

## FREE SCHOOLS.<sup>1</sup>

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Have you seen a single, sensible tax-payer, not a small politician, and thus a suitor for impecunious votes, nor a selfish beneficiary of the plunder disbursed by our school system, who does not denounce the whole measure as unjust and mischievous? I have not. The plan has been tried and found wanting. The careful observer of Northern opinion sees that while the demagogues, lay and clerical, still shout for the system, in order to catch the populace, thoughtful men in the North are more radically dissatisfied with it every year, as an expedient for American commonwealths. I could fill quite a scrap book, with reflections of leading Northerners, upon the failure of the system as a diffuser of any real intelligence; upon its tendencies to degrade American literature and obstruct better education (outside the cities) upon the evident increase of crime and incendiary opinions under this system; upon its obvious bearing to rear up an atheistic generation of people and prepare for America a reign of terror; and upon its futility even to diffuse the art and practice of reading among the laboring masses. Such a scrap-book might be edifying reading for our Utopians. It seems very likely, that they have persuaded Virginia to put on the costly shoes of the Yankees, in this matter, just when they are getting ready to kick them off with disgust.

Their consciousness of the strength of our arguments against their pet plan is clearly betrayed in the false issues they raise. Because we see that this pretended way of education is fallacious, dangerous and wasteful, we are the "enemies of education," forsooth! Let us see if even their reluctant heads may not be forced to admit, that a man may be a true and hearty friend of a good work, and yet, *for that very reason*, all the more opposed to a pretended, mischievous, false way of promoting it: It is presumed that the State Commissioner for instance, is a true friend of the evangelization of all the people, and espec-

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ially of the poor and ignorant. Consistency, therefore, makes him an advocate of an established Church to do the evangelizing, does it? Let him speak out! If he says he is not the advocate of evangelization by State-action, and yet the ardent advocate of evangelization, then I ask, by what monopoly of candor or honesty does he, while claiming this for himself, impugn our motives, when we say that we are ardent advocates of the true education of the poor and ignorant (have been working for it all our lives); and yet not advocates of education by direct, State-action? And while on this point, I will add another question: If a man reasons consistently, must not the State-school men's logic, from the admitted importance of education, to their State scheme, also lead every Christian to advocate a State establishment of Christianity? Why not? And does the Superintendent remember an occasion, at which I was present, when a citizen of Virginia, eminent for moderation, wisdom, age and benignity of character, made him admit that very conclusion, as, under certain circumstances following from his positions?

This suggests a point against our present plan, whose formidable character is now making thoughtful men at the North, and in Britain, tremble. The Redeemer said, "He that is not with me is against me." There cannot be a moral neutrality. Man is born with an evil and ungodly tendency. Hence a non-religious training must be an anti-religious training. The more of this, the larger curse. But the American commonwealth has expressly pledged herself to a non-religious attitude. Hence, she cannot, by her State-action, endow or inculcate a particular religion. While the population of some States was homogeneous, this radical difficulty was not seriously felt: the people of a Protestant State, like Connecticut, could quietly overstep the true history of their own constitution, in favor of Protestantism; and there was nobody to protest. But now we have Papists, Unitarians, Chinese, Jews and Atheists by the myriads; and they will not acquiesce in the wielding of State-power, in which they have equal rights, for the partial advantage of a creed to which they are opposed. The result will be, that their protests will triumph, as they now do, in many States; and we shall have a generation of practical atheists reared "on State account"; just as clear-sighted men in the North see they have on their hands

there, rapidly preparing for them another *sans culotte* revolution.

In previous discussion, it was also shown, that the system of State-schools is agrarian, or communistic, confiscating the property of one class of citizens for the private and domestic behoof of another. The justice of this charge none know better than those who mix with the people; the power to make the rich man educate their children is the main feature which commends the system to the non-taxpaying voters. It is valued by them as a method of plunder. We have also shown that the system is levelling, and attempts an impossibility: to give all the people literary occupations; whereas in all countries, and in spite of universal schools, it is found that the laboring class does not read, and does not wish to read. It was shown that the scheme confounds education with a knowledge of a few literary arts (reading, writing, etc.) which are not education, but only possible means thereof; and in the case of the laboring poor, far the most questionable, and least efficient means of true education. The tendency of the State's interference was shown to be, to degrade the standard of literary education, while diffusing its poorest elements: since we see good schools disappear as the primary ones are multiplied. The degradation of literature follows from the same cause, by reason of the attempt to supply a grovelling or shallow literature for the multitude of minds one-tenth part educated. It was proved by stubborn facts, that common schools have multiplied crime and pauperism, by a natural influence, suggesting to the laboring classes new wants, without increasing in them the power of moral self control or the means of lawful indulgence. And the dishonesty of their advocates has been again and again exposed, in continuing to appeal to their deceptive cry, "Better economy to build school-houses than jails"; after *it has been proved to them, that the multiplication of their school-houses has multiplied the jails.* The fearful dangers to the morals of children, by promiscuous minglings in these schools, has been pointed out; and are receiving confirmations in many parts of the country, in the spread of abuses too gross to be ventilated in public. The certainty that our schools will be perverted by demagogues for party purposes, was pointed out; and was illustrated by facts; while the intolerable and tyrannical nature of this usurpation

