



VIEW OF TUSKEGEE SCHOOL GROUNDS.

NEGRO PROGRESS ON THE TUSKEGEE PLAN.

BY ALBERT SHAW.

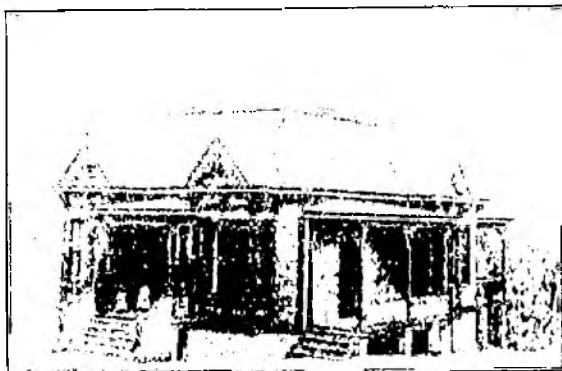
A FEW weeks ago, in the heart of the black belt of Alabama,—a region in which the colored population is far in excess of the white, and in which the negro preponderance is constantly increasing,—there was assembled at Tuskegee a very remarkable gathering. It was an occasion fraught with vital significance; and it deserves to be known and understood both in the South and in the North, in order that sympathy and encouragement may be given to a more general movement upon the methods so successfully introduced at Tuskegee. The assembly to which we refer was the third Tuskegee Negro Conference, which met on the 21st of February. It was held under the auspices of the Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute. The attendants and participants were the negro farmers of that general region. Some of them came from long distances. They filed into Tuskegee in every conceivable sort of vehicle, many of them driving from homes thirty, forty, or even fifty miles away. Fifteen Alabama counties were represented by the more progressive elements of the colored race,—a few ministers, some mechanics, and a considerable sprinkling of colored school teachers mingling with the much larger body of tillers of the rich but not very perfectly cultivated soil of that productive region.

The call to this Conference, as to its predecessors of 1892 and 1893, was issued by Mr. Booker T. Washington, principal of the Tuskegee Institute—a colored

man who deserves to be ranked not merely with the best and truest leaders of his own race in this country, but with our most skillful and successful educational organizers and managers, regardless of race. The late General Armstrong, whose magnificent work for the industrial and intellectual training of young Indians and young negroes at Hampton, Virginia, has left so permanent an impress, was heard to say more than once in his last years that if Hampton had done nothing else worthy of praise, he should have felt that his years of devotion to that undertaking would have been fully repaid in the training and commissioning of so remarkable and useful a man as Booker T. Washington. Young Washington was a colored lad of Virginian antecedents, who found his way to Hampton under the most forlorn conditions and in a state of absolute poverty. He developed rapidly under the inspiring influences of that school, and gave evidence of capacity so great, of prudence and judgment so marked, and of character so high and trustworthy, that General Armstrong and his associates felt no hesitancy in commending the untested young graduate for the post of principal of the new training school it was proposed to found upon the Hampton model in central Alabama, in the midst of a dense population of plantation negroes. Mr. Washington and other Hampton graduates, devoting their lives to the best interests of their own race, founded the Tuskegee School in 1881. It has from

that time until now been wholly in the hands of colored teachers. It began with one teacher and thirty students in a dilapidated old church and an adjacent shanty. It has now about forty resident teachers and officers, and a total enrollment of from nine hundred to a thousand pupils. It has 1,440 acres of land and some fifteen buildings, eight or ten of which are commodious and modern. Its property, at the low prices prevailing in the region, is valued at not far from \$150,000. Such is the bare statistical record of a growth that has been achieved in a little more than a decade. But the Tuskegee School is important not so much by reason of its large number of students and its acquisition of a working educational plant, as by reason of the precise kind of education it gives and the positive character of its influence upon the region over which its beacon light begins to shine with increasing brightness.

