PROCEEDINGS
OF
A CONVENTION OF TEACHERS,
HELD, IN
ACCORDANCE WITH THE SUGGESTION
OF
HIS EXCELLENCE GOV. SEABROOK,
AT
COLUMBIA, JULY 12TH, 1850.
PUBLISHED BY ORDER OF THE GOVERNOR.

COLUMBIA, S. C.
PRINTED BY A. S. JOHNSTON.
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PROCEEDINGS.

In answer to a call made through the papers of the State, by the Governor, a number of Teachers assembled in Columbia, on Friday, July 12. At 10 o'clock, A. M., Dr. LELAND was called to the chair, and J. H. CARLISLE requested to act as Secretary. The districts of the State having been called in order, the following Teachers appeared and enrolled their names:

NAMES.
E. R. Doyle,
S. H. Johns,
Rev. Thos. Curtis,
Giles J. Patterson,
L. McCandleless,
Rev. J. P. Lee,
\" J. R. Gilland,
J. W. Hudson,
Rev. C. F. Bansemer,
D. Wyatt, Aiken,
T. M. McCants,
J. R. Schorbe,
Geo. W. Ladd,
Jno. R. Shirley,
W. Z. Leitner,
Dr. W. H. Pierce,
J. F. Coleman,
Dr. Isaac Auld,
J. S. Reid,
W. Dupre,
D. F. Griffin,
E. Seibels,
W. J. Ligon,
S. E. Caughman,
Joel Wise,

RESIDENCES.
Pickets,
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Spartanburg,
Chester,
Kershaw,
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Fairfield,
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Union,
Lawrens,
Abbeville,
Newberry,
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Edgefield,
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Lexington,

On motion of Rev. E. Cater, it was voted that the officers of the Convention, be a President and Secretary—to be elected by acclamation. Dr. A. W. Leland was, then, elected President, and J. H. Carlisle, Secretary, of the Convention.

On motion of Mr. Caughman, it was ordered that gentlemen connected with the press, be invited to take seats in the Convention.

Prof. J. A. Leland, then, presented the following communication from His Excellency, which was read by the Chairman:

COLUMBIA, July 12th, 1850.

Dear Sir:

In free communities, the general subject of education and intellectual progress, is justly entitled to unceasing attention. To the slaveholding States of our confederacy, it presents questions of paramount interest. In South Carolina, the startling fact exists of over 20,000 persons, in a population of 280,385, being unacquainted with the English alphabet. Apart from other considerations, the malignant and interminable warfare against the domestic institutions of the South, by their co-sovereignties, is sufficient to assure us that in mental enlightenment mainly consists our safety. Of all enemies, ignorance is the greatest foe to individual, social and political advancement. The extent of its jurisdiction, even the vigilant eye of the patriot and philanthropist, is oft times incapable of detecting.

In despite of these affecting truths, intellectual destitution, every
where, continues to exercise a baneful and mortifying influence.—How it may be confined within the narrowest limits, is a practical question of difficulty and embarrassment.

The high prerogative of the school-master's profession, is to expand, strengthen and elevate the mental powers, and indirectly, to enlarge the sphere of the moral law. These ends involve too deeply the public interests, to entrust their accomplishment to isolated efforts. To insure, therefore, the benefits of a free interchange of views among the Teachers, is the design I had in contemplation, in suggesting to them the propriety of meeting in Convention. In seeking the aid of their counsel, on matters of great public concern, especially in reference to the objects specified in my public invitation—a copy of which is herewith transmitted—I have, in part, discharged one of the many imperative moral obligations which devolve on the Chief Magistrate of South Carolina.

I ask an examination, by your honorable body, of the accompanying school books, recently presented to me by Messrs. Babcock & Co. of Charleston—of the recommendatory notices of the late Jasper Adams's work, and the work itself, on the Elements of Moral Philosophy—and the reports of the Commissioners of Free Schools, for certain districts, in reply to the Circular of the Governor, addressed to the Commissioners throughout the State.

I have the honor to be,

Very respectfully,

Your obedient servant,

WHITEMARSH B. SEABROOK.

To the President of the Teachers's Convention.

(Copy.)

EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT.

