VIEWS OF PEOPLE AND THE PRESS ON PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND THEIR NEEDS

Public Schools in Chesterfield.

Editor of The Times:

Sir:—The public schools have been kept open most of the time, and the attendance has been fairly good, notwithstanding the weather has been so severe and the roads bad.

We up in this nook of the old county feel a great interest in the discussion which is going on in regard to the condition of the schools throughout the rural districts of the State, and sincerely trust it may result in improving the public school system.

If it be true, as stated in your editorial of yesterday, "that qualification does not, by any means, always count in the selection and appointment of teachers," then your last statement is true, viz: that "the whole system is at fault and needs to be thoroughly reformed and put upon a basis of merit and efficiency."

While there will always be a tinge of politics in the management of the public school system, and no one will dare say that under the conditions which exist in our dear Southland it should meet with wholesome condemnation and denunciation, still all lovers of justice will agree that all nepotism and favoritism should be discontinued and eliminated, and that the system of true merit should obtain always and everywhere.

We feel that we are exceedingly fortunate in having teachers who are splendidly equipped, both by moral and mental endowments, as well as by intellectual training, culture and experience, to teach our children. Many of our teachers were educated at the best male and female colleges of the State and some of them would fill with credit positions in the higher institutions of learnings, in which high moral character, true worth, intellectual ability and a thorough college and university education are held to be absolutely necessary for the higher training of the young men and women of the present day. With the resources which we at present have at hand, our schools are doing excellent work; but under the efficient leadership of our popular county superintendent and with our superior corps of teachers and with additional equipments we are flourishing and working for better things in the not distant future. The patriotic spirit and noble purpose which have animated the true men and women of the South and led them to put forth their best efforts to rebuild the shattered fortunes of this country and contribute of their time, energies and means for the general uplifting of the people along every line of material, social, intellectual, moral and religious development are worthy of the admiration and commendation of all who have the ability to recognize true worth and self-sacrificing devotion and effort.

The prospects for good crops of wheat and corn in this section are not very promising, but it is rather too early to make calculations as to yield in these cereals.

There has been a great deal of sickness among our people within the last few weeks. Pneumonia has been the prevailing disease, and in a number of cases it has proved fatal.

Among those who have recently died were Mr. John Rudd, who left a widow and three children; Mr. Arthur Markham, who left a widow and six children. His widow has been quite ill for some days, and there has been little hope of her recovery, but at this writing her condition is thought to be more hopeful. A more recent death was that of Mr. A. A. Rudd. In his death this community has sustained a great loss. One could scarcely pick out a man in this whole section of country who would be more missed by all classes of our people than he will be by the young and old.

He has been prominent among us for a long series of years and was highly respected as a man of sterling worth. He was mustered into the Confederate service on May 24, 1861, and followed the "old flag" until it was furled at Appomattox Courthouse.

At the time of his death he was a member of the Skinquarter Baptist Church, of which he had been an active and consistent member for many years. He was also a member of Captain Woolridge Camp of Confederate Veterans and took a lively interest in everything that pertained to the old Confederates. He was recognized by all who knew him as a true and valuable citizen, a devoted husband, an affectionate father and a loyal Christian man.

He leaves a widow, two daughters—Miss Genevieve Rudd, of Hollins Institute; Mrs. William Bagwell, Jr., of Hamlet, N. C.; Rev. R. R. Rudd, of Amelia; Messrs. Worsley Rudd, Aston Rudd, of Richmond, and Rev. A. Barton Rudd, of Porto Rico, who is laboring there under the auspices of the Northern Board of Baptist Missions, and a large number of relatives and friends to mourn their loss. All the members of the family were with their loved one and watched the flame of life flicker and grow dimmer and dimmer and then die out forever on earth, but to be rekindled in the eternal home. People from all the adjoining country came to pay their last tribute of respect and help lay him to rest in the silent grave.

How true is it that in the midst of life we are in the midst of death, that the death angel is abroad in the land and that he comes with equal step and impartial tread to the hovel of the poor and the palace of the rich.

CHRONICLER.

Skinquarter, Va., Feb. 24, 1902.

A Teacher's Advice.

Editor of The Times:

Sir,—The school talks in your paper have given rise to a great deal of thought in the mind of one who has been engaged in teaching since 1884—one who has perhaps seen more of the every-day workings of the schools than higher school officials could.

Knowing full well her own imperfections as a teacher, as well as that of others—observing for many years the schools and its teachers, not in one county alone, but in a number of them—she has long felt that there was need for reform. The State has had heavy burdens to bear, and perhaps has expended all the money that it could spare. Whether it can do more seems a question for the legislators to decide and not the teacher.

