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William Henry Ruffner

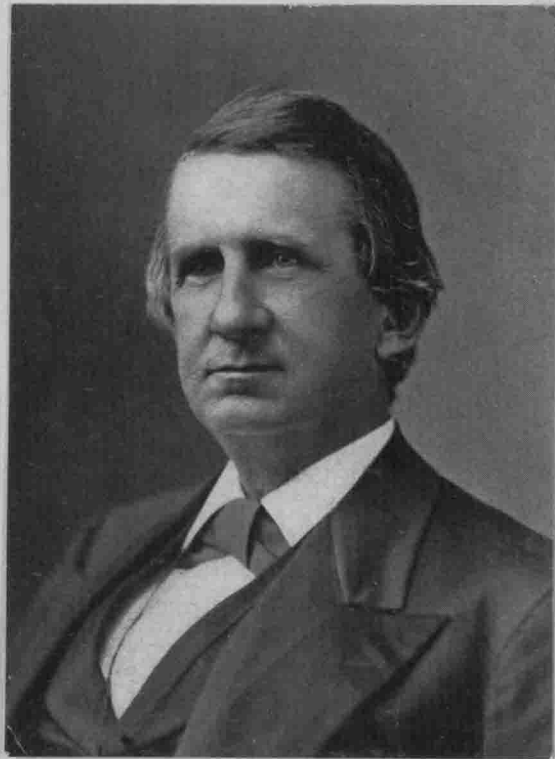
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WILLIAM HENRY RUFFNER

BY

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A THESIS

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INTRODUCTION

WILLIAM HENRY RUFFNER

Without popular education no government which rests on popular action can long endure; the people must be schooled in the knowledge, and if possible, in the virtues upon which the maintenance and success of free institutions depend.

---Woodrow Wilson

Virginia was most fortunate in having as her first Superintendent of Public Instruction, and later, as President of her first Teacher-Training institution, a man who understood the American ideals of democracy and whose faith in education and its ennobling effect on humanity never wavered.

It has been said that "he lit the torch of education in Virginia", and "gave local habitation and a name to the great plans of Jefferson." He has been called also, "the founder and father of Virginia's public school system", "the Horace Mann of Virginia", "the interpreter and fulfiller of Jefferson's dream", and "the apostle of education to the masses."

In educational literature other high tributes have been paid to William Henry Ruffner's outstanding achievements as an educational statesman. His life and his plans for

developing a finer type of citizen through a system of free public schools commanded the interest of the writer. She decided to make a survey of the published accounts of Dr. Ruffner's efforts in behalf of public education, to study the eleven Annual Reports made while he was State Superintendent of Public Instruction, to examine the minutes of the Farmville Normal School for the years during his presidency of that institution, and to assemble in one report the results of her study.

In this thesis attention is directed to those qualities that are responsible for the place that Dr. Ruffner holds as an educator and as an American citizen.

Students of education in the South have long been aware of his monumental work. It was his ambition to extend educational opportunities to all the people of the state, and its realization became a consuming passion that extended throughout his life.

My own faith in education has been revitalized by this study. Enemies that civilization has to face have grown more numerous and more powerful, and in order to preserve our heritage, we must demonstrate our loyalties to the principles of democratic education, even to the extent that we are willing "life itself to give, rather than lose the things for which we live."

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Special acknowledgment is made to the Reverend Robert F. Campbell, Pastor Emeritus, First Presbyterian Church, Asheville, North Carolina, for his interest and valuable references, and to Superintendent James G. Johnson of the Charlottesville, Virginia, Public Schools, for permission to use material from his studies in the history of education in Virginia. The writer is indebted also to Professor William L. Prince of the University of Richmond for encouragement in the preparation of this thesis.

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CHAPTER I.

ANCESTRY AND EARLY LIFE

Many factors contributed to the especial fitness of William Henry Ruffner for the main task that he chose as his life work. He was of a distinguished family and grew up in an atmosphere of culture.

Pearson says, "Of the best type were the Ruffners--all large men, German in the origin of their names, but Scotch-Irish in their intellectual independence, and English in their practical common-sense.-----From his family he inherited strength. His people were large, tall, vigorous."¹

Peter Ruffner, who came from Switzerland to Pennsylvania, in 1732, was the founder of the family in this country. One of his descendants, Colonel David Ruffner, a man of unusual intelligence and force, developed the Kanawha Salines near Charleston, West Virginia. He was one of the

1. Pearson, C. Chilton, South Atlantic Quarterly, January, 1921, pp. 25, 32.

most prominent settlers in what was then the western part of Virginia.

David Ruffner's son was Henry Ruffner, D.D., LL.D., a minister and teacher, and from 1836 to 1848, President of Washington College, now Washington and Lee University.

William Henry Ruffner was the son of Henry Ruffner and Sarah Lyle Ruffner, whose ancestors were Scotch-Irish. They were descendants of Samuel Lyle, who came from the north of Ireland to Rockbridge County, Virginia, about 1740.

The Lyle family had "long been honorably and influentially connected with the material, intellectual and moral progress of the great Valley of Virginia.-----The influence of the mother was a great factor in fashioning the career of the son."²

The Ruffners belonged to the 'dissenter group' that had settled in the Valley of Virginia and who had been interested in establishing schools. "Many early dissenters were 'fresh from the halls of Princeton.'³"

These dissenters may have been responsible for the establishment of Augusta Academy, the first classical school west of the Blue Ridge. After several changes of location,

2. Denny, George H., Men of Mark in Virginia, Vol. I, p. 270, Editor, Tyler, Lyon G., Men of Mark Publishing Company, Washington, D. C., 1906.
3. Fox, Early L., John P. Branch Historical Papers of Randolph-Macon College, June, 1910, p. 124.

this academy was moved to Lexington, and in 1813 became known as Washington College.

On February 11, 1824, in Lexington, Virginia, the year of the erection of the main building now standing on this campus, William Henry Ruffner was born, and thus it is literally true that he grew up with Washington College.

After attending the grammar school connected with the college, he enrolled in the college department. In 1842, at eighteen years of age, he received the A.B. Degree.

At the commencement exercises of that year, James Kemper, later Governor Kemper, and William Henry Ruffner were student orators. Ruffner's topic was "The Power of Knowledge", and Kemper spoke on "The Importance of Having a Public Free School System in Virginia."

In later years, when Kemper was Governor and Ruffner was Superintendent of Public Instruction, they were two of the three men who composed the State Board of Education.

Soon after graduating from college, Ruffner went to Kanawha County and spent a year as manager of his father's salt works. The next year he returned to Lexington, and in 1845 was awarded the M. A. Degree from Washington College.

He had become interested in temperance work and in Negro education. It was at this time also, that he organized the first Negro Sunday School in Lexington, where

some hundreds of Negroes, old and young, were taught the Bible and the fundamentals of an education. "Stonewall" Jackson also taught in this Sunday School that Ruffner had started.

Ruffner decided to study for the ministry, and so spent the year 1845-1846 as a theological student at Union Seminary, Hampden-Sidney, Virginia, and the next session at the Theological Seminary of Princeton.

On account of his mother's illness, Ruffner lived at home for the next two years during which time he served as a preacher and a colporteur for the mountain people near Lexington. In this way he learned to know the mountain people and their needs, and developed the home missionary spirit.