Whereas, the cause of education in South Carolina, demands all the light which intelligent and experienced minds are capable of shedding upon it, the Governor, in pursuance of what he believes to be the public wish, suggests to the Teachers throughout the State, the propriety of assembling at Columbia, on the 12th of July, to consider the subject of Free Schools, the preparation at home of elementary and other books for the use of our schools, the best mode of insuring the progress of education, and other kindred matters.

WHITEMARSH B. SEABROOK.
The subject of referring the Governor's letter, was discussed by Messrs. Gilland, Cater, Shirley, Curtis, Jones, Brumby, Lee, and Hudson, when, on motion of Rev. J. R. Gilland, it was referred to a committee of three.

On motion of Prof. Brumby, Dr. Thos. Curtis, Messrs. J. W. Hudson and Saml. Jones, were appointed on this committee, who, through their Chairman, presented the following report and resolutions:

Report of the Committee, to whom the Governor's letter was referred.

Whereas, the Free School System of South Carolina was established by an Act of the Legislature, in 1811; and has undergone no alteration of importance since or up to this, the 40th year of its existence. The object was the benevolent and patriotic one of enabling our poorer white population to partake, so far as possible, those advantages of a sound education, which this State, in every other class, has always so highly appreciated. During this period, the entire condition of the poor, in all civilized countries, and the best modes of educating them, have engaged the attention of the most enlarged and gifted minds; and corresponding improvements have resulted. So that it has become almost proverbial, that "if education cannot be claimed by the ignorant, as a right, it may be demanded for them, from the State, as a duty." We should, perhaps, in such matters, be content to take improvement by instalments; but, here, there has been no one instalment paid, nor even contracted for, in forty years.

Not that the defects of our system have been unobserved—"It wants amendment," says the Joint Committee of the Senate and House of Representatives, (after a long trial of it,) in 1839. Yet it has never been amended. "Its abuses must be corrected," Still they have remained un-corrected. "A stricter accountability [should be] required of those who administer it." But it has never been required. This was their report, after receiving the valuable documents communicated by Professors Elliott and Thornwell, of the State College, to Gov. Noble, including communications from the Commissioners of Schools, and other intelligent men in every part of the State, and an important suggestion from Prof. Henry, which they considered the best that was offered to them, eleven years ago. These sentiments have been reiterated so frequently and so strongly in Messages of successive Governors, since the year 1822, that they need not be referred to at any length. Gov. Bennett
"admires the liberality of the Legislature, but deplores the misapplication of their bounty." Gov. Manning considers the good accomplished, "by no means proportionate to the large amounts of money expended." Gov. Miller, that "the benefit derived, is partial; founded on no principle, and arbitrarily dispensed." Gov. Hamilton, that "there is (in 1831) a strong and increasing impression that the present system is liable to essential abuses." Gov. McDuffie, that "the Primary schools have been almost entirely neglected," and that "not one in 20 of those who have charge of them, could stand the scrutiny of a fair examination of their qualifications." Gov. Henagan, in 1840, that these Teachers, "so far as his observation extends, are, in general, very ignorant, and persons of a very easy morality."

The results have been what all men, familiar with the subject, would expect—20,000 persons of this class, over 21 years of age, who can neither read nor write; and 70,000, between the ages of 5 years and 20, who are not going to any school—out of a population of 259,000, by the census of 1840. Such a mass of ignorance perpetuates itself to the destruction of all appetite for knowledge, it is well known—even where the opportunity of instruction is afforded; and to the accumulation of vices, which are exasperated by the peculiar position of our whole population of this grade; as all who know the interior of the State, could testify. No entirely white population has anything like equal reason to desire, with Governor Wilson, that "every native citizen shall be enabled to profit by the inspirations of [divine] wisdom, and to write his own name."

We would not be indiscriminate accusers of those who administer this system. In particular districts of the State, where resident gentlemen have interested themselves in it, and met with personal exertion and additional funds—the State bounty—it has worked very differently from the results specified. We are well assured, however, that this is the honorable exception, and that miserable inefficiency is the predominant feature of the system.

In these circumstances it is submitted, that one of the strongest Committees of this Convention should be raised to report on all that can be learned of the funds and existing state of the Free Schools.

Consequent on its report, would be desirable another (from the same gentlemen) on

2. Suggested improvements of, or additions to, the system, if continued; another
3. On the eligibility of a competent Superintendent being appointed for the next year; who should report fully, not only on the state of the Free Schools, but on that of the education, generally, of the youth of the State.