A vast number of school trustees can but be commended for their faithfulness in non-remunerative work. Of school officials and lack of proper legislation I do not speak, but unless the teachers of Virginia—the country teachers especially—rise from their indifference and bestir themselves to do better work, to elevate themselves by self-culture, by a daily education to better things, mentally and morally, a closer study of the child entrusted to his or her care, often at a tender age, despite the fact that strenuous efforts are being made in various ways for the elevation of the schools, our schools will be retrogressive instead of progressive.

There has been too much sentimentalism about the meagre salary of the teacher, too much said of their being paid no more than laundry women or cooks. The good cook, the laundry woman, the stone breaker, the wood chopper, or whosoever he or she may be that does faithfully the work God puts into his hands, commands infinitely more respect than the poor teacher, teaching alone for salary, who oftentimes dwarfs the minds of the pupils.

Few callings—or, I might say, none—bring with them such mighty responsibilities as that of the teacher.

The good or evil effects of the school room is felt through life and reverberates an echo in Eternity. From this center there are innumerable radii, with limitless extensions, [illegible]

Constitutional Conventions might meet to the twenty-first century to devise ways and means for bettering the schools, but unless the teachers recover from this terrible disease, now become epidemic, of self-satisfaction with the work, however poor it may be, wishing for no better merit, the funds of the State will in many cases be wasted.

There are many good teachers in the State, a vast army of them, I might say, both in town and counties, but as Parrish, Dr. Frazer, and others who have looked into it are right in saying there are poor ones, and many of them. It is an unquestionable fact which seems absurd to refute. Weighed in a balance of a high standard, there are few good teachers.

Miss Parrish and Dr. Frazer, though they may not have visited one single school, have had ample opportunity to note the teachers of Virginia. The former has seen many of them at the School of Methods, more intent on a good time than on the mathematical or pedogogical lessons she is trying to instill into them.

In special instances there is an ignorance of school subjects which is very perceptible and ludicrous. It is but too evident that some teachers attend these excellent summer schools liberally provided for us more to escape the examination than to fit themselves for better work. The majority do not, but many assign that as their motive, and their negligence while there corroborates the sincerity of their statements.

Where can better opportunity of judging of a teacher's work be had than at the State Female Normal School of Virginia, where, from time to time, every county and city in the State has its representation? They have been taught by some one or they could not enter at all, and not only Dr. Frazer, but every member of the Normal faculty have seen for themselves and have given expression to the fact that the majority have not been well taught. This ideal is a high one, but should not ours be? They are critical of us, but should we not be more critical of ourselves? They are giving their influence, their time to an effort being made by some of the teachers to elevate the standard of public school education—namely, the Teachers' Association of Virginia. In the county of Prince Edward, in which the Normal School is located, Dr. Frazer is the honored president of the Teachers' Association. Though now out of the county, he is preferred above all others, for his kindly interest in the teachers and cordiality towards them, and also his ripe scholarship and large experience in school matters causes them to wish to retain him indefinitely as their leader and their representative.

Does the physician of a neighborhood change his mind with the well people or the sick? He that is whole needs no physician. Healthy people don't even associate with physicians. Would teachers with nicely painted, comfortable school houses be likely to have kodak pictures taken, hoping to get better houses thereby? Why, they need no better; but the teacher who has contracted throat or lung trouble, perhaps from an uncomfortable room, hearing that there is a movement on foot to better improve school buildings, would jump at an opportunity to have his or hers bettered. The writer would give a good deal to know if one picture exhibited was of a house in which she once taught, perhaps the most unsightly and uncomfortable in board benches with no backs and the very best children in the world to sit upon them.

There are many very nice school buildings in the State, and some very poor ones, but better ones are hoped for, and we can but believe that Dr. Frazer is displaying ugly sores but to heal, and we not only believe, but know, that he has the interest of the schools of Virginia and its teachers at heart, and is ready to lend a helping hand to draw us out of any slough of despond into which we may have fallen. Let us not sink further in, but rather give our own efforts to uplift ourselves, our schools, and to rise from a lethargy so noticeable as to be observed by prominent educators all over the State. We need not honeyed words or sugar-coated pills, but a little tonic, to make us realize that the public school teacher is often a term of reproach. Bitter words there may be, but true; not in all cases, but in some. Let such things no longer be true of us, but let us use every means for improvement within our grasp—meet together in associations and make means, if we know of none. What matters if we Virginians know we are the best people in the world, and why should we not be the best teachers? Let's be, and make Dr. Frazer, Dr. Southall, Miss Parrish, Mr. Brent and others be proud of us. I say, Let's; so says one of the country public school teachers of Virginia.