In September, 1849, he became chaplain of the University of Virginia, and held this position for two years. While at the University he studied Moral Philosophy under Dr. William Holmes McGuffey,⁴ of whom he said, "He resolved my intellectual forces in to common sense."

Dr. Ruffner had gone to the University of Virginia as a young minister twenty-five years of age. He often spoke

4. Dr. McGuffey, the author of the series of famous Eclectic Readers, went to the University of Virginia in 1845 as professor of Moral Philosophy. He taught there until his death in 1873. While Dr. McGuffey often voiced his opposition to slavery and war, he held his position at the University all through the Civil War, and retained the respect of friends and students.

of his admiration for Dr. McGuffey and of the pleasant years spent at the University as a student and a chaplain. Pearson, in discussing Dr. Ruffner's relationship with Professor McGuffey wrote, "and between the two thereafter existed a genuine Presbyterian friendship such as Ruffner rarely felt for other men."⁵

No doubt, Dr. McGuffey, who had been an advocate for the establishment of public schools in his home state, Ohio, influenced, and later aided Dr. Ruffner in his plans for public schools in Virginia.

In addition to Dr. Ruffner's ministerial duties, and the regular attendance upon Professor McGuffey's lectures, and occasional lectures of other professors, he planned a series of addresses on "The Evidences of Christianity." These addresses were given by fifteen distinguished Presbyterian ministers during the session 1850-1851. The third address was made by the Reverend Henry Ruffner, the father of Dr. Ruffner. Dr. Ruffner wrote weekly outline sketches of the addresses which were published in the "Central Presbyterian" and the "Jefferson Monument" magazines. In 1852 he arranged the entire group of addresses with appropriate preface and editorial comments and had them published in book form. The book, "Evidences of Christianity" had a large

5. South Atlantic Quarterly, January, 1921, p. 27.

sale and repaid all expenses.

On September 3, 1850, Ruffner married Harriet Ann Gray of Rockingham County. From this union four children were born. Two sons, Robert Gray, and Henry, died in infancy. One daughter, Anne Howell, married Howard Barclay. The other daughter, Sara Montgomery, married Dr. Robert F. Campbell, a Presbyterian minister of Asheville, North Carolina, who is still living. Mr. Ruffner Campbell, son of Dr. R. F. Campbell and Sara Ruffner Campbell, and his son, Ruffner Campbell, Jr., are the only surviving descendents of William Henry Ruffner.

An article written by Dr. Ruffner's daughter, Mrs. Anne H. R. Barclay, was published in the West Virginia Historical Magazine in October, 1902. This is a delightful sketch of her distinguished father, written while he was still active and devoted to his life-long interests, science, education, and the church.

From September 1851 to March 1853, Dr. Ruffner was pastor of the Seventh Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia. While there he took an active part in the religious and civic life of the city, and engaged in "The New Themes" controversy for which he wrote a book, "Charity and the Clergy." He also delivered a series of lectures on "The Relations Between Science and the Bible."

Due to ill health, he had to give up his work in Philadelphia. Returning to Virginia, he spent about ten years near Harrisonburg, in Rockingham County, where he engaged

in farming, and in preaching occasionally. While in Rockingham County he became superintendent of a Sunday School, and led a movement for the building of a new church.

Ruffner's early training, his interests, and his manner of living had prepared him for the contributions he was to make to his native state. As a boy he had often spent his vacations in the country; he had taken part in the usual jobs on the farm, and had learned to love nature. He was interested in the rocks, the soil, and minerals. When his health failed and he had to give up preaching, he became a successful scientific farmer, and a geologist whose reputation extended throughout the United States.

Few men in Virginia at that time had been blessed with a more fortunate inheritance and environment. Still fewer could be found who had taken better advantage of their talents and opportunities. His training in debating and public speaking, his skill in writing, and his experiences as a minister, a colporteur, and a home missionary furnished an excellent background. The scientific study of agriculture and geology, which was always a strong natural interest, added to his resourcefulness. Linked with these assets was a sincere desire to serve the needs of his state, and the convictions that universal suffrage made universal educational opportunities imperative, and that all classes and races could be improved by the right kind of training.

Events were taking place in Virginia that furnished opportunity for a great service, and when the call came, Ruffner was qualified to render it.

CHAPTER II.

THE EDUCATIONAL STATUS IN VIRGINIA

"The Free School Idea" had met many obstacles since the establishment of the Literary Fund in Virginia in 1810. The act by which this fund was established ordered that "all escheats, confiscations, fines, penalties, and forfeitures, and all rights accruing to the state as derelict be set aside for the encouragement of learning", and thus the Literary Fund formed the nucleus for the support of free schools.

For years the controversy over the distribution of the revenues from the Literary Fund engaged the interests of those who were promoting education. Representatives from privately owned schools and colleges, from the Sunday School Movement, and from schools for the poor had put in claims for the surplus revenues from the fund. But these

1. Heatwole,-Cornelius, History of Education in Virginia, p. 104, Macmillan Publishing Company, New York, 1916.

schools could not educate all the children, and there was a large intermediate section of society that the schools did not reach.² This fact became evident when the Census of 1840 revealed that nearly 60,000 white people in Virginia over twenty-one years of age could neither read nor write.³

Many of the influential and wealthy people of the state who had been in the habit of educating their children privately, disliked the idea of a general system of education. They thought that it was an invention of the New England States and would not work in the South, and, moreover, it would provide for the education of Negroes at public expense.

The size of the plantations in eastern Virginia, the scattered population, and the lack of good roads, were other drawbacks to public schools.

In the western part of Virginia the people were more democratic and were not as divided as in the East. They plainly said, "We will be satisfied with nothing short of a wise and just provision for all the children."⁴ They had been

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2. Dabney, Charles Wm., Universal Education in the South, Vol. I, Chap. VI, pp. 80-97 passim, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, N. C., 1936.
 3. Maddox, Wm. Arthur, Free School Idea in Virginia Before the Civil War, p. 132, (Teachers College Contribution to Education, Columbia University, N. Y., 1918), citing House Journal, Second Auditor's Report, Sup. Document 1841.
 4. Dabney, op. cit., p. 83.

pleading for district schools for years, and were determined to educate their children.

Dr. Henry Ruffner, President of Washington College, called the people of the western part of the state together in the first of a series of conventions to consider the school question. These conventions were the beginnings of the uprisings of the people of the West. "The teachings of Thomas Jefferson were working."

The first convention was held at Clarksburg, September 8, 1841, at which time President Ruffner submitted a plan for the improvement of the common schools of Virginia.

"This was a great document and it contained the principles on which the schools of Virginia were later built. . . . A wave of agitation in behalf of better schools now swept the state." 5

In October, of the same year, at Lexington, under the auspices of Washington College, an epoch-making convention was held. The attention of the convention was called to the fact that only one-half of the enrolled poor children went to school at all, and these for only a few weeks of the year.

President Ruffner said, "There is but one effective remedy -- a system of district schools supported by a tax on property.-----Let the schools be free to all the white

5. Ibid., pp. 83, 84.

youths within the district.-----The public schools must be good colleges for the people. If not good enough for the rich, they will not be fit for the poor.⁶"

The Lexington convention adopted the Ruffner plan submitted at Clarksburg.