No improvement, or means of improvement, have been so largely and frequently recommended from every quarter and for so great a length of time, as this. All Teachers in the State, worthy that name, would rejoice at and assist in the investigation: and the year's sedulous devotion to it, of a competent and zealous party, must result in the approval of all that is good; and the separation of chaff only from the wheat, in any system pursued; as well as a future enlightened and satisfactory legislation, when required.—Another committee is suggested.

4. On the present supply and character of the elementary school books, in use or to be recommended—with a view to the encouragement of their compilation and publication for Southern schools, in the South.

1st. Resolved, That the present Free School System of South Carolina, though benevolently and patriotically designed, and in several instances, intelligently and beneficially administered, requires at this time, essential improvements and additions, to render it effective for the education of the poorer white population; and that a committee of six gentlemen, be raised to report upon what is known of it.

2nd. Resolved, That said committee be requested to report, specially, on any of the improvements and additions that it may appear to them to require.

3rd. Resolved, That it having been long and repeatedly recommended that a general Superintendent of said schools be appointed, with instructions to investigate in detail, their entire condition and character, as well as the general state of the education of this State, a committee be appointed to consider the eligibility of such appointment for the ensuing year, and the instructions it is desirable to offer such Superintendent.

4th. Resolved, That a committee of be raised to inquire into the character of the elementary school books, now in use in the State, and the encouragement that could be extended to Southern men and Southern publishers, to undertake the compilation and issue of school books for the South.

It was proposed by Rev. C. F. Bansemer, and agreed to by the Convention, that these resolutions be submitted separately.

On motion of Rev. E. Cater, it was ordered that the first and second resolutions be referred to one committee, who should be furnished with the letter of His Excellency, and the accompanying reports of certain Commissioners of Free Schools. Dr. Curtis,
Messrs. J. W. Hudson and Saml. Jones, Rev. E. Cater, Dr. Auld, and Prof. J. A. Leland, were appointed on this committee.

The 3d resolution was then read, and after some remarks by Dr. Curtis, Messrs. Smith and McCandless, adopted. And in accordance with it, the following gentlemen were appointed: Prof. Laborde, Prof. Brumby, Rev. C. F. Bansemer, Messrs. Shirley, Hibben and McCandless.

The fourth resolution being under consideration, it was proposed by Dr. Auld, and ordered by the Convention, that the proposed committee consist of one teacher from every district represented in this Convention.

Whereupon the following committee was appointed to prepare a report on school books:

Chairman — J. W. HUDSON, Fairfield,
E. R. Doyle, Pickens,
Thos. Curtis, Spartanburg,
Giles J. Patterson, Chester,
L. McCandless, Kershaw,
Dr. W. H. Pierce, Union,
J. F. Coleman, Laurens,
Dr. Isaac Auld, Abbeville,
J. S. Reid, Newberry,
D. F. Griffin, Edgefield,
W. J. Ligon, Lexington,
Saml. Jones, Richland,
Edwin Cater, Sumter,
P. F. Smith, Charleston.

On motion of Mr. D. F. Griffin, the Convention took a recess until 8 o'clock, P. M.

FRIDAY EVENING, 8 o'clock, P. M.

The Convention met pursuant to adjournment.

The Chairman called for Report on Free Schools, when Dr. Curtis, Chairman, submitted the following report, which was accepted, discussed, and unanimously adopted:

Your Committee, to whom was referred the subject of the exist-
ing state of the Free Schools, and any improvement that could be made on the present system, respectfully

REPORT,

That they have little to add to the report of the committee to whom the letter of the Governor was referred, which the Convention has already adopted. His Excellency the Governor fully confirms, in his letter of this day, to the Convention, the strong conviction of our present committee, that the system, on the whole, is unproductive of any benefits adequate to the amount of money expended. He reiterates the "startling fact" which has been brought before the Convention to-day—that "over 20,000 persons in our population of 280,385, are unacquainted with the English alphabet;" and forcibly dwells on "the affecting truth," that this "intellectual destitution everywhere continues" (after the frequent exhibition of it by our successive Governors,) "to exercise a baneful and mortifying influence." His Excellency further informs us that to the extensive printed enquiries which he ordered his Secretary to make, through the public papers, respecting the state of their schools, but 15 replies have been received from any quarter. Of these, the four he communicates to us, establish the report above alluded to. The system works to the partial satisfaction of only one Commissioner—where "the Free School fund is used as an addition or help to make out schools," otherwise contributed to and superintended by neighbors. But even here, where the Free Schools funds "do not pay for all" the poor scholars, the poor Teacher "loses the deficiency;" "the accounts are closed;" and "the Commissioners attend no examinations." This last is the fact also, in the other cases—because, says one of these replies, "of the fact of the Teachers being hired by private individuals." The other two complain of "the limited appropriation."

