

SCHOOL FINANCES IN SOUTH CAROLINA.

An Appeal to Common Sense and Conscience.

To The Editor of the Daily Item:

In my last letter I discussed the distribution of the constitutional three mill tax, and suggested a definition of enrollment which would make the distribution contribute to school efficiency. I now wish to discuss the practical difficulties which confront the school authorities of South Carolina in the present method of apportionment, and its moral tendencies.

The Constitution provides that the three mill tax shall be apportioned among the districts of the county in which it is raised on the basis of enrollment, and leaves to the legislature the definition of enrollment. The legislature has defined enrollment as "Ten days attendance during the previous scholastic session." Under this definition a pupil who attends school for less than ten days should not be enrolled and should not secure recognition in the distribution of the three mill tax. The actual number of pupils who at one time or another attend school during any scholastic session is usually greater than the legal enrollment. For example, in the annual report of the Columbia schools for 1908-09 the total number of pupils enrolled, in the ordinary sense of the term, was 3,933. The legal ten day enrollment was 2,468. This is typical of actual conditions all over the State.

Since the amount of money available from the three mill tax for the maintenance of schools in any district is dependent on the enrollment, it is to the pecuniary interest of the trustees to secure as large an enrollment as possible for at least the minimum period of ten days. The teacher at the end of each month makes on the back of her pay warrant duplicate a report to the county superintendent of education, who approves the warrant for the teacher's salary. At the end of the year each teacher is supposed to make an annual report of the total number of pupils enrolled, and of certain other data indicated by the standard forms provided by the State Department of Education. This report is transmitted through the district board of trustees, who alone have the opportunity to check its accuracy. The teacher very soon finds out that the district board of trustees is more concerned that there should be a large enrollment than that there should be an accurate statement of facts.

In consequence, the enrollment reported frequently includes every child who has been present even for one day during the school session. In fact there are teachers in South Carolina who through ignorance of the legal provision, without desire to defraud, report the entire list of pupils as the legal enrollment.

The law is especially subject to abuse by negro teachers. As is well known in South Carolina, the district funds are not divided among the schools of the district in proportion to enrollment, but every negro child counts as much as a white child in securing funds for the district. The negro schools afford the best opportunity for padding the rolls. In fact, a contract with negro teachers is not infrequently made in South Carolina in which the salary to be received by the teacher is dependent on the number of children enrolled. The report of the teacher is usually received and transmitted without correction, with a result which can be easily imagined. Recently I visited a negro school in South Carolina in which I found nine children present. I asked the teacher for his record for book. Although it was the closing day of school, he handed it to me with the statement that he had just made it out that morning. He had enrolled eighty-eight children. There were no marks in the book to indicate the number of days each child had been present. I asked him for the daily record which he had kept, and he produced from his pocket another book which contained merely the names of the pupils. I called his attention to the legal definition of enrollment in the front of the register, and asked him how he expected to ascertain how many of his pupils had been present ten days. He replied: "Well, sir, I just guesses at it." In the afternoon I called on the chairman of the district board, who candidly told me that he had instructed the teacher of his district to enroll everybody who appeared at the schoolhouse during the session, and to get as many of them as they could. There are districts in the State in which negro schools are opened up for brief periods of time in two or three sections of a district for the express purpose of increasing the district enrollment and securing an advantage in the distribution of the county fund.

Even in scanning the reports of the cities of South Carolina one frequently finds discrepancies in the enrollment of the succeeding years which are only to be explained on the theory that the enrollment has

been padded. The county superintendents of South Carolina make annual reports to the State Superintendent of data concerning the finances and the general condition of the schools. Most of these county superintendents will tell you plainly to place no reliance on the accuracy of the enrollment and attendance statistics as given in these reports. They must accept them as presented by the teachers and district trustees. Nevertheless, upon the data in these reports the money of the county is distributed. Last year 153,807 white children and 181,075 negro children were enrolled in the public schools of South Carolina. More than a million and a half dollars paid annually by the people of the State is distributed largely upon the unchecked reports of ignorant and often unprincipled negro teachers who, in many cases, as indicated above, have been given the strongest possible incentive to lie. It is hard for the honest teacher and trustee in the county to tell the truth when they realize that the rolls of other districts are padded for the purpose of securing an unfair advantage. Any system which does not check critically the figures on which money is apportioned and which rewards the liar for his effort will inevitably drag down the moral standard, and make liars out of truthful men. The morals of a community are not safe as long as the honest man can say truthfully: "The wicked flourish as the green bay tree." We cannot expect to inculcate honesty and public morality in South Carolina as long as our laws in their operations encourage this miserable graft in the very institutions which train our children.

A Proposed Remedy for the Condition.

How shall we remedy this deplorable state of affairs? The first remedy is the removal of the county superintendent from politics, and the establishment of this office on some such basis as that indicated in former letters. The county superintendent must be able to spend all of his time in the schools, and must receive a salary which will enable him to do this. His position must be made stable enough to enable him to do his duty faithfully and fearlessly.