The alumni of Hampden-Sidney called a state educational conference in December, 1841. This meeting was held in Richmond. A distinguished group of men from various parts of the state attended this convention. The report made by them, and the memorial to the legislature contained one of the strongest pleas ever made on the subject of education in the state. It recommended that "primary schools accessible without fee to every white child ought to be maintained at all practicable points at public charge,"⁷ and urged the better preparation of teachers and good supervision of schools.

The plan of Henry Ruffner, which was the basis for these conventions, may be summarized as follows:

1. A free school system, based on districts, was to be supported from the Literary Fund, supplemented by a direct school tax.
2. A normal school with a practice school was to be provided in each county.

6. Ibid., p. 83.

7. Ibid., p. 85. The primary school report was prepared by a committee composed of Thomas Richie, R. G. Scott, and B. N. Smith. Citing article published a year later in Richmond Enquirer, November 22, 1842.

3. A library was to be provided for in each school. ⁸

A bill for schools that included the main features of this plan was passed by the House on March 17, 1842, but on March 22, it was rejected in the Senate. ⁹

¹⁰ "The eastern aristocrats had defeated the schools again."

An appeal was made to the legislature in January, 1844, by representatives of William and Mary College, Hampden-Sidney, Richmond Medical College, then a branch of Hampden-Sidney, Washington College, Randolph-Macon, Emory and Henry, Richmond College, and Rector College (at Pruntytown, now in West Virginia) for appropriations from the Literary Fund. ¹¹ Nothing came of this memorial.

The following year another serious attempt was initiated at Richmond. "(It) emphasized a well regulated system of Popular Education as the most efficient means of securing that virtue and intelligence on which depended the preservation of liberty and a republican form of government.

-----A standing committee was appointed who issued an

8. Ibid., p. 84. Citing Proceedings of Ed. Convention, House Journal, 1841-42, Document No. 35. Summary given condensed from Maddox, op. cit., p. 140, 141.
9. Ibid., p. 85.
10. Ibid., pp. 85, 86.
11. Bell, Sadie, The Church, The State, and Education in Virginia, p. 352, The Science Press Printing Company, Philadelphia, Penn., 1930, citing Southery Literary Messenger, February, 1844, X, p. 121.

address to the people of Virginia, in which they declared it to be 'a subject of paramount importance to the patriot, the philanthropist and the Christian' to endeavor the regeneration of Virginia by urging upon the illiterate the necessity of intellectual and moral cultivation.¹²"

In 1846 legislation was passed to amend the primary school system and to establish a district public school system.

Again in 1850, when the Census was taken, it revealed educational statistics that were still not very comforting to the friends of public schools. There were 77,005 white persons over twenty years of age who could not read¹³ nor write.

From 1850 to 1860 there was a decrease in the illiteracy of the white people. The illiterate group in 1860 numbered 74,055. This was 7 per cent of the white people¹⁴ over twenty years of age.

The Civil War left the state almost in ruins. Many homes had been burned, and almost every family had lost one or more of its members. The farms were in a state of neglect, labor disorganized, and almost impossible to secure,

12. Ibid., p. 353, citing Southern Literary Messenger, October, 1845, pp. 604, 605.
13. Ibid., p. 358, citing Barnard: American Journal of Education, I, p. 368.
14. Ibid., p. 398, citing U. S. Census Population, 1860, p. 508.

and the local government in unsympathetic hands.

"The war-smitten people of that region (the South) were now to grapple for their very social existence with another and inconceivably degraded form of politics. For six years during the fateful period of Reconstruction, fuller of bitterness and suffering and degradation than the fewer years of battle and defeat, they experienced poverty and detraction and woe under the vicious rule of the 'carpet-bagger', the 'scalawag', and the newly enfranchised negro." 15

These unfortunate conditions, which are generally admitted to be mistakes of the Reconstruction Period, we should like to forget, but they were very real at that time, and added tremendously to the difficulties of starting a state system of schools in Virginia.

Adoption of the Underwood Constitution

The Underwood Constitution, adopted during the Reconstruction Era, on July 6, 1869, provided as follows:

- "1. The General Assembly shall elect in joint ballot within thirty days after its organization under this Constitution, and every four years thereafter, a superintendent of public instruction. He shall have the general supervision of public free school interests of the state and shall report to the General Assembly for its consideration within thirty days after his election, a plan for a uniform system of public free schools." 16

15. Alderman, E. A., and Gordon, A. C., A Biography of J. L. M. Curry, p. 194, The Macmillan Company, New York, 1911.
 16. Heatwole, op. cit., pp. 215 ff. citing Constitution of Virginia, 1869, Art. VIII, Sec. 3.

This was the first constitutional provision for a complete system of public education in Virginia.

The Act of Congress by which Virginia was admitted into the Union in 1870 stated that:

"The Constitution of Virginia shall never be so amended or changed as to deprive any citizen or class of citizens of the United States of the school rights and privileges secured by the Constitution of the said state." 17

The Legislature of 1870 passed an education bill as required by the recently adopted Constitution which provided for:

1. A State Superintendent of Public Instruction with extensive powers, appointed by the General Assembly;
2. A State Board of Education, comprised of the Governor, Attorney-General and State Superintendent, with power to name, with the concurrence of the Senate, a superintendent for each county, and until 1877, the district trustees as well;
3. County superintendents, paid for the most part from the Literary Fund, who by virtue of their salary and election by the State Board, became state rather than local officers;
4. A board of three trustees for each school district." 18

In accordance with the provisions of this bill, the Legislature elected William Henry Ruffner, Superintendent of

17. *Ibid.*, pp. 215 ff.

18. *Maddox, op. cit.*, pp. 172-173, summarized by Maddox. (italics used by Maddox.)

Public Instruction on March 2, 1870. In twenty-six days he submitted an "Outline Plan and Argument for a School System." This plan, with a few changes made by the Legislature, was passed and signed by the Governor on July 11, 1870.

CHAPTER III.

WILLIAM HENRY RUFFNER AS
SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

The Task of Organization

Ruffner began at once his work as Superintendent of Public Instruction.

"He had for his guidance not only the general section in the Constitution, but also a resolution by the Senate, which stated that the object of the constitutional provision for education was the better preparation of posterity for 'the discharge of the duties of an American citizen.'" 1

In less than four weeks after the passage of the Education Bill, the State Board of Education organized and elected twelve county superintendents. The schools opened in November, 1870. By the end of the school year there were 2,900 schools, 3,000 teachers, and an attendance of 130,000 pupils. The difficult task of appointing about 1,400 trustees

1. Bell, op. cit., p. 400, citing Senate Journal, October 19, 1869, p. 32.

for school districts and division superintendents of schools was completed by January the second.

From the first, local superintendents had many duties. They had to organize the school districts, take the school census, locate schools, and examine and commission teachers.

"The Board of Education was to provide gradually for the uniformity of text-books. Separate schools were to be maintained for the Negroes The Constitution had authorized the Assembly to establish as soon as practicable, normal schools, agricultural schools, and 'such grades of schools as shall be for the public good.'" 2

Ruffner decided to begin with the elementary school system, and to allow the age limits to extend from five to twenty-one years.