Tuskegee has a broad conception of its mission. It is not planted in Central Alabama in order to culti-



A TEACHER'S COTTAGE—BUILT BY THE STUDENTS.

to carry to young plantation negroes in Alabama is the old-fashioned curriculum of the smaller New England college of twenty-five years ago. The Tuskegee School has no desire to educate young negroes away from sympathy with the masses of their own race, nor to spoil them for the practical work that their own region has to offer them. On the other hand, the Tuskegee School is no fomenter of race discords and has no sympathy with the idea of the regeneration of the negro race through politics. It believes in the essential unity of interests of all the population of the South, and seeks to cultivate and perpetuate respect, confidence and mutual good will between the black and white races.

With so much of preface as to the deserved centrality of influence which the Tuskegee School has secured in all the matters that make for the well-being and progress of the colored people of Alabama's black belt, it may be permissible to return to the topic of the recent Conference, and then to make some further remarks as to the school itself, its methods and results. The following sentences made up the call which Mr. Washington sent out early in the present year for the recent Conference, and they throw light at once upon the spirit in which the gathering was conceived, and the practical ends it had in view:

The negro Conference held at Tuskegee, Alabama, the last two years, under the auspices of the Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute, have proved so helpful and instructive in showing the masses of colored people how to lift themselves up in their industrial, educational, moral and religious life, and have created so much general interest throughout the country, that it has been decided to hold another session of this Conference, Wednesday, February 21, 1894.

The aim will be, as in the two previous years, to bring together for a quiet Conference, not the politicians, but the representatives of the common, hard-working farmers and mechanics—the bone and sinew of the negro race—and ministers and teachers.

Two objects will be kept in view—1st, to find out from the people *themselves*, the facts as to their condition and get their ideas as to the remedies for present evils,—2nd, to get information as to how the young men and women now being educated can best use their education in helping the masses.

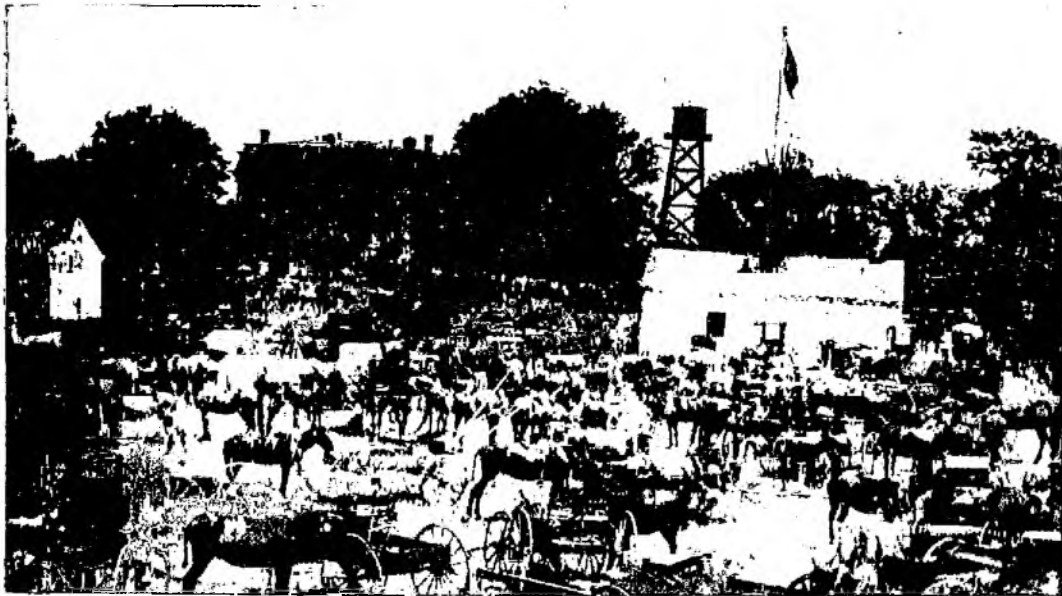


BOOKER T. WASHINGTON.

vate in the minds of a carefully secluded lot of young negroes the delusive idea that a smattering of Latin, Greek, trigonometry and psychology,—added to a very imperfect knowledge of the rudimentary branches,—can win the battle of life for the colored man in America, either as an individual or as a race. Nothing is more remote from the spirit and methods of Tuskegee than the absurd notion that the thing



DELEGATES ENTERING CONFERENCE HALL.



