REPORT

OF THE

SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION

OF THE

STATE OF ALABAMA,

TO THE

GOVERNOR.

HOUSE—5,000 COPIES.

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1855.

To His Excellency JOHN A. WINSTON,

Governor of Alabama:

The Superintendent of Education has the honor to submit, as his first report, a brief history of his labors thus far, and the results of his observation upon the practical operation of the system of public instruction established by an act of the General Assembly of February the 15th, 1854.

He took upon himself the responsibility of the important trust not without diffidence and serious misgivings. The building up of an efficient educational system, adapted to the various wants and circumstances of a large community, has never been accomplished, hitherto, but by the patient unremitting efforts of successive years. The experience of other States abundantly proves that liberal appropriations and legislative enactments cannot, of themselves, impart to such a system that vitality and energy which are essential to its ultimate success. It must rely mainly for these upon enlightened public opinion,—upon a rational, all-pervading interest on the subject, which springs not up spontaneously or from sudden impulse, but is itself the result of a sort of process of education, by which the whole people are brought to esteem the proper training of those who are to come after them, as their paramount duty and highest earthly concern.

The undersigned could not, therefore, flatter himself that such a measure of success could attend his efforts during the brief space of two years, as would meet the expectations of many of the sanguine friends of the enterprise, or silence entirely the predictions of those prophets of evil, who considered it wild and impracticable. Nor did it tend to relieve the embarrassments of his position, that much the greater part of his labors at the beginning were of a character that could never meet the public eye. The two funds placed under his control, under the general title of Educational Fund, were created at different times, were subject to different laws, and sustained different relations. One was the property of the State, consolidated and unchanging in amount; the other belonged to the townships in their individual capacity, distributed among them in all possible amounts, ranging from a few cents per annum to many hundreds of dollars, and was constantly accumulating. A small portion of the latter was still under the management of the banks another and much

the larger was in the treasury; a third, in the form of sixteenth section notes, was found in the office of the Comptroller of Public Accounts, and scattered over the State in the hands of trustees, withheld under special laws, or in defiance of law.

To unite these two funds thus situated, and bring them under one general system of accounts which would do full justice to all, and more than justice to none, cost an amount of thought and labor which he had not been prepared to expect, and which few, perhaps, can now realize. It is, however, a source of gratification that he has so far succeeded, that the management of the finances of the system can hereafter involve no very great difficulty.

ORGANIZATION OF THE SYSTEM.

The fourth article of the law prescribes the plan of operations to be pursued in the organization of the system. The second section of that article requires the Superintendent, "so soon after entering on the duties of his office as possible, and once in every year thereafter, to determine, from the best sources of information he can obtain, the whole number of children in this State between the ages of five and eighteen years," "and the number of such in each township and county." He is then required to apportion the amount last appropriated, among the townships, according to the number of children in each, in such a manner as to remedy, as far as the money goes, the inequality in the distribution of the 16th section fund.

SEC. 3. "As soon as the Superintendent shall have determined the whole amount to which each township is thus entitled, and the county in which such township is situated, he shall issue a circular to the Commissioners for every county, designating the amounts respectively to which the townships in their county are entitled."

SEC. 4. "The said Commissioners shall thereupon transmit copies of said circular to the trustees of the several townships in their counties, and require them to proceed to organize schools by the employment of teachers, procuring of schoolhouses, &c., as provided in this act."

It will appear from the above: 1st. That the enumeration of the children of the State had to be made, and the fund apportioned before the organization of schools could be authorized. 2d. That the circulars mentioned should contain statements, *in advance*, of the amounts to which the townships would be entitled for the support of schools established or adopted subsequently to the receipt of said circulars. 3d. And that that part of the educational fund last appropriated could not pass to credit, and be made available, before the day on which dividends were declared.

In pursuance of the plan prescribed, a call was made upon the trustees, immediately after their election, for reports of the number of persons between the ages mentioned, in their respective townships, and forms for the purpose were sent to the commissioners, for distribution among them, accompanied by a circular explaining the object in view. The great difficulty of reaching all the townships of the State, and inducing action on the part of the trustees, not having then been realized, it was believed that the months of June and July would be sufficient for the collection of the information desired. The first of August was accordingly fixed as the time when the distribution would be made, and the organization of the schools authorized. But when the first of August arrived, it was found that a little less than one-half of the counties had reported. To have distributed the fund among this minority, would have been disastrous to the whole enterprise, embittering the majority against it, besides doing injustice to some townships that had failed from not having received the instructions from the commissioners, and to others whose reports had been made to the commissioners, but had not been forwarded to this office. To give the reported townships a *pro rata* share was impossible, there being no means of fixing a ratio of distribution without the number of children in the whole State.

The only alternative left, was to defer the apportionment of the fund; which was accordingly done, until the first of October. A circular was issued to the trustees, explaining the cause of the delay, and urging upon the delinquent townships the necessity of immediate action.

The reports received by the first of October, though not full, might have justified the distribution of the fund, but a difficulty appeared, which had not before been seen. The appropriation, it will be remembered, was to pass to credit, and be made available, whenever the necessary information was obtained, upon which it could be united with the 16th section fund. But before this was done, ten months' interest had accrued on the latter fund, which interest belonged to the townships independently of the appropriation. Two months' interest still remained to accrue, which, together with that of the ten months already past, would fall due on the first of December following, and could then be claimed by the townships to which it belonged.

To have united the funds at that time, would therefore have introduced fragmentary portions of a year's interest, which it would have been difficult to manage, and impossible to get rid of in subsequent distributions of the educational fund. To avoid the irregularity and confusion that must have arisen, greatly increased, too, by the constant accumulation of the 16th section fund, from daily payments of notes,

it was decided to delay the apportionment until the first of December, when a year's interest of the 16th section fund fell due, and a new year's interest began.

The former was paid to the townships under an arrangement proposed to the commissioners in the accompanying circular (Appendix B.) and was applied to schools kept up during the year 1854. The latter was united with the appropriation on that day, the two constituting the State educational fund, and statements were issued of the distributive shares of the townships for the year 1855. These statements included the following sums:

	PRINCIPAL.	INTEREST.
Sixteenth Section Fund on deposit in the State Treasury on the 1st December, 1854	$1,244,793 36	$74,687 60
Valueless Sixteenth Section Fund	97,091 21	7,767 30
United States Deposit Fund	669,086 80	53,526 94
Direct Appropriation		100,000 00
Special Taxes		1,300 00
Escheated Property		233 55
		$237,515 39
Less amount appropriated as Contingent Fund of this Department		5,000 00
		$232,515 39

The number of persons of the educational age returned to this office was 145,518.

The average per child, produced by the distribution of the above amounts, upon the principles prescribed by the law, was a small fraction above one dollar, thirty-three cents and six mills.

Each township having no 16th section fund, accordingly received an amount produced by multiplying that ratio into the number of children reported by it. Those having from their 16th section fund less than that average, received such a sum, as, added to the interest of their fund, would be equal to such average, and those already having more, simply retained what they had.

The number of townships belonging to the latter class is not precisely known, since some that have 16th section funds failed to report. It is probably about one hundred and fifty, and to them belongs more than two-thirds of the whole 16th section fund.

The statements of the distributive shares of the townships were accompanied by a circular of explanations to the Commissioners, (Appendix A.) also a pamphlet, for distribution among the trustees, containing such forms and instructions as were thought necessary to guide them in the discharge of their duties, and secure uniformity in the transaction of business. It contained, also, the course of study recommended, the classification of pupils according t o studies pursued, a catalogue of text books, and extracts from the laws relating to school lands, and notes given therefor. Copies of the school law, in pamphlet form, had been previously distributed among them.

SIXTEENTH SECTION NOTES.

In addition to the 16th section fund in the treasury, as given above, there are in this office notes given by purchasers of school lands, amounting to.....$228,616 22

Do. in suit..... 70,594 07

The interest of these could not be taken into the account in the distribution of the educational fund, because it was impossible to tell, beforehand, what amount would be actually realized by the townships from that source. Many of the trustees had been in the habit of collecting the interest from the makers of notes, and giving their receipts, which were taken, on final settlement at the treasury, as sufficient evidence of its payment.