"RAVENSWOOD."

Hampden-Sidney, Va., Feb. 25th.

Mind Culture.

Editor of The Times:

Sir:—Man's mind is his guiding star, hence the importance of its being rightly trained that it may guide him in right ways. His success or failure depends largely upon the training received. A huge unsightly mass of granite would not be a very desirable headstone, but after having undergone a process of polishing, it would be a most fitting possession to mark the final resting place of heroes exalted and those fondly beloved.

The same is true of mind; before man can enter into profound thought, his mind must essentially be cultured. The world's most worthy achievements are products of those who have adhered to the adage that "Mental culture is the food of humanity and that 'tis the mind that makes the body rich." Let one engage in whatever vocation he may, without a certain degree of mind culture, his schemes will fail of success. The nations who stand highest in the scale of civilization are those who have put special emphasis on mind culture.

Man's intellect, sensibility, and will must be awakened, if the best in him is to be developed. If these remain undeveloped, he is a mere cipher in civilized society—"A becalmed ship that moves only by the wind of other men's breath."

A. H. WYNN.

Crewe, Va., February 22.

Better Superintendents Needed.

Editor of The Times:

Sir,—Much has been said about the country schools of the State which tends to lessen their value in the eyes of the public.

These things are not true of all country schools; some are doing good work, others very poor work. What is the remedy? I think to a large extent in the appointment of county superintendents. Act in a business way. Appoint men who have taught in the public schools, thereby knowing their needs and how to guide teachers aright in conducting them.

It is now the duty of county superintendents to visit every neighborhood to stir up the people to the importance of educating their children. Does he do it? He does not visit the schools more than once a session, and many schools not once. He is appointed on the recommendation of leaders of his political party. Will the plan adopted by the convention avoid this? I think not. The information upon which he will be appointed will come from the same source. Let the people elect. I know some say he will be more in politics. I think all the people know who will best suit them better than a few politicians.

Let the county superintendents and trustees call together the people in each neighborhood once a year to talk over and discuss what is for the best interest of their schools. Have the people to express their preference for teachers; if there is no reasonable objection let trustees appoint these as teachers; the people will then feel they have a personal interest in their schools, will visit schools and send their children more regularly.

Build good, warm houses, dry wood, &c., so one can easily and quickly make a fire; make children and teacher comfortable.

Teachers of each school district should meet regularly once each month during the session to talk over school work and recommend plans for the betterment of the schools. Whenever possible the county superintendent should attend these meetings.

The teacher seems to be blamed for everything which goes wrong in education. Can a person in any occupation do her best work feeling the pay will not support her, and she must think of and arrange for work to be done when school closes?

Give the schools nine or ten-months' sessions and make the pay such as she can live for twelve months, so that she can plan and study during vacation for next session.

Select some boy or girl from each school who has the natural fitness to teach (teachers are not made by training) and help this one to go to a school for teachers. Returning home, she will do more to excite an interest in education than any public speaker passing through the country.

THOMAS W. CRAWLEY.

Prospect, Va., Feb. 25th.

A Suggestion From Dinwiddie.

Editor of The Times:

Sir,—Your editorial comments on education are so in harmony with my ideas that I cannot help from adding my little mite to the good work. In the first place the public school system, especially in Dinwiddie county, is rotten to the core. Take the district here, where I live, for example. The teacher—well perhaps I had better not say anything about her, she is as good as the average—but there has not been a stick of wood furnished the school this winter and the little boys have had to skirmish around and gather up a few fragments here and there to keep from freezing to death while they should be in the school-room studying, and the school-house is no better than a barn.

Whoever is to blame for this condition of things I do not pretend to say, but I do say that a system that will show such a condition of things is certainly rotten and now while we are having a new Constitution made and the Legislature is in session, why not have a new system either engrafted in the Constitution or by legislative enactment, the abuses which I have named above will never cease under the present condition of things and this has been the whole cause of the disrepute into which the public school system in this State has fallen. It is just the easiest thing in the world to change this rotten system to one that will be a pride and a joy to the patrons and tax-payers and be no more expensive than the present one.

Let every district elect its own trustees to serve without pay and let this trustee have the whole management of that district amenable only to the county superintendent. Let him hire the teachers and see that the wood is supplied and the house in proper repair and everything else needful. In this may you have a head in every district that is responsible for the good conduct of the school, whereas it now is no one seems to be responsible. The teacher runs the school just as she has a mind to. She gets to the schoolhouse any time between 9 and 12 o'clock and if a young man comes along that she wants to go riding with, she closes school, no matter what the time is and the scholars are cheated out of their honest dues. But you cannot expect anything better under the present system, you cannot run any branch of government without a system that makes performance of duty.

