

AT PRAIRIE VIEW

Prospects Good for Full Attendance
Next Session.

EXHIBIT GREAT BENEFIT

Interest in Industrial Training
Among Negroes Growing, Said
President E. L. Blackshear
in Interview.

(Houston Post Special.)

PRAIRIE VIEW, Texas, July 5.—The prospects for a full attendance at the next session of the Prairie View State Normal and Industrial college for the negro youth of the State, which opens September 8, are very encouraging. Principal E. L. Blackshear is getting inquiries every day regarding the school. One thing that has been of benefit to the school is the industrial exhibit that was shown at Houston and Waco at big gatherings of the negroes of the State. This exhibit shows what is done by the students of the school and it has excited the interest of the adult negroes who want their sons and daughters to have the advantage of industrial education. Principal E. L. Blackshear says: "It is the hope here that the discontinuance of the State scholarship privilege by reason of the governor's veto will not have a permanently hindering effect in the development of this institution. Naturally it will have some effect on a few who had laid their plans with this custom in view, and thus there may be for a season or two a diminished attendance. But even this possible temporary diminution of attendance may be a blessing in disguise, because the school accommodations have been terribly overcrowded for several years past, and in view of the fact that the expected increase in accommodations has not materialized, due also to the veto of the governor of the new dormitory, a decrease in attendance down to the limit of comfort and proper sanitation is by no means a disadvantage, although disappointing for the moment from the standpoint of growth in numbers. After all that is a popular, not extrinsically

correct standard by which the success of educational institutions of all kinds and classes are judged.

INDUSTRIAL TRAINING.

"The interest of the negro in industrial training is growing. More and more are students coming here to learn a trade. This does not mean that none are coming to prepare to teach. This is the only normal school for negroes—in fact the only educational institution of any kind for negroes supported by the State, and Texas needs negro teachers for negro schools and Prairie View must supply the demand in part. I say in part because the several excellent denominational schools for negro youths in Texas supply, and will continue to supply, a quota of teachers for colored schools. But whereas formerly every student who came to Prairie View came to prepare to teach, now probably the greater number do not wish to teach at all, but desire to prepare for and enter some of the industrial pursuits. There are hundreds of negro boys in the State who would gladly come here and work to pay their expenses and learn a trade at the same time. Herein lies the success of the Tuskegee institute. It is made up mainly of poor but earnest, honest negro youth who want a trade and some education and are willing to work to get it. Tuskegee gives this chance to the boy to earn his way or working at a trade. He is paid for what he does; that is, he is allowed enough for his labor to pay his board while he labors and learns.

"In my opinion the industries at Prairie View should be expanded into manufacturing industries so as to afford a chance for a large number of colored youths to work at real trades and industrial processes—wagon making, cabinet making, house building, blacksmithing, horseshoeing, laundering, shoe making, tailoring, canning vegetables, butter making, truck growing, farming, swine and cattle feeding, practical firing and running engines, gins, etc., brick making, grading of roads, drainage, etc. "I do not say all of these can be operated at once, but some of them. But these things are usually the ones who are not able to pay their own way. The Tuskegee plan makes the industrial and agricultural departments in a measure self-sustaining. The labor of the boy is productive. The boy produces something that can be sold, and is sold, hence the remuneration for the labor. This plan could with profit to all concerned be duplicated at Prairie View. Truck gardening and general farming might be handled so as to give the boy a chance to maintain himself, and at the same time become a skillful and reliable truck grower or farmer.

LETTERS FROM POOR BOY.

"As principal of Prairie View I am daily receiving letters from poor and

helpless boys and girls of my race, some of them sincere and touching in the extreme, asking, entreating, praying, begging for a chance to work and fit themselves for some useful pursuit. I believe the crying need of the race in Texas is some provision whereby hundreds of negro boys and girls who are sincerely anxious to make something of themselves and become skillful producers of value, skillful workmen and skillful workwomen might have the opportunity to work out their own salvation. Some negro youths whose parents are able to give them good advantages despise these advantages and deliberately choose a life of idleness and folly, while hundreds of others are thirsting and praying for the opportunity to prepare themselves for usefulness."

Student at Prairie View Grandson of African-King

BY JAMES HAYS QUARLES.

When Thomas Dixon once wrote that among other failures of the African race, it had neglected to provide a language in which there was a word that corresponds to the English word of love, he had not far enough investigated to learn all about the Yoruba language of the west coast of Africa.

There is a native of that country in Texas today. He speaks his native language and he speaks the English language. From him I have learned that there is a sentiment and an affection among the people of his race, that they are true to the love they have, although it is not always confined to one individual, and that the word love, when expressed in the native language sounds something like it might be spelled af-fete.

