

THE SOUTHERN PLANTER & FARMER,

DEVOTED TO
AGRICULTURE, HORTICULTURE AND RURAL AFFAIRS

Agriculture is the nursing mother of the Arts.—XENOPHON.
Tillage and Pasturage are the two breasts of the State.—SULLY.

L. R. DICKINSON, EDITOR AND PROPRIETOR.

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THE NEGRO AND THE COMMON SCHOOL.

DR. L. R. DICKINSON, EDITOR PLANTER AND FARMER,—DEAR SIR: I have read the essays of "Civis" in your December, January and February numbers with profound interest, and with general approbation. Concurring fully with him in the opposition to the whole theory of primary education by the State, I also feel the force of his views concerning the negro and the common school. For some years I have had strong convictions of the falsehood and deadly tendencies of the Yankee theory of popular State education; and I confess that the influence which prevented my lifting up my voice against it was, simply, the belief that so puny a voice could effect nothing against the prevalent "craze" which has infected the country on this subject. You may conceive, therefore, the satisfaction with which I saw "Civis" take up the cause of truth in the columns of the *Religious Herald*, and subsequently in the *Planter and Farmer*, and my admiration for his moral courage, eloquence and invincible logic. With such champions, the cause of truth is not so hopeless as I feared. With equal satisfaction I have seen the Rev. Dr. John Miller, long an honored citizen of Virginia, and a gallant soldier in her army, arguing the same truth in the *Tribune*, with even more than his wonted terseness, boldness and condensed logic. There is another sign that the cause of truth is not wholly lost: this is the new zeal of the self-constituted protectors of this Yankee heresy in Virginia, in circulating arguments and pleas for their error. These documents have had no other effect on my mind than to awaken the wish that, if we must, perforce, have this false system imposed on us by our conquerors, any executive agency, created to administer the ill-starred plan, might at least have the modesty to stick to its appointed business, and not waste the money of the people in the attempt to manufacture among the people an erroneous public opinion. It is enough to be taxed heavily, against my judgment, for a quix-

otic project, which can never do me or any one else any good. I am unjustly forced to surrender my money; but I beg leave to preserve the privilege of doing my own thinking. At least, I do not propose docilely to receive my opinions on it from those, who, in advocating the system, are also advocating their own official emoluments.

While speaking of the general subject, I am tempted to notice a recent argument which is flaunted before us: this is, the rapidly increasing popularity, which, it is claimed, the plan is winning at the South. The reply is, that if this popularity is growing, it exactly confirms the argument of "Civis," that the system is agrarian, corrupting, subsidizing the people and debauching their independence. Imperial donatives to the Roman populace became very popular; true, but they poisoned the last good element of Roman character, and helped to complete the putrescence of the empire. I fear it is only too true, that this cunning cheat of Yankee state-craft is *alluring* the poor, harassed Southern parent; and that he is yielding to the bait, which promises deceitfully to relieve him of his parental responsibility. A bribe, alas, may become easily popular in decadent times.

But, you asked for my opinion of this fearful question of the negro in our common schools. It is not necessary for me to repeat the points so strongly put by "Civis." To one of them only, I would add my voice: the *unrighteousness* of expending vast sums, wrung by a grinding taxation from our oppressed people, upon a pretended education of freed slaves; when the State can neither pay its debts, nor attend to its own legitimate interests. Law and common honesty both endorse the maxim: "A man must be just before he is generous." The action of the State, in wasting this money thus, which is due to her creditors, is as inexcusable as it is fantastical. I do know that not a few of our white brethren, before the war, independent and intelligent, are now prevented from educating their own children, because they are compelled to keep them in the corn-field, laboring from year's end to year's end, to raise these taxes to give a pretended education to the brats of the black paupers, who are loafing around their plantations, stealing a part of the scanty crops and stock their poor, struggling boys are able to raise. Not seldom has this pitiful sight made my blood boil with indignation, and then made my heart bleed with the thought: "How mournfully complete is that subjugation, which has made men, who were once Virginians, submit tamely to this burning wrong?" "The offence is rank, and smells to Heaven." Thank God, that I have only to pay, and have nothing to do with the imposition, collection and disbursement of this shameful exaction.