AMOS BOLSTER.

Dinwiddie County, Feb. 24, 1902.

A Hint to the Press.

Editor of The Times:

Sir,—"Napoleon when asked which was the greatest power on earth," expecting him to say France, England or Russia, replied, "Public Opinion, Public Sentiment." There can be no doubt of this. You have put your patrons' and people under lasting obligations in your noble defense for public schools. We take it that the press is one of our great blessings and should be leaders of thought and men's actions. Your able correspondents too have done their duty well, such as Dr. Curry, Dr. Hazen and many others through your valued paper. Allow us to suggest that you urge the press of our dear old State to keep this matter well before our people.

That our country schools are a disgrace to the age, goes without saying. There is a remedy for this great evil. Let us have it.

J. R. VAUGHAN.

Richmond, Va., Feb. 25, 1902.

A Word of Encouragement.

Editor of The Times:

Sir,—It was with pleasure that I read the articles on education published in the Daily Times recently I am very glad to note the active manner in which you have begun the crusade for a better system of public education and hope the good work may go on until our people are thoroughly aroused to the situation. They will then rise and demand a change for the better and you will have satisfaction of having conferred a lasting benefit upon our people. No intelligent fair-minded man, who is acquainted with the facts will attempt to deny that the evils exist. Please accept this as the humble opinion of a reader of the Times who is anxious to see the cause of education advanced. Please consider it private as I have no desire for publicity.

CITIZEN.

Blacksburg, Va., Feb. 27, 1902.

A Teacher's Protest.

Editor of The Times:

Sir—Will you allow me to say a word in vindication of our town and its excellent public schools? The Times of February 16th publishes an article from Dr. Kline on education in the South, in which he makes a sweeping denunciation of all schools in Virginia. He knows far better than I about many of these, but let me say for our Staunton schools that they are excellent. The pupils who have gone from here to Blacksburg, Virgnia Military Institute, Washington and Lee, and the University of Virginia have, almost without exception, taken an enviable stand, and have been an honor to our town.

Those pupils who have come up into the Virginia Female Institute for advanced work, have always been among our brightest students, all showing excellent training in the public schools, and among the teachers of these schools will be found many who are graduates and former pupils of this Institute, whose work as pupils or teachers I know to be good. We have also had well prepared pupils come to us from the Lynchburg schools.

Pardon this defense of our town school and its excellent management. Being in a position to say this, I felt impelled to do so.

MARIA PENDLETON DUVAL.

Staunton, Va., Feb. 22d, 1902.

Defends the Schools.

Editor of The Times:

Sir,—It seems that the Constitutional Convention has brought to light innumerable evils, and bred a multitude of reformers. Why is this? Why is it that so little was said about the great evils existing in our State Government before the meeting of the convention? Before the meeting of this body much was said complimentary of our Old Dominion Government in all its braches. We got compliment from abroad, and thought well of it. But, alas!

I know of no real basis for the many hard things said about our free school system. Some things have been published in The Times recently on this subject which will not bear close inspection. I think this is so because close inspection was not made before they were said.

Our free-school system is said to be the poorest in all the land. This is not true. I have taught in other States than this, and know whereof I speak. I have taught in an adjoining State where all the plans suggested as a remedy for the deplorable (?) condition of the schools in this State have been carried into effect, and used for a good number of years. They have a State Normal School in every congressional district, and three trustees for every individual school, and nearly all the teachers are either students or graduates of some one of these normals; they have teachers' institutes in every county, and every teacher is required to present a certificate of attendance at one of these before being admitted to a teacher's examination, and a general average of 85 per cent. is required for a No. 1 certificate, and it is not an easy matter to obtain a school there with a certificate of a lower grade, but notwithstanding all this, the schools of this State fall somewhat behind the schools of Virginia in method, management and progress.

Is Dr. Kline very certain of the ground on which he claims that there is such a sad lack of high-grade teachers in Virginia? With the work of how many of the six thousand teachers in Virginia is he acquainted? He seems to know about how many of that number are graduates from the State Normals at Farmville and Williamsburg. And he seems to take it for granted that the remainder of them are necessarily of a low grade. I am right well acquainted with the public school teachers of this section of Virginia, and have thought they were doing fairly good work. A large proportion of them are graduates from Farmville and other like institutions, and use as far as practicable the methods and suggestions of these schools. Nor do I think those who have not had such advantages of a lower grade. In fact, some of our best and most energetic teachers have not had high-school or collegiate training. But it is a good thing to have, if it is of a high order, and we are inclined to think that if Dr. Kline and his colleagues really desire to elevate the standard of Virginia teachers they have an opportunity for doing so in the work of the normal schools—institutions already established.

