

COUNTY SCHOOL PROBLEMS.

Charge of Judge Geo. E. Prince, Made to the Grand Juries of Abbeville, Greenwood, Laurens and Newberry Counties.

The next office to which I would call your attention, over which you have supervision, is that of County Superintendent of Education. It is your duty to examine the records of his office, but these may be well kept and yet you may have a very inefficient Superintendent of Education.

Any man of reasonable education can keep the books required by law to be kept in the office of the Superintendent of Education, but the only way to determine the efficiency of this office is to go by committees into every school district, even into every school house in the County.

This is one of the most important offices that there is in any county, and the man who fills this office ought to be the best teacher in the county, a great organizer and a man endowed with great love for the magnificent work of educating the masses of people. The fact is he ought to be a very evangel of education, going to and fro throughout the county and, by his eloquence and enthusiasm, arouse the people to the great importance of educating their children. He ought to be a man of high principle and with such love for his work that in selecting his Board of Trustees for the several school districts, he will not select those men who have the most political influence, merely, and whose active interest very much promoted his election, but to select men because of their peculiar fitness for the duty that they may have to perform as Trustees of the several schools.

Now, Mr. Foreman and Gentlemen of the Jury, when you go into any school district first investigate and determine the fitness of the Trustees selected for the position to which they have been appointed. See what interest they take in the schools of their several districts and determine whether they are living up to the requirements of the law in performing the duties devolved upon them by law. Mr. Foreman, it is sad to say that in numerous school districts in South Carolina men are daily acting as Trustees who are absolutely unqualified by reason of want of sufficient culture, by reason of the lack of high character, by reason of the lack of appreciation of the responsibilities devolved in them, by reason of the lack of interest in their work to properly discharge the duties of the office of Trustee. There are numbers of Trustees who would not know a good school if they were to see one, nor have they the slightest conception of how to properly go about to secure one for their community. There are Trustees who have accepted their position merely for the little honor conveyed by such an appointment, who are absolutely without any just conception of the responsibilities resting upon them and who are absolutely devoid of any purpose to discharge the duties of the office. There are Trustees who have not visited the schools in their districts once a year since their appointments, and who know absolutely nothing about the quality of the teaching done in the several schools in their districts, except what they have heard from patrons. The information derived from patrons is, for the most part, the merest hearsay; often, it is derived from the statement of their little children as to the conduct of the teacher. These patrons never visit the schools and have no first hand knowledge, but are disposed to accept the child's estimate of the teacher. They are silly enough often to believe that their children are incapable of speaking anything but the truth and are entirely capable of forming a correct estimate of the character of the teacher and the quality of the teacher's work: the truth is every parent, nowadays, seems to think that his children are little angels who are almost sprouting wings, ready to be wafted away to the veils of light and love. This is a fearful mistake. Our children have just about as much human nature in them as their parents, when younger, possessed, and are no more truthful than you and I were when boys.

That Trustee who turns over to the patrons of the school the selection of the teacher, has no proper conception of the duties and responsibilities devolved upon him by law. It is his duty, under the law, to select the teacher and he cannot shirk the responsibility by electing teachers merely because they are selected by the patrons. His is in the responsibility of knowing the efficiency of each teacher employed, and he can only

know this by frequent visits to the schools.

One of the weaknesses of our present school system is largely due to too frequent changes in our teaching force. These frequent changes result often from discontented patrons who have no knowledge of the teacher's efficiency except that what they have gained from the prattling of their children. This frequent change of teachers works not only as an injury to the teacher but as a greater injury to the child. No teacher can properly develop a child's intelligence, knowledge and superior nature until he first understands such nature, and this can only be understood after more or less study of each individual. About the time the teacher learns the characteristics of his several pupils, he is removed and a new teacher selected who cannot do the efficient work incumbent upon him until he too learns the special characteristics of the several pupils entrusted to his care. About the time he learns the children, he too is removed and yet another teacher is selected. This course does not tend to promote the best interest of the child.

Trustees are too frequently given to nepotism in the selection of teachers: that is to say, they too frequently elect as teachers in the several schools under their care, those who are related to some member of the board. This is prohibited by law and it is not to the best interest of the schools for the law to be violated by Boards of Trustees, yet it is frequently violated all over South Carolina. It is your duty to ascertain whether or not this law has been violated in your County.