We have, also, been furnished with a communication from the late worthy Governor of the State, Judge Johnson, who states his conviction, that while "in some localities, (the cities, towns and villages, and in some of the more densely populated portions of the State,) the funds appropriated have been judiciously and profitably expended—in the main, the fund has been unproductive of any benefits," adding, "that which is known to every one, cannot be proved." Gov. Johnson also complains of the entire "want of system in the disbursement of the fund;" stating that "our public records furnish no facts from which we can judge of the necessities of
various portions of the State, nor is there any individual in it sufficiently acquainted with the details necessary to a proper understanding of the matter."

He, then, submits a plan of establishing one superior Grammar School in each Judicial or Congressional district, to which all classes should be admissible, and which might serve as a Normal School for Teachers of the common schools, which he would continue with an improved class of Teachers; subjoining a strong recommendation of a competent Agent or Superintendent of the entire system.

Your Committee, in the absence of all satisfactory information on the existing state of things, do not feel competent to recommend specific or legislative action even on the apparently obvious improvement of a better school for Teachers—or that central High School which Professor Henry and other intelligent gentlemen have formerly recommended.

Upon two points only, on the subject of additions or improvements, (and after giving much thought to the subject,) are they at present clear: 1. The system of our Free Schools needs that thorough and prompt revision and improvement, which can only be accomplished by a far better class of Teachers than are ordinarily employed; a class which must be offered such adequate remuneration as elsewhere they readily obtain.

This remuneration would involve, as they believe, (with other much needed improvements of the school houses and in the number of schools,) funds of at least double the amount now appropriated by the State, were it ever so well expended; and that these additional funds might, with facility, be raised by a school tax in each district, of an amount equal to the State appropriation. Of what legal powers may be necessary to raise it, they are not fully advised; but presume that the School Commissioners might be empowered to assess what was needful.

2. The only other measure of improvement, which they are prepared to recommend, is that which Gov. Johnson, His Excellency the present Governor, and a large majority of our intelligent citizens, who have directed their attention to this important feature of our polity, have long since suggested—the appointment, for at least one year, of an active and competent Superintendent of the whole; a matter upon which, as within the province of another committee, this committee need not dwell.

THOS. CURTIS, Chairman.

The Chairman of the Committee appointed under the third resolution of the Committee on the communication from the Governor,
read the following, which was also accepted, discussed, and unanimously adopted:

The Committee to whom was referred the resolution recommending that a general Superintendent of schools be appointed, with instructions to investigate, in detail, their entire condition and character, as well as the general state of the education of the youth of the State, beg leave to make the following unanimous

REPORT:

