

## EDUCATION AND THE STATE

THE importance of the dedication of the Rice Institute is emphasized by the presence of so many distinguished scientists from other nations and by the presence of distinguished educators of other States of this Union. The interest which prevails in Texas, and especially in this city, in the future of this university, is manifested by the assemblage which is before me. But of equal importance are the provisions made by Mr. Rice to secure the success of the enterprise by placing it in the hands of such able trustees, who can be relied upon to use the funds to the best advantage. These buildings, so well adapted to the work to be done, and especially the competent president and his assistants selected to execute the provisions of the will, give additional assurance of the wise application of the beneficent donation to the education of young men and women of Texas.

The American population in the State of Texas revolted against the Mexican rule, and on the second day of March, 1836, published a declaration of independence, specifying the causes which justified the act, one of which was expressed in this explicit paragraph: "It has failed to establish any public system of education, although possessed of almost boundless resources (the public domain), and although it is an axiom in political science that unless a people are educated and enlightened it is idle to expect the continuance of civil liberty, or the capacity for self-government." The Constitution which was adopted by the people of the Republic in its General Provisions, Section 5, reads: "It shall be

the duty of Congress, as soon as circumstances will permit, to provide by law a general system of education."

The Constitution of the State of Texas, adopted in 1845, expressed the same purpose in terms thus: "A general diffusion of knowledge being essential to the preservation of the rights and liberties of the people, it shall be the duty of the legislature of this State to make suitable provision for the support and maintenance of public schools." That provision was repeated in 1866 by the convention which reformed the Constitution of the State so as to conform to our new relations to the Federal Government. The Constitution of 1876, now in force, contains like provisions, and to secure its enforcement the convention set apart certain classes of lands and taxes for the maintenance of a system of public free schools. On every appropriate occasion the people of Texas have expressed their purpose to make ample provision for the maintenance of an efficient system of public free schools in this State for the education of the masses.

Prior to the war between the States, the people were dependent for the education of their children upon private schools organized and supported by the patrons, each paying tuition to the teacher. The consequence was that those children whose parents were unable to pay and orphans who were indigent were not provided for. The teachers of those schools were usually men, and, as a rule, were better instructors than now employed in the public schools of the country districts.

The purpose to inaugurate free schools survived the war between the States, and during the administration of Governor Davis free schools were organized to some extent, but had little success until the adoption of the Constitution of 1876; since which time much progress has been made and the public-school system is much improved, especially in the

cities and towns. The State University, the Agricultural and Mechanical College, and a number of colleges of good capacity supported by the State afford to students good opportunity for higher education. Austin College, Baylor University, and the universities of the different churches constitute a valuable auxiliary educational force with which Rice Institute will take its place as a part of our system of higher education, and no doubt the Institute will be a creditable accession thereto.

I have briefly reviewed the history of educational institutions in Texas to point attention to the fact that public sentiment is ready to welcome the Institute, and the provision for education in this State, public and private, is in condition to promote success.

I am not informed as to the date of Mr. Rice's settlement in Texas, but it was in the life of the Republic, and he imbibed the spirit which prompted the declaration in favor of education, above quoted, and which survived the years of an active life and prompted the provision made for this Institute.

Mr. Rice was a young man, with no capital except his manhood and his intellectual and moral endowments, when he became a citizen of the Republic, and by his industry and economy acquired a large fortune. He held public office and participated in the public enterprises of the community in which he lived up to the date of disqualification by infirmity. He was prominent in the upbuilding of the City of Houston, and in the construction and operation of railroads by which the whole State was benefited. In fact, he was an important factor in the development of Texas, and by this donation expressed his appreciation of the favors he had received and the advantages offered to him, which is creditable to his memory.

In order to comprehend the full value of the endowment of this institution it is necessary to look to the condition of the State and the needs of the people who will be indirectly benefited by its work; for it is true that the greatest value will accrue from the lives and labors of those who may be educated here, and will be enjoyed by many who will not recognize the fact that it is traceable to this university, but that fact does not detract from its importance.

If the benefits to be derived from this institution be confined to those persons who may receive instruction here and to the financial benefits accruing to the City of Houston, Rice Institute would be worth all that it will cost. But, in fact, such individual and local benefits will be a small part of the total good that will accrue to the people of Texas from this liberal donation. The Institute is located at Houston, but it belongs to the whole State. The arts and sciences are made special subjects of instruction, and they who acquire the knowledge of these branches of learning will go forth to put into practical use the knowledge thus obtained, with a purpose to acquire fortune or fame for themselves, but such persons will necessarily have good or evil influence upon others. "No man liveth to himself." Through its students every institution of learning exerts a power for good or evil upon society, therefore the instruction given and the character of the institution itself are of importance to the public.

