






UNIVERSITY OF N.C. AT CHAPEL HILL



00039136844

**This book must  
be taken from the  
Library building.**





Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2010 with funding from  
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill



ADDRESS

OF

REV. DR. BARNAS SEARS, D. D., LL. D.,

ON

THE OBJECTS AND ADVANTAGES

OF

NORMAL SCHOOLS.



DURHAM, N. C.:

W. T. BLACKWELL & CO.'S STEAM PRINTING HOUSE,  
1878.





# POPULAR EDUCATION.

## The Objects and Advantages of Normal Schools.

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA, }  
CHAPEL HILL, N. C., July 25th, 1878. }

TO THE MEMBERS OF THE UNIVERSITY NORMAL SCHOOL OF 1878 :

The following letter and address of the Rev. Barnas Sears, D. D., LL. D., the distinguished Agent of the Peabody Fund, reached me so late that I could not comply with his suggestion to "read one or two brief extracts to the School." There is no one in the United States who has greater experience or authority in matters relating to education than Dr. Sears. No one is more worthy to be listened to with respect and deference by the teachers of the land. This address so ably sets forth the importance of education and the impossibility of promoting it without previously training the teachers, that the whole should be carefully read and thoroughly digested by you all. I therefore take pleasure in forwarding to each of you a copy, hoping that its perusal will in some measure compensate for the disappointment you felt in not hearing it spoken by its eminent author.

Very respectfully,

KEMP P. BATTLE,  
President University of N. C.

---

STAUNTON, VA., July 22d, 1878.

*President Kemp P. Battle, LL. D.:*

MY DEAR SIR : At this late hour, I find that, owing to sickness in my family, I cannot fulfil my engagement to deliver an address at the close of your Normal School. The best I can do is to send you the address I have prepared, the substance of which I had already delivered at the Normal College at Nashville. Perhaps you may have a few spare moments when you can read one or two brief extracts to the School. At any rate, you can see what I had intended to do.

Yours very sincerely,

B. SEARS.

## THE ADDRESS.

In all great public interests, there is a simple underlying principle from which the whole may be developed. That principle in regard to public schools may be stated thus: Man was made for education as much as the earth was for cultivation. Both the rational and the material world lose most of their value when neglected. Not long ago I passed, on my way to Texas, through the cultivated States of Ohio, Indiana and Illinois. I then passed through the rich but uncultivated Indian Territory. The contrast was painful. The bounties of nature seemed to be wasted for the want of the hand of industry. I have seen a similar contrast between a cultivated and uncultivated people. Can it be that in one case it is the same fertile earth, and in the other the same race of rational beings? Look at Britain as it was in the days of Julius Cæsar, and at England as it is to-day, and tell me what has made the difference? It is culture. Compare the Germany of Tacitus with the Prussia of the present day, and you will see the same contrast. What has China, India, Mongolia and Central Africa, during so many ages, done for the progress of mankind? Their history, like that of the native tribes of America, is mostly worthless because it lacks the essential element of a progressive civilization.

The difference between a totally uneducated and a highly educated man or people is as great as between an ant and an elephant. Look at a boor of Siberia, and then turn your thoughts to a Humboldt, and you would think you had crossed a continent in the animal kingdom. I agree with Huxley when he says that one such man as Arkwright or Watt is, in a pecuniary point of view, worth £200,000 to England alone. There is probably vastly more of undeveloped resources in the capacities of man, than in the unseen mineral wealth of the world. If both individual man and nations are worth to the world one hundred times more when highly cultivated, as England and Prussia are now, than when sunken in the ignorance of barbarism, education is a prime necessity to man, as it is his peculiar prerogative. Education, then, should be universal because the nature and necessities of man are universal. It is the immense disparity between these two, the want and the supply in the matter of education which is the cause of some of our greatest troubles at this very day. With all the learning of individual men, there is among us and around us a frightful mass of ignorant and almost useless citizens, which the educated class cannot control. If you inquire into the cause of much of our domestic unhappiness, you will find it is the want of culture and refinement. The son goes out at night for pleasure because he finds so little at home. The daughter seeks amusement abroad by day and by night, for the same reason. The husband goes to the saloon and other places of resort because his wife's stock of entertaining conversation is exhausted; and she herself sits solitary at home in the wearisome and dull evenings, because the family finds more pleasure elsewhere.

Now, if this be the history of many families in every community, how much of intellectual elevation, of high-toned moral sentiment and public spirit will be found among them? What are their social enjoyments—rational and improving, or low and degrading? elevating and refining intercourse, or the sensual pleasures of eating and drinking, and vulgar and commonplace conversation?