LANDON GREENE.

Belona, Va., February 24.

A Teacher's Suggestion.

Editor of The Times:

Sir,—While the subject of education is being discussed, I would like to say that in my twenty years of experience in school work I am of opinion that one of the greatest evils results from the method of appointing teachers. As a rule, the trustees are not educated men and have but little real interest in the schools—are easily influenced, and hence favorites, sycophants and those who will belittle their calling and beg most earnestly, get the schools. Many of these are young girls who should be going to school, but whose only ambition is to teach (?) a while and then get married.

I could give many illustration, but will give only one: There is a teacher not far from me who gives an order for the cutting of a whole cord of wood for every half cord that is cut and the cutter draws the pay. (Wood is cut and piled 2x4x8.) Right in that same vicinity are some good teachers who would willingly teach this school, but cannot get it without playing the sycophant, which they will not do. In the same vicinity are several families, who though they can ill afford it, hire a private teacher, and still others who can't pay keep their children at home.

My remedy is this: Abolish the board of trustees and let the patrons elect the teacher.

VIATOR.

Sunnyside, Va., February 24th.

Why School Teachers Are Not Successful.

Editor of The Times:

Sir,—Since this is a question agitating so many minds of to-day, a discouraging problem, which meets so many teachers with empty benches in their school-rooms and is a mortifying thought which is well ventilated by evil tongues to be heard at every turn, whilst teaching, it seems that we ought to give these thoughts some consideration. It is a well known fact that teachers are not altogether to blame for this status of affairs. Then let all who are interested, superintendent, trustees, parents and children who are to blame for this wave of dissatisfaction, co-operate and shoulder each one's share of the responsibility, so this misunderstanding can be removed in a measure and everybody can be encouraged and benefited by this great work of school reformation. After ten years' labor in public school work I ought to be prepared to point out somo of the obstacles in the way of success as far as our public schools are concerned. The most of my labor has been confined to my own native county, Greene, which I would be as loth to censure as I would a mother who nourished me in her bosom or guided my wandering feet into the path of rectitude.

As to my own individual work, I taught sixty-five pupils ungraded one session in a small school-house, with no help. My work was not altogether satisfactory. How could it be? As sickness or bad weather only helped me out, when I was nearly broken down, I could not blame the trustees for not assigning me an assistant, as the teacher who preceded me averaged three pupils and a half in six weeks. The compensation for this overwork was twenty-two dollars and a half. If the county was not able to pay more at that time, that could not be helped either. Since then I have taught another school with one session's enrollmene of forty-two and another session's enrollment of forty-five, with no help assigned me, yet I know I am doing a good work, as one of my pupils took the same grade in the public school at Washington as her cousin did, who had attended Hollins Institute one or more sessions. She not only took the same grade, but has held it through this session with ease. If the growlers would look out for the good and correct the evils in our public school system a new era would dawn for our over-worked teachers. If scurrilous and unjust accusations are brought against a teacher let them be investigated, and if true let the person be suspended from work for a season; if false let the instigator suffer for the misdemeanor, and let the worker go on with her labor, and the falsehood will be apt to rebound to the instigator, and no one will be injured by such an accusation.

Our superintendents do all in their power to prevent fraud in teachers securing higher standards than they are entitled to, and if they do this they are finally caught up with and banished from school work. If a teacher is assigned a school which she neither has the experience nor the capacity to teach, she is soon willing to give up her work to a more congenial co-worker. Then, again, some teachers are expected to control and instruct children who have looked on her as only a playmate or companion. She is certainly not to blame in such an instance if her work is unsuccessful and falls by the wayside and is lost.

Teachers again are placed in fields of work where through some ill-will or personal cause they are not wanted, and nothing they can do, nor no matter how hard they labor, it would not be beneficial to them nor their children in their estimation, consequently a teacher suffers from the misrepresentation of these parties and is not a success. When this ill feeling is engendered between teacher and parents there is a lack of co-operation, which is a necessary essential to the intellectual growth of a community. Children knowing these causes are not as obedient nor not as studious as they might be if everything worked in harmony and unison; therefore, all such differences should be banished entirely from the school-room.