If this course were allowed to continue it is evident that the interest annually accruing on the 16th section notes, amounting in all to a large sum, could never be thrown into the distribution, and thus be made to swell the general average. It would be realized by the townships to which it belongs, *in addition to*, and not as *a part of*, the shares declared to them from the treasury. The interest accruing on notes after the first of December, 1854, was therefore required to be actually paid into the treasury, so as to be taken account of in the next distribution, and paid out for the year 1856. No injustice is done by this arrangement, the object being, not to give any township less than it is entitled to, but to avoid giving it more.

It was believed that full authority to make this requisition was conferred by that section of the law which vests "The control and management of the funds arising, or which have arisen, or which may hereafter arise from the sale or other disposition of the lands granted by the United States to this State for the use of schools in the Superintendent for the purposes of this Act,"—one of these purposes being an equitable distribution of the whole fund among the townships of the State. A distinct provision to that effect would, however, remove all doubt on the subject, and perhaps secure a more cheerful compliance on the part of trustees and makers of notes.

There still remained a class of cases which justice required should not be overlooked. After dividends were declared, it was ascertained that a number of those townships, to which full shares had been assigned, already realized considerable sums from rents of lands, and funds retained at home. The Commissioners were instructed to withhold from such the amounts assigned them in the distribution, or at least such portions of them as would be equal to what was thus realized

from the sources mentioned. The sums thus withheld will be transferred to the educational fund of the next year, as so much unexpended surplus. The recurrence of a similar necessity cannot, in all cases, be avoided in future, since it cannot be known, at the time the distribution is made, for what amounts the school lands will rent the following year.

The interest received and paid out by the Banks upon unsettled claims still under their control was considered too unimportant to merit attention.

DISBURSEMENT OF THE FUND.

The subjoined extract from the school law prescribes the method to be pursued in the disbursement of the educational fund:

The trustees, as soon as they shall receive the circular of the Superintendent, giving the amount to which they are entitled, "shall proceed to employ a teacher or teachers for a period of not more than twelve months, and when the school or schools shall have been regularly conducted for a term of three months, the said trustees shall be authorized to draw their warrants upon the Commissioners for the part of the salary then due."

"Whenever the Commissioners shall receive any warrant drawn by the trustees, as provided, and shall be satisfied that the amount therein called for is justly due in accordance with the provisions of this act, they shall forthwith draw their warrant for the same upon the Superintendent, who shall at once draw his warrant upon the Comptroller for the amount, who shall thereupon draw his warrant upon the treasurer in favor of the county Commissioners for the same, who shall pay it to the trustees to be be applied according to law." Art. IV., Sec. 5.

The remarks and recommendations made to the trustees in reference to this system of disbursement, are here inserted:

"A literal interpretation of the language of the law would seem to imply that the trustees may draw warrants for quarter salaries, at the expiration of three months from the beginning of each particular school, without reference to any fixed point of time at which the quarters of the scholastic year may expire.

This interpretation, it is feared, will impose upon the Commissioners an amount of labor which they cannot reasonably be expected to undergo.

The schools in the different townships of the same county, and often in the same township, will begin at different times. The quarter salaries of teachers will, therefore, fall due at every possible season of the year. To draw the whole

salary of any one teacher, in four installments, will require, on the part of the trustees, eight applications to the Commissioners, and eight communications addressed by the latter to this office. These applications, from the different townships of the county, will be of daily occurrence, requiring prompt and constant attention, or else leading to confusion, uncertainty and delay, in the disbursement of the educational fund. It will also be remembered, that the presence of two members of the board of Commissioners is required to form a quorum for the transaction of business; and that, except the Judge of Probate, they frequently reside in remote parts of the county.

There is another point worthy of consideration in this connection. If warrants be drawn upon the Commissioners, as above described, their warrants upon me will be drawn in the same irregular manner. The mails will ordinarily furnish the only means of transmission, so that a large number of packages, containing small, odd and inconvenient sums, must be sent from this office each day, through the mails, at great risk of being delayed, miscarried, or intercepted.

There is also much reason to apprehend that the trustees, in their frequent settlements with teachers—applications to the Commissioners for the purpose of drawing warrants or obtaining money—apportionments among the different schools of the township, and among the pupils of each school—will find an amount of labor and trouble for which the advantages to be derived from such frequency of settlement will not compensate.

I would therefore suggest, as a matter of convenience to them as well as to the Commissioners, that they waive their right, under the law, so far as to draw semi-annually, instead of quarterly; that the sessions of the schools be so arranged for the first half-year, as to close with June; and that the first warrants and first reports be made out immediately thereafter, and forwarded to the Commissioners by the expiration of the first week in July.

The warrants of each board on me will then include the whole amount due their county, up to that time, and will reach this office during the session of the Supreme Court, when safe and speedy means of remittance to many of the counties can be found. A subsequent day can be appointed for disbursing the money, after it shall have been received by the Commissioners, when the requisite receipts can be given, and all forwarded to this office in a single package. The business of drawing and disbursing the educational fund of the State will thus be dispatched by the labor of a very few days, while it would otherwise prove a source of constant interruption throughout the year.

The warrants for the second half year can all be drawn by

the last of December, and will then, also, reach me at a time when the money can be sent by safe hands to all the counties."

Most of the townships of the State adopted the above recommendations, and the result has shown that the difficulties there pointed out were not by any means exaggerated. The first semi-annual payments fell due on the 1st July last, but there are still fifteen counties that have drawn no part of the amount then due. The delay is owing to the fact that the Commissioners are unwilling to incur the responsibility and personal risk of ordering remittances by mail, and they have no other means of obtaining it.

It is respectfully submitted, that quarterly, or even semi-annual payments, in the manner prescribed by law, have proved entirely impracticable, and it is believed have given rise to most of the complaints, so often heard, of the intricacy and complicated character of the law itself.

This method of disbursement is inconvenient on another account. With the means placed at their disposal, many of the trustees found it impossible to give satisfaction to the various neighborhoods of their townships, without resorting to a pro rata distribution of their funds among two or more schools, instead of employing a single teacher at a fixed salary. They established such a number of schools as the people needed, binding themselves to make an equitable distribution of the money under their control among them, according to the attendance upon each, and the length of time each was taught, leaving the patrons responsible to the teachers for the remainder of the tuition, at rates previously agreed upon.

Under such an arrangement, it cannot be told at the close of the first quarter, or first half year, what part of the fund has been exhausted, since the attendance upon the schools during the remainder of the year must of course be unknown. An equitable distribution cannot, therefore, be made until all the schools of the whole year have been taught, and the average attendance of each has been ascertained.

The difficulty suggested is not imaginary. It has already been encountered in a large number of the townships, and has deterred many of the trustees from drawing warrants before the close of the year.

The simplest method of conveying the money to the townships, that is consistent with safety, is certainly the one to be preferred. There seems to be no necessity for paying it into the State Treasury at all. There will be no greater risk in having the county officers receive it from the tax collector, than from the treasury. They can be held equally responsible for the proper application of it, on their part. Not a check which is now imposed upon any of the officers need necessarily be dispensed with. Indeed, the system of accounts

already adopted, by which the Commissioners are charged with the amounts of money received by them, and credited, as evidences of its proper application—in the form of trustees' receipts are exhibited—might be continued.

REPORTS.

According to the recommendations made from this Department, in connexion with those already referred to, respecting the disbursement of the fund, the first semi-annual reports of the trustees fell due on the 30th June last. Since reports from local officers must be relied on as the chief source of information in reference to the progress and condition of the schools, it is to be greatly regretted that those received at that time were too irregular and imperfect in their character, to be submitted in tabular form.

