

LOUISIANA SCHOOL TEACHERS MEET.

The Second Annual Session Assembles at New Iberia.

Governor Foster and Superintendent Lafargue Make Addresses.

Walter J. Burke, Esq., Welcomes the Strangers to Town.

Text of the Address of President W. J. Calvit—The Delegates in Attendance.



Captain W. J. Calvit.

New Iberia, La., Dec. 26.—(Special.)—The second session of the Louisiana Public School Teachers' Association convened here to-day at 4 o'clock, in the Opera House, with Prof. W. J. Calvit, of Alexandria, in the president's chair, and Prof. C. E. Byrd, of Shreveport, at the secretary's desk, with about 125 members present, representing all parts of the state except the Fifth congressional district, which has only one parish with a delegate. In addition to a large list of public school teachers, the convention is attended by Governor Foster, State Superintendent Lafargue, Superintendent Bastou, Associate Justice Breaux and Judge Allen, and the meeting was formally opened with instrumental music.

Walter J. Burke, Esq., of the local bar, made an address of welcome, which was couched in charming English, and was full of warmest hospitality. He felt great pleasure in performing this duty, because he addressed an intelligent and noble band of workers, and because they represent the grand American institution of public education, and whose duty it was to educate all the children of this great country.

President Calvit introduced State Superintendent Lafargue, who responded at length and in eloquent terms to this cordial greeting. After expressing great pleasure in the honor of replying to the cordial and hearty address of welcome, he paid a just tribute to New Iberia for her educational progress, which places her in the forefront of education in Louisiana, and said a word in commendation of the police jury and the people for their liberality in building their high school, and insisted that our children can be educated at home for less cost than abroad.

He was especially kind in his remarks about Superintendent Burke and Principal Howe and their co-workers in the school room. He indeed the work of the State Teachers' Association; he offered the plea for the general betterment of the teachers, the school-house, the facilities, and arousing public sentiment, and urged that these were the fruits of ceaseless agitation by school officers, and a unanimous impulse among the teachers to make the schools as effective as possible. He gave a clear and full history of the difficulties heretofore embarrassing the work, which included loss of position to the teachers and patron, and he then turned to the more pleasant chapter in our history, which witnessed, Phoenix-like, the schools beginning to grow and better houses, better and more professional teachers and better equipment. He said that we have some communities with the unimproved teacher, but the day will come when it will cease to be true. He said an encouraging word to the poorly-paid country teachers, with only a short annual term, and told them to come to the front and help build up the work for their own good and that of their fellow-men. He closed by making Admiral Nelson's motto, "England expects every man to do his duty," to read, "Louisiana expects every teacher to do his duty."

President W. J. Calvit read a fine inaugural address, from which the following extracts are made:

The assembling of this association here to-day will, without a doubt, be productive of fruitful and magnificent results. You have so wisely arranged it as to show that the paramount interests you represent, while opening up the vast possibilities of the future of education, offer also the happy inducement to you of a realization of your highest hopes and ambitions. All gatherings of this kind are, if I may so speak, the concentration of great force. Your object is to consider the educational situation, the forces along that line, with which you are provided by law, and to apply in the wisest manner possible, as far as you can, to the peculiar circumstances of your own surroundings these forces. We are told that the great social forces are thought, will and action, and these three great educating forces are to be found in this assemblage. Thought should find its food in truth; hence in all that you shall find, in all your practical conclusions, you must remember that they must have for their foundation the eternal principles of truth.

The will plays a conspicuous part in the right-doing of every human heart, and until our hearts are freely and willingly controlled by truth and virtue all social reforms cannot be attained.

Action, too, is a powerful factor, but it must be governed and guided by truth in our thinking and by virtue in our souls. The well-being in society consists in the perfect ordering of the different elements towards the great scope of society.