Quarrelsome and disagreeing pupils should be watched, and when the least differences arise, they should be corrected before they gain any headway and a quietus put on all controversies. A perfect equilibrium should be established between teacher and pupil, if we want harmony and good will all around us and success to crown our efforts. It takes a school a long time to recover from a bad name gained by the mismanagement of a teacher, therefore teachers have to be wide awake and keep posted as to their pupils.

Then, too, scholars are sometimes entirely to blame for misdemeanors, which are magnified in proportion to the distance, as they get further and further from a school, and teachers are perfectly unaware of the magnitude of their proportions or of the fact that anything had ever arisen to have been censured by the public. We must not be idle ourselves nor must we give way to indolence in our pupils. Give them all the work they can do, then keep an eye on each one individually and see that they carry out their part of the programme to the uttermost.

The old adage "Satan finds some mischief still for idle hands to do," is better exemplified in the school-room than any other field of labor. A number of boys and girls shut up in a school will find some place for their mischievous natures to gain headway and set the whole school in an uproar, if not kept busily employed. Want of proper discipline in a school will produce confusion, which will injure a school and prevent children learning as they should. There should be rules enough in every school to keep good order and pupils should observe them through love and not through fear.

Teachers are sometimes too arbitrary and exacting and it makes children more rebellious. Parents are sometimes too exacting in their demands on the capacity of their offspring. Children's minds are so constituted that they except and retain only a certain portion of learning. Lack of exciting a proper ambition in pupils sometimes fail to do the good it might do under certain conditions.

One of the great needs of our schools is a plentiful supply of text books, which the children ought to have in order to be classed and progress as they should. On account of this need of text books we cannot get up that class rivalry which should be awakened, and we have to give our time to two similar lessons which ought to be rightly given to one. If our schoolhouses are small and cramped and not with sufficient blackboards and conveniences for the most approved methods of teaching and the facilities for intellectual culture it is the best we have and we ought to make the most of them. In teaching we can wield a potent influence for good in those around us, and in long years to come they will pay a fitting tribute to our memories if we only do our duty.

Considering the misfortunes under which we labor, some of us are certainly making the best of our opportunities, and doing all we can to advance the forces of wisdom, refinement and culture. Let us not be superficial or careless in our methods of labor, but thoughtful and skillful workers in the vineyard of education—always examples worthy of imitation. If we fail, let us do so at our post of duties, with our bright colors waving our principles of truth in the breezes, and our faces to the foe combating ignorance on every side. We must carry our work to a successful issue. Let us be aggressive, conceive and adopt new methods which will advance education and aid us in our career of usefulness and progress. Erect high standards, which can only be attained by steady application and hard work. Do everything to awaken new zeal and encourage enthusiasm in the minds of our youths. They will some day be the great lawmakers of our country; on them will rest a future destiny of a nation.

A. L. BAKER.

Baskerville, Va., February 22d.

VIEWS OF THE PRESS.

What the Newspapers Think of the Public School System.

The Richmond Times has been giving for some time a large amount of time and space to the discussion of the public free school system of the State. During the course of the discussion it has been clearly shown by The Times and confirmed by the Virginia School Journal, Dr. Frazier and others, that in many instances the public schools are absolute failures and a disgrace. The school buildings, says The Times, in many counties are "wretched," that the merit "system does not obtain, generally speaking, in the selection of the public school teachers," that there is a great deal of politics and favoritism in the selections of teachers and qualification does not always count. The Times will give the "names and addresses of county superintendents, in Virginia, or men who have occupied that position, who will testify on this point."

The Times goes on to say:

"Dr. Southall intimates that the State is doing about as well as could be expected with the money which she expends upon public education. With due despect to Dr. Southall's opinion, we do not believe it. We believe that the schools can be vastly improved without any additional expenditure, by getting a better class of teachers, and we believe that if the tax-payers could see better results for the money thus expended, it would be but a little while before the appropriation would be increased."

As we have said before, the best proof that many of our schools are almost utter failures is the pupils themselves. Let a little time and trouble be taken to examine the pupils from these schools, on reading, spelling, etc., and it will be apparent at a glance that they have not been taught. Of course there are some notable exceptions. The fault is with the teachers. They themselves are deficient, woefully so, in correct elementary knowledge. Many of these teachers are employed on the principle that a half loaf is better than no bread, others through favoritism, and a few because of their qualifications. Among the colored schools the condition is even worse. The Times says on this point, that, "in some cases among the blacks, it is notorious that the teachers are men and women of bad moral character and some disclosures have been made to us in this connection that are enough to shock the whole State if they should be made public."

