

ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

State Superintendent of Public Education

FOR 1870,

TO THE

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF LOUISIANA.

JANUARY, 1871.

NEW ORLEANS:
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1871.

LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL.

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**STATE OF LOUISIANA,
OFFICE STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC EDUCATION,
NEW ORLEANS, JANUARY 30, 1871.**

To the Honorable the Senate and House of Representatives of the State of Louisiana, in General Assembly convened :

GENTLEMEN—In accordance with the requirements of law, I have the honor to submit my Annual Report of the Public Schools of the State of Louisiana, for the year ending December 31, 1870.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

THOMAS W. CONWAY,
State Superintendent Public Education, State of Louisiana.

INDUSTRIAL SCHOOLS.

I would invite attention to the desirableness of establishing, at an early date, schools of the above named class, in which, in connection with the ordinary branches of an English education, pupils might be instructed in some of the useful avocations of life. It is a subject which has been pressed on my attention by the peculiar circumstances in which large numbers of our recently enfranchised citizens are placed. By the disadvantages of their previous condition the great mass of them, both male and female, were prevented from acquiring the knowledge which gives to skilled labor its high value. Among the males comparatively few are possessed of trades, while many branches of indoor industry have scarcely a representative among that portion of our people. The females are almost equally deficient in the higher departments of needlework, the products of which are always in demand in a highly civilized community.

It is, therefore, an inquiry worthy of your consideration, whether a class of schools combining the industrial with the purely educational element may not be established with the greatest advantage to a large portion of our people. Any or all of the lighter trades, an acquaintance with which is equivalent to an independence, might be taught in the male departments, while to the female pupils a knowledge of those avocations in which the needle is the chief instrumentality, might be readily imparted.

The schools of Prussia, which belong to a system that had its birth in the highest intelligence, give a prominent position to this industrial element. It would too greatly prolong my report to enter

into details in regard to the admirable school system of that great nation—whose wonderful power is based on the intelligence of its people—yet I may call attention to the fact that in its public schools of an industrial character the pupil is begun to be fitted for the most important activities of life. And if, as is confessedly the case, in our State the need for such aid is far greater than in Germany, the propriety of establishing such schools merits consideration.

STATE NORMAL SCHOOL.

In my report of last year, I called the attention of the General Assembly to the importance of providing a State Normal School for the special training of teachers to be employed in the public schools of this State. My views of the necessity for such an institution and the advantages certain to flow from its establishment have undergone no change, and in now recurring to the subject I can do little more than repeat the requirements then presented.

"Here order is to be brought out of chaos; here difficulties arising from ignorance, inexperience and indifference are to be overcome, and a school system is to be built from the very foundation. In this great work, we shall need, for many years to come, teachers thoroughly trained for the profession, who will comprehend the ends aimed at, and know by what methods they may be secured; disciplined to patience, to perseverance, and inspired by the enthusiasm which springs from a comprehension of the greatness of the educator's work. At present we must look mainly abroad for such, but the supply from such sources will always be far below our needs, even could we consent to depend on the liberality of other sections for the supply of our necessities. A proper pride of State, no less than a wise regard for the interests and character of our whole system of education, urge, at the earliest practicable moment, the establishment and sustaining of a normal school for the State, such as our wants, present and prospective, undeniably require."

These considerations presented in my last annual report resulted in no action on the part of your honorable body further than to provide, by section thirty-six of the school act that, "The State Board of Education may establish academies, normal schools and a teacher's institute, and provide for the government and control of the same." But the act, in neglecting to make provision for the expenses of such a school, renders the permission nugatory. I would, therefore, call attention to this omission, and request that definite authority be granted to the State Board to pay the necessary expenses of establishing and maintaining normal schools by warrants drawn upon the State school fund.

THE PEABODY FUND.

By direction of the State Board of Education, I transmitted to Rev. Barnes Sears, D. D., the General Agent of the above named fund, an attested copy of the following preamble and resolutions adopted by the board:

Whereas, a portion of the munificent endowment of Mr. George Peabody, for the promotion of public education in the South, has been assigned and set apart for this State; and

Whereas, this board, created by law, and now organized and engaged in the control and management of the public schools of the State, would seem to be the proper medium for the care and disbursement of the portion of said endowment to which the State is entitled; therefore, be it

Resolved, That the President of the Board be and is hereby instructed to open a correspondence with the Rev. Barnes Sears, General Agent of said endowment, with the view of securing the transfer of such portion of the same as may at any time be set apart for the good of this State to this board; and that he convey an authentic copy of this resolution to the said General Agent.