We can never hope to have good schools in South Carolina until we put more money into them and more business management into the selection of proper teachers. We have by our false economy, almost driven the men, as school teachers, from the school room and substituted for them little girl graduates from eighteen to twenty-three years of age, who do not feel especially called to teach as a life work and who have no idea of engaging in it for life, but who undertake to teach for a few years while they are waiting for matrimony. No one has a right to occupy the responsible position of teacher who is not divinely called to that work. This divine call is just as important for the teacher as it is for the Minister of the Gospel, and one has no more right, uncalled, to thrust himself into the school room as teacher than one has to thrust himself into the pulpit to preach the everlasting Gospel without a special call to that work. No one can teach, however thoroughly educated they may be, who has not been endowed with the teaching capacity or talent. One may have the talent and yet be worth little in the school room until that talent has been developed by experience. Teaching is an art, and can only be learned from experience, and yet you and I are guilty of the folly of paying as much to the teacher just out of school with little or no experience as we pay to one who has taught for ten years. This is the only profession, calling or business on earth where the novice earns as much as the trained and experienced workmen. This is why all the men have been run out of the school rooms in our country schools, and the work of teaching has been turned over entirely to comparatively inexperienced girls and we have made the substitute merely because of the fact that we can employ the girls at a very small salary.

We boast of the superiority of the present school system over anything we have had in the past: this is but an idle boast. The old time academy taught by one man for years in one community did much more efficient work than any of our modern schools. I will grant that education is now more general, but I insist that it is much more superficial than that of the past. Your father and mine paid from thirty to forty-five dollars a year tuition for each child while at the present time you and I are contented merely to pay our taxes which seldom amount to thirty dollars per year: then we expect to educate at the public expense not only one child, but a half dozen children. Such education as they are receiving in our public schools is to disuse, and necessarily so, because of the number of children set apart for each teacher to instruct. No teacher can teach successfully more than twenty or twenty-five children and yet these cheap teachers whom we have employed, of necessity, more frequently attempting to teach forty or fifty pu-

pils. We can never educate our people by any false economy. Our children know little of many subjects, but are taught no subject thoroughly.

It is the duty of the County Superintendent of Education to supervise the instruction given in every school in the County and to determine the quality of the work done in each school. To do this thoroughly he ought to be able to go into any school in the County, from the highest to the lowest, and so intelligently examine any class in that school on any subject taught as to determine clearly the quality of the work done by the teacher. You may have a man of that type and of that degree of equipment, but if you have, you are not paying him enough salary. What do you think of the propriety of appointing a little twelve or thirteen hundred dollar man to supervise the work of a fifteen or eighteen hundred dollar man?

Too often do our people elect a man as Superintendent of Education not because of any superior fitness for the performance of the duties devolving upon his office by law, but because he is a shrewd politician—in fact a shrewder politician than his opponent who may have all the necessary qualifications for efficient service. This I would have you look into in this county, and if you go into every school district in the county, I would have you visit the several schools so that you may see how the superintendent has the educational force of the county organized and how efficient are the teachers and trustees in the several school districts. I would ask you, with the aid of the teachers, to ascertain and report the number of white children in each school district within school age who ought to be in school, but do not attend. If you will make a canvass of the children who do not attend any school, you will be surprised at the number of parents, white men, who, by reason of ignorance, do not insist on their children attending some school and have no appreciation of the fact that every white child has a God given right to an equal chance to every other white child to develop his God given faculties, and every parent who does not give his children this opportunity, ought to be held up to public scorn and contempt; and, if you are so disposed, I trust you will present the name of every parent in this county whose children ought to be in school, but are not to be found there.

In visiting the schools, do not permit the teacher to get off any little Friday afternoon stunts, but take your seats in the school room unobtrusively and ask the teacher to go on with her usual work. You may not see a college education; you may never have taught school, but if you will apply the same business intelligence to the work being carried on in the school room that you apply to ordinary business matters, you will be able to tell whether the teacher is or is not doing good work.

Now, Mr. Foreman, in this matter, as in all other matters devolved upon you by law, you are required by the terms of your oath to make diligent inquiry and true presentment made according to your best understanding. I trust, Mr. Foreman, that this year will be one noted in the history of your county because of the work done by the Grand Jury, animated by no other purpose than to conscientiously and impartially work for the public good.

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The University has the following Departments of Study:

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S. C. MITCHELL, President
Columbia, South Carolina

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On April 18th, the day of the Big School Fair, I am going to take One Thousand Feet of Moving Pictures in Laurens. You can be in the pictures by simply being on the City Square when they are taken.

You Can See These Pictures Later

By coming to the Motion Picture Show about three days after the pictures are taken. Later they will be shown on Saturdays. Watch the papers for these dates. They will interest you and they will interest your whole family.

DON'T FORGET THIS:

Everybody in Laurens County is welcome to be in the Pictures. Come and bring the whole family and later come and see yourself at the Picture Show.

It's Only 5 and 10 cents.

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