The greatest benefit derived from such teaching is the relief that comes to the unlearned masses, through the invention of new methods of performing their labor, relieving the laborer of the tax on his physical strength and increasing the return derived from it. The great progress made in the different industries has had its origin and consummation in the scientific knowledge of men, students of natural laws.

Bear with me if I am tedious, but I can better present by

illustration the fact that the greatest benefit of such training as will be received in this institution does not consist in the money accumulated or the fame won by the use of training received in such an institution as this. The history of the United States, and especially of Texas, shows a wonderful development and great amelioration of the drastic methods that taxed the energies of the pioneers, which have been effected by discoveries of methods of labor and the application of new powers.

To illustrate. Father removed from Jasper County, Georgia, to Washington County, Texas, in 1846. We saw our first railroad track and train at Atlanta, Georgia, and did not cross another railroad on our journey, which was made in wagons and carriages drawn by horses and mules, consuming three months' time. There was then no railroad in Texas. In 1851 father was farming on Mill Creek, west of Brenham, in Washington County. All family supplies were enormously high: flour was sold at fifteen dollars per barrel, and other things in proportion. We usually had biscuit for breakfast on Sunday mornings and at the preacher's visit. All merchandise was so exorbitant that the people were compelled to deny themselves such things as were not absolute necessities. The produce of the farm being conveyed to market on wagons, and their supplies being hauled by like conveyance to the interior towns, the consumers necessarily paid heavy freight charges. The construction of railroads has worked such changes that it would be difficult for one who has had no experience of those conditions to realize the great benefit that railroads have brought to the masses.

In my boyhood I saw a man lying near a tree appearing to be dead. The tree had been struck by lightning and the man had been shocked. He had taken refuge under the

tree from a rain-storm. In that day electricity was known to the people only as a dangerous element beyond human control. It has by scientists been converted into an important servant, doing various important things, as the telegraph, which bears the messages of men in all kinds of business, also the telephone, which without regard to distance enables us, for business or pleasure, to converse as if standing face to face.

In the days of the best mail service a letter sent to one in New York would not be delivered and answer returned for many days, perhaps weeks. The telegraph wire now transmits such message and brings a reply in a few hours. The telephone carries the voice, and enables one to speak to another hundreds of miles distant, and in a known tone of voice to receive a reply as if the parties were in the same room. The wireless telegraph seeks the vessel in distress, or person whose locality is unknown, with messages of relief. Electricity has in many ways proved to be a very potent and valuable servant to man. My proposition is, that the relief to the masses in these minor matters, each insignificant, has conferred more important benefits in the aggregate than the acquisition of much wealth by the inventor or persons who put those inventions and discoveries into operation.

The wonderful development of the natural resources of nature has been accomplished through scientific knowledge by persons trained in the sciences, and is the fruit of training received in such institutions as this. Therefore, I repeat that the relief which is conferred upon the laborers in making less burdensome their tasks, and the conveniences which have through this source come to men of business as the fruits of learning imparted to students by such institutions, are of paramount importance.

Within the last century both steam and electricity have, by scientific knowledge, been converted into the greatest powers the world has ever known. In fact, those powers now move the machinery of the world. I need not specify the particulars of their uses. Without them stagnation would reign in every department of life.

I have given but a very limited statement of the advancement in all grades of life and all classes of business, but it will suffice as a basis for my conclusion, that the development and progress of the world has been the result of scientific knowledge, whereby the laws of nature have been utilized for the benefit of man.

The training of men and women mentally or morally is not limited in benefit or injury to the individual trained, but each student who may be educated in this institution will affect the public for good or evil. If the training in the arts and sciences produces an inventor of machinery or one who applies to practical service an invention by another, it will be a benefit to all whose labors may be made lighter or whose earning power may be increased thereby.

I have used the illustrations of the application of steam and electricity to the service of man as a basis for my concluding proposition, that the development of the resources of nature and the advancement of mankind intellectually and morally have been due mainly to the discoveries by scientists of the laws of nature, whereby the labors of men have been relieved of much hardship, their ability to produce enlarged, and the conveniences of life greatly increased. If we consider the labors of the farmer, the new machinery multiplies the powers of the man and relieves the laborer of the great hardships which formerly attended the work. In every department of life we find the contrast between those who avail themselves of the discoveries of new methods and

those who still are unable to secure the benefits, from which we get some conception of what scientific discoveries have done for men.

The desire for higher education is increasing, and the universities and colleges of the State and of the Christian denominations are overtaxed. There is room for this institution, and ample work for it to do. Its field of usefulness is commensurate with the growing State, and it will be a Texas University dispensing to our ambitious young men and women the benefits of Mr. Rice's bounty. The people of the entire State welcome Rice Institute as more than a local school, and I assume to say for them, "God speed Rice Institute in its noble work!"

THOMAS JEFFERSON BROWN.