HOW THE DELEGATES CAME TO THE CONFERENCE.

SCENES AT THE THIRD TUSKEGEE NEGRO CONFERENCE, TUSKEGEE, ALA.,
FEBRUARY 21, 1894.

At the last Conference there were nearly 800 representatives present and a large number gave encouraging evidence of how, as a result of the previous meetings, homes had been secured, school houses built, school terms extended and the moral life of the people bettered.

In view of the economy which the people have been forced to practice during the last two years, owing to poor crops and low prices of cotton, this Conference will present an excellent medium through which to teach permanent economy and thrift.

It is planned to devote a portion of the session of this Conference to a Woman's Conference.

On Thursday, February 22, the day following the Conference, there will be a meeting of the officers and teachers of the colored schools in the South, who may be at the Conference, for the purpose of comparing views and taking advantage of lessons that may have been gotten from the Conference the previous day.

It is believed that such a meeting of the workers for the elevation of the negro, held in the Black Belt, with the lessons and impressions of the direct contact with the masses of colored people the previous day fresh before them, can only result in much practical good to the cause of negro education.

Aside from the work to be done in the South in an educational and moral sense, there can be no permanent prosperity till the whole industrial system (especially the "mortgage system") is revolutionized and put on a right basis, and there can be no better way to bring about the desired result than through such organizations as this negro Conference.

Thrift, continuous industry, and a sense of responsibility are what the plantation negroes most need to learn; and it would hardly be an exaggeration to say that the foremost object of the Tuskegee Institute is to inculcate these homely virtues. If most of the Tuskegee graduates and ex-students go out to become school teachers in the colored district schools of Alabama and adjoining States, it is not with the mere object of earning their wages by teaching the colored children to read and write. Each teacher regards it as his mission to further the prosperity and civilization of his race, by persuading the colored farmers to buy pieces of land rather than to rent; above all to shun the disastrous practice of mortgaging the crop long before it is harvested and sometimes even before it is planted; to abandon the tumble-down, one-room cabin, and to build decent houses of two rooms and an attic; to work steadily six days in the week, keeping fewer holidays and making fewer errands to town; to raise a greater variety of products, and to depend less upon the proceeds of a single crop. A further mission of these Tuskegee trained teachers is to persuade the district where they plant themselves to build a neat little schoolhouse instead of the decayed log cabin which still does service, as a rule, in the country districts of that section. The young women teachers occupy themselves much with a propaganda for cleanliness and good housekeeping among the mothers of families, and argue powerfully for the two-room house as against the one-room shanty. Mr. Booker Washington, out of the depths of much experience and knowledge of his race, would probably assent to the proposition that the adoption of two-room houses in place of one-room cabins by the plan-

tation negroes of the South would mean in the present generation ten times more for the real progress of the race in all that belongs to a true civilization, than the possession of the elective franchise. I confess that there is nothing in all the work done by Tuskegee that appeals more strongly to my sympathy or to my imagination as a friend of social reform, than this earnest propaganda for the two-room houses as a primary factor in moral and social progress. We have been accustomed to read of the horrors of life in one room in the crowded tenement districts of New York, London, Glasgow, and other great population centres, and most of us have been far less familiar with the idea that the one-room shanty of peasant populations is also an evil thing which must be superseded by better housing arrangements if there is to be any growth in refinement and civilization. A Hampton Institute teacher, Alice M. Bacon, who attended the recent Tuskegee Conference, remarks in a brief letter to the *Congregationalist*:

It was interesting to notice during the discussion how many changes were said to have taken place "since the last conference," or "since the first conference," the Tuskegee farmers' conference evidently furnishing an incentive to whole communities and a date from which events were to be reckoned. Many had been putting up schoolhouses since the last conference. So great a change in the matter of one-room cabins was noted as dating from the conference, that the original fraction used in the declaration that four-fifths of the people were still living in one-room cabins, was changed after the discussion to two-thirds as nearer the present state of affairs.