The trustees began their labors under circumstances peculiarly trying. They had pioneer work to do, precedent not having prepared a beaten track for their feet. The law itself, as well as the explanations and instructions issued from this Department, being necessarily general in their character, could not obviate all the difficulties to which local complications of circumstances might give rise. The statements of the amounts to which they were entitled, although sent to the Commissioners for distribution early in December, did not, as has since been ascertained, reach many of the townships for several months. The locations for schools were then to be selected—a task often rendered doubly difficult by the dissensions and conflicting demands of different neighborhoods. The preparation of houses, depending solely on voluntary contributions, was, in many instances, a source of still greater delay. It is not to be wondered at, then, that the end of the first six months arrived and found many of the townships with nothing to report.

The returns which have been received, show the existence, up to that time, of about one thousand schools; but, with the exception of those from a few of the counties, they exhibit no details worthy of publication.

Among the counties that constitute these exceptions, Chambers, Benton, Randolph, Shelby, Pickens, Barbour, Limestone and Lauderdale deserve special notice and commendation. They are mentioned with the hope that their example may stimulate others to like noble exertions.

With a territory covering only twenty-two townships, Chambers county reported, as established during the first six months ..... 58 Schools. 1968 Pupils.
Benton County ..... 57 " 1486 "
Randolph County ..... 41 " 1396 "
Shelby County ..... 31 " 1094 "

Pickens County	33 Schools.	1062 Pupils.
Barbour County	35 "	1041 "
Limestone County (16 townships)	28 "	794 "
Lauderdale County	29 "	817 "

They also gave the names of the teachers, the classes of the pupils, and the average daily attendance of each school, as required by the forms previously distributed.

The statistics of several other counties, though less full, will compare favorably with those which have been mentioned.

Upon information derived from extensive correspondence, and from private interviews with school officers and others, the assertion may be safely ventured, that several hundred additional schools have been established in the State since the 30th June. It is also positively known that a large number, in existence before that time, were not reported.

The collection of full and accurate educational statistics, is always attended with great difficulty. Many of those who must be relied on to furnish them, are unaccustomed to business forms and transactions, and some, unfortunately, feel too little interest on the subject to enquire what their duty is. The reports of Superintendents in States whose educational systems have been in successful operation for many years, abound with evidences of the truth of the above remarks. The Superintendent of Connecticut, a State which has one of the oldest and most efficient systems of education in the Union, in his report for 1855, says: "I regret that the imperfection of the existing system of returns and reports from school officers to this Department, renders it impossible for me, at this time, to present full and accurate statistical information as to the progress and present condition of our common schools."

The following are respectfully suggested, as perhaps the only means by which promptness and accuracy in making returns can ever be secured in this State:

1st. By making the duty as simple and easy of performance as possible.

2d. By avoiding unnecessary frequency of its occurrence.

3d. By making prompt attention to it, at the close of each year, the condition upon which the shares of the following year are obtained.

1st. They need only be required to give the number of pupils registered; the studies pursued, or the number belonging to each class; the average daily attendance upon each school, and the aggregate of teacher's wages, or the total expenditures for school purposes during the time for which reports are made. None but the last item can possibly give the Trustees any trouble. The first will of course be known; and the remaining three can be obtained in a few moments from the registers which the teachers should be required by law to keep.

2d. There seems to be no good reason why the school operations of the whole year should not be given in a single report at its close. It is believed to be far preferable on two accounts: First, it is less troublesome, and hence more likely to be attended to; and secondly, it will give an item of information which cannot be obtained from quarterly or semi-annual returns; that is, the whole number of children in the State that have enjoyed educational advantages during the year. If, for instance, in a township containing one hundred children, twenty, thirty, forty and fifty, be represented as attending school during the four successive quarters, it is impossible to tell from this whether every child in the township was in school some part of the year, or whether only fifty of them were.

3d. The trustees are already required, at the close of each year, to make and return to this office an enumeration of the children in their respective townships, for the purpose of furnishing the basis of calculation, in the distribution of the fund, for the next year. Each board can be required to accompany such enumeration with the educational statistics of the year just then passed, as a condition upon which their township shall share in such distribution.

VISITATION BY THE SUPERINTENDENT.

The undersigned regrets that this part of his official duties has been performed in a very hurried and imperfect manner. Entering a vacant room on the 1st of April, 1854, the remainder of the year was occupied in collecting the information upon which the shares of the townships were to be estimated; in devising a system of accounts applicable to the funds, situated as have been described, and in the preparation of account and record books suited to that system; in the examination of the various publications of school books, with a view to the most judicious selections for the use of the public schools; in obtaining information as to the history and progress of the systems of other States; in the apportionment of the fund, and in opening accounts with the townships of the State; and finally in conducting a correspondence rendered doubly onerous by the large number of communications which required daily attention, and by the difficult nature of many of the questions which arose for decision.

Only ten months remained before the session of the Legislature, in which to visit the fifty-two counties of the State, at such intervals of time as could best be spared from office duties here, that still demanded a large share of attention. More than a year of uninterrupted traveling would be re-

quisite for a profitable performance of the duty, as contemplated by the law; and to visit each township, as was expected by many, would require five years.

The Superintendent has thus far found time to traverse forty-five of the counties, generally delivering two addresses in each, and has it in contemplation to visit the remainder before his term of office expires. These visits, though hurried, and often unavoidably made at the most unfavorable times for obtaining audiences, and enlisting public attention, are believed to have been attended with advantage by no means inconsiderable.

The extent and character of the educational resources and wants of the different localities—the tone of public sentiment in reference to a general system of education, and the difficulties encountered in the practical administration of the law, were made subjects of special observation and enquiry.

That which most prominently strikes the attention of one favored with such a field of observation, is the total inadequacy of the means hitherto employed, ever to accomplish what all acknowledge to be desirable—a general diffusion of knowledge.

Alabama, it is true, can point with just pride to her Colleges and High Schools, her Institutes and Academies. Perhaps in no State of the South have individual citizens and communities exhibited more liberality of sentiment. Nowhere have greater personal exertions and sacrifices been made to advance the interests of education. The undersigned would be the last to stifle such sentiments, or to disparage the benefits which have resulted from those sacrifices and exertions. The melancholy reflection still, however, obtrudes itself, that three-fourths of the youth of the State have hitherto either gone without instruction entirely, or have been crowded into miserable apologies for school-houses, without comfortable seats, without desks or black boards, often without the necessary text books, and still oftener without competent teachers.

It would be the grossest arrogance to say that the adoption of the present system has supplied all these wants. It has certainly imparted a powerful impulse to the Common School operations of the State. It has increased the attendance upon most of the schools previously kept up, and has led to the establishment of many, where none before existed. But the improvement thus far, is in the *extent* to which educational facilities have been diffused, rather than in the *character* of the facilities themselves. The increase of the school fund may have crowded the houses, but it has not always dispelled blank cheerlessness from its old dominion. It has not led to the adoption of the policy which controls men under an increase of private gains—to pull down the old barns and build greater. It has added largely to the demand for teachers' services; but it has not imparted the necessary qualifications to those who are engaged in the mighty field of labor. "Owls and bats" are still employed "to teach young eagles how to fly, because they will work cheap." The discussion of the best remedy for the great evil here complained of, is reserved for a subsequent part of this communication.

There is another conviction to which the undersigned has been forced by extensive intercourse and correspondence with the masses of the people. It is that the present educational movement is not in advance of public sentiment—that the people of the State, by an overwhelming majority, are favorable to the principle of public education, and are prepared to sustain the Legislature in all judicious measures for giving additional efficiency to the system already in existence. It is not intended by this to convey the assertion that any thing like general enthusiasm, or even general interest on the subject, prevails. On the contrary, there is a degree of apathy and indifference greatly to be deplored. But sentiments of decided hostility to the law were rarely encountered—confined almost exclusively to those localities where 16th Section funds are large, and generally originating in some misapprehension of the law itself. Those who now yield a passive approval can ultimately be made to *feel*. It is the object and one of the legitimate results of a general system of education to extend such assistance as will bring the means of education within the reach of the poorest, and at the same time to set on foot such agencies as will arouse general interest on the subject, by disseminating correct views as to what education *is*. Before its highest achievements need be expected, it must have time to create the food upon which it thrives, and qualify the agents by whom it works.

LEADING FEATURES OF AN EFFICIENT EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM.

