

Address delivered February 6th, 1885, by Hon. J. L. M. Curry ... in response to an invitation extended in a joint resolution of the Senate and House of representatives of Alabama. Reported ... by E. Workman.

Curry, J. L. M. (Jabez Lamar Monroe), 1825-1903.

Montgomery, Barrett & co., printers, 1885.

<http://hdl.handle.net/2027/loc.ark:/13960/t6349k97m>

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ADDRESS

DELIVERED FEBRUARY 6TH, 1885,

BY

HON. J. L. M. CURRY,

GENERAL AGENT

OF THE

PEABODY EDUCATION FUND,

IN RESPONSE TO AN INVITATION EXTENDED IN A JOINT RESOLUTION OF THE
SENATE AND HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF ALABAMA.

REPORTED STENOGRAPHICALLY BY E. WORKMAN.

MONTGOMERY, ALA.:

BARBETT & CO., STATE PRINTERS AND BINDERS.

1885.

J. M. Curry

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ADDRESS.

In introducing Dr. Curry, Governor O'Neal said :

Senators, Representatives and Fellow Citizens: I have been requested to introduce to you a distinguished gentleman, eminent for his talents and for his virtues, and who has a national reputation. Formerly a distinguished citizen of the State of Alabama, he has rendered great service to his State in the General Assembly, and in the Congress of the United States. It affords me pleasure to introduce to you the Hon. J. L. M. Curry.

Dr. Curry said :

Governor, Senators, Representatives, Ladies and Gentlemen : Loving as I do the State of Alabama with all the intensity of an earnest nature, devoting as I do all the energies of my being to the cause of the education of the masses of both races, I do not ascribe the honor of this invitation to anything personal to myself but to the fact that I am the agent of the Peabody Education Fund—the most magnificent gift ever made by a single person in the interest of humanity. It was not, mark you, made to his own section, exultant in victory, but to a people smitten, peeled, subjugated, over whose fair and fertile fields rolled a tide, the reflection of the inky blackness of which darkened the heavens. It was the first voice of cheer and hope that came to the South while her heart quivered in speechless agony and was in aid of those who had suffered most from the ravages of a fratricidal war. The Southern States, in testimony of their gratitude, should unitedly erect, in the hall of the nation's

glory in Washington, a statue of marble or bronze to their illustrious benefactor.

A State government is a representative Republic. A representative is chosen for his patriotism, fidelity, wisdom and integrity. It surely is a high honor to have the welfare and liberties of a people committed to one's hands. To the discharge of these high duties he should bring a clear head and an honest heart—a mind well stored by diligent and painstaking study, a judgment free from prejudice, and a courage and conscientiousness which bribes, intimidation, selfishness, or fear of popular displeasure can not shake. He reflects the conscience, the high resolve, the intelligent patriotism, or the passions and hates of his constituency. He is a lawmaker. Law is the expression of sovereignty. Behind law, which should be the embodiment of justice and right, sits enthroned for its enforcement the power, the majesty, of the commonwealth. I believe with Sir James Mackintosh that "there can be no scheme or measure so beneficial to the State as the mere existence of men who would not do a base act for any public advantage, and that a State can possess no richer patrimony and no purer wealth than the stainless honor of its public men"—men of earnest convictions and noble aims, to whom "power is not a possession to be grasped but a trust to be fulfilled."

The constitution of Alabama, which on the threshold of your legislative duties you swore to support, enjoins that "the General Assembly shall"—an imperative word—"shall establish, organize and maintain a system of public schools throughout the State for the benefit of the children thereof." This is not a temporary, local or subordinate duty. It is general, continuing, paramount, affecting the present and the future, every family, every citizen and every interest of the State. These schools are the colleges for the people, the masses, and in their successful maintenance is the real test of political intelligence and statesmanship. Education,

in a broad sense, includes all the influences that result in growth. It is the product of all the institutions, all the environments of man. It comprehends whatever helps to shape the human being, to stimulate faculties to action, to form habits, to mould character, to make the individual man what he is, or to hinder him from being what he is not. It is both a result and a process. For our purpose, let us consider it a process of development and transformation so as to realize the ideal man and accomplish the end of his being. Education is then not to be tested by the quantity or kind of knowledge acquired so much as by the capacity for using knowledge and the "extent to which knowledge gained has been turned into *faculty* so as to be available for purposes of life." The "new education," of which we hear so much, means the best method that the experience of 4,000 years and the improved knowledge of the human mind and of child nature have evolved for bringing a skilled teacher in contact with the mind of the pupil.

