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Educational Aims

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EDUCATIONAL AIMS

By ANNA J. COOPER

The current Atlantic Monthly carries an illuminating article by Julian S. Huxley on African Education which would suggest useful ideals for educators of any people anywhere and particularly in countries or districts whose economics must be based on agriculture rather than manufacture.

As his main thesis he says: "Education in Africa means native development. Black men are not white men, but they are men, and as such essentially educable,—the natives want education, and in spite of everything natives are being educated to do—and often to do well—things which only one generation back were not even dreamed of by the African. I have seen dressers in charge of dispensaries, clerks keeping the records of native courts, girls running maternity and infant welfare stations with white inspection only once a month, men in charge of a power station on a big estate, schoolmasters who taught well and had their heart in their job, foremen in sole control of building operations—all blacks. I have seen black nuns, black school prefects, black drill sergeants, black students who were dissecting a cadaver with commendable thoroughness, a black choir singing Bach Motets and singing them well, black health workers who, unsupervised produce admirable malaria surveys and maps." He proceeds to give the main heads of his plan as follows: "To insist on hygiene, drill, and practical agriculture, to encourage respect for tribal history and customs and the practice of native handicrafts; to begin with general education in which, after a grounding in the three R's emphasis is laid on the native's own environment—African geography, African history, local na-

ture study, hygiene, agriculture; to build on this foundation by special vocational training for the great majority of boys and girls, reserving the higher academic education for the exceptional few who can profit by it., and so quite apart from its direct effect upon production, education will pay for itself over and over again by raising the native's demands upon life, reducing the wastage of life and health, cutting down the expenditure on military and police and replacing many alien cogs in the administrative machine by indigenuous ones." Further he adds: "There must be a supply of white teachers, government and missionary alike, who do not think of the natives as 'niggers' to be taught useful trades, or as heathen to be converted, but as human beings who have a culture of their own, making native education to the fullest extent the instrument of native development."

Is not this the elemental principle and foundation of all education everywhere? namely the fullest development of the individual in and by and for the best possible environing society. The writer cogently concludes: "Hundreds of black boys and girls are being today let loose over the country charged every year with new knowledge, new practical arts, new thots and ideas. There is no stemming the tide. We are certain . . . the remedy for education is more education."

"We of the U. S. A. have also our problems in education of primitive or backward groups—and they are not all black! The public press has thrilled recently and we have all been touched and inspired by the spirit of sympathetic kindness with which the best brain and heart of the country responds to the need of a group of arrieres lately discovered in the vicinity of the Rapidan. Wealth has rushed to the rescue—radios, automobiles, desks, books, and abundance, to be sure, of much needed soap and water, assuring the world that to have been by any trick of fate marooned for a time off the high ways of civilization is by no means to be imputed as a mark of inferiority, or any inherited tendency, but should be promptly and dutifully atoned for by all the forces of the on-rushing tide."