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WHOLE NO. 91.

THE GOVERNOR'S MESSAGE.

[CONTINUED FROM LAST WEEK.]

The road, then, which leads to the lightening of the people's burden by reduction of taxes either now or ultimately, is not through an unwise withdrawal of proper support to the different departments of government under the guise of economy, but by that increase of wealth and population which will certainly come from stability, effectiveness and vigor in these departments, imparted by a fair, just and liberal support, and by the awakening of our sleeping resources through the increasing industry and enterprise of our people, fostered and protected by a just and stable government.

The building of the Spartanburg and Asheville Railroad and other similar enterprises; the successful operation of the Piedmont and Camden road and other factories in the State; the discoveries of the asphaltum element by Dr. Ravenel; the reclamation of thousands of acres of the most valuable land in the lower portions of the State from the grasp of present ruin by the introduction of some new product suited to the soil; the introduction of some new mode of culture; the deepening of our rivers and the draining of our swamps; the extension of education; the fair, just and impartial administration of the laws—these are the agencies which will add to and increase the value of the property from which our revenue is to be derived. And inasmuch as the rate of taxation will decrease as property increases, the surest road to permanent and substantial reduction of taxes is protection and encouragement to enterprise and industry like these, and to these ends, therefore, legislation should be directed.

I invite your attention to the following condensed statement of our financial condition, gathered from the clear and able reports of the Comptroller and Treasurer, which is herein incorporated so as to be in convenient form for reference:

Congressional bonds and stocks funded to November, 1879.....	\$5,624,949 99
Less bonds retired by sinking fund commission.....	30,000 00
	\$5,588,949 99
Amount to be consolidated.....	\$1,161,829 09
Equal to.....	580,914 54
Certificates of claims commission already funded for deficiency bonds and stocks, less \$2,672 26 of bonds retired by sinking fund commission in 1879.....	557,645 93
Certificates still to be funded.....	3,890 00
	561,535 93
	\$6,731,400 46
Total interest on all bonds and certificates.....	619,513 35
Less amount in Treasury.....	175,451 80
	444,061 55
Total debt and interest.....	\$7,175,454 91
Bonds declared invalid by recent decision of the Supreme Court, including interest consolidated in gross \$2,292,270, equal when consolidated, to.....	1,196,185 00
Total approximates.....	\$5,979,269 91
Bills of the Bank of the State supposed to be still out.....	400,000 00
This statement does not embrace the contingent liability, if any, of the State for railroad bonds guaranteed.	
Taxable property of the State:	
Real estate.....	\$76,583,866 00
Personal property.....	36,974,858 00
Railroads.....	7,392,900 00
Total.....	\$120,951,624 00
One mill will yield (net).....	\$102,320 00
Poll tax last year.....	102,000 00
This year.....	97,579 00

PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

The present school system was organized by the passage of an Act entitled "An Act to alter and amend the school law of South Carolina," passed at the regular session of 1877. This system, though somewhat defective, was the best that could have been then devised, and it has produced good fruit. Its defects are of a character which, perhaps, at this time cannot be remedied on account of our peculiar condition.

A perfect school system would be one which, by its own machinery, would bring into the school room all the youths of the State between the proper ages and subject them for the greater part of the year to the tuition of thoroughly competent and professional teachers—competent to instruct and discipline the mind as well as develop and discipline the character. This last being, in my judgment, as important, if not more important, than the first.

The present system provides no special mode of furnishing the State with the class of teachers suggested. The different Boards authorized to license teachers are dependent upon those who apply—many of them entering the work as a mere temporary business and for present support. The examinations are necessarily to some extent superficial, and cannot reach fully into the higher qualifications of capacity—learning and character—required on the part of those into whose hands the educational interests of the young of the State are entrusted. I know no mode of remedying this defect except the establishment of one or more normal schools to prepare and fit teachers for this work. It may be on account of our depressed condition that the State is not yet prepared to undertake a scheme of this sort and establish it on a firm basis; but the whole school system depends in a great measure for complete success upon the character of the teachers employed, and we will be compelled, ultimately, to adopt some better mode than is now in existence to meet this demand.

The other defect referred to, to wit, the short period during which the schools are kept open, is due not so much to the system as to the fact of deficiency in the sum appropriated for school purposes.

The schools are kept open to the full extent of the means appropriated, and, through the energy and most earnest efforts of the State Superintendent, are doing all the good that can possibly be accomplished with the limited means provided; and until the State is prepared to enlarge its appropriation, either through State or local taxation, this evil must continue unless in the meantime private effort can be combined in some way with public aid to continue the schools after the public funds are exhausted.

This matter of public education, however, is of the very highest importance and requires the maturest consideration; and in a government like ours, resting as it does upon universal suffrage, it is indeed the question of questions.