The superintendents were advised to organize only a few schools at first. Private school houses, vacant rooms, and cabins were used. According to one Virginia school³ history, 1,725 schools were taught in log cabins and no new buildings were erected until 1875. Men and women of culture, in most cases, were secured as teachers, although the salaries were very small, from \$25.00 to \$30.00 a month.

2. Ibid., pp. 400, 401, citing Acts of Assembly, July 11, 1870.

3. Sydenstricker, Edgar, and Burges, Ammen, School History of Virginia, pp. 371, 372, Dulaney-Boatwright Company, Lynchburg, Virginia, 1914.

The County Superintendents - The Teachers

The newly appointed school officers and teachers needed instructions and guidance. Ruffner provided this by means of letters, circulars, the use of columns in The Educational Journal, by visits to the schools, and by public addresses.

The part played by his articles in the Journal can hardly be over-emphasized. A copy of the Journal was sent to each county superintendent, and to members of the Board of Trustees. Teachers were encouraged to subscribe to, and read the Journal.

In the January issue of 1871, was this comment:

"The public school work moves on with a vigor which is surprising in view of the fact that not a dollar of the public money has yet become available for the support of the system."

In the March issue of the same year, after expressing satisfaction with the number of schools established, Ruffner placed emphasis on their quality and wrote:

"We have now only hitched up the teams; the whole work of cultivation is still before us. Day by day must the plowing and sowing, the thinning and weeding, the reaping and mowing go on, steadily, skillfully, economically, persistently, or the whole year's work will end in disappointment and loss."

The selection of a highly qualified county superintendent was of vital importance. Ruffner described the person for this position:

"A perfect county superintendent of schools would be a young man, or middle aged man of successful experience as a teacher, pleasant in manner, irreproachable in character, good speaking abilities, architectural taste, energy, talent, prudence, sound opinion, public spirit, zeal for the education of the people, and faith in the public school system.-----The man recommended for the office should be the one who combines the most of these qualities." 4

The following excerpts were taken from a circular sent to citizens of the counties to aid them in judging the qualifications of an applicant for the superintendent's office.

"There should be nothing in his habits of speech or conduct which would be offensive to good people. He should be an educated man. It is desirable that he should not only be familiar with the ordinary branches of a primary education; that he should be a good speller, a good reader, and a good writer, but he should be a man of high attainments,-----and a man of high administrative ability,-----He should be a systematic business man because he has many accounts to revise, many reports to read, to digest, and to make.-----He not only has to supervise every school board, every teacher, and every school house; but he is the court of appeals and the general referee in all the matters pertaining to the system.-----His duty is not only to license teachers, but to be constantly engaged in improving his teachers professionally. Hence, he must have been a teacher himself, and a good one." 5

Ruffner continued throughout his superintendency

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4. Pearson, op. cit., South Atlantic Quarterly, April, 1921, p. 139.
 5. Cited from the Circular in Virginia Educational Journal, October, 1876, pp. 535, 536.

to stress the duties of the local superintendents. He required them to make lengthy, detailed, annual reports to the State Superintendent concerning school affairs in their counties, and to keep in bound volumes a record of their own official acts.

The Journal carried other suggestions to the county superintendents: to read current educational literature and never to appear before teachers without showing evidences of fresh growth; to promote the desire and appreciation of education among the people by all proper means in their power; to have a spirit of conciliation towards the patrons of the schools, and to enlighten and persuade them; and to urge teachers to come prepared to the teachers' institutes, to be punctual, and to stay through the entire program.

But none of the superintendent's duties must keep him from the major work assigned him: "He must be a teacher of teachers", and always have in mind the definite, systematic, professional training of his teachers so that they might in turn be better teachers of the children.

The following quotation in regard to the selection and examination of teachers gave Dr. Ruffner's appreciation of the superintendent's arduous job: "In all this how few comprehend the value of the faithful superintendent's labors, or the extent of his sufferings."⁶

6. Ruffner, W. H., Second Annual Report, p. 81, 1872, Superintendent, Public Printing, Richmond, Virginia.

The type of teacher desired for the schools was frequently described in the Journal.

"The life of our school system is bound up in the character of our teacher."⁷ The teacher must prove her ability before a certificate is granted her. She must have "moral and general fitness." Her habits and character must be above reproach. She must be conscientious, impartial, honest, devoted. Tact and pleasant manners enter largely into the composition of the good teacher.

She must be willing "to spare a dollar for a professional book.-----No reading--no progress."

"It is not meant that every normal pupil (one who has been a student in a Teacher-Training Institution) surpasses every one not normal--but that the highest type comes from the professional school as certainly in this as in every other profession. Of course it must be so, because no art has a deeper philosophy or a more varied and difficult practice than school teaching, and most varied and difficult of all when applied to the youngest children." 8

"But every talent and every grace can't be expected for \$30.00 or \$40.00 a month." 9

The "Official Department" of the January, 1882, issue of the Journal, on pages 79 and 80 had the following paragraph and chart by Dr. Ruffner:

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7. Virginia Educational Journal, September, 1877, p. 519.
 8. Virginia Educational Journal, February, 1878, pp. 183-185.
 9. Cited from letter to County Superintendents.

"The scheme of education to be found on another page covers the whole ground, and has frequently been used by the Superintendent of Public Instruction as the basis of his lectures to teachers on professional education.-----We beg our readers to give the chart, or outline, a studious perusal." 10

10. Cited by Johnson, James G., The Examination, The Certification, and the Training of Teachers for the Public Free Schools of Virginia, July 11, 1870, to February 1, 1906. (Bound with The McGuffey Reader, Edition 1937, Vol. VII, Nos. 1-9, September, 1937--May, 1938), p. 51, The Michie Company, Printers, Charlottesville, Virginia, 1938.

"SCHOOL TEACHING

Two Parties: I. The Pupil. II. The Teacher

Education

I. The Pupil to be (Cultured and Informed) By means of (Knowledge and Discipline) Into a Perfect man or woman as to (Character Manners Health Wisdom Efficiency)

Professional Education

II. The Teacher should be (Cultured in (Character Manners Health Wisdom Efficiency Knowledge) (Informed as to (The nature of man (Moral Physical Intellectual) (The principles of culture) (The means of culture (Environment Knowledge Methods Apparatus Organization Management Incidentals" 11

As Superintendent, Dr. Ruffner tried to keep in personal touch with the school conditions all over the state. He visited 94 of the 100 counties. He traveled 55,657 miles, perhaps half of it in a buggy, and delivered 326 formal addresses.

"How many heart to heart talks about buildings and teachers and text books and grading and methods he had, we can not even estimate."¹²

Obstacles That the Schools Faced

Familiarity with the school systems in the New England states helped Dr. Ruffner, but there were many problems of a different nature that faced the schools of Virginia. There was a deplorable lack of funds. The state debt in 1870 amounted to \$45,000,000, and the public officials began to divert some of the tax returns for school purposes to payment of the debt. Many people thought that an obligation like the state debt should come first, and that the public schools should wait. The presence of two races in the state made the operation of the schools much more difficult and expensive. In 1873-1874 the Civil Rights Bill threatened the

12. Pearson, C. C., South Atlantic Quarterly, April, 1921, p. 141.

establishment of mixed schools. Constant vigilance was necessary to protect the schools from injurious legislation and from undesirable political affiliations.