Order, then, is the systematic of the varied related the different elements, one to the other. These relations to which we are subject can be embraced in these words: The Creator, humanity and nature. We all recognize the paramount duties we owe the Almighty, which duties we should never forget. We then have the duties that we owe to ourselves and to our fellow-creatures, and finally we have those relations to the great world of nature, over which our action is exercised. From the several considerations of the different relations spring up the great questions which have puzzled the human mind. As a matter of fact, before us now, one of which, the educational problem, being the prime cause of this meeting to-day, Louisiana has long been pointed at as a laggard in this vital matter of the education of her children and, while this fact has been keenly humiliating to her people, sons and daughters, they have known and appreciated as strangers could not know and appreciate, the peculiar conditions that brought about and prolonged this state of things.

With a heroic fortitude they have borne their humiliations, and have patiently and persistently and successfully struggled for better things, until to-day, the rosy dawn that will surely usher in a bright and cloudless day, is plainly visible upon the horizon, a new life is being infused throughout the length and breadth of the state, and the organization which you are affected one year ago at Alexandria is already a powerful factor in awakening an increasing interest everywhere, as is abundantly evidenced by the association formed in nearly every parish, co-operating heartily with the state association, and ably represented upon the floor of this hall. Ours is, indeed, a high and

holy mission. Representing as we do, the public education of the masses of the state, that interest so nearly concerning the masses of our people and upon which rests their highest and fondest hopes for their children, we should be keenly alive to the grave responsibilities we, as teachers, have voluntarily assumed.

It will be your duty to thoroughly discuss the system under which you are working—to recommend to the legislature such needed reforms as are known to be necessary and in every possible way through a free and full interchange of ideas and experiences to endeavor to improve and perfect that system. It is the work of your legislative committee to direct for your approval and consideration such changes as are required in the present school laws, in order to remedy many of the acknowledged defects; and composed, as in that committee, of some of the ablest and most experienced teachers in your organization, no fears need be entertained for the work to be done. I would, however, impress upon you the impossibility of recommending the submission of a constitutional amendment to the legislature annulling the last section of article 233 of the constitution, which provides for the payment of the interest on the school fund out of any moneys collected for the benefit of said fund. By means of this heretofore unheard-of procedure, the state of Louisiana has deprived her educable children of a sum of more than equal to that surplus claimed to be in the treasury, and every dollar of which rightly belongs to the school children of the state, and not to the bondholders.

You should earnestly urge and recommend such legislation as will prevent the appointment on the parish boards of education of persons who are, educationally, wholly unfit for this responsible work. These bodies should be composed of educated, unprejudiced and moral men; free from the influences of such self-styled, broad-gauge men as are brimful of narrow-gauge prejudices, and who, but too often, have been placed in such positions as a reward for some valuable service rendered. We would have "no politics in education; all the education possible in politics."

You should recommend also a provision in the law granting a professional certificate to all teachers who have taught successfully and consecutively in the public schools for a period of seven years; and as the safety of our institutions, and the prosperity of our people are largely dependent upon the quality of the public school system, our teachers, both state and national, should be impressed with the vital importance of legislating along such lines as should have for their sole object the accomplishment of the following results, viz:

A preservation of the integrity of the funds, and the fair and impartial character of our free public school system.

The elimination of religious controversy from public educational questions and issues.

To destroy the intimidation power of ecclesiasticism and politics over both citizens and lawmakers.

Let our hands be clean that to make public education a success it must be kept free—absolutely free—from either political, religious or personal influences. We must labor to have the standard of teachership elevated, and every species of favoritism in the selection of teachers eliminated. Let moral and educational qualifications be recognized as the primary requisites and the preference given accordingly, no matter where the application comes from. Let us ever insist that all things pertaining to our public schools—justice be done upon broad principles of justice and right, and not upon the narrow and unjustifiable plea of policy and expediency. For our hands is largely committed to the future destiny of our rising generation, and upon your instruction and example must rest, too, its brightest hopes of eternity.