The essential *working* parts of a perfect public system of education have been represented to be—

1st. "A separate department in the Government for its administration."

2d. "Efficient local supervision, connecting that department with all parts of the State."

3d. "The specific and regular aid of the press in its advocacy, and the diffusion of its objects and operations."

4th. "The professional training of its teachers by State Normal Schools."

1st. The necessity of State control and care, has, with us, already been recognized, and therefore needs no discussion.

2d. The absence of adequate provision for efficient local supervision has already been felt, as one of the most crippling wants of the system.

Men of intelligence and public spirit were, in the main, selected to fill the office of County Commissioners. They consented to accept, under the influence of their own generous impulses, and the earnest solicitations of others. But they have found that a proper performance of the duties of the office requires such an amount of time and attention, as cannot consistently be withdrawn from their own personal engagements. The concurrence of at least two members of the board is necessary to give validity to their acts; but in many counties, they reside at such distances from each other as to render frequent meetings inconvenient and troublesome. Those who are most remote from the county seats, generally lose the train of business, and, with it, much of the interest which they at first might have felt. The burdens of the office have, therefore, generally fallen upon some single member of the board, who is embarrassed at every step by the want of authority to act on his own responsibility. The probability of obtaining the services of efficient county officers will, most likely, hereafter diminish. An office which yields no emolument will ultimately lapse into a sinecure. Those commissioners to whom this department is most indebted for strenuous co-operation, have already expressed just dissatisfaction, that such an amount of labor should be required of them without compensation. There is no good reason why men should make greater personal sacrifices in this, than in other matters equally essential to the general welfare. That the education of all is something in which all are interested, is acknowledged. It is on that very ground that it becomes the province and duty of the State to assume its supervision. But so, also, are the making and administration of the laws a matter of common concern. Yet it is not expected on that account, that the various officers of State will discharge their respective duties with no other reward in view than the consolation of well-doing, and the honors of office.

It is believed that the substitution of single county officers, instead of the present boards—such as are mentioned in the communication to the Commissioners, hereafter given, will add greatly to the efficiency of that department of the system. A strong array of facts, were it deemed necessary, might here be adduced from various States of the Union to show the happy effects of the immediate supervision of the schools by a single county officer.

The following language is used in reference to it by the Hon. S. S. Randall, of New York, in a letter addressed to the Superintendent of schools in New Jersey. The opinion of a gentleman of his acknowledged ability and long experience—having been for fourteen years at the head of the educational department of the State of New York—is entitled to the highest consideration and respect:

"From the year 1841 up to 1847, you are aware, our schools were under the immediate supervision of county Superintendents, and while this system remained in force, it was characterised by a rapid and an unprecedented advancement of our elementary institutions of learning. The various provisions of law were promptly and efficiently executed; our schools were very generally supplied with well qualified teachers of both sexes, the course of instruction was essentially improved; an increased interest was excited on the part of parents and the public generally; controversies and dissensions in the several districts were pacified and adjusted through the judicious interposition of this class of officers, and the elements of prosperity and success were extensively diffused throughout the State. In an evil hour, the Legislature allowed itself to give way to the noisy clamor of the opponents of this beneficent system, who, by combining with the disaffected and the indifferent in the several school districts, presented, in the absence of any counteracting movement, a formidable array of names in favor of its repeal. From this period, a retrograde process commenced. The bond of union, which had connected the State department with the several school districts, being dissolved, it became wholly impracticable to exercise that constant supervision, which was absolutely indispensable to the harmony and efficiency of the system."

In his report to the Legislature for the year 1854, he says:

"In 1841, the county Superintendency was established, and the town school officers reduced to one. In some counties, where incompetent officers were selected, it resulted in little visible benefit, but generally it was far otherwise. In counties where qualified and zealous Superintendents were chosen, it marked the commencement of a new era in the schools. With the pruning of a rigid and fearless inspection, a higher grade of qualification in teachers was secured. Under the stimulus of a certain and appreciating supervision, every teacher was both roused and encouraged to constant effort. The spirit spread to the people. They flocked to the school room to meet and hear an officer who brought to them high intelligence in his vocation, a knowledge of improved systems, processes and books, gleaned from a wide field of observation; and who was fired with zeal and energy flowing from the concentration of time and attention to a single object. In some counties the enthusiasm reached such a height, that processions of children with banners and songs of welcome, greeted the Superintendent as he passed from

town to town. School celebrations multiplied. The schools became one of the prominent topics of popular conversation, and popular interest. The natural fruits of such an awakening followed. Better selected and better paid teachers, more regular attendance, greater uniformity in text books, more commodious school houses, and above all, a more earnestly aroused parental co-operation, marked the new era of things."

The objection made in New York to the county Superintendency was founded chiefly on its expensiveness—an objection which will apply with less force in Alabama, since there the number of schools was such as to occupy the whole time of the Superintendent, while in Alabama he need not be engaged more than from six to ten weeks.

It is also the united testimony of all the public school officers in Pennsylvania, that the establishment of the county Superintendency has imparted a degree of prosperity before unknown to the system of that State.

The remarks made above in reference to the compensation of county officers will apply, though perhaps with less force, to those of the townships. The duties of the trustees are less onerous, and the interest they have in their performance more direct and personal. Under the influence of a wholesome county supervision, most of the townships may be supplied with active and efficient trustees even without any provision for their compensation. There is however, great reason to apprehend that the school operations of the townships will never be vigorous and effective, until a moderate allowance is made for the time actually occupied by them in the legitimate performance of their duties. The necessary means might be provided by requiring each county to levy a sum sufficient for that purpose, and thus leave the funds derived from the treasury to be, as they now are, solely applicable to the payment of tuition.

3d. The aid of the press should, as early as possible, be regularly and efficiently enlisted in support of our system. "All other great enterprises appeal to, and in a large degree depend on this power." A monthly educational journal published at the capitol would, as a merely incidental advantage, furnish a medium of direct and speedy communication from this department to all the townships of the State. The present method of disseminating information by circulars and epistolary correspondence is much less effectual. Important documents of instruction have been issued from this office for distribution among the trustees, and six months afterwards many townships have been found in which the existence of such documents was entirely unknown. It is also less economical. The amount appropriated as the contingent fund of this department, after defraying the necessary

expenses of the office, would be more than exhausted by the extensive circulation of two pamphlets of fifty pages each; while a well conducted journal could very soon be made to support itself.

"The effect of sending monthly into every township a pamphlet containing the official opinions of the Superintendent; an account of the educational movements of the State, plans and descriptions of the best school houses, discussions of topics connected with popular education, articles exhibiting the best method of teaching and 'governing schools, together with the current educational intelligence of the day, could not fail to infuse into the administration of our system new life and vigor."

4th. The ultimate establishment of State Normal Schools for the professional training of teachers, cannot but be regarded by the enlightened friends of popular education, as a consummation most devoutly to be wished. In the judgment of the undersigned, however, the time has not yet arrived for decisive action on this subject. There is reason to believe that public opinion is not yet ripe for the movement; that the people have not yet been brought to see the necessity of a course of special preparation to fit men for the profession.

Such institutions, if established, might not at the beginning be largely attended, and hence could not supply the present urgent demand for well qualified teachers. The occupation of common school teaching does not now hold out such pecuniary rewards as will likely induce a large number to undergo a course of special preparation, with a view to embarking in it, as a profession for life. A large majority of those whose talents would ultimately fit them for the business, engage in it as a temporary occupation under the pressure of temporary circumstances.

But the question arises, and it is one of grave import, what means shall be employed to elevate the low standard of qualification, among these temporary teachers, and to rescue fifty thousand of the youth of Alabama from the pernicious influence of a "leaden, prescriptive inefficiency" among the schools. Something must be done, or it is useless to talk of a flourishing educational system. It is a subject of complaint with the Commissioners of almost every county that competent teachers cannot be obtained, and if certificates were granted only to those whose qualifications are even respectable, three-fourths of the townships of some counties would be deprived of schools entirely.