Much antagonism against public schools still existed. Some religious denominations opposed them on the grounds that the church should educate the children. Private schools and colleges wanted to share in the revenues from the Literary Fund.

Controversies

The most conspicuous opposition that Dr. Ruffner encountered was from two college professors. These controversies were given much publicity and are still remembered.

Dr. Bennett Puryear, of Richmond College, began with a series of articles in the Religious Herald during the spring and summer of 1875.

His articles may be summarized as follows:

Parents are responsible for the education of their children, not the government; the cost of public instruction, to those whose money supported it, was greater than better instruction at the private school; payment of the state debt was more important than public education.

Dr. R. L. Dabney was a professor in the Union Theological Seminary adjacent to Hampden-Sidney College. His son, Dr. Charles W. Dabney, gives an entirely unbiased

account of the debates between his father and Dr. Ruffner.

"In this debate Ruffner stood for the Jeffersonian view, which had just been revised and put into effect, and Dabney for the aristocratic view inherited by the people of the Old Dominion from England. In Dabney's mind a system of free public schools was just a part of a vicious scheme to destroy completely the last trace of that old civilization. -----The state's duty was merely to protect the family and should not interfere with any of its functions. -----The state-----is totally disqualified to conduct schools for all the people.-----
 ---If those Negro schools are to fail, they should be abolished without further waste. If they are to succeed, they only prepare the way for that abhorred fate, amalgamation." 13

The articles by Dr. Dabney and Dr. Puryear added to the discontent with the public school system in some sections of the state, and fired Dr. Ruffner with the desire to offset each accusation made against the schools.

In Dr. Ruffner's replies, he was friendly but convincing. He used the following arguments:

"All the people of the democracy must be educated to protect their rights. Family and church schools can never do this. The democracy is a co-operative society of citizens whose chief function should be the education of the children.-----The public school is the institution of the parents co-operating in the education of their own children.-----Every human being has the right to an opportunity to develop his God-given capacities. The American democracy stands before everything for opportunity, a chance for every child to do this." 14

13. Dabney, op. cit., pp. 154-158.

14. Ibid., p. 159.

In answering the arguments against the education of the Negro, Dr. Ruffner

"held up the right of equality before the law, and the Christian doctrine of the brotherhood of all mankind.-----We cannot be insensible to the moral claim these people have as human beings, upon their fellow men. The Negro-----is improvable under culture. He may be made more intelligent, more moral, more industrious, and more skillful. He may be taught much of his civic, and social duty. And just in proportion as he is really improved, in that proportion he is a more orderly and productive member of society. -----There is one place where no Negro enters in Virginia, and that is a white school house. The law separates the races in education as nowhere else." 15

Dr. Puryear and Dr. Dabney felt very sincerely that Virginia, on account of the poverty and state debt, should not attempt any thing as large and as expensive as a general public school system. Dr. Ruffner's reply was that no better investment could be made by a state than the education of the people, and in this way increase the earning power of the citizens.

In a concluding paragraph, Dr. Ruffner wrote as follows:

"It is thus seen that the present advocates of public education in Virginia, however humble in themselves, belong to a heroic ancestry, beginning with George Washington and continued through a magnificent line

of Virginia worthies, including one who had no superior in American History, Robert E. Lee. It is for their views we are contending, and in their hallowed names we shall conquer: especially as our adversaries are few and far between. Indeed, in all my reading I have met with but two Virginia names since the days of Governor Berkeley recorded in opposition to universal education, R. L. Dabney and B. Puryear." 16

Annual Reports

During his term of office as Superintendent of Public Instruction, March 2, 1870, to March 15, 1882, Dr. Ruffner submitted eleven Annual Reports.

The first report, dated October 1, 1871, began by referring to the large amount of valuable service that the governor and attorney-general had given to the cause of public education during the year. This was followed by an expression of appreciation to these men for their counsel, not only at the forty-eight regular meetings of the Board of Education, from September 17, 1870, to August, 1871, but also for help on many informal occasions.

Some of the topics listed in the Table of Contents and discussed in the First Report follow: Opening of schools;

16. Ruffner, W. H., "The Public Free School System", Virginia Pamphlets, Appendix, Vol. 4, 1885. (Pamphlets bound by Chas. W. Priefer, Staunton, Virginia.)

Central authorities; District officers; School funds; Cost of schools; The cost of a full supply of schools for the state; The Literary Fund; George Peabody and his donation; Ability of the state of Virginia to maintain public education; Claims of Virginia on the Federal Government; Statistics of school attendance; Statistical tables of school operation; County and city superintendents and their reports; Barnard's Report; Mr. Jefferson's opinion; Discussion of the public school system; States which have public school systems; The immediate future of the public school system; School houses; Text-books; Books for indigent children; Freedman's Bureau; The Negro in Virginia; The improvability of the Negro; Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute; Colored Normal School of Richmond; White Normal School of Richmond; Normal Schools; Private Schools; Statistics of Private Schools for 1870-1871; and, Some remarks on moral training.

Under the topic "The Schools", Dr. Ruffner wrote:

"The school is the objective point of the whole operation. Here is determined what shall be the value for the great expenditure. If the schools are poor, the system is a monstrous waste of public funds." 17

In the Supplement to this report were these suggestions to the General Assembly for amendment: Raising the

17. Ruffner, W. H., First Annual Report, p. 14, 1871, Superintendent of Public Printing, Richmond, Virginia.

local school taxes; Rate of local taxation; Pay of county superintendents, (average salary in Virginia about \$296.00; in other states, about \$560.00); Vaccinations to be enforced; and Graded schools.

The Third Annual Report submitted November 1, 1873, took up first the school enrollment. There had been a decrease in the enrollment that year, which Dr. Ruffner said could have been caused by stricter regulations and requirements, or by poor teaching and poor management.

Other subjects discussed were:

1. More favorable public sentiment and better revenues for schools
2. The amount of state tax on property for school purposes
3. Graded schools
4. The higher branches
5. Relation of our public school system to the colleges and universities
6. Sketches of Higher Institutions

The other reports were similar in nature; all stressed the importance of teacher training. Dr. Ruffner frequently suggested that the fund from the sale of public lands be used for educational purposes. He put in a claim for a large share for Virginia on account of her cession of the entire Northwest Territory.

The Tenth Annual Report, submitted on November 1, 1880, gave the progress of education in Virginia during the

decade, with tables of statistics, and comments on these.

The total number of graded schools of more than one teacher had increased from 70 in 1871, to 205 in 1880. The average attendance for white children the first year was 50 per cent greater than it had been any previous year. In 1871, when both white and Negro children were counted, the average attendance was 77,402, and in 1880 it was 128,404.

Dr. Ruffner stated that around \$200,000 of the Peabody money had been spent in the state and gave figures showing the distribution during the ten-year period. Again he urged the establishment of normal schools and the provision of greater educational opportunities for women. He appealed to the leaders of all parties and to the citizens of Virginia to keep the schools out of politics.