was displayed. Last: the lights of the wiser statesmanship of better days were adduced, to show how perilous it is to fix on the community any system whatsoever, the nature of which is, to subsidize many persons, by giving them a selfish, pecuniary interest in the perpetuation of it, or of its abuses. For, should the system prove unwise, or should new circumstances require its change or repeal, the self-interest of all these subsidized classes will prompt them to clamor and defraud the public mind, so as to make the needed repeal impossible or extremely difficult.

The course of this discussion has added a pungent illustration to the power of our last argument. No sooner was discriminating inquiry turned upon the new system, than it was discovered that it had already bribed so many classes, other than tax-payers, that candid and patriotic discussion was hopeless. A State Superintendent in the metropolis, a county Superintendent in each county, with his gang of petty tax gatherers, his school board for each "township," his company of schoolmasters and schoolmarms, with their whole cohort of pauper parents, at once waked up to the fact that their much be praised system enabled them very conveniently to keep their hands in the pockets of other people. All these joined, in many places, in raising a mercenary clamor, which has drowned fair discussion. And our minute politicians, in whose breasts votes are the breath of life, are seen so intimidated, that hardly one of them dares whisper a doubt against the idol of the socialists. The manner in which this debate has been conducted by many of these petty place holders would have been enough, were Virginia what she once was, to overwhelm the whole affair with righteous disgust and indignation. Citizens who have the right of tax-payers, to be heard touching their rights, and State-affairs; who are, in many cases venerable for grey hairs, for experience, for integrity, and for long lives of labor and sacrifice for the honor of Virginia, have been seen yelped after by these officials (whose only known service to the State has been drawing salaries wrung from it by a grinding taxation), with obloquy and ridicule. This is an indecency which deserves only chastisement.

The time was, when Virginian officials had manners and principle enough to keep silent in a debate touching their own

emoluments; they felt that delicacy, not to say common decency, prompted the leaving of such questions to be considered by that larger part of the citizens who had no pecuniary interest in the issue. The time was, when Virginia had a righteous constitution, the work of statesmen and not of demagogues; and that instrument contained this provision: That no member of a Legislature which debated and decided the creation of a salaried office, should take office under the act creating it. The reason of this excellent law was, that the very indecency on which I remark might be made impossible, at least, in the Legislature; that no man, when handling the rights of his fellow-citizens and of the State, should run even a risk of having his judgment warped by a pecuniary and personal consideration. But we have now seen all this indecent clamor from the throats of paid officials; and we have seen the School Commissioner actually employing the people's money to flood the State with *ex-parte* documents and arguments, designed to forestall the expression of the people's judgment as to measures in debate before them, and liable to be justly condemned by them. All that the school law, bad as it is, could pretend to create such officials for, was, to execute the provisions of the law. But under the thin pretext of diffusing information about education, they misapply the people's money to the work of manufacturing, in Virginia, a Yankee public sentiment, alien to the genius and traditions of Virginia, promotive of the continuance of their personal emoluments! And Virginians stand this?

The utter inadequacy of the pretext for universal negro schooling was also pointed out; that "as they are to vote, it is our duty and interest to educate them into intelligent voters." We showed that primary education, larger than that given to our negroes, had utterly failed to make intelligent voters out of the white proletariat of the North, and we urged this plain, honest query: *What right have they to promise Virginia that a smaller dose of their physis which we see only impotent and mischievous there, will do any good here?* The facts they dare not deny; but at the plain, stubborn question they refuse to look. Blinking that, they only repeat the refuted pretext, an average specimen of the honesty of the logic. The radical nature of the perils attending negro suffrage was pointed out to them, from difference of color and race, alien blood, race an-

tipathies, savage morals, total absence of property-stake in the common weal, subjection to poisonous and malignant outside influences; and it was asked, Will such *a mite of the arts of reading and spelling*, as Virginia free negro children are going to retain, be *any remedy* at all for these strong perils? Every man's common sense answers: Just as trustworthy as a minute bread pill for the yellow-fever! Every man's common sense also shows him, that while this sham-schooling will be utterly futile for the end proposed, it *will be* efficacious for harm, by giving young negroes pretext for the idleness and the false expectations which are their and our great perils. The art of reading may be quite a good thing for him who uses it aright, but these young negroes are in perishing need of learning many things which are, for them, infinitely more momentous than this questionable boon, and which these baubles of schools fatally prevent their learning; how to turn a good furrow, how to make an honest day's work, how to groom a horse, how to cook a wholesome loaf, how to wash a shirt, how to whet a scythe, how to mow an acre of grass per day, and above all, how to live without stealing. We solemnly tell the school-men that they are giving the country a generation of young negroes whose inevitable destiny is to work or steal, whom they are so rearing, that they neither wish to work nor know how. The property-men of the country cannot hire them, because they know nothing useful to an employer; and the young negroes would not hire themselves if they were fit for anything. Come, gentlemen, lay aside utopianisms, and sophisms, and "false facts," and tell us, if you please, what Virginia is to do with a half million of young negroes thus trained to impotency, when the old generation, *educated by slavery* are gone? Give each one of them a school to teach? Will they not all have the natural wants and desires of human beings? Neither able nor willing to work, will they not take? Can poor, impoverished Virginia stand up under so much lettered pauperism? Will not the alternatives be universal bankruptcy or anarchical resistance? The question is solemn and urgent.

