

Learning White Man's Ways

Indian Youth Study Agriculture and Home Making at Genoa

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Indian Youth Study Agriculture and Home Making at Genoa

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The task of making "good Indians" of the boy and girl descendants of the first inhabitants of America is being accomplished with a good deal of success by the United States Indian School at Genoa, Nebraska. The results obtained by that school, as were told and shown to me while on a recent visit there, dispose of the oft-repeated statement that "The only good Indian is a dead Indian." The Indian boys and girls at Genoa are being taught something really worth while, and the manner in which they apply themselves to the work laid out for them indicates that there is in their makeup the desire to make use of all the modern attainments of civilization which their white teachers have developed.

Rather strange it seems that the first farmers of our fair land have not kept pace in the progress and development of the greatest of all industries, agriculture, and in other professions and trades, and that it now remains for their more advanced brothers and neighbors, the white race, to teach them the essential thereof. Probably some of the blame for this tardy progress may well be laid to the latter people, who encroached on the domain of the Red Man, destroyed his game preserves, took his land away from him, and forced him to remove reservations to spend his remaining life.

Education Relays Advancement

The results of this teaching are apparent after the Indian youth completes his school work and goes back to the reservation or to follow some chosen profession or trade, declares Professor Sam R. Davis, superintendent of the Genoa school. Many persons have the idea that the Indian taught all his school instruction and returns to the stage of development he occupied before coming to school. Mr. Davis said that only in rare cases is that true. Many are the instances where the young blood has brought wisdom and progress to the home from which it came.

The Genoa school is almost self-supporting, which means that most of the work done by the boys and girls there must be productive. Inasmuch as the government contributes but \$10 a year per pupil, most of which is necessary to pay the salaries of the forty-five instructors and employees, it is very evident that the pupils must earn the most of their own living. This living comes from the work they do in caring for the crops and livestock raised on the 320-acre farm, and all other necessary labor about the buildings. In a word, the industrial features revivify the education.

The Genoa Indian School was established in 1884 and is one of more than twenty similar far-western reservations in Indian education. The enrollment has grown from 119 pupils, soon after the school was founded, to about 400 boys and girls at the present time, ranging in age from six to twenty. Until a few years ago all these schools gave the most attention to purely academic work. Then the industrial work was introduced, and recently agriculture and stock raising have been added and emphasized.

The present commissioner of Indian Affairs, Cato Sells, has inaugurated the most extensive policy toward stocking large reservations with livestock, hence the necessity for the

boys to know how to care for it. Such a system stimulates the large masses of Indian lands to big cattle-raising and representations of packers.

Encouragement at Home

Ten states are represented in the enrollment, though the most of the pupils come from the Indian reservation.

may have an idea what line of work suits him best. In the vocational division the pupil takes up his chosen work and carries it to completion. The first six grades correspond to the work in our grade schools, while the seventh and eighth grades in the public schools and two years of high



Genoa's Dominant at Genoa Indian School

tions of Nebraska. The attendance is largely unseasoned. Mr. Davis informed me, though in the past it has been necessary to search rather anxiously for pupils. This good attendance is indicative that the results of Indian education are being felt at home, on the farm, and that the boys and girls are receiving more encouragement from their parents than they have in the past.

It is the belief of the Indian commissioners that any attempt to change and improve the Indian's mode of living must include the bettering of their conditions, hence the emphasis on

school, with emphasis on the vocational training. A number of high school subjects are omitted.

Pupils entering the Genoa school have been outside the state most for four years or more years old and must have passed the fourth grade in the public schools. Children from this state may enter without having had previous public school training, after they are six years old.

Vocational Work Emphasized

From the beginning the vocational idea is prominent in all divisions of the school. Half the time is devoted



Indian Boys and Girls in the Class Room

placed on home economics and agricultural subjects taught in the school. The problem is to give instruction adapted to the varying conditions of the country from which the pupils come.

The course of study of the Indian schools is separated into three divisions, the primary, the pre-vocational and the vocational. In the first division are taught the general elements of education. The pre-vocational section is called the feeding stage. In that division instruction is given the pupil in various subjects so that he

to vocational work and half in class-room recitations. Although most of the pupils at the Indian school are from the farm, and have land of their own, it is not compulsory that they take a course in agriculture, though agriculture is taught to some extent in every division of the course. Before the pupil enters the vocational division he consults with an advisory board composed of the superintendent and some of the instructors, who inquire into the conditions existing as an endeavor to help him select a course that will be best adapted to



Dining Room Etiquette

his qualifications and inclination. The vocational work that he has had in the primary and pre-vocational divisions usually brings out a natural tendency for some particular profession or trade.

The vocational courses include home economics, agriculture, farming, and the trade courses, carpentry, engineering, blacksmithing, painting, masonry and painting. The industrial work consists of actual school and farm work in the various courses. Preceding each period of industrial work a lecture of thirty minutes is given the class, instructing them as to their duties. Sometimes the instructor remains with the class while the work is being done, but in many cases the pupils accomplish the task alone.

All the woodwork about the school is done by the students under the direction of the head carpenter. The farmer instructs the boys in agriculture and the livestock man directs the work in caring for the animals. An engineer directs the work to be done in caring for and repairing the heating and lighting system for the school.

Practical Work for Pupils

I saw boys at work in the tailor shop making the school uniforms, while across the hall in the harness shop the pupils were making harness with the skill of a professional harness maker. Samples of the work done in the harness shop bore evidence that the boys who complete that trade really are competent to compete in the business world to making a living. Over in the boiler room a hunky Indian lad was stoking a furnace and when I inquired if he received any pay for doing such heavy work, Mr. Davis said that he did not; that his interest in engineering prompted him to do this work.

In the blacksmith shop the boys learn to forge iron and steel and to make the repairs for the various farm implements. A woodworker then develops the finer ability in carpentry. All the buildings put up in recent years have been constructed by the Indian boys under the direction of the head carpenter. A new dairy barn was under construction at the time of my visit to the school; a number of boys were working on it. The head carpenter was enthusiastic over the manner in which the boys worked; they are better workmen than white men, he said. The laundrying for the entire school is done by machinery. The cooking and baking are done in a large kitchen directly off from the dining room. We happened into the dining room at the noon hour and watched the pupils make ready to "fall in." The building comprising the dining room is

located about 100 feet long and 40 feet wide. Upon the blowing of a signal previous to the meal hour the pupils march in a double line from each side into the dining room.

Dining Room Etiquette

All movements are executed in military formation, although on actual military training is given. When the pupils had entered the dining room they remained standing until a gong sounded. With the sounding of a second gong they began to eat and talk. The dining room became a busy place at once. The meal looked mighty substantial and wholesome.

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