On November 1, 1881, Dr. Ruffner submitted his eleventh and last report as Superintendent of Public Instruction. This report covered the work of the schools through July 31, 1881. (He continued as Superintendent until March 15, 1882.)

The last report was very full. It contained a digest of the reports of the county and city superintendents; the Second Auditor's Report on the Literary Fund; and the usual statistical tables and summaries. An especially strong appeal was made for Teacher Training.

In the Summary of the report on "Educational Progress"

he stated that within the past two hundred years four generic developments had been recognized in the educational world, Normal Training, Industrial Training, Object Teaching, and Kindergarten Teaching. Each one of these topics was developed and discussed.

The eleven reports made by Dr. Ruffner are valuable as history of education in Virginia. They build up a philosophy of education that holds good for today. Other southern states used the plans developed by him in the organization of their school programs.

"His school reports were quoted by John Morley in England in articles advocating a public school system in that country."¹⁸

19

Dr. J. L. M. Curry, for many years agent of the Peabody Fund wrote:

18. Dabney, op.cit., p. 162.

19. Dr. Curry was born in Georgia, June 5, 1825, but moved with his parents to Alabama in 1835. He was a most versatile person--a leader in educational and religious work, a member of the Alabama Legislature, and from 1857 to 1861, a member of the United States Congress. During the latter part of the Civil War he served on General Joseph E. Johnston's staff, and was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. In 1866 he was offered the presidency of Richmond College. This he declined, but in 1868 accepted a professorship there and was appointed to the chair of history and English literature. When he succeeded Dr. Barnas Sears as agent of the Peabody Fund in 1881, he resigned the position at Richmond College, but was made a trustee of the College and held this office for fifteen or twenty years, a part of the time serving as president of the Board.

As agent of the Peabody Fund, he was given a rare opportunity for service in the field of teacher training. During his administration of the Fund the policy was adopted of

"For whatever of success has crowned the system, Dr. Ruffner is entitled to the credit. His eleven reports are lucid discussions of all the leading subjects pertaining to the organization and management of schools and systems. They are hardly surpassed in our educational literature, have often been quoted as authoritative, and (on account of them) he was honored with a diploma from the Republic of Chile." 20

Teacher Training

Although the Virginia Reconstruction Constitution of 1869 had given the General Assembly the authority to establish normal schools, they were not mentioned in Dr. Ruffner's Education Bill. It was no doubt a matter of expediency. From the first he urged the county superintendents to arrange for teacher institutes, to call in the best teachers available, and to have them demonstrate good teaching methods. He suggested also, that several experts in elementary education be secured to travel through the

setting aside three-fifths of the money for the training of teachers.

With only two brief interruptions, when he was selected to represent the United States at the Spanish Court, Dr. Curry continued as General Agent of the Peabody Board, until a short time before his death near Asheville, North Carolina, in 1903. He had requested burial in Richmond, and for his body to be borne to its last resting-place from the halls of Richmond College. His wish was faithfully regarded, and on February 15, 1903, his remains were carried from the halls of Richmond College to Hollywood Cemetery where he was buried.

(Alderman, E. A., and Gordon, A. C., J. L. M. Curry, p. 380.)

20. Ibid., p. 162.

state, and in this way reach many of the teachers.

Summer normals were organized to help supply the need for trained teachers. The summer normal usually lasted for four or six weeks, and was often followed by examinations for teachers' certificates. The Valley Normal opened in the summer of 1873 at Bridgewater, Rockingham County; the normal for the Shenandoah Valley was held at Strasburg; and the same year a normal was held in Botetourt County. Some of these normals were in session many consecutive summers and received both state and county funds for their operation.

In the summer of 1878 the first summer normal for the counties around Manassas was held there. Dr. Ruffner attended the meetings for a part of the session, and pronounced the normal "The Biggest Thing Yet."

In 1880 he secured permission to have a summer normal at the University of Virginia. Dr. M. A. Newell, the State Superintendent of the Maryland schools, was selected to have charge of the normal. Prominent educators were invited to lecture. Among them was Dr. John Eaton, the United States Commissioner of Education. The Governor of Virginia, and several school trustees attended some of the meetings, and 467 teachers registered for the normal.

A state-wide normal for colored teachers was held the same summer at Lynchburg. Two hundred-forty teachers were in attendance there.

Money for the support of these schools came largely from the Peabody Fund, and on this account, some of the schools were called "Peabody Institutes." Dr. Barnas Sears, the Peabody agent, recommended that the Peabody Board give financial aid to State Normal schools in preference to private colleges and universities.

As a result of interest in the higher education of women, the Senate, in 1879, asked the State Superintendent of Public Instruction to make a survey of conditions in the state in order to find out if it would be practicable to provide a school for the training of women teachers. Dr. Ruffner gladly furnished this report but no action was taken by the Legislature for several years.

Summary of Accomplishments

Dr. James G. Johnson, Superintendent of the Public Schools of Charlottesville, Virginia, has assembled some important and interesting material about Dr. William H. Ruffner. In his 1937 edition of the McGuffey Reader is a chapter entitled "The Administration of William H. Ruffner", and there is a section on "The Examination and the Certification, and the Training of Teachers for the Public Free Schools of Virginia from July 11, 1870, to February 1, 1906."

Superintendent Johnson uses as source materials the State Constitutions of 1869, 1902, and 1928, Legislative

enactments, minutes of the Board of Education, the House and Senate Journals and Documents, the files of the Educational Journal of Virginia, the Annual Reports, and much local data, and he has interpreted this material by editorial comments and summaries.

His list of Dr. Ruffner's accomplishments as the first Superintendent of Public Instruction is included here by his permission.

"And now by way of conclusion what may be set down as some of the tangible results of Mr. Ruffner's efforts to realize his vision of a properly trained corps of teachers to care for the children of the State?

1. The establishing of the relations of the county superintendent to the teacher in such a manner that this officer has become the key man in each locality in improving existing teachers.
2. The setting up of standards for the certification of teachers, which requirements are the hope and the despair of every school administrator in the state: 'The higher grade certificate should be bestowed very sparingly, and should always imply successful experience, a familiar acquaintance with the improved methods of instruction and the habitual reading of the current educational literature.'
3. The making of Teachers' Institutes or meetings constructive forces in the development of the teaching staff in every locality.
4. The initiating of summer normal schools, which are today universal factors in the growth and efficiency of the teachers in the State.
5. The making of the people of the State

conscious that teaching is an art to be developed through two methods: the training of prospective teachers; and the improving of existing teachers. Out of 'the normal spirit' has grown every teacher-training institution in Virginia." 20

20. Johnson, op. cit., p. 80.

CHAPTER IV.

AS PRESIDENT OF THE FARMVILLE NORMAL SCHOOL

The Legislature of 1883 authorized a state normal school for white girls. The bill for the appropriation for a school to train female teachers for the public schools was signed on March 7, 1884. This was an important event in the history of Teacher-Training in Virginia, and the date commemorates the winning of another signal battle for public education in the state.

The credit for this victory belongs to Dr. Ruffner and Dr. J. L. M. Curry. Dr. Curry was already well known for his interest in the educational opportunities in the South. He had drafted the original bill that was presented to the Legislature for the establishment of the first teacher-training institution.

