...Progress of Education in Virginia...

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The first decade in the twentieth century will perhaps be best known in Virginia's history by the progress of popular education. The large factors in this progress are the present aggressive State Board of Education, the experienced Superintendent of Public Instruction, Mr. J. D. Eggleston, and the five admirable inspectors and examiners, the initiative of our Chief Executives, the responsiveness of the Legislature, the leadership of our editors and the united efforts of the citizenship in the Co-operative Education Association, together with the two hundred and fifty local school improvement leagues. These factors, working in harmony, have wrought marvelous progress in education in Virginia. For instance, in 1870 there were in all the schools in the State, private and public, only 59,000 children; in 1905 there were enrolled in the public schools alone 361,772, while many private schools were crowded to their utmost capacity. The school term has been steadily lengthened, so that in many counties during the coming year the session will be not less than eight months.

TEACHERS' SALARIES.

While the attendance has been increased, and while the term has been lengthened, it is a striking fact that the average monthly salaries paid to teachers in the country schools are little more than they were in 1871, the first year of the public school system in Virginia.

The average monthly salaries:

	Male.	Female.
1871	$32 36	$26 33
1905	36 86	28 11

When you remember that in this average are included the comparatively large salaries paid to our city teachers, it is evident that the teachers throughout the country, as a whole, are receiving very little, if any, more than they were thirty-six years ago, in spite of the fact that the cost of living has advanced and the demands made upon them as teachers increased. No teacher in Virginia should receive less than $40.00 a month, and she should have work for nine months. Notwithstanding the low salaries, the quality of the teaching force in Virginia has undoubtedly steadily improved. It would be hard to find a more aspiring and self-sacrificing group of people than the teachers in our public schools. Their zeal in their profession is evinced most gratifyingly in the large attendance upon the summer normals now in progress throughout Virginia.

Dr. Robert Frayser, who has done so much for Virginia's schools, has already happily recounted in The Times-Dispatch the statistics as to the educational advance. The recent Legislature passed fifty-two bills dealing with childhood and education. The session consisted of only sixty days. If eight days be allowed for the organization of the body, it will be seen that it passed, therefore, on an average of one bill a day in the interest of childhood. That is, perhaps, a record without a parallel. The generous appropriations have stimulated every branch of our public schools. The $50,000 given for secondary education has called forth one hundred and fifty high schools, which are now rising in as many localities throughout the State. One of the best results of the work of these high schools will be in furnishing a finer grade of teachers for the primary schools.

THE LIBRARY INTERESTS.

The library interests are keeping pace with the growth of our schools in other directions. The appropriation of $7,500 asked for by Mr. Kennedy, the State Librarian, will enable him to add greatly to the thirty-five traveling libraries which are now doing beneficent work throughout the State.

An important feature of our progress consists in rendering education in spirit and method much more practical, concrete and definite in its aims. Manual training in its various forms, methods of recovering exhausted soils and of improving agriculture, the better care of the home and the claims of civil life, are all finding their natural place in the instruction now being given in our schools. In the South the school must bring about economic development, national integration and racial adjustment, for these are the three great tasks that confront our people, and the school must become the chief agency in their accomplishment.

To create an adequate public-school system in a State that is dominantly rural, where the population is sparse, where two different races have to be taught in distinct schools, and where war has wrought its ravages, is indeed a difficult undertaking. What agencies can be found equal to so arduous a task? While the State School Board and its officials are efficient, we are beginning to realize that it is only by the united effort of the citizenship in each community that the public school is to be placed upon a permanent basis of power. Hence the question of progress concerns an organization of all the energies of each community in the interest of the public schools. These local school improvement leagues can best create sentiment in favor of an increase of taxation, stimulate attendance, encourage the teacher, beautify the grounds and buildings, uphold the superintendent, and breathe a healthful impulse into the whole educational cause. Community effort is the key to the educational situation in the South. Local taxation begets direct interest in the progress of the school. "For 1905 the total fund from local sources was $1,304,000—nearly $350,000 more than the year before. For the present year the increase will be even greater."

WOMEN'S HELPFUL PART.

In organizing community effort in behalf of the neighborhood school, women have taken in Virginia a prominent and most helpful part. In the 250 leagues at present in existence, consecrated women are doing a vast work. In taking up this cause of the children, the women of Virginia are writing a glorious page in our constructive history. The Co-operative Education Association has many leaflets explaining the nature, organization and work of these local school improvement leagues. These are for free distribution. Any person desiring to form such a league would do well to write to Mrs. L. R. Dashiell, North Tenth Street, Richmond, Va., who has rendered distinguished services as the chairman of this branch of the work of the Co-operative Education Association of Virginia.

Another thing in which we are making progress is the democratizing of the spirit and ideal of the colleges and universities of the State. These institutions are being drawn closer together by a new realization of common function and vast responsibility of the nation. They are no longer in any sense monastic or remote from the interests and impulses of the common people. In the annual educational convention there are found representatives from all the higher institutions in the State, tugging at the problem of the country common school, such as Presidents Alderman, Boatwright, Denny, Blackwell, MacAllister, Waterhouse, Tyler, and the representative men from their faculties. This downright devotion of our colleges to the advancement of the public schools is a fact of the highest importance in educational progress. I venture to say that the college professor has his own life enlarged, his sympathies quickened and his spirit mellowed by reason of his active co-operation with the public schools, while the college class-room profits by the new and healthful impulse that is born of this democratic interest on the part of the teacher.

MEETING OF CONVENTION IN RICHMOND.

No proper register of the progress thus far can be made until the annual educational convention meets this fall. It will assemble in Richmond, October 3d to 6th, just before the meeting of the State Fair. This will enable the friends of education from all parts of the State to take advantage of the low rates to the fair in attending the convention. It will doubtless be the most representative and inspiring gathering that has yet been held under the auspices of the Co-operative Education Association. The State Teachers' Association and the Superintendents' Conference will meet in connection with this convention. The three bodies combined will surely give a new impetus to education in Virginia. S. C. MITCHELL.