The second remedy is to change the definition of enrollment to coincide with the total days attendance, as indicated in my last letter. The report of the teacher to the county superintendent of education should indicate the number of children present each day during the school month and the total attendance for the month. It is impossible for anybody to check enrollment according to the present definition. It is possible, however, for the county superintendent, or other supervising officer, to visit the school at intervals, to count the children present, and to form an intelligent idea of the attendance.

In the third place, the figures on which the money is apportioned should be published for the information of the districts of the county. The mere publication of records would be sufficient to correct in a large measure the grosser violations of the law.

At heart the people of South Carolina are honest and truthful. I believe that they would welcome a law which would divide the school funds equitably, and which would secure truthfulness in reports. The present condition is the direct result of a system which rewards lying by increased appropriations and punishes honesty by a reduction in school funds. Such a system, if long enough continued, would corrupt a Methodist conference or a Presbyterian Synod. In no other department of the State finances is there such laxity shown. How much longer can we afford such an unbusiness-like proceeding in the schools of the State which are supposed to train our children in personal honesty and civic righteousness?

W. K. TATE,
State Supervisor of Elementary Rural Schools.

New Express Agent for Sumter.

The Southern Express Company has appointed a new agent at its office in this city, Mr. J. J. Avent having taken charge of the office the first of this month. Mr. Avent has been in the express business for several years, he having been agent at Florence, from which place he was sent here, for four years prior to his appointment here.

Mr. Avent, when seen, said that he was very much surprised to see what a large amount of work was done here by the express company. He has been very busy since having taken the office in hand, and has not yet had time to meet the Sumter people, but as soon as he has straightened up the affairs of the office he expects to go out and meet them. He was very favorably impressed with what he has seen of the town and with those of the business men he has met. Mr. Avent hopes to give the people of Sumter the very best service possible, and he hopes that the people will aid him in doing this.

His Objection.

(By Kennett Harris.)

I always felt a sort of doubt,
I could not "pish!" or "pooh!"
For quite a while I hung about
To hear her softly coo;
But, when I came to try her out,
I found she wouldn't do.

Her hair was like fine golden thread,
Her throat was like the swan;
Her skin was white, her lips were red
And fair to look upon;
But she could never make a bed
Or sew a button on.

Her voice was ever soft and low,
Her smile was very sweet;
From certain points of view I know
That girl was hard to beat;
But I'd have had the slimmest show
To get good grub to eat.

She warbled like a mockingbird
Upon a budding haw;
Her playing was, upon my word,
Without a single flaw;
But I believed, from what I heard,
She cooked her beefsteak raw.

I mean no sort of slight or slur,
However it may look,
I knew I could not marry her—
She'd never suit my book;
I knew 'twas certain to occur—
I'd have to hire a cook.

More Trouble in China.

China is declared to be on the verge of another upheaval, similar to the Boxer uprising and the lives of foreigners are in jeopardy. Advice received in Washington recently from government officials in China express the belief that an outbreak at any time would not surprise them. The state department has instructed its diplomatic and consular officials to maintain a close watch on the international conditions.

All through the summer months there have been mutterings of discontent in some of the Chinese provinces, due to the rice famine, dynastic difficulties and dissatisfaction over acts of the Pekin government as to foreign investments in China. Good harvests mitigated to some extent the gravity of the situation, but there is still a general feeling of unrest here from men on duty in that quarter. The army and the navy are prepared for any emergency, but their readiness is solely a precautionary measure, it is said, and should not be taken as an indication of immediate danger.

Authentic advices from those charged with keeping in touch with conditions indicate that the only thing lacking to parallel today's situation with that preceding the Boxer troubles, which drew into China the American forces as well as those of other nations, is the matter of organization and that it only needs a leader to effect that.

Every vessel in the Asiatic fleet, as well as the military forces at Manila is prepared for almost instant action in the event the trouble breaks.

Revolutionary uprisings are of greater or less frequency throughout China and it is recognized by Washington authorities that trouble is liable to occur at any time in some of the provinces.

Fire on Manning Avenue.

A store on the corner of Manning avenue and Divine street, the property of Mr. A. E. Gregg and run by Mr. J. D. Gregg, two negro resaturants, and a negro dwelling house belonging to the Rev. Friday Ker-shaw and occupied by Manda Trezevant and James Ross, were burned Wednesday at 1 o'clock. The cause of the fire was unknown, although it was ascertained that it originated in a negro restaurant belonging to a negro by the name of Adam Wilder.

The alarm was turned in from box 35 and the reel wagons responded immediately, but owing to the character of the buildings and the stiff breeze that was blowing at the time, the fire had gained such head way before the wagons reached the spot and the hose was properly adjusted that the firemen turned their attention to the saving of other buildings adjoining those on fire, it being utterly impossible to save those already on fire. The fire, while not unusually large, was an unusually hot one and the firemen suffered extremely from the heat.