Very wisely the General Assembly selected Dr. Ruffner and Dr. Curry as members of the first board of trustees. At the organization meeting of the board of trustees on April 9, 1884, Dr. Curry was made president of the trustees, and

Dr. Ruffner chosen as president of the Normal School.

Due to political changes, Dr. Ruffner had not been re-elected as State Superintendent of Schools in 1882.

Farmville secured the normal school because the town offered to give the state a building formerly used as a girls' school. The seventh of March is still observed as "Founders' Day" at the State Teachers College in Farmville.

Two able and devoted champions of teacher training were given an opportunity to shape the policies of the new institution and guide it during its beginning years. The success of the school from the start was largely due to these two men.

As agent of the Peabody Fund, Dr. Curry gave material financial aid. Before his connection with the Peabody Board he had been a teacher and a college president in Alabama. His interest and his pride in the Farmville school continued throughout his life.

Dr. Ruffner brought to the position his rich experiences and training. He was thoroughly familiar with the needs of the public schools.

"He had founded them, studied them, and worked for them as had no other man in the state. He knew the needs of the teacher and how to meet them." 1

1. Tabb, Jennie M., "Our Alma Mater", Bulletin of the Farmville State Teachers College, (unpaged), January, 1929.

He very quickly organized the school and established it on a sound and practical basis. He laid down the principle for teacher training that were the results of his observation and study during the twelve years as State Superintendent.

The trustees of the Normal School allowed him great freedom in the organization and administration of the school. With their approval, Dr. Ruffner visited schools in the North and East in order to locate teachers trained in the methods peculiar to normal schools. He had already made a study of normal schools and had on other occasions visited some of the best schools of this type. His older daughter, Anne H. Ruffner, afterwards Mrs. Barclay, had taken the three years' course in Professional Training at the New Jersey Normal School.

When the Farmville Normal School opened in the fall of 1884, a total of 107 students were enrolled in all departments. The faculty had been most carefully selected from among the teachers that Dr. Ruffner had observed. The curriculum consisted of the following subjects: Geography, Physiology, United States History, General History, Morals and Manners, Vocal Music, English, Elocution, Drawing, Mathematics, Calisthenics; the President himself taught Psychology, Ethics, Didactics, and Natural Science. The Model School opened in October. During the term teachers of Piano Music, Science, Latin, and Algebra were added to

the regular faculty.

Dr. Ruffner continued as President of the School until 1887. During the three years he watched with keen interest and satisfaction the growth of the school. The buildings had doubled in capacity. The enrollment, the furnishings, and the equipment had kept pace with the enlarged and improved plant.

The President and the faculty attributed much credit to the people of Farmville for the success of the school. They had donated the buildings and grounds, and felt that the school belonged partly to them.

The State Teachers College still remembers and honors its first president. Above the main reception hall, in the dome of the rotunda, are some splendid paintings by a celebrated artist, and among them is Dr. Ruffner's portrait. Another copy of his portrait is kept in the President's office. In the Annual for 1909, which was commemorative of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the school, and in a special bulletin of January, 1929, grateful recognition was given the founder for starting the school on its successful career. His influence continues to live. A true appreciation of his devotion to an ideal and a purpose, now recognized as the Farmville spirit, finds expression in the President, the faculty, and the student body of today.

CHAPTER V.

OTHER INTERESTS

Industrial and Technical Schools

Dr. Ruffner believed that all the people of the state should be taught their responsibility for the support of the schools. Another very strong conviction was that the production of wealth was in proportion to education and training. For these reasons he advocated industrial and technical training and was instrumental in promoting several schools of this type. He was especially impressed with the manual and industrial training given at Hampton Institute, and used his influence to forward the interest of the school. He considered Hampton one of the most valuable schools in America for the training of Negroes.

He was the originator of a plan for an Agricultural and Mechanical College which was chartered in 1872, and became
1
Virginia Polytechnic Institute.

1. Morton, Richard L., History of Virginia Since 1861, Vol. III, p. 287, American Historical Society, Inc., New York, 1924.

He was ex officio trustee of Hampton and of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute, and was also interested in the Miller Manual Training School, located in Albemarle County.

Geology

Dr. Ruffner's knowledge of geology and his life-time interest in its study enabled him to make many valuable contributions in that field. In his visits to the different parts of the state while he was Superintendent of Public Instruction he made many addresses on local geology and tried to interest the people in their natural resources. He made a useful collection of Virginia minerals, and before he became a professional geologist, did much free geological work.

One of his first large undertakings was to make a study of a geologic section across the state of Virginia, from Hampton Roads to the Ohio River. Several times Dr. Ruffner was employed by railroads to make physical surveys or prospectuses. Soon after leaving the office of the Superintendent in 1882, he and Professor John L. Campbell, of Washington and Lee University, made a joint report of the survey for the Georgia, Pacific Railroad, from Atlanta to the Mississippi River, a distance of 500 miles. They also made a joint study of the occurrence of different ores in the vicinity of Birmingham, Alabama, which led to the development

of the mines there.

In 1887 Dr. Ruffner did extensive work for the Seattle and Eastern Railroads in Washington Territory. He traveled a distance of 8,500 miles and spent many weeks in the Territory. On his return, his report concerning the possibilities of developing the rich resources of that region, was published in book form. Dr. Ruffner wrote that he had learned much geography from his reading, and the report proves that he learned much about that section from his observations. It gives much information of a commercial nature. He stated that a vast field of enterprise was "wide open." In his opinion the coal, and the different kinds of steel ores were unsurpassed, if equalled, and there was also, an abundance of granite, limestone, marble, and the precious and base metals.

The book is most interestingly written and illustrated with pictures of Lake Washington, showing Mt. Ranier in the distance, views of the forests, a train-load of logs, and haymaking in Washington Territory.

Of unusual present day interest in this book are maps of Asia and the Pacific Ocean which show the distances between Seattle and places in China, Singapore, Australia, and parts of Russia. There is also a discussion of the influence of the Japanese Current on ocean travel.

In 1891 he made a second trip to the new State of Washington and examined some properties in the Cascade

Mountains for a Richmond firm.

In Professor Joseph K. Roberts' Annotated Geological Bibliography of Virginia, published in 1942, a sketch of Dr. Ruffner is given among the biographies of nine deceased Virginian geologists. Dr. Roberts says that while Dr. Ruffner served his generation in other ways and was not well known as a geologist, his achievements entitle him to be ranked with the native Virginians of that profession. In the sketch attention is called to the physical surveys for commercial firms that Dr. Ruffner made, and especial mention is made of his interest in the uses of cement. "He knew more about the cement resources and possibilities than anyone of his² time."

2. Roberts, Joseph K., Annotated Geological Bibliography of Virginia, Part III., Biographical Sketches of Virginian Geologists, p. 40, published by the Alderman Library, Charlottesville, Virginia, The Dietz Press, Richmond, Virginia, 1942.

CHAPTER VI.

LATER YEARS

At the insistance of his family, Dr. Ruffner retired from active work as a geologist in June, 1894. He was then seventy years of age and had worked almost constantly. He returned to his farm, "Tribrook" near Lexington. For about ten years he engaged in historical and biographical writing and completed the History of Washington and Lee University which was begun by his father.