No reply having been received, I forwarded to Dr. Sears a second copy of the above resolutions, attended by the following communication:

STATE OF LOUISIANA,

OFFICE STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC EDUCATION,

New Orleans, October 28, 1870.

Rev. Barnes Sears, D. D., General Agent, etc.:

SIR—The State Board of Education for this State, at its first meeting adopted the following preamble and resolution. A copy of

the same was forwarded to you, but, as we have not heard from you, we presume you did not receive it.

The object in view is to call your attention to the question of the use made of the Peabody fund in Louisiana, and to suggest that it might add greatly to its success if you were to change the local agency here, and for the following reasons:

First—Mr. Lusher, your present agent, does not co-operate, in any way, with the State authorities in the promotion of the work of popular education.

Second—There is good reason to believe that he is greatly opposed to the State authorities, and that he aims to build up a system antagonistic to that of the State.

Third—Some of the teachers aided by him are doing all in their power to break up our public schools, and in some cases circulars have issued from them urging the citizens to oppose the establishment of public schools.

Fourth—Mr. Lusher announces that the schools aided by him are for "white children," thereby involving the trustees of the Peabody fund in the false position of establishing a caste system of education, which is, as I believe, at variance with the declarations put forth by them.

Fifth—Mr. Lusher must necessarily excite widespread opposition because of his prejudiced feelings, his inharmonious conduct toward the public school officers, and his neglect of the educational interests of the colored population of our State. We think the fund for this State can be used by the State Board of Education to far better advantages than if it remains in the hands of Mr. Lusher. Not only would we assist schools attended exclusively or partially by white pupils, without exciting the jealousy of the colored population, but we could render all proper assistance to the latter class without exciting the opposition of any of the white citizens of the State.

You would gain great advantage by having the fund used in perfect harmony with our public school system; it would be far more economical, since our school officers would charge nothing for any service you would require, and it would secure you double the results which you can possibly accomplish under the present auspices.

Very respectfully,

THOMAS W. CONWAY,
State Superintendent of Public Education.

of our population enables them to establish, and to maintain private schools for their children, and were the number who does derive the advantages of education added to those white children in attendance in our public schools, it would make a number at least quadruple that of all colored children now enjoying school privileges in this State. It is not, therefore, in any sense true that the white children in Louisiana are "from the fact of their unwillingness to attend mixed schools" the "more destitute." The administration of the Peabody fund on the basis of such a supposition, has a tendency to foster the evil which it deprecates, inasmuch as it rewards by its benefactions those who refuse to gain an education unless it is obtained in harmony with the spirit of caste. While on the other hand, by providing educational facilities for white children it enables the opponents of the public school system to deny school facilities to the colored children without involving the others in the loss and injury inflicted.

FREEDMEN'S BUREAU.

The closing up of the educational work of the Freedmen's Bureau affords a proper occasion for expressing my sense of the value of

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the aid afforded by it to the class of citizens for whose benefit it was especially designed. Coming to the aid of the freedmen almost at the moment of their emancipation, the Bureau was far in advance of all other organizations in making provision for their education. At a time when the State was powerless to provide them with the advantages of mental culture, the strong arm of the Bureau, clothed with the power and authority of the nation, was extended in their behalf. My intimate association with that work, as Assistant Commissioner of the Freedmen's Bureau for this Department, during the first year of its existence and operations, enables me to speak intelligently of the value and amount of the work which was performed. It seem to be one of those providential instrumentalities which an overruling power brings into operation at the coming of great emergencies, and the results of its official work amply vindicate the wisdom of the mind by which it was originated. Beginning at the lowest rudiments of education, it taught the unlettered adult to at least read the ballot which was soon to be placed in his hands, and opened to his mind, however imperfectly, the wonderful pages of that sacred book which had previously been to him a sealed volume. As the years rolled on, the educational work of the Bureau broadened into greater importance, and, by a co-operation with local boards and benevolent associations, it established schools, founded academies and originated institutions intended to embrace the higher class of studies, and from among the freedmen to raise up teachers fitted to carry on the work of instruction.

The need for such an organization as the Freedmen's Bureau having terminated, and its existence ceasing by the limitations of the act of Congress under which it acted, it became necessary to transfer the school property held by it to the proper authorities of the State. This necessity led to the following communication from Colonel E. W. Mason:

OFFICE OF SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION,
Bureau Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands, State of Louisiana,
NEW ORLEANS, LA., May 9, 1870.