We urge, again, the burning injustice of the present law, taxing the former owners, after plundering them, for the pretended education of negroes—Virginia had her own system for educating her negroes. It was a good system, approved by two

centuries of experience. It turned miserable savages into a decent, useful, Christian peasantry. It even diffused fully as much of the arts of letters as the Africans were in a condition to profit by! For it is well known that every young negro slave who showed any worthy aspiration at all was usually taught to read in his master's family. It was a system of education, solemnly sanctioned by the laws, human and divine, and guaranteed to us by the Federal Constitution and the enactments of Congress. Well, it suited the invader's purposes of ambition to tear down our good, old, legalized, beneficent system of education for the negro, and to confiscate our property in him, thus reducing the white community to the verge of destitution. And then, the oppressor turns around and taxes us, already so ruthlessly injured, for means to attempt a new, expensive and worthless system for repairing the ruin which he had himself perpetrated in destroying the well tried and lawful system! The destruction of the good, old system was his work—a work wrought exclusively for his own aggressive ends. Let him bear the cost of repairing his own mischief. There was wickedness enough in the doing of it, in all conscience. But now, when he turns upon the injured party, and again plunders them, under the pretense of taking means to repair his own first crime, the wrong is "rank and smells to heaven." I see not how any righteous mind in Virginia can have anything to do with it, except to protest, while he unavoidably submits.

Hence it is, that when any white man among us pretends to be an *ex animo* approver of this plan, my common sense compels me to be a skeptic as to his sincerity. The old Irish fish-woman tried to persuade her customer that the eels rather liked skinning; but the eels never said so; and had one of them professed satisfaction with the process *pr see*, I should have persisted in the doubt whether he were a candid and truthful eel. From this point of view, the sensible reader sees that the very inception of this State-school matter in Virginia stamped its motive with insincerity. The "Underwood Constitution" itself, thrust down Virginia's throat as it was, by the breech of Provost Marshal's musket, did not require the Legislature to put any system of State schools in operation until 1876. Every patriotic reason should have prompted us to wait as long as our masters allowed us. The State was in a condition of finan-

cial exhaustion, which made any breathing time, however short, a boon to her; and her credit was already staggering under a load she could but just carry. There was no experience anywhere in the world, to guide a Legislature in such a problem as the Underwood Constitution imposed; the education of two different and hostile races on the same soil and in the same system, and in Virginia, there was a total lack of experimental knowledge of State education on the Yankee-plan. It would have been most beneficial to wait a season, and thus gain the benefit of other's experiments. Our conquerors, whose imperious will imposed this plan on us, then had the full fever of their hatred and triumphs on their spirits. Every year that passed was likely to abate something of their fury, and take some of the "wire-edge" off their despotism, so as to hold out the hope that in 1876 they would be less exacting of their subjects than in 1870. At least, one would have thought, the Legislature, driven by their masters to so vast, expensive and untried a work, would proceed tentatively, during the six years of grace, and risque only small experiments, until they had felt their way. The propriety of delay is evinced by this plain question: Does anybody dream, that in 1876, after the Funding Bill, after all the experiences, the disappointed hopes, the decline in real estate, the ebbing of resources of those six disastrous years, any Legislature could have been mad enough to commit the State to the cumbrous and costly *incubus* fixed on us by the action of 1870? Nobody. The blunder would have become impossible by 1876. Well, all that we might have gained by the experience of those six years, with five millions of dollars (spent on these sham-schools), which might either have paid off one-sixth of our whole debt, saving the State's credit; or, if left in the people's hands, might have fecundated private enterprise all over the State; all this our Legislature threw away in 1870, by its precipitate, superserviceable zeal in carrying out the orders of our conquerors. Why did they thus run six years ahead of their master's own orders, in the face of all these obvious considerations for delay? *To buy votes for themselves* in county elections; to disarm the objections of radical demagogues, who were hounding on the negro voters after the spoils of the promised school-system; to ingratiate themselves with the non-tax-paying voters, by giving them speedily this pretext for