It is probable that no measure can be adopted that will immediately eradicate the evil complained of. The townships themselves may do much towards its correction by allowing more liberal compensation to teachers. The emoluments of a position are generally the measure of the qualifi-

cations that can be induced to fill it, and so long as teachers' salaries are reluctantly doled out "like cheap food in winter," mental nutriment will not be bounteously dispensed among the children.

Incalculable advantage would also be found to flow from a system of "competent, high-toned supervision" and inspection. This topic has already been briefly considered in the discussion of the county Superintendency.

The Commissioners of some of the counties have already accomplished much by dealing faithfully and fearlessly with applicants for license. In Pickens county, especially, arrangements were made to examine all the applicants at once. The examination lasted two days, and was conducted in the presence of a large and highly interested audience. The effect is represented to have been most salutary, both upon the public mind, and upon the teachers themselves. Each had revealed to him points of excellence in others, which he was conscious of not possessing, or defects in himself, of which he was before unapprised. A noble determination to rival the former, and remedy the latter, was thus most naturally inspired. Those whose attainments were thought to be too limited to entitle them to permanent license, received temporary certificates, to be renewed only upon condition of subsequent improvement. The Commissioners were afterwards highly gratified to find that the condition was in almost every instance complied with, and that at the time appointed, evidences of marked improvement were exhibited. The plan of granting temporary certificates has also been adopted in other counties, and has, in every instance, tended to stimulate teachers to the very necessary work of self-improvement.

But in the opinion of the undersigned, the organization of *Institutes* or conventions of teachers for mutual instruction and improvement, constitutes the speediest and most effectual means of elevating the standard of qualifications in the profession, infusing into the public mind a lively interest on the subject of schools, and imparting vitality and vigor to the educational movements of the State. A correct idea of their nature and objects may be gained from the subjoined extract from a report of Mr. Seth P. Beers, former Superintendent of the State of Connecticut:

"These conventions or schools for teachers constitute the most important events in the history of our common schools for the last ten years. More than three-fourths of all the persons employed to teach the public schools last winter, it is supposed, were assembled together for four or five days—during which time instruction was given by skilful and experienced teachers in the theory and practice of school keeping, and the most approved methods of teaching in the various branches usually pursued in district schools. The regular exercises during the day were interspersed with discourses, in which the members of the convention took part; and the evenings were devoted to lectures and discussions upon subjects connected with schools and education—in which parents and others were deeply interested, and in which prominent citizens took part. The good accomplished thus incidentally in the several places where the conventions were held, by awakening parental and public interest, and disseminating sound views on important topics of school-government and instruction, and on the duties of parents to teachers, and to the schools where their children attend, was worth all that the conventions cost the State. But the direct and anticipated results of the conventions—the bringing of teachers from the different towns in the same county into an acquaintance with each other, and to a knowledge of each others' experience and methods—the presentation and exemplification by experienced and successful teachers of the means and methods by which they have attained success—the breaking up in the minds of young and inexperienced teachers of radically wrong notions before they had been carried out into extensive practice, and thus distorted and dwarfed the minds of hundreds of the youth of the State—the impulse and spirit of self and professional improvement, the desire to read, converse and observe on the subject of school-education and teaching, and to elevate the profession to which they belong—these results which were predicted, have been realized as fully as the best friends of the measure promised.

"No single agency has so soon and so widely, with such success and general acceptance, been devised or applied to the improvement of common schools. The first meeting of this character was held in this State at Hartford, in 1839. Since then it has been adopted in New York, very generally tried, and within the last year incorporated by legislative enactment into its school system. In Massachusetts, Maine, New Hampshire, Rhode Island and Ohio, provision is made by law for holding these meetings; and in Illinois, Wisconsin, Michigan, Vermont, New Jersey and Pennsylvania, they are held under a voluntary movement of the teachers and the friends of education.

* * * * * * *

"When convened, the members of the Institute should cheerfully and promptly consider themselves at school, and should co-operate with the principal in making the Institute a practical exemplification of a well-regulated model school, and give a ready obedience to all good and wholesome regulations.

* * * * * * *

"The opinion of those who have had most experience and

observation in these schools, is, that the session of the Institute should not exceed two weeks, or ten working days. And that for that length of time, if the exercises are properly managed and varied, a deep and intense interest can be sustained, both among the members and in the community where it is held. The results of the conventions in this State show that a session of even five working days can be made eminently profitable and interesting.

* * * * * * *

"Public lectures on the duties of parents and the community generally to the common schools—on the construction and internal arrangement of school houses—on the administration and management of common schools—or the reciprocal duties of parents, teachers and pupils—on the claims and rights of teachers, and on improvements in education, are among the legitimate and indispensable objects to be provided for in the establishment of an Institute. The information thus spread abroad through the community, and the interest and spirit of inquiry thus awakened, are among the happy results which have thus far followed their introduction. The public mind requires to be instructed and educated, to appreciate the importance of the professional training of teachers, to correct and practical views as to the objects, nature and means of education."

Should the legislature think fit to adopt the suggestions heretofore made respecting the county superintendency, the organization and management of the Institutes could be committed to those officers, aided by such persons as they might select. The counsel and co-operation of College professors, and the principals of high schools and academies in the various counties of the State, could doubtless be obtained. The State Superintendent might also find time to be present at, and aid in, the organization of a large number of them. Since the expense attending these conventions will be very inconsiderable, it is believed that no appropriation from the State treasury for that purpose will be necessary.

The leading features of a perfect system of public education have thus been briefly and imperfectly presented. Their existence in some form have ever proved as essential to the success of a State educational enteprise, as is a general diffusion of knowledge itself, to the safety and perpetuity of free institutions.

A synopsis of the principal modifications of the law which have been recommended herein, will be found in the following extract from a letter of enquiry, addressed from this department to the Commissioners of all the counties of the State:

"I am anxious to lay before the Legislature, at its next session, the results of the observation and experience of all those who have co-operated in the organization of the present educational system. Will you therefore be so kind as to point out what you consider the prominent defects of the law, and their best remedies? the principal obstacles that have been encountered in the practical working of the school system, whether originating in the defects of the law, or in other causes, and the best means of removing them? Is it your opinion that what has thus far been achieved is such as to encourage continued efforts? Is the tone of public sentiment in your county favorable to the principle of public education? I would be pleased especially to have your views upon the following changes in the law, which, it seems to me, are needed:

1st. That the whole amount coming to a township be distributed equally among all the classes pursuing the common school course, instead of giving the primary class the preference, and frequently exhausting the fund upon it.

2d. That annual settlements and annual reports be substituted for quarterly or semi-annual.

3rd. That a report of the school operations of the preceding year be made a condition precedent to obtaining the distributive shares of the following year.

4th. That the amount declared to each county be left in it by the tax-collector. The system of account keeping already adopted might be continued—the county officers being held responsible for the amounts received by them until their vouchers are exhibited.

5th. That instead of a Board of three Commissioners, a single county officer, styled Commissioner or Superintendent, be elected or appointed, whose duty it shall be to visit the schools of the county at least once each year, and collect information as to their condition; explain the law to the trustees, and aid them in the discharge of their duties; endeavor to harmonize the dissensions of neighborhoods, and by the delivery of lectures and addresses, excite the people to the importance of education; call county conventions of teachers, and deliberate with them upon the best method of conducting schools, and of teaching the various branches of the common school course; and at the close of the year pay out the funds of the townships, and collect and forward their reports. He should be required to give bond in a sufficient sum to secure the amount coming into his hands, and be allowed adequate compensation for his services.

Cannot intelligent teachers be found who would devote their vacations and other leisure times to the discharge of these duties? It would not require more than eight weeks in a majority of the counties.

I would not have the views which I have advanced to be understood as conveying an indirect censure upon the present officers. I fully appreciate the faithfulness with which many

of them have toiled; but I know it is unreasonable to expect them to continue to do so without compensation. The Judges of Probate cannot devote the necessary attention to the subject; and the probability of their obtaining efficient co-operation will diminish every year. Any suggestions you may think proper to offer on points relating to the educational interests of your county, not here referred to, will be gladly received."