The teacher's life, then, should be at once "beautiful as the glorified east, when the roseate dawn flings back the sable mantle of night; as the opening sky jeweled with diamonds of dew; grave as the spirit of truth, which the world can never subdue, and gentle, loving and tender as the zephyrs of even, that rock the roses to sleep."

Everything must yield to education, and even that which is unworthy the inestimable blessings of the liberty we enjoy if we cannot afford to make this enjoyment an intelligent, progressive one by means of every effort to improve the mental, moral and physical development of each succeeding generation. This proud heritage of ours should be transmitted to these succeeding generations, improved, elevated and purified by the highest and best efforts of their predecessors. Let the motto be "Ever onward and ever upward."

The first steps have been taken by you towards a united, determined and well directed movement forward in all matters concerning our noble profession, and I congratulate you on the good work so auspiciously begun. Let our purest and best efforts be directed, singly, to the material improvement and rebuilding of the public school system of our state, to the end that her children shall have the advantage of every facility of obtaining an education fitting them to enter the race of life, equally equipped with the most favored of any section.

President Calvit appointed a full line of committees to conform to the constitution.

The nomination of officers was declared to be in order, and Prof. C. E. Byrd, of Shreveport, nominated Prof. R. J. Haings, of the State Normal College, for president, and Superintendent Bastou was nominated for this place, but he immediately withdrew his name, and then Prof. Calhoun was nominated and he immediately declined, but President Calvit said that nobody could withdraw nominations once made.

Miss Marion Brown was nominated by Prof. Hibes for second vice president. Superintendent Easton nominated Prof. Howe, of New Iberia, as first vice president, and Prof. Calvit nominated Miss Mitchell of Rapides.

Superintendent Easton nominated Prof. Burd, present secretary, for re-election.

H. J. Daigre was nominated for treasurer.

Mrs. Josephine Reed was nominated for ticket agent.

The list of teachers and parish association representatives is large and includes delegates from the remote portions of north Louisiana, who were forced to forego their holiday dinners and rest to reach here to-day in time for the opening exercises. These circumstances testify to the great earnestness which is felt in the success of the State Association.

South Louisiana is well represented, but the delegates did not leave home so as to miss their holiday turkey.

North Louisiana Teachers—State Superintendent A. D. Lafargue.

Caddo—Prof. C. E. Byrd.

De Soto—Geo. Williamson.

Natchitoches—Prof. R. J. Himes, Prof. Stevens, Superintendent Smith, Miss Greene, Miss Lawless.

St. Landry—Misses Harmonson, Veazie, Hebrard, Iler.

Morehouse—Prof. D. B. Shewalter, Miss Irma McCord.

Rapides—Prof. W. J. Calvit, Misses J. A. Myers, E. M. Myers, B. S. Landry, N. W. Corp, N. V. Corp, Bessie Brwin, Rosa Gburby, Marie Henry, Leona Henry and A. W. Reidheimer.

St. Charles—Miss E. Deatrigne.

East Baton Rouge—Prof. R. T. Prescott, C. E. Ives, Miss Zoe Garig.

St. Martin—Miss Mattie Kelson.

Ascension—Miss Emma Quimby.

Lafayette—Prof. J. C. and P. H. Martin.

Assumption—C. W. Wortham, Dr. A. J. Hines.

Representatives from the public schools of New Orleans: Superintendent Warren Easton and the following teachers: J. V. Calhoun, Mrs. R. M. Lusher, Misses Marion Brown, Doretta Essler, Eugenie Suddam, Florence Gordon, Julia Hedges, Kate Howley, Mary Selman, Elyna Janfroid, Elise Platts, Miss Kate Kelly, M. A. McMillon, F. E. Goodwyn, M. Gommerville, Mrs. Ellen Hamilton, Misses A. Flanagan, Lizzie Kelly, A. M. Hark, Mamie Vaughn, Arsene Michel, C. Beck, Mrs. Josephine Reed, Misses Tillie Kronenberger, Emma Gause, M. A. Wilson, Prof. Jas. H. Dillard of Tulane University.