thrusting their hands into their neighbor's pockets. Thus the system was begun, not in wisdom or patriotism, but in self seeking. Is it asserted that it was necessary to throw this "tub to the whale" at once in order to appease radicalism and save the State government from its clutches? I reply by the question: *Was radicalism appeased?* Did it not wield the whole negro vote substantially, notwithstanding the "tub?" The State was saved from its foul clutch, not by any appeasing or dividing of its greed, but in spite of that greed. Had the ruler of the State and the leaders of the Conservative party then assumed a quiet, honest position they would have met the clamor for precipitating the school-system thus: "When the stipulated time comes, we shall duly perform the covenant, which a hard necessity has forced us to agree to. The poverty of the State and the true interests of both races forbid our anticipating the task. No obligation exist to do so, consequently no charge of bad faith can lie for our not doing so." This honest attitude would have been so impregnable that it would have put the Conservative party in a far better position before its enemy than it ever gained from its cowardly haste and rashness.

But I have still more practical objections to make against our present school-laws and their administration. I charge that, even if we granted the propriety of the Yankee theory of universal common-school education on State account and under State control; even if the Underwood Constitution were right in this thing—which I utterly deny—still our present system is wicked, tyrannical, wasteful and unnecessarily burdensome to an impoverished people, and comparatively inefficient as an execution of its advocates' own false theory. If it be granted that theory is to prevail in Virginia, still the present school-laws and their administration are flagrantly vicious, and call for the reform of the Legislature. This I shall prove in a practical way, by comparing it with actual results in the present and the past. My argument will proceed on the maxim, that what has been done by others in the same circumstances, can be done by Virginia.

First. I bring our boasters to the test of a comparison with the existing system in the State of Georgia, the "Empire State of the South." Georgia, like us, has been forced by her conquerors to embark in the Yankee theory of universal primary

education on State account and under State control. The vital article of their present Constitution compelling this is as follows:\*

"There shall be a thorough system of common schools for the education of children in the elementary branches of our English education only, as nearly uniform as practicable, the expenses of which shall be provided for by taxation or otherwise. The schools shall be free to all children of the State, but separate schools shall be provided for the white and colored races."

The revenues provided by the Constitution and laws, to support all the schools, \*\* are the poll tax, the interest on the existing school fund, a special tax on shows, a tax on the sale of liquors, a dog tax, and half the net earnings of the "State railroad."

No *property tax is laid*, either on State or local account, on any real or personal property of individuals, to support common schools. Thus the grand iniquity of our agrarian system is avoided. Even the Legislature is sternly inhibited from authorizing any local taxations, by any local authority whatsoever, for school purposes, until the tax has been expressly approved by *two-thirds* of the voters of the locality (city, or county, or town). Even this guarded power *the Legislature has hitherto wisely refused to grant*; and so far *no property tax is wrested* from any one citizen to help to educate another man's family.

Now let us contrast our "bill of abominations." The Legislature,\* in addition to the income of the "literary fund" and certain escheats and fines, levies on all property, for a general or State school fund, a direct tax of ten cents per \$100 annually. But this outrage is only the small beginning. The county school board may also tax all property in the county to the same rate; and the "district school board," the littlest and last gradation of petty tyranny, the three trustees of a township, may exercise this highest attribute of sovereignty, and tax their (fellow-citizens, I was about to write, erroneously) *subjects*, to the rate of ten cents on the \$100 of all property! Thus, besides the other

\*Const. of Ga., Art. viii. § 1.

\*\*Const. Art. vii. § 3. Pub. Sch. Laws of Ga.

†31. Const. Art. viii. § 4. Sch. Report of Ga., 1887, p. 12.

\*\*School Law of Va. codified," pp. 19, 22; Act of Assembly Jan. 11. 1877. "School Laws codified," p. 27.

very considerable exactions which come ultimately from the people, we have property taxed 30 cents on every \$100, to educate the children of those who pay no tax, or nearly none. This is *three-fourths* of all the property tax the State of Virginia used to require for all the ends of government, in the days of her glory and greatness; and *three-fifths* of all that she now exacts for all her other purposes, in these days of enormous and reckless taxation and expenditure! But who are the "county board" and the "district board?" The "district board" is one of three "trustees" for the townships, *appointed by the county superintendent, county court (judge), and commonwealth's attorney!* And who appoints the "county superintendent?" The State school board nominally—Dr. Ruffner actually, according to his own admission.\*\* And the county judge? He is elected for a term of years by the Legislature. And the commonwealth's attorney? He is elected by the non-tax-paying voters of his county; in my county, elected by pauper negroes. And who is the "county school board?" These little office-holders, thus appointed of the several townships, with the county superintendent again, constitute the "county school board." Thus the power of taxing the people, the most important function of sovereignty, is entrusted to persons with whose appointment the people can have nothing direct to do. This is an outrage against the first principle of free government: *that representation must accompany taxation.* True, this county board is directed by law to report their proposed levies to the county "board of supervisors," who are elected by the people, i. e., by the non-tax-paying voters; in our county, by the pauper negroes. But in this matter of the school levies, this board of supervisors is, to the school board, only what a "*lit de justice*" was to Louis XIV. of France. It can hear, register and enforce their majesties' edicts, and hound on the constable who sells the last cow of the white widow of a Confederate soldier to play at schooling the brats of negroes who are stealing out of the field the poor little crop of corn she has tilled with the hands of her fatherless boys. The law itself is so worded as constructively to *enjoin* the supervisors to ordain whatever levies the school board demands, provided it does not pass the *maximum limit*.\*