The store belonging to Mr. A. E. Gregg was valued at about \$600, about \$400 of which was covered by insurance. The stock of goods was valued at about \$500, there being no insurance. The negroes living in the house, and carrying on the restaurants, were unable to save anything except a small amount of furniture. A. D. Gray, a prominent business man of Laurens was thrown from a buggy in a runaway Tuesday night and severely injured.

The People's Bank received Tuesday a Norris burglar proof screw door safe. A force of men were at work from about 3 o'clock until 9 that night unloading and getting the safe into the bank.

THE UGLY LEOPARD

He is a Cattle Thief and Even a Human Being Thief.

WORSE THAN LION OR TIGER.

Seizes Its Prey by the Throat and Clings With Its Claws Until it Breaks the Spine of Its Victim or Strangles it.

Less in size, but even more ferocious, the leopard has a worse character than the tiger or lion. Living mainly in trees and very nocturnal, this fierce and dangerous beast is less often seen than far rarer animals. It is widely spread over the world from the Cape of Good Hope to the Atlas mountains and from southern China to the Black sea, where it is sometimes met with in the Caucasus.

Any one who has frequented the zoo for any time must have noticed the difference in size and color between leopards from different parts of the world. On some the ground color is almost white, in others a clear nut brown. Others are jet black.

Wherever they live leopards are cattle thieves, sheep thieves, dog thieves and human being thieves. Though not formidable in appearance, they are immensely strong, and it is not unusual for them to turn man eater. Both in India and in Africa they have been known to set up in this line as deliberately as any tiger. They have four or five young at a birth. The cubs can be kept tame for some time and are amusing pets, but it is extremely dangerous to have them about.

In Hongkong an Englishman had a tame leopard. It was brought into the dining room by a coolie to be exhibited to the owner's guests. Excited by the smell of food, the leopard refused to go out when one of the women, who did not like his looks, asked that it be removed. The coolie took hold of its collar and began to haul it out. It seized him by the neck, bit it through and in a minute the coolie was dying, covered with blood, on the dining room floor.

The Chinese leopard ranges as far north as the Siberian tiger and, like the latter, seems to grow larger the farther north it is found. The color of these northern leopards is very pale, the spots are large and the fur is very long.

The natives of all countries are unanimous in declaring that the leopard is more dangerous than the lion or tiger. They have no fear of the lion, provided they are not hunting for it, for it will not attack unless provoked, but a leopard is never to be trusted.

In Africa a number of natives were firing the reeds along a stream. One of them, a boy, being thirsty and hot, stooped down to drink. He was immediately seized by a leopard. The boy's brother, with an admirable aim, hurled his spear at the leopard while the boy was in his jaws. The point separated the vertebrae of the neck, and the leopard fell stone dead. But the boy could not recover. The leopard's fangs had torn open his chest and injured the lungs. The latter were exposed to view through the cavity of the ribs. He died during the night.

Leopards are essentially tree living and nocturnal animals. Sleeping in trees or caves by day, they are seldom disturbed. They do an incredible amount of mischief among cattle, calves, sheep and dogs, being especially fond of killing and eating the latter. They seize their prey by the throat and cling with their claws until they succeed in breaking the spine or in strangling the victim. They have a habit of feeding on putrid flesh. This makes wounds inflicted by their teeth or claws liable to blood poisoning. Nothing in the way of prey comes amiss to them, from a cow in the pasture to a fowl up at roost.


In the great mountain ranges of central Asia the beautiful snow leopard is found. It is a large creature, with thick, woolly coat and a long tail like a fur boa. The color is white, clouded with beautiful gray, like that of an Angora cat. The edges of the cloudings and spots are marked with black or darker gray. The eyes are very large, bluish gray or smoke colored. It lives on the wild sheep, ibex and other mountain animals. In captivity it is far the tamest and gentlest of the large carnivora, not excepting the puma. Unlike the latter, it is a sleepy, quiet animal, like a domestic.

The West African leopard skin is more handsome than the Asiatic, the spots being very distinct and clear. He and she—they usually go in couples—are fond of hunting cantonments and around native towns, where they pick up a goat and now and then a baby.

One night I was camped in a native town and after I had retired the natives, as was their custom, were sitting about a great fire asking my caravan all sorts of questions, for the African savage is the greatest gossip in the world. Suddenly a child's cry rang out, followed by a great clamor. Rushing out to discover the cause of alarm, I was informed that a leopard had stolen from the darkness and quick as a flash had grabbed a four-year-old child and made off with it. The child was seated in the midst of the grown men and women. The latter could only lament their loss. They knew it was useless to try to pursue the beast into the dense bush.

The leopard is so bold that even in daylight he will wander about a town or a white man's premises. It is not at all unusual to get a good shot at a leopard from a bungalow veranda or a mud hut door.—Pittsburg Dispatch.

He that plants thorns must never expect to gather roses.—Pillpay.



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