I need not ask what are the occupations of such families. They will be of the plainest and coarsest kind. The arts will be of the rudest sort. That skill, which in this age is an essential element of prosperity, will be wanting.

The sad story to be told of this class is that individual life is dull, monotonous and unthinking; home life, coarse, blunt and uninviting; social life, low and unimproving; civil life, jealous, selfish and quarrelsome; and political life, narrow-minded, clan-nish and semi-barbarous. It is as Bœotia compared to Attica; Ireland compared to Scotland; Spain to England or Prussia; Spanish America to the United States.

It was once, in the days of Rousseau, fashionable to admire at a distance, savage life. Men talked and wrote much about the pure and simple life of the children of nature. We have since learned that there are more cannibals than saints among these supposed innocents. We now hear a certain class of politicians prate about the virtue and purity of an untaught rural population, as if gross ignorance were the only true basis of political integrity and public morality. If this is not putting darkness for light and light for darkness, we do not know what is. The absurdity is too gross to admit of serious argument. It is brain, not argument, that is wanted.

And yet there are men who are indifferent, and others who are ever hostile to the general diffusion of knowledge by means of public schools. The former know not its value, because they have not yet learned what all others have—that “knowledge is power.” Of its elevating influence, its broad day-light upon the soul, and its life-giving energy, they are totally ignorant. Though the world is full of examples, to them the page of history is a blank.

The other class appear to be more knowing than the wisest men, and assume to be public teachers and guides. They are the apostles of ignorance, as if divinely commissioned to keep the veil on the human mind, which others are endeavoring to remove. They forget that truth and the soul are made for each other, as much as light is made for the eye, and the eye for the light. They heed not the proverbs of Solomon, nor the voice of the wise men of one hundred generations in regard to seeking knowledge. In their view, the many exist for the benefit of the few—the one to do the thinking of society, the others to do the work. Light is to shine upon these few favored sons of fortune, while thick darkness is to cover the people.

There are men—I hope there are none in North Carolina—who if we may believe them, are not hostile to the public schools; they only wish to cut down unnecessary expenses. They want cheap schools—the cheaper the better. They would graduate the pay of teachers by the wages of the day laborer. “The poor,” they say, “do not need accomplished teachers or expensive schools. Nothing but the simplest elements of knowledge need be taught them. They have no claim for anything better. Many of them are vicious. Let them put their children to work. The lower classes will never rise. Why trouble ourselves about them? Education is to them a doubtful boon; it often injures the laborer by making him discontented. It is all fanaticism and false philanthropy.” They are now prepared to turn round and say that the public schools are vulgar; that it is no place for the children of good families. Of course, the rich ought not to pay taxes for the schools that do not benefit them. These men are not opposed to public schools. Oh, no! They are the friends of a moderate, economical system of education. Deliver us from such friends. How came such fossils to turn up in this age? They are at least three centuries behind the times. They were born and bred in Sleepy Hollow. The wheel of time has been turning, and will not go back to accommodate them. The world has moved somewhat since such ideas were entertained. Feudalism is dead and buried, and not even its ghost will ever revisit the glimpses of the moon. The peasant of former centuries has disappeared; the citizen has taken his place. Now, we have only to neglect this mass of the people, to suffer their offspring to grow up in ignorance, and we shall have as plentiful a harvest of communists as France and chartists as England has ever had. Indeed, these untutored, imported citizens, buried in our coal mines as deeply as they are buried in ignorance, are foremost in all disturbances. They come mostly from the Old World. They are secluded from society, and breathe not the atmosphere of our institutions. They suffer from want, and in their ignorance know not the cause, and become the enemies of the property-holders. Strikers are the natural outgrowth of ignorance. Education is the only remedy. An ignorant populace can always be led by demagogues.

Now which is the wiser, the nobler, to vulgarize and brutalize the lower classes, or to humanize and civilize them? That is the question for us to settle. Shall we or shall we not fasten the shackles of ignorance upon one-half or one-third of our fellow-citizens?

What folly it is in this Nineteenth century to repeat the blunders of preceding centuries! It was not the light of the Reformation, but the darkness which preceded it, and which still remained, that caused the Peasants' war in Germany. It was not Voltaire and Rousseau and their compeers that produced the horrors of the French Revolution, but Louis XIV and XV, by sinking the people to the level of brutes. The wild beasts were only unchained by new political events. And we have terrible convulsions in store

for us, if we do not tame and humanize the fierce and ferocious elements of society by a diligent and careful training of a new generation. We have signs and tokens enough of approaching danger to give us timely warning.

