

*The Future of the American Negro* · 1899

for professional service. Whether they receive the training of the hand while pursuing their academic training or after their academic training is finished, or whether they will get their literary training in an industrial school or college, are questions which each individual must decide for himself. No matter how or where educated, the educated men and women must come to the rescue of the race in the effort to get and hold its industrial footing. I would not have the standard of mental development lowered one whit; for, with the Negro, as with all races, mental strength is the basis of all progress. But I would have a large measure of this mental strength reach the Negroes' actual needs through the medium of the hand. Just now the need is not so much for the common carpenters, brick masons, farmers, and laundry women as for industrial leaders who, in addition to their practical knowledge, can draw plans, make estimates, take contracts; those who understand the latest methods of truck-gardening and the science underlying practical agriculture; those who understand machinery to the extent that they can operate steam and electric laundries, so that our women can hold on to the laundry work in the South, that is so fast drifting into the hands of others in the large cities and towns.

Having tried to show in previous chapters to what a condition the lack of practical training has brought matters in the South, and by the examples in this chapter where this state of things may go if allowed to run its course, I wish now to show what practical training, even in its infancy among us, has already accomplished.

I noticed, when I first went to Tuskegee to start the Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute, that some of the white people about there rather looked doubtfully at me; and I thought I could get their influence by telling them how much algebra and history and science and all those things I had in my head, but they treated me about the same as they did before. They didn't seem to care about the algebra, history, and science that were in my head only. Those people never even began to have confidence in me until we commenced to build a large three-story brick building, and then another and another, until now we have forty buildings which have been erected largely by the labour of our students; and to-day we have the respect and confidence of all the white people in that section.

There is an unmistakable influence that comes over a white man