\* \*Va. School Rep., 1877, p. 15. "The work and responsibility are thrown on him by the other members of the Board."  
 \*\*See School Laws codified, §64, 4: "It shall be the duty of said Board, . . . to levy," etc.

Why this outrage on the principles of free government? The nature of the Underwood Constitution is to make each township a corporation for township purposes. *Why did no the law allow the township corporation, like all other corporations in the land, to elect its own officers?* Ah, the concocters of the tyranny did not mean to allow the sacred principle, for which our fathers fought, to hold here, for fear the citizens in the townships should use their right of election to protect their property from plunder under the name of school tax! One might have thought that they had sufficient guarantee of lavish taxation, in the universal and the negro suffrage prevailing in the townships, where the voters who pay no property tax have the power of a majority, to vote away the property of the minority who do pay. But this sweeping and ruthless power, wicked as it is, was not enough for the artificers of our system; so, to make sure that property shall be absolutely helpless, under the robbery designed, they also sundered representation from taxation, and gave the taxing power, in township and county, to persons not elected by the tax payers. Our system is worse than those of the Yankees, from whom our school men seem so greedy to borrow; for, while the major part of the school money in the Yankee States usually comes from the local taxes, the rights of townships and their citizens in assenting to those taxes are more respected. The township there is a little republic, and exercises the rights of one; ours are in names, corporations, but helpless corpses in fact, under the exactions of these officials with their foreign appointments.

Once more; bad as the laws are, I have the personal evidence, that these irresponsible exactors are capable of transcending those laws. They actually made me pay in Prince Edward county, for 1877, to the State ten cents on every \$100 for school purposes. To the county and district jointly twenty cents on every \$100 of my real estate in Prince Edward, and 26 9-10 on every \$100 of my personal property. I have the county treasurer's receipt for this lawless plunder (6 9-10 cents per \$100 more than the maximum allowed by their own tyrannical laws) in my desk. It may be satisfying to the curious to know how much tax a countryman pays who has no municipal taxes and no municipal privileges. On my little mite of real estate: To the State, county and schools, 105 cents on every

\$100 of value. On my personal property to the State, county and school, 127 6-10 cents on every \$100 of value, besides my separate income tax. This is quite near enough to confiscation, especially on real estate which yields the owner just 0 *per cent.* annually. Of course there is no redress. Every well informed person knows that this is just the kind of oppression which John Hampton resisted in the famous case of the ship-money, and which ultimately cost Charles I. his head. But the despotism in Virginia is so much more crushing than that of the absolutist king, that any man who made a stand for his rights here would be simply laughed at.

Now, the point of my comparison is, that Georgia is as distinctly committed to the wrong system of universal State-schools as Virginia is. Yet Georgia can set up that system without trampling, in this way, on the rights of the people. The Legislature of Georgia could at least avoid that self-evident enormity, of enabling the non-tax-paying majority to vote away the money of the paying minority without redress to the latter. She did at least avoid the wickedness of so legislating, as that the power of levying and disbursing property-taxes should be placed in the hands of one class of the people who do not pay; while the necessity of paying taxes is imposed on a distinct class—those who own property. If this is not “class-legislation”—the essence of oligarchy—I know not what is. Georgia, knowing that, with universal white and negro suffrage, the class who pay no property tax must always be in the majority, wisely refuses to levy any property tax for schools. The only general tax she allows to be levied on her people for this communistic purpose is a poll-tax, in which rich and poor pay alike.

Now, if we must have the Yankee system, why cannot our Legislature imitate the wisdom and moderation of Georgia? Let all property-taxes, State and local, for school purposes, be abolished. Let the poll-tax be dedicated to that use, with the proviso, that the parent must at least pay the poll-tax, in order to enter his children. And, if this would not make a sum sufficiently splendid for our enthusiasts, let us imitate Georgia again, and devote the liquor-tax to the schools. The Auditor estimated that the Moffett law, properly applied, would yield \$600,000. Is not that, added to the poll-tax and the income of

the literary fund, enough to glut the rapacious maw of the School Board? Give them this; and we shall at least have the consolation of knowing, that we are not plundered to support a mischievous system, unless we choose to commit the folly of tipping.