All the answers which have been received, so far as they relate to the points presented, will be found in the Appendix. (C)

The Superintendent cannot conclude this part of his official duties without giving expression to the deep solicitude which he feels, in common with men of liberal and enlightened views everywhere, for the continuance and further improvement of our infant educational system. The following propositions are, in conclusion, respectfully submitted, as containing some of the more prominent considerations in favor of the permanent adoption of that line of policy by the State:

1st. The intervention and effort of society in its organized political capacity, constitutes the only means by which a universal diffusion of knowledge can ever be secured. Neither the history of the past, nor the circumstances of the present, reveal any other agency adequate to its accomplishment. The question of a continuance or discontinuance of such effort here, amounts to a direct issue between general intelligence on the one hand, and wide spread, deplorable ignorance on the other.

2d. No obstacles in the way of the ultimate attainment of this great object exists in Alabama, which have not been encountered and triumphed over in other States. Indeed the achievements of the present year will challenge comparison with what has ever been accomplished, elsewhere, with the same means and in the same length of time.

3rd. General intelligence and virtue are included in the very idea of a government where the people are the great depositories of power, and the ultimate tribunal to which all questions of national policy are referred. "They who govern, must know how to govern; and they who govern rightly must themselves be right." MR. MANSFIELD says "There is a positive antagonism between the possession of civil power requiring the highest exercise of reason, and the want of that intelligence and integrity, which are essential to the right use of reason itself."

It will not be considered improper to introduce in this connexion the opinion of one of the founders of the government, and the great republican philosopher of his day. MR. JEFFERSON, in a letter to Col. YANCEY, January 16, 1816, uses this language: "If a nation expects to be ignorant and free, in a state of civilization, it expects what never was and never will be. The functionaries of every government have propensities to command at will, the liberty and property of their constituents. There is no safe deposit for these but with the people themselves; nor can they be safe with them, without information. When the press is free and every man able to read, all is safe."

4th. Aside from the overwhelming motives of self-preservation, which apply to nations as to individuals, every consideration of sound domestic economy demands at the hands of government a liberal encouragement of the means of education. The State that scatters broadcast the seeds of knowledge most profusely, will ever reap the richest harvest of golden fruit, in the increased thrift and industry, prosperity and happiness of its people. "Were there any statistics to show the greater productiveness of the educated than the brutified laborer, the increased power of the intelligent hand, and the broad survey and the deep intuition of the intelligent eye! Could we see a ledger account of the profits that come from forethought, order and system, as they preside over the farm, the work-shop, and the labors of the household, we should then know how rapidly their gathered units swell into millions upon millions! The skill that strikes the nail's head instead of the finger's ends; the care that mends a fence and saves a corn field; that drives a horse-shoe nail and secures both rider and horse; that extinguishes a light and saves a house; the prudence that cuts the coat according to the cloth, and lays by something for a rainy day; the forethought that sees the end from the beginning, and reaches it by the direct route of an hour, instead of the circuitous gropings of a day; the exact remembrance impressed upon childhood to do the errand as it was bidden; and, more than all, the economy of virtue over vice; of restrained over pampered desires;—these things are not set down in the works on Political Economy; but they have far more to do with the Wealth of Nations than any laws which aim to regulate the balance of trade, or any speculations on capital and labor, or any of the great achievements of art. That vast variety of ways in which an intelligent people surpass a stupid one, and an exemplary people an immoral one, has infinitely more to do with the well-being of a nation, than soil, or climate, or even than government itself, excepting so far as government may prove to be the patron of intelligence and virtue."

5th. And finally it is not an invasion of the rights of property for the government to assess upon each individual his share of the expenses of educating the children of the community, up to such a point, as the nature of the institutions under which he lives, and the well-being of society require.

The man of affluence is willing to bear the burdens which

the ponderous machinery for the punishment of crime imposes upon all, because if crime go unpunished his interests are in jeopardy. Is it at all unreasonable, then, that he be called upon to assist in the prevention of crime, instead of its punishment? He would willingly lend his aid to strengthen the hand of government in intimidating or overpowering a lawless mob. But would it not be better to begin in time, and *tame* that mob! Is it not wiser to contribute to the means by which the torch may be extinguished in the hand of the incendiary, and the dagger wrested from the assassin, than to wait until the mischief has been done, and then pay for the punishment of the misguided criminal?

It is considered a legitimate exercise of sovereign power to levy contributions upon the citizens of a nation to repel an invading foe. Is it less the province of government to create the means necessary to protect it from the ravages of corruption, that eats like a canker worm at the core, that vitiates the life-blood as it flows from the fountain head? The affections of an intelligent, virtuous, patriotic people are stronger bulwarks of national defence, than ships-of-war and frowning battlements.

When, therefore, a man shall become so isolated and independent as to have no interest in common with the society of which he is a member, as to be alike uninfluenced by the prosperity and permanance, or the calamity and overthrow of the government of which he claims protection, then only, may he demand exemption from the obligation to contribute to the means by which the former may be secured, and the latter shunned.

Respectfully submitted,

WM. F. PERRY,

Superintendent.

OFFICE OF SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION,
Montgomery, Ala., October 1, 1855.

APPENDIX A.

OFFICE SUPERINTENDENT OF ENUCATION,
Montgomery, Ala., Dec. 1, 1854.

The Commissioners of Free Public Schools:

GENTLEMEN:—Enclosed are statements containing the amounts now due the several townships of your county, as interest on their 16th Section Funds, up to the 1st day of December, 1854, and of their distributive shares of the State Educational Fund for the year 1855.

I have also, this day, forwarded to your address, several numbers of a document designed for distribution among the Trustees and Teachers of your county. One or more of the

copies sent by you to each Board of Trustees, should contain, under your signature, the amount to which their township is entitled. You will doubtless observe the leaf inserted for this purpose.

The same method will have to be adopted for the disbursement of the 16th Section interest now due, that the law prescribed for the whole Educational Fund. (See the last paragraph on the 12th page of the accompanying pamphlet.)

Instead of Form VI., there given, the following is suggested as more suitable for your warrants on me for the 16th Section interest, particularly where the drafts of several different Boards of Trustees on you are enclosed in one:

"The Superintendent of Education will pay to our own order, hereon endorsed, for the use of the Trustees of the several townships in ——— County, hereafter enumerated, the sum of ——— dollars, being the total of the warrants drawn on us by said Trustees—as per the following statement—for the amount due their respective townships, as interest on their 16th Section Fund, up to the 1st day of December, 1854.',

A tabular statement can then follow, containing the township and ranges, with the amount to be drawn for each annexed:

You will accompany each warrant with directions as to the mode of remittance I shall adopt. The money will then stand charged to you until the receipts taken from the Trustees shall have been returned to this office, when you will be credited and the township charged. Each warrant should be endorsed by you in blank.

As a separate receipt must be taken by you for each Board of Trustees to whom money may be paid, blank copies have been sent to relieve you of the trouble of writing. Sufficient space has been left for the insertion of the fund from which the money has been drawn, so that they may serve for the disbursement of the 16th Section interest for 1854, and that of the State Educational Fund for the year 1855—the latter being the term applied to the late appropriation and the 16th Section Fund united.

It will be seen that the same amounts are declared to some of the townships for the year 1855, that they were previously entitled to on their 16th Section Funds. This is because they either failed to report, or else had before, an average per child greater than that produced by the apportionment of the Educational Fund.

I have mentioned this, that satisfactory explanation may be made to those who may not understand why no additional sum has been declared to them. The apportionment was made by giving to those that had nothing, and adding to those that had little—increasing all in the same ratio, until

the amount appropriated was exhausted, and leaving those whose fund exceeded the average thus produced, to retain what they had, without increase or diminution.

It may also be found necessary to explain why it is that the Educational Fund cannot, under the law, be drawn and disbursed for the year now past. For this purpose I refer you to the fourth article of the law itself. The very fact that the Trustees are authorized to draw quarterly, necessarily implies that they must know before hand the amount to which they are entitled.