This capacity for education and for spiritual religion differentiates the human species from the lower animals. The range of their acquisitions is limited and is usually referred to instinct, as superseding the necessity of reason. Man is made for education as much as the earth is for culture. Truth and mind are as much complementary as light and the eye. The nature and the needs of man are the same, and hence education is an universal necessity and right. The child of the poor man, of the black man, has the same indefeasible *right* to the unfolding of his powers, the exertion of his faculties, with the child of the rich man, or of the white man. There is the whole argument in a nutshell. Wherever there is a man—man by virtue of his creation in God's image—a responsible, volitional, immortal man—he has a right to the fullest moral and intellectual development, and to me it seems arrant blasphemy to deny it.

Education is not only essential to usefulness, happiness

and dignity of man, to truest manhood and womanhood, but also to good government and high civilization. An ignorant people needs restraint, repression, visible and strong authority; a wise people may be entrusted with self-government. "The maximum of education is the minimum of government." Civilization, good order and refinement are proportionate to intelligence. Crime is often to be traced to ignorance or improperly developed faculties. The records of any criminal court or penitentiary will show that the criminal classes are largely furnished by illiterates. The President of the Council on Education in Great Britain recently said, "One of the great features of the working of the Education act had been the startling diminution of crime, especially among juveniles." Mr. Foster, the author of the act, in a late speech, referring to the diminution of crime said "that progress great and material had been made in the habits, almost in the natures, of men. * * * The two great causes of the beneficial change are education and temperance. As the school rooms grow full, prison cells become vacant. * * * It is far cheaper to pay even a moderate school master than the best of prison wardens." The report of the Bureau of Education for 1872, summing up the evidence of the intimate relation of crime and ignorance, says that one-third of all criminals are totally uneducated, that four-fifths are practically uneducated, and that the proportion of criminals from the illiterate classes is at least tenfold as great as the proportion from those having some education. Education is not regeneration nor a substitute for it, but developed mental power certainly lessens subjection to lower appetites and brutal instincts. As you multiply mental resources, the taste for the gross and sensual is somewhat corrected and subdued, higher enjoyments are opened and one's mere impulses are held in check by the habit of thinking and the companionship of good books.

Education is the fundamental basis of general and perma-

nent prosperity. Poverty is the inevitable result of ignorance. Capital follows the school house. Thrift accompanies governmental action in behalf of schools. Macaulay, in urging an educational grant, said that State education in Scotland, "tried under disadvantages, produced an improvement to which it would be difficult to find a parallel in any age or country." "In spite of the rigor of the climate and the sterility of the earth, Scotland became a country which had no reason to envy the fairest portions of the globe." "If we look at the matter in the lowest point of view, if we consider human beings merely as producers of wealth, the difference between an intelligent and stupid population estimated in pounds, shillings and pence, exceeds a hundred fold the proposed outlay." Education opens to the masses new avenues of business and profitable careers, and puts in the hands of all an instrument whereby alone advance in life becomes possible. Success and wealth are to the largest intelligence rather than to the largest capital. Potentiality is more in the brain than in the muscle. The two must form partnership. As the world makes strides, a greater faculty, more industry and more intelligence are required. Unless the laborer is educated, civilized nations are now seeing that his industrial products can not sustain competition in the markets of the world. Mr. Mundella states that 40 years ago Germany and other nations saw that the only way to compete with the industries of England, which had an unrivalled geographical position and could command capital at the lowest rates of interest, was not by wealth but by intelligence, and as a result Liebig introduced science and art in connection with the German industries. Berlin has lately opened a technical college which cost £340,000. England realizes that if she holds her own as the foremost industrial nation, she can not neglect technical education. France, attributing the rise of Germany to her system of education, is making gigantic efforts in the same direction.

If we unite the practical knowledge of field and workshop with the intelligence and knowledge that science brings to bear, we can soon understand what Watt and Stephenson, Bessemer and Whitworth, Howe and Whitney and Edison have done in forwarding the industries of the world.