Hon. Thos. W. Conway, Superintendent Public Instruction, New Orleans, La:

DEAR SIR—I have the honor to transmit herewith list of buildings in the State, built or repaired by the Bureau Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands, and authorize you to use the same for

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schools, provided no distinction is made in regard to race, color or previous condition. There are many other buildings upon plantations, that have been repaired by the Bureau, that, I presume, could be obtained free of rent for school purposes. In regard to Union Norman School and Straight University, I presume the trustees of these institutions would be glad to co-operate with you. There is a large amount of furniture, blackboards, etc., scattered through the State that I would be glad to have Division Saperintendents make use of. I shall be happy at all times to aid you in the noble work that you have so auspiciously commenced.

Yours, respectfully,

E. W. MASON,

Superintendent of Education for Louisiana.

Accompanying this letter was a list of forty-three school houses in the various towns and parishes of this State, which will probably be occupied for school purposes by the local boards under the State system.

AGRICULTURAL SCHOOLS.

I am not aware that any measures have been taken by the Legislature to secure to the State the grant of land by the General Government for establishing agricultural schools. I have been informed that the scrip is made out for this State, and if so, it is probably ready for delivery to the proper authorities, on application being made for its transfer. The value of the grant itself, and the importance to the State of a school of agriculture and mechanics, thus amply endowed, should prompt the adoption of measures for receiving the benefits of the grant as speedily as possible.

The above letter received a reply from Dr. Sears, which is given below:

STANTON, VA., November 8, 1870.

Hon. Thomas W. Conway:

Dear Sir—In reply to your communication of October 28, I beg leave to say that, in the distribution of our fund, I should be most happy to co-operate with the State authorities. But I understand that the State public schools are so organized that the greater part of the white population are unwilling to send their children to them, and that, consequently, the benefit of the public money goes in *fact* chiefly to the colored children. If there is any feasible way of removing this inequality, bringing the white people generally into co-operation with you, the necessity for a local agency would cease, and we could act in concert with you.

We, ourselves, raise no questions about mixed schools. We simply take the *fact* that the white children do not generally attend them, without passing any judgment on the propriety or impropriety of their course. We wish to promote universal education—to aid whole communities, if possible. If that can not be, on account of peculiar circumstances, we must give the preference to those whose education is neglected. It is well known that we are helping the white children in Louisiana, as being the more destitute, from the fact of their unwillingness to attend mixed schools. We should give the preference to colored children, were they in like circumstances.

Mr. Lusher has been requested to avoid controversy and antagonism with the State authorities; and he has assured me that this is in accordance with his own views and wishes.

Yours truly,

B. SEARS,

General Agent of Peabody Fund.

It will be seen by the letter of Dr. Sears, that owing to the representations made by Mr. Lusher, the Peabody fund, so far as it is employed in Louisiana, is used in opposition to the public school system of the State. With all respect for the judgment of the agent of the Peabody fund, it may be doubted whether an unwillingness to avail themselves of the advantages offered by the public school system constitutes, in any true sense, "destitution." While as a fact the number of white children in our public schools is threefold that of children of color. The greater wealth of the white portion

CONCLUSION.

In concluding this portion of my report, I am satisfied that there is no need for pressing on the attention of your honorable body this great subject of the education of our people. Its own magnitude will cause it to command the attention it requires; and while I entertain no doubt that it will receive your prompt and earnest consideration, I trust that the action of the Legislature will result in removing the obstacles arising from some imperfections in the law which experience has shown to exist, and in harmonizing the differences which have unfortunately arisen among those who are equally friendly to popular education.

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It is to me a subject of regret that any conflict of opinion or of action should exist in conducting a work so essential to the prosperity of our commonwealth, yet where those differences relate not to the object to be attained, but merely to the best methods for securing an end, the value of which is conceded by all, their adjustment should not be difficult. The act relating to public education requires no sweeping changes in order to be made thoroughly effective; a few modifications simplifying the operation of the law by bringing the responsible school officers into closer contact with the actual work they are expected to perform, and endowing them with authority to supplement with their own exertions the neglect of indolent or unwilling subordinate boards, is everything that is needed for the State at large.

For the city of New Orleans, some such amendment of the law as has been recommended in a previous portion of this report is unquestionably needed, to insure co-operation by the friends of education, as well as to impart the greatest efficiency to the school work.

I am, very respectfully,

THOMAS W. CONWAY,
State Superintendent of Public Education.