstable mental and moral condition. Somehow, character must be built up, and character depends upon industry, upon thrift, upon morals, upon correct ethical perceptions. To have control of one's powers, to have skill in labor, so that work in any occupation shall be intelligent, to have self-respect, which commonly comes from trained capacity, to know how to live, to have a clean, orderly house, to be grounded in honesty and the domestic virtues,—these are the essentials of progress. I suppose that the education to produce these must be an elemental and practical one, one that fits for the duties of life and not for some imaginary sphere above them.

To put it in a word, and not denying that there must be schools for teaching the teachers, with the understanding that the teachers should be able to teach what the mass most needs to know—what the race needs for its own good today, are industrial and manual training schools, with the varied and practical discipline and arts of life which they impart.

What then? What of the 'modus vivendi' of the two races occupying the same soil? As I said before, I do not know. Providence works slowly. Time and patience only solve such enigmas. The impossible is not expected of man, only that he shall do today the duty nearest to him. It is easy, you say, for an outsider to preach waiting, patience, forbearance, sympathy, helpfulness. Well, these are the important lessons we get out of history. We struggle, and fume, and fret, and accomplish little in our brief hour, but somehow the world gets on. Fortunately for us, we cannot do today the work of tomorrow. All the gospel in the world can be boiled down into a single precept. Do right now. I have observed that the boy who starts in the morning with a determination to behave himself till bedtime, usually gets through the day without a thrashing.

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But of one thing I am sure. In the rush of industries, in the race problem, it is more and more incumbent upon such institutions as the University of the South to maintain the highest standard of pure scholarship, to increase the number of men and women devoted to the intellectual life. Long ago, in the middle of the seventeenth century, John Ward of Stratford-on-Avon, clergyman and physician, wrote in his diary: "The wealth of a nation depends upon its populousness, and its populousness depends upon the liberty of conscience that is granted to it, for this calls in strangers and promotes trading." Great is the attraction of a benign climate and of a fruitful soil, but a greater attraction is an intelligent people, that values the best things in life, a society hospitable, companionable, instinct with intellectual life, awake to the great ideas that make life interesting.

As I travel through the South and become acquainted with its magnificent resources and opportunities, and know better and love more the admirable qualities of its people, I cannot but muse in a fond prophecy upon the brilliant part it is to play in the diversified life and the great future of the American Republic. But, North and South, we have a hard fight with materializing tendencies. God bless the University of the South!