If the shares now declared were drawn and paid out for services rendered during the year 1854, they would begin a new year in total darkness, so far as the aid upon which they could rely is concerned. Not a definite contract could be made with a teacher—not a warrant could be cashed until the close of the year 1855, after a new apportionment of the Educational Fund upon a new basis of calculation. Beginning thus in uncertainty, in uncertainty they must continue, *ad infinitum*. Indeed, the law expressly states that the Trustees are authorized to draw for salaries at the expiration of three months *after* the organization of schools—that they are to proceed to organize schools *after* receiving a publication containing statements of their distributive shares; and that these statements are to be made out by the Superintendent, *after* he has ascertained the number of children in the whole State, and in each township; and he certainly could not do so before obtaining such information. I have dwelt at some length on this point, because I am aware that in some counties misapprehension and dissatisfaction have existed in reference to it.

I would respectfully invite your attention to the remarks on the 11th and 12th pages of the accompanying publication, and solicit your co-operation in effecting the adoption, on the part of the Trustees, of the plan recommended. The truth is, the method of disbursement prescribed by the law, *literally followed*, is utterly impracticable. We are, however, left to manage it as best we may, until some other can be substituted for it.

The suggestions referred to are the result of much reflection, and seem to me to furnish the only plan by which the spirit of the law can be carried out without involving the responsibility of a direct violation of its letter.

I suppose it would not be difficult to produce the impression that warrants cannot be attended to at any other time than that suggested, without very great inconvenience, and that it will be necessary that their regular reports be before you, in order that you may have the data upon which to draw your warrants upon me.

I will endeavor to furnish you every possible facility in the way of printed forms, and would be happy to receive any suggestions you may think proper to offer, on any topic connected with the educational interests of the State.

Please accept assurances of my cordial sympathy in the discharge of the onerous duties you have generously assumed, and of the consideration with which I am,

Very respectfully,

Your obedient servant,

WM. F. PERRY,

Superintendent.

(B.)

OFFICE SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION,
Montgomery, Dec. 11, 1854.

The Commissioners of Free Public Schools:

GENTLEMEN:—Since the accompanying communication of Dec. 1st was written, I have effected an arrangement with the Comptroller and Treasurer, by which the 16th Section interest, now due, may be drawn with much less inconvenience than by the method therein suggested.

Immediately after receiving the statement of interest due, draw your warrant upon me in favor of the Trustees of the several townships, for the aggregate amount due your county. I will then draw *mine* upon the Comptroller, who will issue his in favor of you, which warrant will be sent to you by mail. By endorsing said warrant to your Tax Collector in blank, you can obtain from him the amount for which it was drawn, and he can present it, instead of an equal sum of money, at the Treasury, where, as you know, it is *always received as cash*.

The money thus obtained by you can be disbursed to the townships, and will be charged and credited on my books, as stated in the circular referred to.

The statements of the 16th Section dividend, for the year ending December 1, 1854, and the calculations of distributive shares for the year ending December 1, 1855, had all to be made after the 1st of December, instant, and have involved an immense amount of labor. It was the work of eight weeks condensed into *two*. The latter calculation could not really have been begun before the date mentioned, for reasons briefly stated on the first page of the accompanying pamphlet.

Both funds will now begin to draw interest on the same day, and dividends will hereafter be declared in December of each year, and be published in time to reach the Trustees before the opening of a new year's school operations.

Very respectfully, &c.,

WM. F. PERRY,

Superintendent.

(C.)

CRAWFORD, Ala., Sept. 21, 1855.

Wm. F. Perry, Esq., Superintendent:

DEAR SIR:—We have had your circular of the 17th inst., under consideration. The suggestions of changes and amendments which you therein make, so perfectly meet and remedy the defects of the present school law, which our own observation and experience of its operation have developed, that we deem it unnecessary to say more than that they are, in our opinion, all highly needed.

Three suggestions, especially, meet our hearty concurrence, and without the adoption of which by the coming Legislature, we believe the whole law had better be repealed; they are the 1st, 2d and 5th. We are entirely satisfied that without a paid superintendent for each county, and no more than one, the whole system will fall into neglect and disrepute.

It is onerous and unjust that such severe and responsible duties should be imposed by the State on her citizens without compensation—but more objectionable than even the injustice of the matter, is the absolute certainty of less efficiency by three unpaid commissioners, than *one* duly compensated.

We candidly believe that the radical defect of our whole system of the management of school land and money, since the organization of the State government, has been in having too many unpaid officers connected with it. We are almost inclined to recommend to you the abolition of the office of trustee altogether, or the reduction of the number to one.

We are strongly inclined to think that many of the losses, embezzlements and frauds connected with school lands and school moneys, are to be traced to the carelessness and improper conduct of the township trustees or commissioners.

Respectfully,

ALLEN EILAND,
WILSON WILLIAMS, } Com'rs.
JOHN A. LEWIS,

CAHABA, Sept. 25, 1855.

W. F. Perry, Esq., Superintendent:

DEAR SIR:—In compliance with your request, we submit the following opinions and thoughts in reference to the school law, and particularly in reference to the questions propounded in your circular:

1st. It is our opinion that what has thus far been achieved, is such as to encourage continued effort. The people of our county are beginning to understand and appreciate the design of the law, and are now forming or organizing schools in many of the townships, according to the provisions of the law.

2d. We think the tone of public sentiment in our county favorable to the principle of public education. The chief cause why our people have not gone into the system as required, has been a total misunderstanding of the law and its designs.

3d. We incline to the opinion that the primary class should have preference as allowed by the existing law. We understand the object of the law to be to benefit those who are unable to educate their children, until the fund is large enough to benefit all—at least, we deem this its chief aim; and if the fund is to be gradually increased, the most effectual means, in our opinion, of arriving at such an end, is to pay the tuition of the primary class first, and then, so soon as the fund is sufficient, pay the tuition of the next class, &c., until all can be paid. Perhaps it would be best not to require in every school, that no charge should be made for the primary class; but only in the event there is money enough to defray the tuition of that class. If there should not be money enough, let the Trustees make such charge as may be agreed upon.

4th. We are *decidedly* of the opinion that annual settlements and reports would simplify the matter very much, and render the labors of the Trustees and Commissioners much less. But as teachers generally require at least half their pay (and they generally need it) at the expiration of half the year, we doubt the expediency of annual settlements. Semi-annual would perhaps be better.

5th. We are firmly of the opinion that a compliance with the requisitions of the law, and a report of the school operations, should be made a condition precedent to the obtaining the money at *any time*. For so long as the money can be obtained without a compliance with the requisitions of the law, its requisitions will not be complied with. Let them understand that the money is theirs—that no one else is entitled to it, or can get it—but that the law has prescribed a certain way by which they must get it, and if they do not see proper to have it in that way, they themselves, alone, are to blame. Such a state of things will very soon (as it has already done in several instances within our knowledge) induce the people to begin to enquire into it, and to adopt the course prescribed by law.

6th. By all means, some plan of getting the money into each county should be adopted, to avoid the trouble that now attends it. We think the plan of having the Tax Collector leave the amount, as suggested, in each county, a good one.

7th. We think the plan of a single county officer in each

county, as you suggest, a good one. It would be much better than the present plan.

The law, in our opinion, should be simplified as much as possible, so that the people can understand it.

The impression among many has been, and still is, that the townships that are entitled to large amounts, by joining into the new system, will lose a portion of their amount in order to contribute to those that have not so much. This has been one great obstacle in the way, but we think it is mostly removed in our county. The law requiring the teacher to be licensed, employed by Trustees, and copy of contract filed with Commissioners, and the money to be paid *directly* to the teachers by the Trustees, upon his warrant upon them, &c., we think a good one.

Thus you have, as briefly as we could give them, our views and opinions as to the matters suggested, all of which are respectfully submitted.

THOS. G. RAINER, } Com'rs.
THOS. J. PORTIS, }

ELYTON, Sept. 29, 1855.

Wm. F. Perry, Esq., Superintendent:

DEAR SIR: Your circular of 17th inst. is in hand, and it is exactly what is needed.

We most heartily concur in all your suggestions, and believe that they would meet with public approbation.