The time is coming, and is rapidly approaching, when public sentiment will not only approve, but demand, that education in all its grades, higher and lower, shall be free to all, without money and without price. If I had the power I would hasten the arrival of that time, and would then rejoice in the consciousness that I had borne some humble part in a work than which no greater can mark the history of any people. But you are far more competent than myself to deal with this great subject, and into your hands I commit it, commending to your consideration the very able report of the Superintendent with the valuable facts and suggestions contained therein.

It will be seen that this report furnishes much important and interesting information showing the growth and improvement of the school system. The number of pupils attending the public schools during the last year was 122,463; of this number 58,368 were whites and 64,095 colored. This is probably the largest number of pupils that has attended the public schools in any one year.

The improvement in the schools for the colored race has been marked; it is worthy of notice that since 1876 the average increase attendance of colored pupils has been more than 45 per cent. greater than under the Republican administrations. Four of the Counties, it appears, had not made returns of the school fund collected when the report of the Superintendent of Education was submitted, but enough is known to warrant the assertion that the school fund for the fiscal year 1878-79 was

greater than for any preceding year.

The expenditures have been kept within the receipts and the general management of the school fund deserves especial commendation. The heavy load of debt which was left by the school officers under the Republican administrations has embarrassed generally the working of this department, and the shortness of the school session is due in some measure to this cause.

I would earnestly recommend some legislation which will secure to teachers in the public schools the prompt payment of their salaries. The difficulties with which teachers have to contend because of delay in this matter are fully explained in the report of the Superintendent of Education. It will not be possible to retain competent teachers if we do not make provision for paying them promptly for their services.

MILITIA.

The condition of this department of public service will be found fully set forth in the report of the Adjutant and Inspector General. This officer has been most untiring in his efforts to place the militia of the State upon a proper footing, and the result of these efforts will be seen in his report.

PUBLIC ROADS.

The roads of a country have been frequently said to be accurate and certain tests of the degree of its civilization. The construction is one of the first necessities of the emergence of a people from barbarism, and their improvement should keep pace with the advances of the nation in numbers, wealth, industry and science, of all of which they are at once an element and an evidence; they are the veins and the arteries of the body politic, through which flow the agricultural productions and the commercial supplies which constitute the life blood of the State, and upon their condition, sufficiency and number depend, in a great degree, the health, life and vigor of the industries of the people.

If our civilization was tested by this rule, I fear that our position would not be as high in the scale as we are disposed to claim. Our public highways, as a general thing, are in a wretched condition, and one of the necessities of our situation is a radical change in the road system. We have railroads now running to most of the County sites in the State, and as a consequence, the country villages have become market towns to the inhabitants of the counties in which they are located, where their produce is sold, and from which they are mostly supplied with their commercial supplies. What an impetus would be given to agriculture, to progress, and improvement in every way, if to these different county sites, from the extremities of the respective counties, were running well graded, level and firm highways? Every branch of industry would thereby be materially benefited, the expense of carrying to market every article reduced, and the necessities of life greatly cheapened to the consumer.

The difference as to ease and rapidity of transportation resulting from improved highways—improved by proper skill and labor bestowed in laying them out, leveling and keeping them in constant repair—is much greater than is usually imagined.

As an illustration of this fact I would refer to a statement made by one who has thoroughly examined this subject as follows: "In a road rising a hundred feet in the distance of two thousand, its ascending slope would be one in twenty. One-twentieth of the whole load drawn over it must be actually lifted up the entire height of one hundred feet; but upon such a slope a horse could draw only one-half as much as he can upon a level road, and two horses, therefore, will be needed on such a road to do the work of one if the road was level." If this be the fact—in the matter of leveling and properly grading simply—the cost of carriage could be greatly reduced; and when is added to this the constant repairs of the surface which could be kept by a judicious system—the advantages would be a most incalculable. These advantages could not be con-

fined to those who trade at the market towns, but would extend to the towns themselves, enabling them to grow and expand indefinitely multiplying their population and increasing their wealth. Our present system, if adhered to for all time, could never produce these results. It is deficient in two essential particulars—skilled superintendence and control, and constant and efficient labor. These cannot be supplied by the present system. Each county should have a practical engineer or road commissioner in sole charge of the county highways; his whole time should be devoted to this business. The necessary labor should be furnished him by county and other convicts, commutation tax, and such other labor as might not be able or willing to pay the tax. And this officer should be held strictly responsible for the condition of the roads. In a system of this sort, after a short experiment, I am fully persuaded the people would most cordially co-operate; and, besides furnishing employment for many deserving young men and inducing scientific education in a direction much needed for the full development of our resources, a patriotic rivalry would spring up in the different counties, and with the different officers in charge, which would soon work a most wonderful change in the face of our country—leading to the wealth and prosperity of the whole State. I most earnestly recommend this subject to your consideration as the one matter most needing attention in our present condition.