He frequently wrote for newspapers, especially when provision for some educational legislation was being discussed, and always took part in educational campaigns.

He died on November 24, 1908, in his eighty-fifth year, at the home of his son-in-law, Dr. Robert F. Campbell, in Asheville, North Carolina.

There was an editorial in The New York School Journal at the time of Dr. Ruffner's death in which the writer expressed the opinion that while the world would remember him as a scientist, his own state would remember him

for his work in the field of education.

The editor was right. The people of Virginia will not forget the contributions of William Henry Ruffner in establishing and fostering a public school system during its most critical years. Virginia's daughters will remember him also, as the founder of the first institution of higher learning for the women of the state. The closing sentence in Dr. Ruffner's last report makes us realize, that although he had other interests, education came first: "My heart will still live in the noble work of educating the people and of building up the Commonwealth."

Expressions of Appreciation

It seems appropriate in concluding this sketch to give the following expressions of appreciation of Dr. Ruffner and his work. The first was written during his lifetime by Dr. George H. Denny, while president of Washington and Lee University. The second was written a few years ago by Dr. James G. Johnson of Charlottesville, Virginia.

"He blazed the way in which others have followed. No one has approached him as a master of the educational needs of the commonwealth of Virginia. No one has done as much as he for the children of this generation in his native land. He is a philosopher, and yet not a dreamer. He is an enthusiast, and yet not a fanatic. He has understood men, and has always been a master architect. He has done a great work in an untried and for

a time, an unsympathetic field; but without faltering he has worked out, as far as the times permitted, the great ideal set before him. Few men, under existing circumstances, could have established a more worthy system of public instruction with a more appropriate code." 1

"Aflame with the thought, 'where there is no vision, the people perish', caught up in the heaven of a great ideal, the sacred right of every child irrespective of race or color to the privileges of a primary education at public expense, though sitting in high places with men yet never ceasing to walk the by-ways and hedges with the humblest citizen, for a period of twelve years he toiled on and in the end left so many stray bits of the fleece of his inner soul upon the hedgerows that his followers have been able to weave out of those fragments an enduring fabric of public education for Virginia." 2

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1. Denny, George H., Men of Mark in Virginia, Vol. I, p. 270. Editor, Tyler, Lyon G., Men of Mark Publishing Company, Washington, D. C., 1906.
 2. Johnson, op. cit., p. 80.

APPENDIX

Recommendations of W. H. Ruffner for Superintendent of
1
Public Instruction.

1. A letter from Robert E. Lee

Lexington, Va., February 5, 1870

Dr. A. Leyburn:

My dear Sir:- In reply to your note in reference to the Rev. Wm. H. Ruffner, I will state that I consider it a fortunate circumstance for Virginia that he is willing to become a candidate for the office of Superintendent of Public Instruction. He is in my opinion in every way qualified for the position, and if elected, I know of no one who will more conscientiously or ably discharge its duties. His attention, as you are aware, has been turned to the subject of education in its broadest sense. While therefore impressed with its great importance in an enlarged point of view, he is also sensible of the necessity of adapting it to the present wants of the people. As I believe he possesses the requisite qualifications for the office, I would be glad for the interest of the State that he should obtain it.

I am very truly yours,

(Signed) R. E. LEE

1. Found among Dr. Ruffner's papers and cited in Dabney's Universal Education in the South, Vol. I, p. 530.

2
2. Testimonial of W. H. Ruffner, Lexington, Va.

Lexington, Va., January 25, 1870

We regard the office of Superintendent of Public Instruction as one of the most important to be filled by the Legislature, and we feel a strong desire to have the services of the best available man secured for that position. It gives us great pleasure, therefore, to know that the State can secure for the office a gentleman eminently qualified to discharge its important and responsible duties. That gentleman is the Rev. Wm. H. Ruffner, of Lexington.

We have long known him as a man of high personal worth, of superior talents, education, and energy; of extensive information on all matters connected with the educational interests of the country, and who has had opportunities of becoming well acquainted with the school systems in operation in other states. We believe, moreover, that he will, if elected, give the system prescribed by the Constitution a fair and honest trial. And that he will be most competent to make what may be good in it available for the interests of education, and to suggest promptly such alterations and amendments as future experience may point out as desirable.

In view of the premises, we most cordially commend

to the favorable consideration of members of the Legislature Mr. Ruffner's high claims as a candidate for the important position above indicated.

(Signed) R. E. LEE,
President of Washington College

[Note. Following Lee's signature were those of professors in Washington College, Virginia Military Institute, Union Theological Seminary (Hampden-Sidney), Ann Smith Academy, and prominent ministers and lawyers; also there were the signatures of the president of Rockbridge Agricultural Society, and a former member of the Virginia Senate.]

3

3. Testimonial of W. H. Ruffner, Lexington, Va.

University of Virginia, January 26, 1870

From a thorough conviction of the great importance of having the office of Superintendent of Public Instruction in the State of Virginia properly filled, we are induced to urge strongly upon all friends of this most important measure (Public Instruction) to use their influence for the appointment of Rev. Wm. H. Ruffner, of Lexington, Va.

Mr. Ruffner combines all the qualifications to give complete satisfaction and success to this great enterprise, hitherto in a great measure untried among us.

(Signed) WM. H. MCGUFFEY, Prof. Moral Philosophy
University of Virginia

[Note. The other signatures were those of other professors at the University of Virginia, the University Librarian, the Charlottesville Postmaster, and a lawyer, and a physician of Charlottesville.]

"Dr. Ruffner was in personal appearance a striking and distinguished looking figure. He was six feet tall and weighed about two hundred pounds. His features were large, and the expression of his face indicated intelligence and strength of purpose. His grey eyes, rather small, were keen and kindly.

Since 1863 he had lived on a small farm which he had purchased, two miles from Lexington. His household consisted of his wife, and sister-in-law, and two daughters. It was a home of refinement and culture which attracted a constant stream of visitors from the near-by town. It bore the name of "Tribrook" suggested by the meeting of three small streams on the farm.

It was while he was living here that he was called to the office of State Superintendent of Education. In the winter the family went to Richmond, returning to "Tribrook" for the summer months.

The streams that flowed through the farm offered a fine opportunity for irrigation, and Dr. Ruffner, shod with rubber boots and armed with a hoe, found exercise and delight in digging and keeping open his irrigation ditches. In dry seasons the crops were green and vigorous in contrast with the parched and stunted growth of the fields and farms smitten with drought.

Dr. Ruffner's library was in a small building separated from the dwelling, and to this he would retire for

uninterrupted study. He was greatly interested in the history of Washington and Lee University of which his father had been president and of which he was an alumnus and trustee. After his retirement from public office he spent a large part of his time in the preparation of historical papers bearing on the origin and growth of his Alma Mater.

He was an interesting conversationalist, with a rich fund of anecdotes and reminiscences, many of them droll and humorous. The older man of the community often visited him for information about the early history of Rockbridge¹ County and the town of Lexington."

1. Article on Dr. Wm. H. Ruffner by his son-in-law, the Rev. Robert F. Campbell, and sent to the writer of the thesis, February, 1942.

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