This crusade against public schools is as unwise as it is perilous. We live in a scientific age, and cannot get out of it. Henceforth all successful business will be conducted on scientific principles. The muscles of the hand and arm have given way to machinery. The ways of our fathers, which answered for them, will not answer for us. Improvements have infinitely varied and multiplied competitions. In Virginia the carriage-maker, the cabinet-maker, the manufacturer of the implements of husbandry and of household articles, find that the material is carried from our forests almost to the Canada line, worked up by steam or water power, and returned and sold here at lower rates than we can manufacture them. Hand labor is of little account; brain work has the ascendancy everywhere. Even in so simple a work as that of making boots and shoes, not less than seventeen patented inventions are now used. Crimping, stitching, sewing, pegging, eyeleting, riveting are done in less time than it would require to describe the process.

One woman can make the eyelet-holes of 1,440 pairs of shoes in a day. The consequence is that fewer hands are employed, although more work is done. In Massachusetts 30,000 fewer men in the shoe business alone are employed than there were in 1855. And yet the manufacture is increased by \$71,000,000 a year. In like manner, the great inventions of recent times have revolutionized nearly all branches of business. The *New York Tribune*, for its 30,000 readers, rolls off from its revolving cylinder and folds up twenty-four miles of printed matter for its columns every day, and not a human hand touches the work, which is all done by machinery. But the ignorant cannot be trusted to work this machinery. The people, or State, that is determined to do business in the primitive way dooms itself to irretrievable inferiority and insignificance.

Business is no longer provincial. Those who are to prosper in it must have a wider outlook than was formerly necessary. They must take vastly more into their calculations than their fathers did. Not only is the sphere of influences affecting them wider, but the relations of trade are more complicated. Business is in the hands of experts, and a novice, though honest and industrious, is sure to be outdone. Competition is sharper than it was, and the competitors more numerous, and improved methods make it harder to keep up with the times; the adaptation of means to ends is more exact; and the study and forecast of coming changes in the state of business have become more common by means of increased knowledge.

In these disastrous times our men must go to work with clearer heads as well as braver hearts. Those who take most advantage of the facilities furnished by science will carry off the prizes. While industry and economy will do much, skill will do more.

The more mind there is applied to business the more prosperity there will be.

General education, therefore, is the condition on which the success of the individual, the happiness of families, the peace of society and the prosperity of the State depend. How is this grand object best to be obtained? Various methods have been tried during many centuries and in all civilized countries, and the result of these experiments is the almost unanimous opinion that not only the best but the only way is by a State system of public schools. All other kinds of schools, whatever their merits in other respects, have failed to accomplish this object.

#### PART II.

As soon as such a system is established by law, and properly organized, there is at once a demand for an army of teachers. There must be not only a much larger supply of teachers, but the worthless ones must be weeded out by strict examinations.

One of the chief dangers is that of employing cheap teachers. Landor represented Hanley as saying "the readiest made shoes are boots cut down." So men think the readiest made teachers are cut-down men of other employments. We have hundreds of such teachers, not one of whom has the slightest doubt of his fitness for the office.

In the great demand for them, caused by the multiplication of schools, many unsuitable persons will be likely to be employed for want of better. Students, sometimes, who have no aptitude nor love for the occupation, will submit temporarily to the unwelcome task for the sake of replenishing their purses. Persons out of employment will offer to teach till they can find something better to do. The young and inexperienced will always stand ready for the service, which will prove a dead loss to the pupils. As none of these classes of teachers will give satisfaction, a new teacher will be sought every session, so that nothing but change and confusion will be perpetual. The school boards, seeing the worthlessness of teachers, will lower their wages. The more promising teachers will retire from the field, which will be held by the incompetent. No ambitious youth will think of preparing himself for an office so little respected and so little remunerative. The schools will sink in character and reputation just in proportion as the teachers sink. Good families will withdraw their children and place them in private schools, and will be opposed to voting money when so little good is accomplished. And with the great majority of children the golden period for education will be idly passed away, never to be recalled.

The great fault with untrained teachers is that they do little but teach the words and formulas of books. A Normal graduate teaches things, principles, thoughts. Every point is examined orally; and subjects are sifted by the exercise of the judgment as well as the memory. The pupil is made to see with his own eyes

and to rely on his own observations. Books are a mere syllabus, a skeleton, to be clothed with flesh by the teacher and pupil.