The committee, impressed with the importance of the subject, have given to it all the consideration which the very short time allowed them, would permit. The question of a Superintendent of schools, is no new question in South Carolina. It belongs to the great subject of education, and many of our Governors and other public men, have frequently pressed it upon the attention of our Legislature. If there be any one fact connected with the education of our State, which may be said to be established beyond dispute, it is that the Free School System is a perfect failure. All of our Governors, we believe, without exception, for a period of more than twenty years—the Education Committees of our Legislature—a special commission of the Faculty of our College—have borne like testimony. The fund, annually appropriated, has accomplished but little. The defects of our system are acknowledged on all hands; and the great question is, how are these defects to be remedied, and a system of mere extended usefulness put in operation? Your committee freely confess the difficulties; they have been experienced elsewhere; and one of the most difficult of all problems for solution is, how to educate the people. It is, however, one of the high duties of the State, and our own government is fully alive to the sacredness of the obligation. He who is so fortunate as to perfect a system which is adapted to the necessities of our people, will have accomplished a work of which, indeed, he may be proud; a work which will place him high among the benefactors of our State, and give to him a fame as undying as the page of history. To your committee it seems but a waste of time to compare the different systems which have been adopted in different communities, with the view of making provision for our own people, until we make certain inquiries which must be regarded as indispensably preliminary to the adoption of any system among us, of real and permanent utility. It is only known, generally, that our present system is imperfect and defective; there is an entire ignorance of particular facts—of detail. Our system is condemned—not from a knowledge of its
operation—from an apprehension of its nature and character, but from its results. It is found to do but little good. But what are the particular causes to which this failure is owing? Is it that the appropriation by our Legislature is too small for the purpose? that the schools are not sufficiently numerous? that the Teachers are not qualified for their high vocation? that the fund is squandered or subjected to speculation? that the Commissioners are unworthy of their sacred trusts? that parents will not send their children to school? These, and many other inquiries, which will readily suggest themselves, must be entered upon before anything can be done with an assurance of success. But we cannot forbear suggesting further, such inquiries as these—What is the school fund in each district? what is the population in each district, which is entirely dependent upon the State for education? how many schools in each district, and the proportion of children at school in each? how many days in the year, are they at school? what is the plan of education in each school? what is the particular classification of the poor children, by the Commissioners of Schools? how are the teachers appointed? if examined, and by whom? how often does the Board of Commissioners meet? are the schools visited by them? who has charge of the fund, and how and when is it paid out? what is the pay of the teachers in the different districts and neighborhoods?—How is this information to be procured? There is, your committee conceives, but one way; and that is the appointment of a Superintendent of our public schools. It is a work of great labor, and calls for qualifications of the highest order. A clear head, a discriminating judgment, a cultivated intellect, a patient spirit, a conciliatory manner, a moral character without reproach; these, with an enthusiasm which knows no abatement, make up the character of a Superintendent. It would be the duty of that officer to lay before the Legislature the fullest and most detailed information, in relation to our public schools; and then, groping no longer in the night of ignorance, it is believed that a system could be adopted, which would diffuse the blessings of education throughout the length and breadth of our State.

The Committee are required, by the resolution submitted to them, to consider not only the "eligibility" of the appointment of a general Superintendent, but the "instructions" to be given to him. They do not understand that the particular duties be prescribed—that precise and formal instructions be laid down in this report; but that the general ground of his operations be suggested, and a mere outline of the work which he is expected to do. Your Committee
trust that enough has been said to exhibit the nature of the office, and to vindicate the necessity for its creation. When the appointment is made, more precise instructions will be given, and the particular duties be more clearly defined.

A great work is to be done. It should be thoroughly done, or not done at all. The office should be made of such dignity and honor, as to tempt the ambition of the first minds of the State. Place it beyond the reach of little men. A large salary will keep them off the lists of competitors, and secure for you the services of a competent person. Nothing short of this will do it; and it is right. It is not to be expected that men will work for nothing; the laborer is worthy of his hire.

In conclusion, it is recommended that His Excellency the Governor be requested by this Convention, to ask of the Legislature the appointment of a general Superintendent of public schools, for the ensuing year, with instructions to investigate, in detail, their entire condition and character, as well as the general state of the education of the youth of our State.

M. LABORDE, Chairman.

The Chairman informed the Convention that a report from the Committee on school books may be expected at an adjourned meeting of this Convention, to be held at this place, on the Tuesday following the first Monday in December next.

Mr. P. F. Smith offered the following resolutions, which were unanimously adopted:

Resolved, That the thanks of this Convention are hereby cordially tendered to the Rev. Dr. Leland, for the kindness and urbanity with which he has presided over its deliberations.

Resolved, That we return our grateful acknowledgements to the Hon. Intendant and Town Council, for the use of their hall.

Resolved, That the Secretary be directed to record these resolutions in the minutes, with the other proceedings.

On motion of Prof. Brumby, it was ordered that the Secretary be directed to communicate to the Governor, the reports made to this Convention.

And on motion of Dr. Curtis,

Resolved, That the Secretary be instructed to place the minutes of the proceedings of this Convention, at the disposal of the Governor.

The Convention then adjourned, to meet on Tuesday following the first Monday in December next.

A. W. LELAND, Chairman.

JAS. H. CARLISLE, Secretary.