At the night session of the Teachers' Association a very large assemblage of the citizens greeted the visiting teachers. In a few kind remarks President Calvit introduced Governor Foster, who delivered the address of the occasion.

Governor Foster explained that official duties and an affliction to a member of his family had prevented his preparing a

written address, and he made an extemporaneous talk on the condition of the public schools of the state to-day. He compared the expenditure of 1884 and 1892, to show the great favor in which the people now hold their school. In 1884 the total expenditure was \$552,000, while in 1892 it was \$1,114,000, and that in 1884 there were only 1618 schools, while in 1892 there were 2641 schools, and that in 1892 the number of the new white schools organized were more than the combined number of white and colored schools of 1884.

He said that the year closing witnessed greater increase in all schools than any previous year. He felt sure that the educational interest of Louisiana was developing more rapidly and grandly than the people realized. He said education was the best investment the people could make. His general discussion of the subject of education was indeed both practical and yet extremely gracious and pleasing in its matter and manner. He then considered the question of school finance, and on this subject he said the state support should be supplemented by ample local tax, as now granted by many police juries, but also the right of the people to vote on themselves such additional sums as may be necessary to build schoolhouses and pay a good salary to the teacher.

He scouted the idea that public education should be considered a matter of charity. He felt the school treasures should be guarded and kept free from political and charity control. He said that the teacher must be respected and esteemed in the community where he lives, and the children under their control, their work to the plane of professional life. When this condition is realized the merit of the teacher will receive its reward. He urged the teaching of patriotism, love of God, love of home, and that this state is the greatest of all, and that the north and south are one and the same, and that our great country is the greatest of all nations, and we could become the noblest of people.

Captain Calvit's Career.

Captain William John Calvit, the first president and the originator of the State Public School Teachers' Association, now in session at New Iberia, was born on the plantation of his distinguished grandfather, Governor Joseph Walker, near Alexandria, in the parish of Rapides, on the 11th of June, 1840, his mother being the eldest daughter of Governor Walker.

His earlier years were for the most part spent in New Orleans and Baton Rouge, where Governor Walker held most of the highest offices within the gift of the people whose esteem and confidence he always enjoyed. At these places Captain Calvit received the elements of that practical education which was in a great measure completed at Emmitsburg, Md., where he was a classmate of Senator E. D. White.

Captain Calvit went to Virginia as a private in Colonel J. C. Wise's company, which was attached to the first Louisiana regiment, stationed during the first months of the war near Norfolk. There he remained until authorized, when barely of age, by Mr. Benjamin, then secretary of war, to proceed to his native parish and raise a company, which was to have been attached to his regiment in Virginia. His characteristic energy and perseverance enabled him, single handed, to raise as fine a company of as brave and true men as ever left the state; but before the organization was completed New Orleans was occupied by the federals, and he was compelled to remain in the trans-Mississippi department, where his command was, at first, attached to Colonel Franklin H. Clark's battalion, and afterwards consolidated into the Crescent Regiment, under the command of the heroes Beard, Clark and Canfield, all of whom gave up their lives on the same day on the bloody field of Mansfield. He was honorably paroled at Alexandria when the war closed.

After spending several years in planting and other occupations he has for the past eighteen years been actively and successfully employed in the public school work in Rapides and Grant. The establishment of the Rapides public high school is mainly due to his influence; and its success, until very recently, is entirely due to his management and recognized ability as its principal. As parish superintendent of his native parish he discharged the duties of his office with acknowledged ability. He is an earnest, faithful worker in the cause of public education and his elevation to the proud position he has so ably filled is a fitting recognition by the teachers of the state of his valuable services. He has been recently elected president of the Teachers' Association of Rapides parish.