It appears to us, from the discussion so far, that the trouble largely is in the office of the superintendents, and the reform should begin right there.

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Dr. Frayser's Criticism.

The comments of Dr. Fraser, the late president of the Farmville Female Normal School, upon the public schools of the State, are not understood by his many friends in Accomac. His displaying photographs of some rural schools from this or that section of Virginia, and his position therein to class the schools as contemptible, or the work being accomplished a failure, finds no place in the judgment of sensible men over here, who are the friends of public education.

We have in this county one hundred and fifty schools, counting each room a school. Of course this gives a large number of buildings. About six of these buildings no doubt would be fit objects for Dr. Fraser's camera. But to display these and say nothing of the excellent schools regularly graded, carrying two, three and four teachers, and many of these teachers from the Normal School over which Dr. Fraser presided, would be unjust to the present system, unfair to the workers in the schools, and show lack of consideration in the person at the head of such a parade. It is a very easy thing to theorize in educational matters, to say this is not right, or some other is the thing to do. It is not so easy to get in the work and labor to attain the desired results. This is a practical age. A man and his opinions amount to nothing unless they are of some practical value. A man who discusses school business and is unable to point out any helps, unable to show how to make it less expensive to educate our people; unable to tell how to make the rural school-houses better than is being done under the present system, with the amount of money expended, is of no value to the schools.

The local school boards of Accomac county are six in number. They are composed of level-headed business men, who have the interest of the schools in their respective districts at heart. They spend the money at their command, after due consideration, for what in their judgment is for the best interests of the schools.

They are in touch with the policy as outlined by the State Superintendent in The Richmond Times of last Friday as to weak schools. Each of these boards will welcome any man to their meetings who can figure from the funds available a more rapid and permanent improvement than has been and is being wrought in these parts under the present system. It takes money to build school-houses, and many of the rural school districts have very little money.

The following figures taken from the official reports from this county show a healthy growth:

	Year.	School Pop.
Total enrollment of pupils in Accomac	1883	4,357
Total enrollment of pupils in Accomac	1901	7,347
Average number of pupils to a teacher	1883	43
Average number of pupils to a teacher	1901	33
Total number of schools, calling each room a school, in	1883	67
Total number of schools, calling each room a school, in	1901	151

—Accomac News.

ANNUAL STATEMENT FOR THE YEAR ENDING DECEMBER 31, 1901, OF THE CONDITION AND AFFAIRS OF THE FIREMEN'S INSURANCE COMPANY OF BALTIMORE, ORGANIZED UNDER THE LAWS OF THE STATE OF MARYLAND, MADE TO THE AUDITOR OF PUBLIC ACCOUNTS OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA, IN PURSUANCE TO THE LAWS OF VIRGINIA.

President—F. H. S. WOLFE.
Secretary—HARRY L. RIALL.
Principal Office—25 SOUTH STREET, BALTIMORE, MD.
General Agent in Virginia—ROBERT LECKY, JR.; residence, Richmond, Va.
Organized or Incorporated—DECEMBER, 1825.
Commenced Business—AUGUST 2, 1826.

CAPITAL.

Amount of capital stock subscribed		$ 400,000 00
Amount of capital stock paid up in cash		400,000 00

ASSETS.

Value of real estate owned by the company			$ 145,000 00
BONDS AND STOCKS OWNED ABSOLUTELY BY THE COMPANY			
State of Virginia bonds, Century	$ 50,000 00	$ 50,000 00	
State of Virginia bonds, Deferred	21,500 00	2,150 00	
Baltimore city, Md., bonds	605,000 00	631,210 00	
United Railway and Electric Co. bonds	90,000 00	85,500 00	
Virginia Electric Ry. and Development Co. bonds	50,000 00	45,000 00	
Farmers and Merchants National Bank stock	8,000 00	13,800 00	
Merchants National Bank stock	6,000 00	11,700 00	
National Mechanics Bank stock	8,100 00	25,110 00	
National Marine Bank stock	12,000 00	15,600 00	
Peoples Bank stock	2,000 00	1,800 00	
Citizens National Bank stock	10,000 00	33,000 00	
Second National Bank stock	15,000 00	29,250 00	
Union Terminal Railway Co. stock	14,600 00	11,680 00	
United Railways and Electric Co. common stock	15,000 00	4,500 00	
Total par and market value (carried out at market value)	$ 907,200 00	$ 1,010,300 00	
			1,010,300 00
Cash in the company's principal office			6,487 13
Cash belonging to the company in bank			96,027 95
Interest due and accrued on bonds not included in market value			17,424 07
Gross premiums (as written in the policies) in course of collection, not more than three months due			48,123 64
All other property belonging to the company—viz.:			
Rents due and accrued		$ 299 68	
Furniture and fixtures of building and maps		5,198 36	
Return commissions due on return premiums and reinsurance		1,091 69	
			6,589 73
The gross amount of all the assets of the company			$ 1,289,956 44
Amount which should be deducted from the above assets on account of bad and doubtedful debts and securities—viz.:			
Furniture and fixtures of building and maps		$ 5,198 36	
Account of loan due February 21, 1902		30,000 00	
Total deductions			35,198 36
AGGREGATE AMOUNT OF ALL ASSETS OF THE COMPANY, STATED AT THEIR ACTUAL VALUE			$ 1,254,758 18