This percentage in the reduction of the one-room cabins throughout that great region under the influence of the Tuskegee Institute is a splendid and substantial result for which the highest praise is due. The negro is imitative and not without ambition; and the fashion having now been set, it may well be expected that the substitution of decent little homes for filthy hovels will go on at an accelerating pace. Unquestionably the reports at this year's conference will result during the coming twelvemonth in the building of many new homes. The manner of men who constitute the colored peasantry of central Alabama is described so interestingly by Miss Bacon that we are impelled to quote once more from her letter:

To persons who have worked in negro schools for years, and who think themselves fairly well acquainted with the characteristics, both mental and physical, of the race, this assemblage of Alabama cotton farmers is a revelation. One surprise comes in the great size of the men, the deep chests, the mighty muscles, the towering height, qualities which so many years ago represented so many thousand dollars' worth of property, but which to-day, if rightly directed, mean power to seize and to hold for themselves many of the benefits of American civilization.

When the conference sits down and begins its work a new surprise is in store. As one after another of these sons of Anak rises and gives his views of the subjects of everyday practical importance, for the study of which they have come together, the strong common sense, the quaint wit, the childlike simplicity and earnest thoughtfulness that characterize most of the speeches give to

the listeners a new idea of the intelligence of the plantation negro.

Surely Alabama need not despair of the future of a race so sinewy and so well disposed, if properly trained in habits of thrift and industry and brought under sound moral influences and restraints.

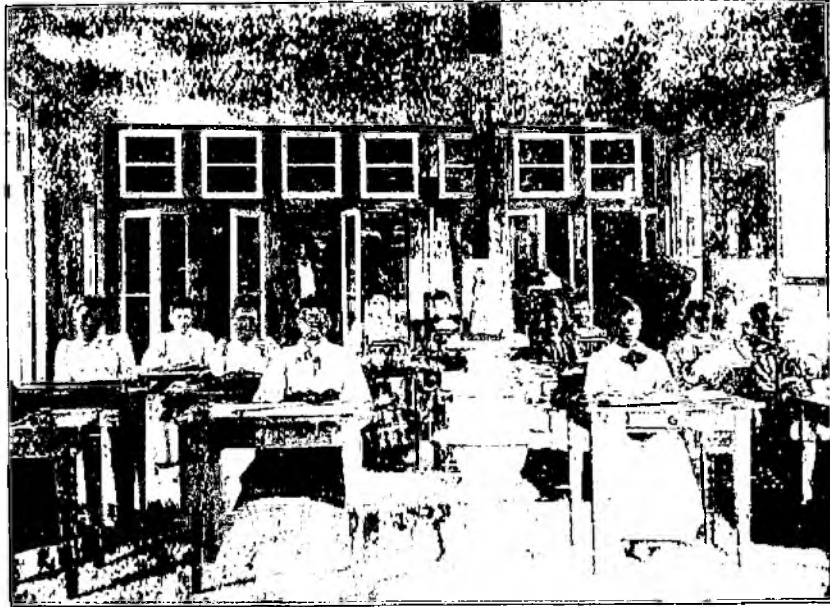
The resolutions which were adopted by the negro conference are abundantly worthy to be quoted in full. Their good sense and clear phraseology are equally remarkable. They are as follows :

We believe education, property and practical religion will eventually give us every right and privilege enjoyed by other citizens, and therefore that our interests can best be served by bending all our energies to securing them rather than by dwelling on the past or by fault-finding or complaining. We desire to make the Tuskegee Negro Conference a gauge of our progress from year to year in these things in the Black Belt.

1. With regard to education, it is still true that the average length of the country school is about three and a half months. There is either no schoolhouse or a very poor one, and the teacher, as a rule, is but little prepared for his work. We would suggest as remedies the raising of money by subscription, to lengthen the school term and to provide more and better schoolhouses. We would also urge upon our schools and colleges for the training of leaders the importance of sending more of their best men and women to the smaller towns and country districts.