The powers given these petty officials by our laws are also tyrannical in the matter of school buildings and fixtures.\* These officers, practically irresponsible to the people, decide that any building they please are needed, and the people are taxed, "will they, nill they" to build them.\* The county Superintendent is armed with the power of condemning a building, already paid for by the people's money, and disposing of it. He who does not see here openings for corrupt robbery must be blind indeed. I know that officials may be found, who do not build or alienate school-houses for jobbery, and who endeavor to consult the poverty of their people. But the system is evil, in that it gives the power to unscrupulous men; in that it applies the temptation to human nature. And I know that abuses do exist, showing cruel oppression of our burdened tax-payers. I know of a school-house, needlessly built, against the advice and protest of discreet tax-payers, in a township of honest country people almost bankrupted already by taxes, occupied by a pretended school one or two seasons, and since standing empty, except as used, without authority, for a tobacco barn! How many hundreds of such cases exist? The people are so tired out and crushed with oppressions, that they are too languid to protest; and such doings pass *sub silentio*.

But now, let us compare the cost of our schools, and those of Georgia; a vital point when our State is hovering over insolvency.† Georgia spends, in one year, \$434,046.‡ Virginia spends, for one year, \$1,050,346!!!! Georgia is the undiminished Empire State of the South, with \_\_\_\_\_ of population, and \_\_\_\_\_ millions of taxable property. Virginia is shorn of one-third the dimensions by dismemberment and claims only \_\_\_\_\_ millions of taxable values.

Again,§ the total expense of working the system in Georgia is \$6,390.58. The expense of working our system is, ||by

\*School Laws codified, § 40-44.

†School Laws codified, § 42-43.

‡Georgia School Rep. for 1876, p. —, p. 8, p. 8 again.

§Virginia School Rep. for 1877, p. 7, pp. 5, 6.

||Georgia School Rep. for 1876, p. —, p. 8, p. 8 again.

||Virginia School Rep. for 1877, p. 7, pp. 5, 6.

the Superintendent's own figures, \$170,837.78. This includes *nothing for building school-houses; all this immense sum goes for salaries, fees and rents, etc.* Is it any longer a surprise to the people of Virginia, that there is an indecent and vicious resistance to all amendments, on the part of this well-pampered crew? The number of children in Georgia (of both colors) between the ages of six and eighteen is reported<sup>¶</sup> to be 394,037, the number enrolled was 179,405, and the actual average number in the schools was 115,121. In Virginia (see reference above) the number of both colors between five and twenty-one years, was said to be 482,789 (the difference of 88,752 in favor of Virginia would be more than offset by the children between five and six, and between eighteen and twenty-one, not enumerated in Georgia), and the average actually taught last year was 117,843. That is to say: our Virginia system teaches but 2,722 more children than the Georgian system, but costs our distressed State nearly twice and a half as much money. *Why cannot our system be wrought as cheaply as the Georgian?* Look at the enormous salary-list on our plan:\* Salary for State Superintendent; salaries for his clerks; office expenses at the seat of government; salaries for a cohort of county Superintendents, at the tune of \$300 for each of the first ten thousands of souls in his county, and \$20 for each subsequent thousand; so that a county of eighteen thousand souls pays for these few duties a salary of \$460: salaries to clerks of county boards and district boards; salaries for Treasurers, *per diems* for district trustees, salaries for the enumerators of children; so that, for every four dollars and fifty cents which reaches the teachers—the men who *do all the real work*—one dollar of the people's money is stopped on the way to grease the palm of some blatant advocate of the system, who teaches no child at all. But, on the Georgian plan, the county Superintendent receives no pay but a small *per diem* for the days actually devoted to his duties; and the county boards no pay at all, except exemption from jury and road-services. *Why cannot Virginians serve the cause of education as cheaply as Georgians?*

Again, the monthly cost of the Georgian child for school-

¶Georgia School Rep. for 1876, p.—, p. 8, p 8 again.

\*Va. School Rep. 1877, p. 7. School Laws codified, § 73, p. 27, p. 21. Act of Assembly, March 29, 1877.

ing is 84 1-3 cents. The monthly cost of the Virginia child is \$1.40.

Or, let us take this view of the economy of our system. The average pay of primary male teachers in Virginia is \$33.10 per month; of female teachers, \$27.37 per month. But private parties have no difficulty in employing young ladies, of liberal culture, who actually teach the higher English branches, Latin, French and music at prices ranging from \$12 to \$15 per month with board. Every country housekeeper knows that the board of a young lady in his family does not add \$10 per month to his actual expenses. So that private parties can get competent persons to teach the higher branches for \$22, when the State gives \$27.37 for teaching the plainest rudiments. Yet the boast was that the State would do the work so much more economically! There are *accomplished ladies* now in Virginia laboring long hours in schools unendowed by the State, at \$150 per year without board. Negro fellows, on the other hand, who would think themselves well paid at \$8 per month in the field, and young negro women who would be satisfied with \$5 per month in the laundry, are paid \$33 and \$27 per month, while white ladies are reduced to work for \$12 or \$15. No wonder the system is popular with negroes and office-holders.