At the Prairie View State Normal and Industrial college, located at Prairie View, in Waller county, a State institution for negro youth, is a native of the west coast of Africa—a boy from the Yoruba country. This lad is 17 years of age. His name is Lettlevi Afay. He is carried on the rolls of the schools, and is a student in every particular, and he is making good progress in his work. The boy is the grandson of a king of the Yoruba country, and the son of a reigning prince. It is an interesting story how he came to America.

HOW HE CAME TO AMERICA.

John Wesley Hoffman, professor of agriculture at the Prairie View college, is an illustrious negro, who is well edu-

cated and who has traveled widely. He is a member of the American Society of Naturalists, the Boston Society of Natural History, the American Society for the Advancement of Science, the American Geographical Society, the Royal Society of Biology of Berlin, the Societe Royale de Zoologie of Antwerp, Fellow of the Royal Society of Agriculture of England. He has filled professorships in the State negro college of South Carolina, the Tuskegee institute in Alabama, and the Florida State Industrial college. Through the influence of Joseph Chamberlain, the secretary for the colonies of Great Britain, Hoffman was in 1891 appointed to the position of director of the cotton industry and commissioner of agriculture of the Nigerian territory in British West Africa. He was the first negro to be appointed to such a position. He made such a favorable impression upon the king of the Yoruba country that he secured a rich tract of over 200 acres of land for the establishment of a cotton plantation and this was planted with American cotton secured from Texas.

While in that country this boy, who is now in the Prairie View school, became acquainted with Prof. Hoffman. The native African boy heard about the civilized world and he became impressed with it, and when Prof. Hoffman gave up his position with the British government to come to Texas to take charge of the agricultural department of the Prairie View school, the boy took his address. The boy wrote to Hoffman and said he wanted to come to America, and through the efforts of Sir Alfred Jones, interested in a steamship company, passage was secured for the lad, and he came to America. Hoffman met him at New Orleans. He could not speak English and knew nothing of the customs of the country. Hoffman encouraged the lad to come to America because he regarded him as a superior boy. The boy has been here now two years. He is studying at the State school, and he has learned to speak English.

BLACK AS ACE OF SPADES.

This boy is as black as the ace of spades. He has snow white teeth and is exactly what our conception of the native African is.

When I asked the boy why he wanted to come to this country he said that he wanted to know something of the civilization about which he had heard Hoffman talk; he had grown up to 12 years of age under the influences of the Mohammedan faith; he got some one to write his letters to Hoffman and he secured the royal permission to come. His grandfather, the king, he told me, has 20 wives. The boy says that his father, the prince, has 20 wives, and this lad has so many half brothers and half sisters that he does not know how many.

Since this boy has been in Texas, however, he has become converted to the Christian religion. He no longer be-

lieves in a plurality of wives, and when he has finished his education he wants to return to Africa and teach the people of his race that which he has learned in America.

It is interesting to hear this African talk about his own people and his own country. He talks English very well and his own language fluently. He says that in his country there is an affection between the sexes, and that his people know what love is. There is no immorality among the people. The customs of the country require absolute fidelity to all family relations, although the plurality of marriage is practiced.

This African boy gets good treatment at the Prairie View school. His fellow-students treat him well, and Hoffman, his benefactor, looks after his needs. The board of directors of the Agricultural and Mechanical College of Texas has allowed all the privileges possible to the lad under the law that he may obtain an education. He is studying agriculture, learning English, history, etc.

HOFFMAN'S VISIT TO AFRICA.

Prof. Hoffman tells an interesting story of his visit to Africa. He says that what impressed him most was the care given to the cultivation of the cotton plant, which was cared for as carefully with the native hoes as the American negro would cultivate it with the best American plow. Nearly every native hut in the Ekiji country had a loom, and throughout the country the people wear the native cotton cloth. The methods of cultivation are primitive, and children, as soon as they become old enough, leave for the west coast, where money is more easily made.

In his visit to the Oshiele district, Prof. Hoffman found a very progressive lot of farmers. It was here that the cotton industry was first introduced in West Africa in 1866 by the church missionary society. In 1865 1000 bales, weighing between 100 and 120 pounds were shipped to England and this production increased until 18,000 bales were shipped in one year. But with the resumption of cotton production in America after the civil war, the production in the Oshiele district of Africa ceased.

In his work at Prairie View Prof. Hoffman is making success. He has a large class in the agricultural course and the students cultivate the crops through the school year. Hoffman exercises personal direction over the work of the students in the field, and they are made practical farmers. This year the crops have been successful and the shipments of watermelons from the Prairie View farm at this time are from the crop which was cultivated by the students.

The industrial education at Prairie View is making rapid strides. Principal E. L. Blackshear is anxious to extend the influence of the school in this