2. As regards property, we find that four-fifths of our farmers still practice the habit of mortgaging their unplanted crops for the supplies furnished them, live on rented lands, are in debt, and two-thirds live in one-room cabins. As remedies we recommend the immediate purchase of land, its thorough cultivation, the raising of sufficient food supplies for home use, that we avoid the emigration agent, keep out of the cities, pay our taxes promptly, stop moving from farm to farm every year, work winters as well as summers, Saturdays as well as other days, practice every form of economy and especially avoid the expensive and injurious habit of using liquor, tobacco and snuff, and since our interests are one with the white people among whom we live, we would urge the cultivation, in every manly way, of friendship and good will toward them.

3. While in morals and religion we are far from what we ought to be, we yet note each year real improvement. To help us in this direction we urge a better preparation for the Christian ministry, the settlement of more of our differences outside of the courts; that we draw sharp lines between the virtuous and the immoral; that we refuse to tolerate wrongdoing in our leaders, especially in our ministers and teachers; that we treat our women with more respect and urge upon them the importance of



GIRLS' SEWING ROOM.

giving more time to their home life and less to the streets and public places.

In conclusion, the facts gathered from these three conferences warrant us in saying that each year education is increasing, more and more property is being acquired and gradually religion is becoming less a thing of the emotions and more a matter of upright living. We are glad to note a growing interest on the part of the best white people of the South in our progress.

In the afternoon of the same day there was a conference of negro women under the auspices of the woman's department of the Tuskegee Institute, the meeting being devoted to such subjects as the care of homes and of children. The *New Orleans Times-Democrat*, which reports in the most favorable and friendly way the main facts regarding the conference, says that there was a general consensus of opinion that the colored people of Alabama could not possibly better their condition by emigrating either to Africa or to any other portion of this country, and that there was general testimony as to the kind treatment received from the best class of white people. The lengthening of the school term is a subject that the Tuskegee Conferences have made conspicuous, and we are informed that the testimony shows some average improvement in this regard. In conclusion the *Times-Democrat* says: "Circulars got out by the Tuskegee school were given to each member of the conference, containing pictures of comfortable homes with directions for building. The teams were harnessed up and the farmers started home with hearty thanks and good-bys to Mr. Washington, and promises to go home and do the things they had learned."

This conference upon their practical affairs by these colored men of central Alabama was followed on the next day by a conference of teachers. There

were present many well-known friends and promoters of colored education representing both the North and the South, besides a large number of the district school teachers who have been trained at Tuskegee. This conference was also pronounced a very valuable and interesting one.

There are two principal advantages in the large landed domain—1,440 acres—which the Tuskegee Institute has acquired. Nearly all of the students come to the school so poor that they are compelled to work their way through. The school farm affords employment for many of these pupils. On the other hand, it is an important part of the work of the school to teach thoroughly the art of practical agriculture. With nearly a thousand persons living in the school dormitories and cottages, many of the products of the farm and gardens can be utilized in the school kitchens. Moreover, a considerable area of land is desirable for the best success of the other practical trades and industries that go to make up the industrial side of life and instruction at such a school as Tuskegee. Thus it happens that one portion of the land affords extensive beds of clay, and the students have made all the bricks that have been used in the construction of several new school buildings, besides making brick for sale to outside purchasers. Most of the important buildings on the grounds have been built wholly by student labor, with the threefold result of good practical training in the several building trades, the giving of work to students who could not otherwise enjoy the advantages of the institution, and the eking out of the school's financial resources. Plastering, as well as brick-making and brick-laying, is practically and regularly taught. So large a farm makes it necessary to own horses and mules and agricultural implements, and this fact affords a basis for the maintenance of

a good shop for horse-shoeing and general blacksmithing—a shop patronized not only by the school farm itself, but by many outside farmers. Wheelwrighting also grows of necessity out of the making and care of the wagons and other vehicles of the farm; and the repair and painting of vehicles for many people in the country round about has resulted, as a testimony to the efficiency of the shop. The practical opportunity for instruction in carpentry is very considerable, where the barns and sheds and most of the more important school buildings have all been constructed by student labor, not to speak of a number of neat residences. A portion of the farm is heavily timbered and affords opportunity for instruction in sawmill work—while the output is at the same time utilized for the supply of materials for buildings, fences and so on. Harness-making, tinning, shoe-making and mattress-making are among the other trades taught, and carried on for the support of students and the profit of the institution. The young women are taught sewing, cooking, laundrying, and all other departments of housekeeping. The printing office is an important adjunct of the institution, and it turns out very creditable specimens of typographical work, doing a large amount of job printing for patrons outside of the institution, besides printing the college catalogues and one or two small journals conducted by the faculty and students.

