

*The BOOKER T. WASHINGTON Papers*

economic production, is gradually bringing the South to the point where it is feeding itself. After the war, what profit the South made out of the cotton crop it spent outside of the South to purchase food supplies, — meat, bread, canned vegetables, and the like, — but the improved methods of agriculture are fast changing this custom. With the newer methods of labour, which teach promptness and system and emphasise the worth of the beautiful, the moral value of the well-painted house, the fence with every paling and nail in its place, is bringing to bear upon the South an influence that is making it a new country in industry, education, and religion.

It seems to me I cannot do better than to close this chapter on the needs of the Southern Negro by quoting from a talk given to the students at Tuskegee:<sup>3</sup> —

“I want to be a little more specific in showing you what you have to do and how you must do it.

“One trouble with us is — and the same is true of any young people, no matter of what race or condition — we have too many stepping-stones. We step all the time, from one thing to another. You find a young man who is learning to make bricks; and, if you ask him what he intends to do after learning the trade, in too many cases he will answer, ‘Oh, I am simply working at this trade as a stepping-stone to something higher.’ You see a young man working at the brick-mason’s trade, and he will be apt to say the same thing. And young women learning to be milliners and dressmakers will tell you the same. All are stepping to something higher. And so we always go on, stepping somewhere, never getting hold of anything thoroughly. Now we must stop this stepping business, having so many stepping-stones. Instead, we have got to take hold of these important industries, and stick to them until we master them thoroughly. There is no nation so thorough in their education as the Germans. Why? Simply because the German takes hold of a thing, and sticks to it until he masters it. Into it he puts brains and thought from morning to night. He reads all the best books and journals bearing on that particular study, and he feels that nobody else knows so much about it as he does.

“Take any of the industries I have mentioned, that of brick-making, for example. Any one working at that trade should determine to learn all there is to be known about making bricks; read

<sup>3</sup> See above, 4:480–84.