One other excellent feature of the Georgia law is secured by the very Constitution of the State—Art. viii. Sec. 5. “Nothing contained in Sec. 1 of this Art. shall be construed to deprive schools in this State, not common schools, from participation in the educational funds of the State, as to all pupils therein, taught in the elementary branches of an English education.”

The meaning of this provision is, that all schools created and regulated by parents themselves, shall have the same title to a share in the school fund to pay for instruction in the English rudiments with those created by the State, provided the teachers of the former come under a few simple regulations ensuring the useful performance of their duties. The vital advantage of this is, that the State of Georgia restricts and limits that intrusion into and usurpation of parental rights and responsibilities within the narrowest limits permitted by her conquerors, which our system studies to push to the most sweeping and enormous extent. The State of Georgia recognizes the right of parents to say where a school is needed, how it shall

be regulated, who shall be its teacher, what shall be its textbooks, what its moral or religious regimen. The State of Virginia does all that can be done to wrest these inalienable rights and duties from the parents to whom God and nature have given them, and vest them in three "school trustees." The State of Georgia says to parents: "Exercise your rights of choice, and the Commonwealth will acquiesce and pay the portion of the fund equitably due your families, to the teacher of your choice." The State of Virginia virtually says: "I claim, like pagan Sparta, to be parent of all children, and to usurp the rights of natural parents in dictating by my officials, where, how, and by whom your children shall be educated; and if any parent insist on his rights of doing his own natural duties to his own offspring, he shall be punished therefor, by having his property taken from him to educate other people's children in ways he did not elect." There is the difference.

The experience of every practical man will teach him how conducive this feature of the Georgia law is to flexibility, convenience and economy. The parents of a neighborhood create a school; they are the best judges where it should be situated, and who had best teach it; for they are actuated by disinterested love for the children, and sound common sense. They furnish the house and the appliances. Hence, every dollar the State contributes is applied to the cost of actual instruction. The plan has the flexibility needed for a sparse population; the wishes of parents, desiring higher tuition for their children, co-operate with the wishes of the State desiring primary tuition for all; and public and private interests work together for the mutual benefit of the property-class and the poor.

It may be claimed, that a similar thing is sometimes done in Virginia. If it is, it is done informally, and outside the provisions of our iron system. The instances speak well, not for the system, but for the good sense and right feeling of some of the officials.

Let us now proceed to compare our system with the former system bequeathed by our wise fathers. Before the war, it was much the fashion with the Utopians to belabor that system with abuse, as inefficient and partial. But experience now proves that the results were every whit as complete and useful as the results of our present oppressive plan, while the old

one has the unspeakable advantages of economy and foundation in right principles.

According to the report of William A. Moncure, Second Auditor, the literary fund of Virginia accomplished in 1858 the following results: The number of schools assisted in Virginia was 3,847. The number of poor children sent to school was 54,232. The average attendance of these children was not quite twelve weeks, or three months of school time. The average annual cost of the tuition and books of each child was \$2.96, or about \$1 per month for the time actually spent in study. And the total cost of the system to the State was only \$160,530. The addition made for the expenses of administration seems to have been, in all, \$18,047, if we rightly infer from the Second Auditor's figures. The whole expenses of the central administration were but \$2,750 (as against \$5,819 in 1877), and the only other salaried agents were the county superintendents, who received, what one of them calls in his report, a "little pittance." "School commissioners," in all the counties, performed their duties gratuitously, and were prompt and proud to do so from philanthropy and patriotism. *Why cannot this be done now?* The Reports from all the counties, while recognizing defects, and admitting that the results were incomplete, yet inform the government of the general popularity and progressive utility of the system. But now, the general verdict which comes up from disinterested and intelligent men in all quarters is, that our present system is an expensive, mischievous and cruel sham.

*Per contra*, it claims, in the School Report of 1877, to have given, on an average, four and a half months' tuition to 117,843 children, at an average monthly cost of \$1.43 per month, and at a total cost to the State of \$1,050,346. While the cost of administration of the old system was but \$18,000, the expense of working the new has been \$170,800! If we regarded the number of pupils alone, the old system did nearly *half the work* (54,232 children then, 117,843 now) *for less than one-fifth of the money!* Look at that! \$178,577 then, against \$1,050,346 now. Then Virginia was rich; now she is poor. The cost of administration was then, absolutely, a little over one-tenth of what it is now; and relatively to the numbers taught, about one-fourth of the present.

An attempt will be made to break the terrible force of this comparison of facts by reviving the complaints which our Utopians used to utter against the incompleteness of our old system. The plea will be that, if the system was cheap, its fruits were very poor. We shall again hear the old complaints as to the great irregularity in attendance, the listlessness of parents and pupils, the scantiness of the letters actually gained, etc., etc., etc. But the answer is: First, that this imperfection of results, which was true of the old system, if it argues anything, argues the folly of the State's attempting to cure in the popular masses the disease of ignorance, indolence and apathy, by any such *quantum* of the arts of letters as the State can give on any system. If the former results argue anything, they argue the just application to the whole subject of the maxim, "One man can take a horse to water, but a hundred cannot make him drink"; they only show what we have all along urged—that to inspire aspiration, punctuality, industry, a conscientious use of privileges and acquirements, is what the State has no means of doing, and without these, any appliances, or any plan, are wasted.