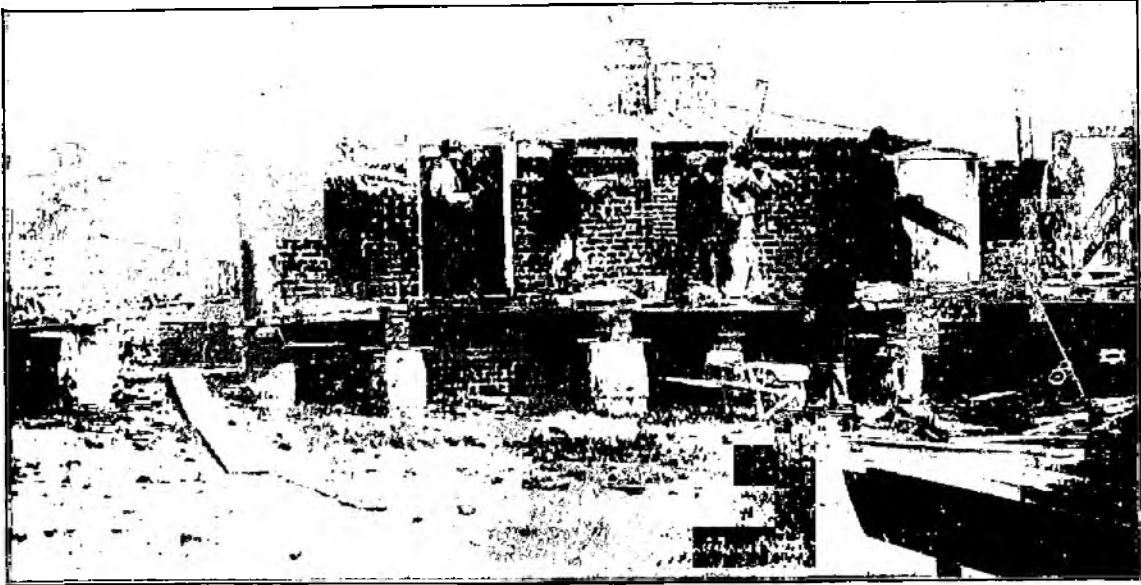
The last number of the *Southern Letter*, a little monthly leaflet published by the Tuskegee school, contains the following editorial note, which will explain the practical nature of the industrial work carried on under Mr. Booker Washington's direction :

About two years ago, a friend of the school living in New York City gave \$10,000 with which to build and furnish Phelps Hall, to be used as a Bible Training School.

Instead of letting out the job by contract, it was taken in charge by the different departments, with Prof. J. H. Washington, General Superintendent of Industries, to oversee the whole. Bricks were made at the brick-yard, lumber at the sawmill, lath, shingles, brackets, moldings, window and door casings got ready, and all were made into the finished building. In the same way it was furnished, even to the mirrors. The work occupied nearly a year, and during that time the students, from the boys that dug the sand and carried the hod to the finest workmen, received \$10,000 worth of help in board, education and skill; yet the full value of the money remains in the building. A gentleman who learned of these facts said, "that \$10,000 was raised to \$20,000." This is a sample of the way all money given to Tuskegee is used.



BUILDING ERECTED AND VEHICLES MADE BY STUDENT LABOR.



STUDENTS LAYING BRICK.

If money is given to pay a teacher's salary, a part of it goes to nourish the student, for he raises and prepares the food the teacher eats, washes and mends and, often, makes his clothing, boots and shoes, and does whatever other work he may need done. Of about \$234,000 received by the school in twelve years, at least \$185,000 appears to-day on the school grounds, in the shape of permanent plant.