One suggestion—a county superintendent would do more perhaps than any other, if a practical teacher could be elected, and one who had zeal and ability; and this could no doubt be done if schools could be so arranged under his supervision as to have examinations about the first of August, and continue consecutively till all the schools could be visited, which, in our county, would perhaps be from 40 to 50, taking about eight weeks. Those who are competent to judge and conduct these duties properly, have their own schools to attend to, and their vacations are generally in August and September.

There are many other matters connected with the system which you make no allusion to, which would greatly advance the cause.

First of all, schools ought to be established to educate teachers. 2d. Teachers' Institutes, or Associations. 3d. The low grade of scholarship, and the great ignorance of teachers, will always be a barrier. Men come to be examined, recommended by trustees who cannot add ½ and ¼ together, and it is the only chance. Few understand the spelling book, or know any thing of the power of letters, or the seat of the accent. 4th. School houses not fit for a stable.

If our license be not renewed, and a higher or more rigid

system adopted, they will teach to *get* the *money*, qualified or not. Many teach for the small pittance of money, either because they are too lazy to work, or have no other means of getting money. They must renew. Nearly every township in our county has a school or two, and all would have, if teachers could be obtained. Our reports in December will show a greater number of schools.

What is needed is, being aroused on the subject; for we find in communities, where they have had good schools, they will continue to have them, at any price. Ignorant teachers never can inspire parents or children with a love of scholarship. Normal schools, teachers' institutes and associations, examinations and exhibitions, and a good superintendent, well paid, who can regulate schools, in our opinion, would revolutionize public opinion. Respectfully,

J. H. BAKER,
Commissioner.

SOMERVILLE, ALA., Sept. 26, 1855.

Wm. F. Perry, Esq., Superintendent:

DEAR SIR—Your communication of the 17th inst. is received, and having conferred with Judge Campbell, I hasten to reply to your enquiries and suggestions, with regard to the Free School system.

So far as our county is concerned, there is much complaint against the law, as it now exists, principally from the fact that the machinery is too complicated, and the fund is not sufficient to realize the expectations of many. The law does need much alteration and amendment, to accomplish the design of of its framers. The people, I think, are generally favorable to the cause of education, and I am of opinion that if the alterations which you suggest can be made, that the whole system will operate better; at any rate, you have the hearty concurrence of myself and Judge Campbell, and we believe the people will be pleased, so far as we know their sentiments. I will notice your suggestions as they occur, briefly:

1st. The whole amount coming to a township *ought* to be distributed equally among the classes.

2d. There *should* be annual settlements and reports, for it is impossible to carry out the present law in that respect.

3d. The report of the school operations of the preceding year *should* be made the condition precedent to obtaining the distributive shares of the following year. This will enforce promptitude and diligence on all concerned.

4th. The amount declared to each county, should be left in it by the tax collector, under the conditions you mention. The present mode of getting the money is almost impracticable, and ought to be changed.

5th. Your suggestions that each county elect one Commissioner instead of three—and that he be paid for his services is a good one. Unless this is done, you may rest assured that the next term will go on without Commissioners. Their duties are burdensome, and will not be discharged without remuneration. There *should* be one Commissioner, and he should be elected by the Court of County County Commissioners of Roads and Revenue. Let him be required to give bond, and be required to discharge all the duties you enumerate. I think it is probable that intelligent teachers could be had who would aid in these duties during their vacations, and I am pleased with the suggestion of a county convention of teachers, it will do much to promote education and to systematize the operations and objects of the school system.

There is another thing I wish to mention. The standard of qualification for teachers is too low. We may now license men to teach who are competent to teach orthography, reading, writing and arithmetic, who cannot teach any thing else.

We have granted license to many of this grade, who, I am satisfied, will never be efficient school teachers. They should have more knowledge than this to teach school. And the better and more extensive their education and general qualifications, the more competent are they to instruct properly in primary branches. A false mode of teaching these branches often produces errors hard to remedy, for they are the foundation of the whole fabric, and should be well laid, well understood. We ought to have good teachers, who understand properly the true mode of instruction.

I do not know of any other suggestion of any importance. You, in my opinion, made the discovery for yourself, of all that will be necessary to be done for the law.

I will most cheerfully give you any information you may desire at any time, which is in my power, and do most earnestly hope your suggestions may meet the approbation of the Legislature, and become a part of the school law.

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Very respectfully,
H. M. WELCH, Com'r.

LA FAYETTE, Ala., Oct. 11, 1855.

Wm. F. Perry, Esq., Superintendent:

DEAR SIR—The School Commissioners for Chambers county are satisfied the most prominent defects of the law are covered by the amendments suggested in your circular of 17th September, 1855. In all of which we fully concur, and especially in the appointment of a Superintendent for each county. We are satisfied what has already been done is sufficient to encourage continued effort, and believe that

public sentiment in our county is favorable to the system of public education.

Very respectfully,
SAMUEL PEARSON, }
JAMES T. BROCK, } Com'rs.

PICKENS COUNTY, Ala., Sept. 28, 1855.

The Superintendent of Education:

DEAR SIR: Your communication of 17th inst. has been received, to which we respond, that the principal obstacles that have been encountered in the practical working of the school system, are, the amount of labor required to be performed by the Commissioners and Trustees, without any compensation, and the incompetency of many of the Boards of Trustees, to know their duty with the law before them.

We think that the labor of the Trustees might be diminished and education suffer no detriment, by the substitution of annual settlements and annual reports, for quarterly or semi-annual. This would be much more simple, and we think that a small compensation, say one dollar per day and expenses, would tend to remove the reluctance which many men feel to acting, when they are required to labor for days, and ride often considerable distances, and in addition pay out a little cash, when they have no time to spare and no money to pay out.

We think your 5th suggestion in relation to the election of one Commissioner or Superintendent in the place of three, a good one, as this would doubtless give efficiency to the system. Competent men must be paid for their time and labor, or such cannot be induced to act long. If paid a reasonable compensation, they would take a deeper interest, and act more efficiently. This officer could also examine teachers and grant licenses. The examination of teachers, we think, is doing good in this county.

The tone of public sentiment in this county, is in favor of public education, and we think that the system should not be abandoned, but that it should go forward, and meet and remove the difficulties to the perfecting of the system.

We think that your 1st, 3d and 4th proposed changes in the law, very good ones, as they could diminish and simplify the work of the county officers, and no injury, so far as we can see, would be done to the cause of general education. Your 1st suggestion, especially, would be more acceptable to the people than the law as it now is. The 4th would save much inconvenience.

We would suggest that a change of the educational age,

from what it now is (viz: from 5 to 18 years,) to, from 6 to 20, would be a good one.

Respectfully yours,
J. M. WALLACE,
JAMES SOMERVILLE, } Com'rs.
L. A. GILKEY,

RANDOLPH COUNTY, Oct. 5, 1855.

Wm. F. Perry, Superintendent:

SIR: Your circular of the 17th September, came to hand, and in answer to your inquiry, relative to the popularity of the school system in our county, I would say that the people generally, as far as I have heard them express themselves, are in favor of its continuance.

The alterations you think should be made in the law, I heartily acquiesce in.

Many of the best informed among us, also think it would be a prudent arrangement to alter the law relative to the age which children should be admitted—say from seven to eighteen; I think it a waste of means to spend money on children under 7 years old. So far as I have been able to form a judgment upon the working of the system in our county, I am of the opinion that there has been at least one-third more students attending the various schools of our county, than had ever attended at any former period. There is also a spirit of emulation gotten up between teachers and schools hitherto unknown amongst us.

We have labored under a serious difficulty in procuring the services of competent teachers to take charge of our public schools, and have had to license men of very humble qualifications, thinking it better to have schools in all the townships taught by very common men than to have no schools at all. This difficulty will be overcome when men of better qualifications can be certain of a decent support for teaching.

There is another great difficulty we labor under. We have many who have large families, who care nothing for their moral and intellectual culture—can the law-making powers do anything for their progeny?

Yours respectfully,
WM. H. SPRUCE,
for Commissioners.

The Commissioners of Limestone county also express unqualified approbation of the proposed modifications of the law, submitted for their consideration.