Practical knowledge of almost every kind is worked in continually with the subjects of study. All the common objects of sight, such as flowers, plants, trees, rocks, birds, insects, tame and wild animals; forms, colors and dimensions; manners, morals, laws of health; gymnastic exercises, drawing, and the cultivation of the voice, receive special attention. This common sense knowledge of useful things is a vital part of popular education. Instead of this, how often are the poor children wearied with the endless repetition of mere words, the dry and stale lumber of the books.

The only way to prevent such disastrous results and to make the schools the pride of the people, is for the State to make provision for thoroughly training a large body of teachers. When schools are established in every district, and a law is passed that none but competent teachers shall be employed, a profession is established and persons can afford to prepare themselves for it. It will thus become a permanent and attractive occupation when the schools become annual, and when graded schools open the way for promotion from the lower to the higher grades.

To make a suitable provision among teachers certain, it is necessary to establish Normal Schools, which is the proper function of the State. This will give dignity to the profession, and produce a radical change in the schools. Can anything be more desirable than these two objects? Is there any greater reproach resting upon our system of education than the low character of many of the schools, and the utter incompetency of many of the teachers?

I know it is said by those who do not believe in progress that a teacher is born, not made, which in its true sense only means that he should have a natural aptitude for his calling, just as if this principle were not applicable to a lawyer, physician or even of an artisan of any kind. In addition to this aptitude, which only indicates what one's occupation should be without fitting him for it, every man should be bred to his profession. To be a great scholar, even a genius must be a diligent student. To be a great General one must be not only born to command, but educated to command.

There is nothing peculiar in the case of the school teacher. His profession is like other professions, and requires special preparation as all others do and precisely for the same reason.

The objection has been made to Normal Schools, that knowledge is what the teacher needs, and that our literary institutions furnish it best. This is only half of what the teacher needs, and much the easier half. You will find twenty who have this qualification where you find one who knows how to teach and govern. This assertion is made not from a theoretical point of view, but from a large experience and observation. I was for some years connected with the public schools of Massachusetts. School boards who had formerly employed college graduates, but more recently graduates of the State Normal Schools, could not be induced to appoint as

teacher a young man just from college without a normal training. This is the more remarkable as the members of the boards were themselves generally college graduates. It was found by trial that a knowledge of what is commonly taught in learned schools is not all that a teacher needs. He must know how to enter into the hidden recesses of the youthful mind, and from that point work outward and upward. The pupil is like a treasure in the sea, and the teacher like a diver who goes to the bottom to bring it up. If you do not descend and ascertain first exactly where the child's mind is you will not bring him up where you are. The descent of the teacher is essential to the ascent of the pupil.

The *beginnings* of knowledge are obscure and mysterious. This is especially true of written language, the first thing with which the primary teacher has to deal. The sound of long *o*, for example, has seven different representations, and each of these has a different sound in other words. How does the ordinary teacher go to work? He makes the child commit to memory the *names*, not the *powers*, of these letters. What would you think of the teacher of chemistry who, instead of showing what oxygen, hydrogen and nitrogen are, should merely give out the *names* to be committed to memory. There is but one thing more absurd, and that is, what an educated man once did who could teach Latin, Greek and mathematics. He called up a child, and pointing to the middle of the alphabet, said: "Go to your seat and get that lesson."

*He who can begin with a child and skillfully carry him through the first fifteen years of his life, does the greatest thing that is ever done for him.*

*It is said by those who know no better, that a Normal School is nothing after all but a State High School. They might just as well say that the science of medicine is nothing but physiology, civil engineering nothing but mathematics, and mining nothing but mineralogy, all of which are taught in our colleges. All professions are based upon general science and literature, but are built up on a structure of their own. There is a science of teaching and an art of teaching. A complete, theoretical and practical course, illustrated in all the branches to be taught, with their environments, is found nowhere out of the Normal School. To make this evident, one needs only to learn what a Normal School actually is.*

Besides reviewing elementary studies to see that there are no chasms, no weak points, and pursuing advanced studies to shed their light on the former, both courses are peculiar in this, that every step is taken with reference to the art of teaching. Then there is the difficult but indispensable study of the juvenile mind: its intuitions and instincts; its dominant faculties and the order of their development; its delicate organism, weaknesses and perils; its active, but one-sided curiosity; its tastes and aversions; the causes of its lethargy or apparent dullness; the kind and degree of stimulus it needs; its social or unsocial tendencies; the play of its various passions; its biases to good or evil; its condition, as