The climate of Alabama is said to be very favorable for bee culture, and this has been introduced on the Tuskegee farm with marked success. It is obvious that the institution can only gradually enter upon scientific experiments for the development of Alabama agriculture in new directions; but it can render very constant service by teaching the best methods of plain farming as regards the crops that belong by common consent to that soil and climate.

Some general information about the Tuskegee school as gleaned from the last catalogue may be of interest to our readers. The school continues in session through nine months, and expects its pupils to enter promptly at the beginning and to remain to the end of the session, although by special arrangements students are taken for periods as short as a single month. Tuition is free, the State of Alabama contributing three thousand dollars a year toward this object, and private individuals, largely Northern philanthropists, giving very considerable sums. The price of living at the school, which is uniform for all, is eight dollars per month—this including table board, room rent, fuel, lights, washing, mending of clothes, etc. All students are given an opportunity to work out from one-quarter to one-half of their expenses. In many cases arrangements are made by which students are permitted to work through the day and study in the night training school, thus accumulating

a credit which ultimately pays their way in the day school. It must be remembered that Tuskegee is not primarily a farm or a workshop, but a well-conducted school; and that study and class-room work are the principal tasks of the day, the industrial and farm work entering in as secondary, though not less intrinsically important, parts of the programme. The full course requires four years of study, in addition to a simple but thorough preparatory course, which the institution offers to those who have not received an equivalent preparatory training elsewhere. Students are informed that they will find it to their advantage not to purchase certain portions of their wardrobe before coming to the school, inasmuch as the girls' sewing room can supply them at about cost price. The school has adopted as a uniform for the young men a neat dark blue suit, this being furnished by the girls' sewing room at the bare cost of materials and manufacture. The expense for uniform is about thirteen dollars. Each student is required to wear the school's distinctive uniform cap. It is hardly necessary to explain that the wearing of a neat and tidy uniform has an excellent moral effect upon the young colored students. Moreover, military drill is a part of the regular *régime* of the school upon the ground that "it cultivates habits of order, neatness and unquestioning obedience, besides, the drill is a good physical training, promoting as it does a graceful and manly bearing." "Students are subjected to the drill, guard duty, and such other training as may be thought best. The battalion is divided into five companies which are officered by the students." The library has ten thousand volumes, to which additions are being made as constantly as possible, largely through the gifts of interested friends. The reading



THE TURNIP PATCH.

room is well supplied with journals and periodicals, and students are required to give items of current news every morning. No young man is allowed to leave the grounds without wearing his cap or some other identifying part of his uniform. He must carry with him the plain evidence of his connection with the institution, and must be on his good behavior accordingly.

It is not to be expected that the industrial departments of an institution like this should go far toward meeting current expenses. The growing work at Tuskegee is dependent upon the benevolence of the public to the extent of from fifty thousand to seventy-five thousand dollars a year. That Mr. Booker Washington has been able to secure such sums is evidence that those who have looked most carefully into the Tuskegee work are thoroughly convinced of its efficiency and importance. Its affairs are supervised by a board of twelve trustees and three Alabama State commissioners. It happens that at present the three State commissioners are also members of the board of trustees, which includes eight Southern and four Northern men. The four Northerners are Gen.

O. O. Howard, of the United States Army; Rev. Dr. Gordon and Rev. C. F. Dole, of Boston, and Rev. R. C. Bedford, of Illinois. The school has the warm commendations of the best white citizens of Alabama, and has the strong moral support of such representatives of the Peabody fund, and other endowments for Southern education, as President Gilman, of the Johns Hopkins University, who has revisited it within the past month. The late General Armstrong said of Tuskegee: "It is, I think, the noblest and grandest work of any colored man in the land. What compares with it in genuine value and power for good? It is on the Hampton plan, combining labor and study; commands high respect from both races; flies no denominational flag, but is thoroughly and earnestly Christian; is out of debt, well managed and organized." Finally it was General Armstrong's plea that this school should have some regularly pledged factors in its annual support, and that the good people of the United States should unite to sustain Mr. Washington in his heavy undertaking, and fix forever a great light in the Black Belt of Alabama. Negro progress on these lines must be approved by every thoughtful mind.



STUDENTS GATHERING CANE.