Borrowing the thought and somewhat the language of Dr. Wm. T. Harris, I advance a step in the argument and affirm that the recognition of government makes things become property and confirms and protects. The quality of the property depends on the community which recognizes it. In a cultivated community it is raised to a high potency of value. In a barbarous community it may not be worth the risks incident to its possession. Franchises, vested rights, incorporeal hereditaments, copy-rights, patent rights, &c., are the outgrowth of civilization and all imply advanced intelligence. Property in the highest sense exists only where the largest enlightenment obtains. This enlightenment obtains in proportion to the universality of education. Education is approximately universal only where it is organized, controlled and maintained by the State. Property in the highest sense can exist only where it is taxed for the education of the people.

Some contend that it is unjust to burden their property with the education of the children of other people. It may be well to remember that the rights of property are put on a firm basis when its duties are practically acknowledged, and it is to the interest of property to make a generous acknowledgment of these obligations. The rights of property harmonize with the right of men to be educated, to live truly and worthily, to attain the end of their creation. Property must pay a ransom for the privileges it enjoys and it will find it to its advantage to provide insurance against the risks to which it is exposed, to guard against the perils of ignorance, agrarianism, nihilism and dynamite. Education, it is true, is for the advantage of the children, but also

of the community and the community ought to pay for it. To compel the poor, even if they were able, to educate their children is a tax not proportionate to their ability but to their wants and necessities. Taxation is not an unmixed evil. When taxes collected are expended for just administration, wise and honest government, maintenance of good roads, providing adequate supply of water and light and sustaining public schools, they are not so much a burden as a proper distribution of a part of the annual product for the protection and welfare of society. Dr. Mayo, so well known and esteemed in the South for his ministry of education, forcibly says, "The State or community that taxes bravely and amply for public education will find itself more and more relieved from the thousand perils of public dishonesty, public corruption, and the hateful charge for crime and pauperism, and the manifold curses that, like a flock of buzzards, hang over an ignorant people."

Universal education is indispensable to American citizenship and free institutions. For good or for evil, in the United States, Democracy has triumphed and popular government has supplanted the government of the few. In populous countries there is always a helpless, shiftless class, who in a Republic are both a burden and a danger. The problem of free government is complicated by the presence, citizenship and suffrage of the negroes, an alien race of African origin. We must accept the influence of these new and suddenly made citizens, this lower stratum upon society, politics and government. We can not avoid danger or duty by shutting eyes, or casting responsibility on the North. Our own well being is imperiled. The danger increases our obligation. There is solidarity of citizenship. We must lift up the degraded, or they will drag us down.

Manhood suffrage is a terrible power and society may well tremble at what it may do for anarchy or despotism. Ten million of men have ballots in their hands and about two

million are illiterate. Of illiterate voters, the census of 1880 gives to Alabama 24,450 whites and 95,408 blacks. Add 120,858 colored female adults, and you may well be appalled at what confronts the statesman, the patriot, the Christian. I pity the simpleton who wraps himself in the robe of self-complacent ignorance or prejudice and refuses to look squarely in the face this overmastering question. The great preacher, Robt. Hall, used this strong language: "Nothing in reality renders legitimate governments so insecure as extreme ignorance of the people. It is this which yields them an easy prey to seduction, makes them the victims of prejudices and false alarms, and so ferocious withal, that their interference in a time of public commotion is more to be dreaded than the eruption of a volcano. * * * Look at the popular insurrections and massacres in France: of what description of persons were those ruffians composed? * * They were the very scum of the people, destitute of all moral culture, whose atrocity was only equalled by their ignorance, as might well be expected, when one was the legitimate parent of the other."

I have been told since I came to Montgomery that if you educate the "laboring classes" they will become discontented and aspiring. The imaginations of some men are haunted by the prospective disappearance of scavengers and boot-blacks, when all men are taught the three R's. There is a vague apprehension that somebody's children—not the objectors—being instructed, will be lifted above their station in life. Out of every one hundred children in Saxony and Wurtemberg ninety-six attended school and we have heard of no special disobedience, idleness or insubordination in those countries where children are so highly favored. What creates discontent with an inferior position is to be encouraged. Man's vocation is perpetual growth. Let him push beyond and above the hard and narrow limits of the present and reach after the ideal. No one should be content to remain in servitude and vassalage. "These that

have turned the world upside down have come hither also." It is a libel on the social order to make it dependent on ignorance and servility. Instead of letting distinctions rest on mere artificial conventionalities, or legal subordinations, let them rather rest on usefulness, integrity, fidelity to truth, aristocracy of soul. Niebuhr said, years ago, of the Italians that they were destitute of hope and all the springs of great and noble thoughts were choked up. An American citizen should not be a mere machine, a proletary. "The finest fruit earth holds up to its maker is a man," a developed man. Trade, law, government, science, education and religion are but so many schoolmasters for training a man. "Europe ends at Pyrennees and then Africa begins." Two centuries ago Spain was a first class power. Now she is below some of her then Colonies. Out of a population of 17,000,000, two and a quarter million can not read and only 715,000 women can read. That tells the tale.