But second, the answer is, that our new system, with all its tyranny and crushing expense, yields fruits just as imperfect. Were the children of the indigent then listless and irregular in attendance? *They are so still!* Was the tincture of letters then given very small? *It is smaller now.* The old system did not profess to deal with any but indigent white children. Of these, the Commonwealth then contained about 97,000; and of these, 54,232 were not only enrolled, but actually sent to school. Our present system undertakes to provide for 482,789 children and youths. Of these, it has not enrolled even more than 205,000, and it only pretends to have taught, at all, 117,843. Talk of imperfect results! The old system was energy and perfection compared with this! The old system had so far overtaken its destined work as to give nearly three months' schooling to *more than half* the whole mass of youth for which it was designed; while the new system has not enrolled nearly half of its appointed mass, and *has not given any instruction to three-fourths* of its appointed charge. Even as to the enrolled youth, we have a betrayal of its inefficiency, and of the abounding listlessness and irregularity of its beneficiaries. The pres-

ent law makes the compensation of the teachers depend on the actual attendance, rather than the numbers claimed on the school-rolls. The law says that a teacher shall not be maintained, unless an actual average of sixteen daily is in attendance. Now, it is very well known among the teachers, that, unless they have a roll of not less than thirty pupils, it is usually vain to hope for an actual average attendance of sixteen. What does this mean? That on any average day, when sixteen are in place long enough to be counted, fourteen are truant. That tells the whole tale as to the wretched results of our present organization. Dr. Ruffner's figures tell the same miserable story. Of all the youth of school age, only 24.4 *per cent.* attend school on an average; and of those enrolled, only 57 1-2 per cent. attend. (In round numbers, 205,000 are enrolled; 118,000 have attended. Now as 118,000 : 205,000 :: 57 1-2 : 100.)

Here, again, are the stubborn facts, showing that the old Virginian system was as much more efficient as it was cheaper. But we shall see our Utopians, with their usual candor, persistently averting their eyes from the facts while they go on with their baseless boasting. Why will our authorities, with this clear light of experience before them, still prefer the bad system to the good? If they do, the people will understand why: *Because the system is worked for the advantage of the office holder, and not of the State.* That will be clear to the people's common sense.

I have now shown our legislators two plans—the Georgian, and the old plan of Virginia—both of which have been tried, and either of which is immeasurably better than the one that curses us. This system of our fathers had superiority in its principles, as great as in its practical workings. Of these, I will, in concluding, present two. One was, that the State government left to parents those powers and rights which are theirs by the laws of God and nature, and which cannot be usurped by a just, free government: those of directing the rearing of their own children, and choosing its agents and methods. *Clusters of parents* were left to create schools, to elect teachers, to ordain the instruction and discipline. When the parents had used their prerogatives, then the State came in as a modest ally and assistant, and by providing for the teaching in those schools of such children as their helpless poverty made proper wards

of the State's charity, helped on the work of education, and supplied that destitution which private charity did not reach. There was a system conformed to the good old doctrine of our fathers, that "governments are the servants of the people." But the present plan proceeds on the doctrine of despots, that the *people are the servants of the government*. Parents are bidden to stand aside, and betray their rights and duties, while little State officials usurp their powers of creating schools, electing teachers, and ordaining methods.

The other was, that our wise fathers, by this simple plan, resolved the otherwise insoluble difficulty about the religion of the schools, which is now involving the friends of State education in the North and in Europe, in inexplicable entanglements. On the one hand, if the State is to act fairly and honestly up to her pledge to sever herself from the Church, she cannot inculcate one religion to the exclusion of the others. On the other hand, it is an Atheistic outrage on the Christians, who compose the larger part of the citizens, to intrude between them and their children, and then give them a godless, which, as we have shown, must be an ungodly education. We have again and again warned the advocates of the Yankee State theory, that the entanglement was insoluble, and that the practical result will surely be, that the attitude of our constitutions will enable the infidel party to triumph everywhere, to expel the Bible and Christianity from all the schools, and to rear us (so far as State schools go) a generation of Atheists. This is to be the practical issue of their misguided zeal—the issue which is, in fact, rapidly establishing itself in the Northwest to-day. Now, all this difficulty was avoided by our fathers' plan. The State, which knows no church in preference to another, did not create schools; did not usurp that parental function; did not elect the teachers; did not ordain their discipline or religious character. Parents have the right to do all these things in the lights of their own consciences and spiritual liberty, and the parents made the schools. No other solution will ever be found that is as good.

R. L. DABNEY.