Governor McDuffie, in his message to the General Assembly in 1837, in discussing the road system of that day, said: "The roads through the State are in a much neglected condition. I traveled through the western districts of the State soon after the crops were laid by, and found the roads in many places almost impassable by a wagon or carriage. The citizen loses, as it may be safely affirmed, four times as much labor as is rendered to the State, and the portion that is bestowed on the roads is so injudiciously directed that it seldom does any substantial good, and very often amounts to a public nuisance." This was said more than fifty years ago, and is as appropriate now as then. Suppose that a more efficient system had been adopted then, and since that time faithfully carried out until now, a half century. The imagination could scarcely picture the difference.

RAILROAD COMMISSIONER.

Under the Act of the General Assembly, passed at its last session, creating the office of Railroad Commissioner, and defining its duties, I appointed General M. L. Bonham, of Edgefield, to this office, who entered upon the discharge of his duties in January.

PENITENTIARY.

It will be seen from the report of the Superintendent of the Penitentiary that the convicts number 640; of these 350 have been hired out to private individuals and to railroads and other corporations, leaving about 290 constantly confined in the Penitentiary. With these convicts, not hired out, under the supervision of the Superintendent, whose zeal and faithfulness in the discharge of his various duties cannot be too highly commended, the Penitentiary grounds and property have been greatly improved—the wall extended 870 feet and several large necessary and commodious buildings erected, a large amount of brick manufactured and other industries inaugurated.

The money value of these improvements and buildings cannot be less than \$16,000, besides other work done on State House grounds and elsewhere. The discipline of the institution is without objections, and the health of the convicts better than it has been for years, and is now as good as that of any other portion of the people in the same community. The practice of hiring out the convicts to any and all parties for any and all purposes, as authorized under recent legislation, has not been in operation long enough to enable us to form a correct opinion as to the wisdom of this policy. Elsewhere his practice has given great dissatisfaction, and I under-

stand that in some of our sister States the laws permitting it, after trial, have been repealed. In some of the counties in which the convicts have been hired in this State complaints have been made, and the grand jurors in one or more of these Counties have presented the practice as an evil. It has been objected to on the ground that the convicts have not been sufficiently guarded and that their labor comes in competition with the labor of the country. In my last Message I recommended that this labor or a portion of it should be utilized outside of the Penitentiary walls in works of quasi public nature and in the development of our resources, and while due consideration should be given to the opinion of the grand jurors referred to, I must say that I have seen as yet no sufficient reason to change my opinion on that subject, and before this policy is abandoned I think it should be given a thorough trial.

The evils complained of, going out of the absence of proper guarding, can be remedied, and I do not think that the labor of the country is as abundant now as to be seriously affected by the competition referred to. At all events, these convicts should be made in some way to support themselves, and the people thereby and to that extent relieved from taxation. And until some remunerating industries can be established inside of the Penitentiary in which all the convicts can be employed, the alternative is presented either to hire a portion of them out or to support them in idleness from the public treasury, which would require an annual appropriation nearly double that at present made. Of the two the former course, in my judgment, is the best.

I would recommend that the law in relation to hiring convicts be amended so as to make it a criminal offense, with a penalty sufficiently high to enforce prompt compliance, for any contractor to refuse to return convicts to the Penitentiary upon the termination of the contract and upon the order of the Board. This is important, so as to give the Board that complete control over the convicts, which their proper protection and proper security demands. It is also important to enable the Board to meet that responsibility which their relation to this institution imposes upon them and which is expected at their hands.

There will be found attached to this Message a short communication from the Rev. William Martin, of this city, bringing to my attention the destitute condition of the inmates of the penitentiary in a religious point of view. It is hereto appended, because it presents the necessities of the institution on that subject as fully and within as short a compass as can be done, and under the hope that, presented in this way, it will more certainly attract your attention and receive at your hands the useful legislation.

LUNATIC ASYLUM.

The report of the Regent will give you all the information necessary in reference to this noble institution.

HOMESTEAD.

The Constitution, Section 32, Article 2, after providing for a homestead in the lands of a debtor, goes on to say "To secure the full enjoyment of said homestead exemption to the person entitled thereto as the head of any family, the personal property of such person of the following character, to wit, household furniture, beds and bedding, family library, arms, carts, wagons, farming implements, tools, neat cattle, work animals, swine, goats and sheep, not to exceed the value in the aggregate of five hundred dollars, shall be exempt from the homestead," &c.

The Legislature in 1872, by Act, extended this exemption to other personal property besides that mentioned in the Constitution, embracing corn, cotton, provisions and other necessary articles, as a matter of justice to those who were not entitled to the exemptions under the Constitution, not owning land and the personal property therein mentioned. The Supreme Court has recently decided that this Act is unconstitutional.