Alabama has sought with courage and wisdom to meet the constitutional requirement in reference to education and to adapt herself to the changes which have occurred since 1860. A comparison of school statistics for five years shows most commendable progress.

	WHITES.	COL.	TOTAL.
1879. school pop.	214.098.	162.551.	376.649.
1884. " "	233.555.	186.209.	419.764.
1879. num. enrol.	106.950.	67.635.	174.585.
1884. " "	131.513.	84.065.	215.578.
1879. av. daily at.	65.936.	46.438.	112.374.
1884. " " "	78.815.	55.595.	134.410.
1879. no schs. taug't	3.177.	1.494.	4.671.
1884. " " "	3.421.	1.797.	5.218.
1879. am't exp'd w. sch.	\$208.568.	col. sch. \$155.849.	
1884. " "	284.649.	" "	202.131.

An efficient public school system needs a well defined and *permanent* educational policy, the product of sagacious and

liberal statesmanship, unalterable except for improvement. Free schools are a perpetual duty and can not be discharged once for all. The obligation is continuing, co-extensive with and necessary to the well being and life of the State. The system of schools is not so much an immediate creation as a steady growth. We should strive to perfect, to have a sustaining public opinion behind, to create a well merited confidence, to have schools good enough for the richest and cheap enough for the poorest. Governors, judges, legislators and citizens should accustom themselves to look upon public schools as they do upon *habeas corpus* or trial by jury, as the foundation of prosperity, the crown of glory.

(a) The State should enjoin and maintain in every town and school district, where the population justifies, a sufficient number of schools for the education of all the children in the rudimentary branches. If left to the will of each locality, there will not be a general or uniform system. To secure economy and efficiency in teaching, the schools should be graded according to the capacity of the pupils.

(b) General revenues are needed to equalize burdens, make schools possible in poorer and less populous sections, justify State supervision and control, and ensure the continuance and permanence of the system. No tax on property is more legitimate than that for universal education. Unless this is recognized, the system had better be abolished. Experience has shown that voluntary or denominational enterprise is inadequate to secure general education. This necessarily is the work of the State. "A limitation of intelligence is a limitation of citizenship, and ignorance on the part of some is an abridgement of the liberty of others."

(c) The general appropriation should be supplemented by local taxation. The most efficient schools are those where the local revenues are constant and liberal. Local interest is secured,—watchfulness as to results, and an energetic public sentiment.

^A(d) State superintendent to take general supervision is indispensable. Special qualifications are needed, for he is to be clothed with authority and responsibility. He should be a superior man, full of enthusiasm, knowing thoroughly the work of each grade of his schools, and ever on the alert to secure excellence. He is to understand and interpret the school law, to study other systems, to suggest or introduce reforms, to stimulate interest in his work, to attend Institutes, to keep himself *en rapport* with teachers and be their adviser and friend. The office should not be political, nor conferred as a reward for partisan services. The general administration should be on a strictly non-partisan basis and without any political entanglements. A school officer, or teacher, no more than a juryman, should be chosen for his party relations. Frequent changes are a serious misfortune; permanence ensures experience, intelligence and progress.

(e) Local agencies are needful auxiliaries to the general direction, and thorough county supervision has been demonstrated to be most helpful in bringing the schools up to the proper standard.

(f) In assuming the responsibility of establishing and maintaining free schools, there is the resulting obligation of providing trained teachers. Public school teachers are to be the only teachers of the masses. Obviously there is much waste of money, time and talents in employing unskilled and incompetent teachers. The income of the Peabody Fund is hereafter to be used largely in teacher training. Observation and inquiry furnish conclusive evidence as to the advantage of trained teachers, in the methods and processes of instruction, in the organization and management and discipline of the schools, in elevating the profession of teaching, and in educating the people to a better estimate of the true object and value of the school system. Normal Schools and Teachers' Institutes have been found