LIABILITIES.

Gross claims for adjusted and unpaid losses due and to become due	$ 4,243 31	
Gross losses in process of adjustment, or in suspense, including all reported and supposed losses	35,681 59	
Net amount of unpaid losses		$ 39,924 71
Gross premiums received and receivable upon all unexpired fire risks running one year or less from date of policy, including interest, premiums on perpetual fire risks, $596,122.70; unearned premiums (50 per cent.)	$ 298,061 35	
Gross premiums received and receivable upon all unexpired fire risks running more than one year from date of policy, $188,627.93; unearned premiums (pro rata)	69,734 17	
Total unearned premiums as computed above		366,295 51
Cash dividends to stockholders remaining unpaid		962 14
All other demands against the company, absolute and contingent, due and to become due, admitted and contested—viz.:		
Commissions, brokerage and other charges due and to become due to agents and brokers, on premiums paid and in course of collection, $10,658.16; return premiums, $45.85; reinsurance, $4,320.93		15,024 94
Total amount of all liabilities, except capital stock and net surplus		$ 422,207 33
Joint-stock capital actually paid up in cash		400,000 00
Surplus beyond capital and all other liabilities		472,550 85
AGGREGATE AMOUNT OF ALL LIABILITIES, INCLUDING PAID-UP CAPIAL STOCK AND NET SURPLUS		$ 1,294,758 18

RECEIPTS DURING THE YEAR.

	Fire.
Gross premiums and bills unpaid at close of last year	$ 60,301 35
Net collected	$ 60,301 35
Gross premiums on risks written and renewed during the year	863,756 74
Total	$ 924,058 09
Deduct gross premiums and bills in course of collection at this date	48,123 60
Entire premiums collected during the year	$ 875,929 49
Deduct reinsurance, rebate, abatement, and return premiums	309,105 47
Net cash actually received for premiums (carried out)	$ 566,824 02
Received for interest and dividends on stocks and bonds, collateral loans, and from all other sources	42,479 37
Income received from all other sources—viz.: Rents, $8,107.43; profit and loss account, $291,966.38	300,073 87
AGGREGATE AMOUNT OF RECEIPTS ACTUALLY RECEIVED DURING THE YEAR IN CASH	$ 909,377 86

DISBURSEMENTS DURING THE YEAR.

		Fire.
Gross amount actually paid for losses (including losses occuring in previous years)	$31,862.98	$ 401,833 62
Deduct all amounts actually received for salvage (whether on losses of the last or of previous years), $12,466.77, and all amounts actually received for reinsurance in other companies, $93,602.27. Total deduction		106,069 04
Net amount paid during the year for losses		$ 295,764 58
Cash dividends actually paid stockholders (amount of stockholders' dividend declared during the year, $72,000)		71,876 49
Paid for commission or brokerage		115,820 63
Paid for salaries, fees, or other charges of officers, clerks, agents, and all other employes'		19,287 50
Paid for State and local taxes in this and other States		34,458 23
All other payments and expenditures		38,387 30
AGGREGATE AMOUNT OF ACTUAL DISBURSEMENTS DURING THE YEAR IN CASH		$ 575,594 63

BUSINESS IN THE STATE OF VIRGINIA DURING THE YEAR.

	Fire.
Risks written	$ 1,310,500 00
Premiums received (gross)	18,085 34
Losses paid	14,490 00
Losses incurred	20,071 31

(Signed) F. H. S. WOLFE, President.
(Signed) HARRY L. RIALL, Secretary.
State of Maryland, city of Baltimore—ss: Sworn to January 29, 1902, before JOHN W. HEWES, Notary Public.

SOUTHERN DEPARTMENT

Embracing Virginia, West Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Tennessee, Mississippi, Louisiana, Arkansas, Indian Territory, Oklahoma and Texas.

ROB'T LECKY, Jr., Manager, RICHMOND, VA.