to be the most efficient instrumentalities for the instruction of teachers. This State has three normal schools for white and three for colored teachers. They might be more distinctively *normal* and will doubtless improve in that respect. Nothing has been done for Teachers' Institutes. Teaching well is difficult and demands special culture and training. "Knowing what should be taught, and how to teach it, is a high art." The education received in schools and colleges is a meagre result compared with what might be accomplished if teachers knew how to teach so as to secure the best results. A good scholar is not necessarily a good teacher. The *what* and the *how* are two very different things. If the art of teaching is founded on the science of education, and the science of education is founded on the science of the mind, then it is not true that any respectable anybody, any Dogberry, or Squeers, or Dominie Sampson can teach. Any dolt can *hear* a lesson, drill in the multiplication table, teach by rote, but to pursue a rational method in accordance with the nature of the being to be taught and the orderly evolution of the mind's powers is a higher process. To proceed from simple to complex, particular to general, concrete to abstract, empirical to rational and logical, from observed facts or things to generalized or scientific knowledge, requires training. The Prussians say whatever you would have appear in the life of a nation you must first put into its schools, and whatever you would put into schools must first be put into the teacher.

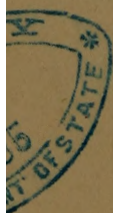
I have, gentlemen, presented some dark and stubborn facts, which lie in the pathway of your progress, but I am no pessimist and sing no doleful jeremiads in reference to the future. I have no sympathy with those who would keep alive alienations betwixt North and South, or who would dig deep chasms betwixt the so-called "upper and lower classes"; nor with that Toryism or Bourbonism which resists all progress and is indifferent to the welfare of the

people. God reigns. Truth will triumph. In the mother land, we have seen the franchise extended, civil disabilities removed, religious tests abolished, taxes reduced, and the establishment partly overthrown. The growth of our country can not be arrested, if lawmakers, rulers and people heed the teachings of experience and the word of God. With near 60,000,000 people, increasing 2,000,000 annually, 125,000 miles of railway, boundless territory, exhaustless resources and the stimulus of free institutions, no god Terminus can stay our advance. In Europe one in every twenty is a soldier, and one in every twenty has to sustain the soldiers. Growing armies, expensive wars, increasing debts, heavier taxes. Misery and wrong engender communism and nihilism. We are exempt from these evils but what we hold and enjoy is in trust and with the trust comes responsibility.

Within a few days has appeared in the newspapers a letter from Col. McClure of the Philadelphia *Times*, in which he says "Alabama has been gifted far beyond even our boasted empire of Pennsylvania"—and he refers to the 11,000 square miles of coal, the illimitable supplies of iron ore and limestone, and the marvellous development of coal and iron products "during a season of continued and steadily decreasing depression in the iron and coal trade of the country." The proximity of the mineral wealth to the Gulf of Mexico and the contemplated inter-oceanic highway induced some of us, years ago, to favor the construction of transportation lines and the opening of these mines of wealth. They give to you a most inviting future; they promise to make Alabama one of the richest States of the Union. So mote it be. We shall not forget, in the presence of this oriental wealth, that honesty and intelligence are at the basis of individual, corporate, State and national prosperity. Prosperity comes from honest administration, honest trade, honest money, honest and intelligent labor, quick and cheap

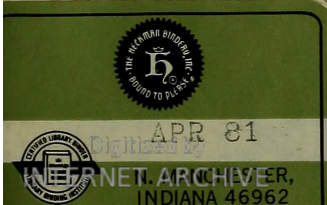
exchange of products. "Individual intelligence and integrity, sustained by public justice, constitute the sole condition under which permanent prosperity can be the rule among men."

You are making in New Orleans an exposition of your products and resources. That is wise but your real wealth, real greatness, is not in cotton, lumber, iron, coal, marble, banks, railways, but in the minds and hearts of your boys and girls. Your future glory depends on your efforts and success in making the youth of Alabama intelligent, industrious and virtuous. "To leave them in mental and moral darkness, ignorant, superstitious, indolent, brutal, quarrelsome, and shut up to little, narrow lives, is the surest way on earth" to blight and impoverish the State. "No community that understands its own interest will evade or resist the utmost possible sacrifice for that public education which pays everybody as no other outlay does." I congratulate you, legislators, that you are, by the favor of your constituents, placed in a position where you can take the lead in doing so much, and so beneficently, for the prosperity and the honor of the people.

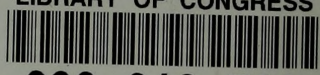


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