The argument by which they endeavor to reconcile us to it is always this: "Negro suffrage is a fixed fact; Virginians cannot help it; and if the negro is to share in governing the State, our interest is to qualify him for doing so, by educating him." To this argument many well-meaning men reluctantly yield. My first remark upon it is: That I am not at all clear, that candor, or truth, or self-respect

will allow any Virginian thus to accept the impossible *onus*, which conquest seeks to impose on us. Radicalism thrusts upon us this fatal innovation of negro suffrage; and then requires of us a promise that *we will undertake* to make it work safely and beneficently. I beg leave to demur from making any such promise. I do not mean to divide with the conqueror the *onus* of his ruthless and murderous crime against liberty and civilization. He has committed it; let him bear its responsibility. If it is not undone, it will destroy both American liberty and civilization. If I could prevent that result, I would; and if I believed that I could, I would promise to try. But, knowing that I cannot prevent that result, and *that no human power can*, unless the crime be retracted, I do not mean to make a deceitful promise, or to divide the damning responsibility of the crime with its perpetrators. If I saw a ruthless quack proposing to divide a man's carotid artery, in a mad surgical experiment, and he should ask me to promise to tie it up, so as to remedy the murder he was committing, I should tell him that, however anxious to save the life of his victim, *I was not able* to do it by tying up a carotid artery, and could not promise. If he persevered in murdering the man, he must bear the guilt alone.

For, second: the pretended education which Virginia is now giving, at so heavy a cost, to the negroes, is, as a remedy for negro suffrage, utterly deceptive, farcical and dishonest. The tenor of the argument concedes, what every man, not a fool, knows to be true: that the negroes, as a body, are now glaringly unfit for the privilege of voting. What makes them unfit? Such things as these: The inexorable barrier of alien race, color, and natural character, between them and that other race which constitutes the bulk of Americans: a dense ignorance of the rights and duties of citizenship: an almost universal lack of that share in the *property* of the country, which alone can give responsibility, patriotic interest and independence to the voter: a general moral grade so deplorably low as to permit their being driven or bought like a herd of sheep by the demagogue: a parasitical servility and dependency of nature, which characterizes the race everywhere, and in all ages: an almost total lack of real persevering aspirations: and last, an obstinate set of false traditions, which bind him as a mere serf to a party, which is the born enemy of every righteous interest of our State. Let the reader look at that list of ailments. Not an item can be disputed. Now, our political quacks propose to cure them, and that in such time as will save the Commonwealth before the infection becomes mortal. And how? By such an infusion of (not education, but) a *modicum* of the arts of reading, writing, and cyphering; which are at best uncertain means, only, for educating; and that, such a *modicum* as the kind of teachers and schools Virginia can now get, will infuse through the wool of such heads. Does any sane man really believe this remedy will do that vast work? Nay, verily, "Leviathan is not so tamed." Or, to return to the former trope, we may use the exclamation of John Randolph against a weak book,

which was proposed to him, as an antidote for the malignant ability of Bolingbroke's infidelity. "Vernice treacle, and syrup, against *Arsenic!*" Whether this remedy will save us, may be settled by an argument of fact, unanswerable to every patriotic Virginian. The Yankees have had this "nostrum" of free school education, in full force, for two generations. Has it reared up among them, out of white people, a popular mass fit to enjoy universal suffrage? Did not this very system rear up that very generation, which, in its blind ignorance and brutal passion, has recently wrecked the institutions of America; has filled our country with destitution, woe and murder; and, with a stupid blindness, only equalled by its wickedness, has stripped its own Commonwealths, in order to wreak its mad spite on ours, of the whole safeguards for their own freedom and peace? *These are the fruits of this Yankee system of State primary education, as working on a white race.* Will it work better on a black race? I have not yet learned enough of that type of "intelligence" which this system seems to foster, to repudiate my Saviour's infallible maxim, "the tree is known by its fruits." The Yankee has bragged so much of his "intelligence," of his floods of books and oceans of newspapers, that some Southern people seem "dazed" by the clamor. Well; there may be "fussiness," there may be plenty of self-conceit, and flippancy; but I stand simply and firmly by this impregnable fact: This system has not given the Yankee true wisdom enough to prevent his destroying the country and himself. What mere self-delusion is it, to dream that it will give this quality to the negro?

But, third: There are causes peculiar to the negro and the South, which leave us no hope that this so-called system of free schools will produce even as much fruit as in New England or New York. One is the fact which "Civis" has so boldly stated: The black race is an alien one on our soil; and nothing except his amalgamation with ours, or his subordination to ours, can prevent the rise of that instinctive antipathy of race, which, history shows, always arises between opposite races in proximity. Another cause is the natural indolence of the negro character, which finds precisely its desired pretext, in this pretended work of going to school. Still another is the universal disposition of the young negro to construe his "liberty" as meaning precisely, privilege of idleness. It was easy to see that the free school must needs produce the very result which it is usually producing, under such exceptional circumstances; not education, but discontent with, and unfitness for, the free negro's inevitable sphere and destiny—if he is to have any good destiny—manual labor. With such teachers, such parents as the negro parents, and such material, it was hopeless to expect any really beneficial knowledge of the literary arts to be diffused among this great mass of black children. The only thing the most of them really learn is a fatal confirmation in the notion that "freedom" means living without work, and a great enhancement of the determination to grasp that privilege. The one commanding and imperative necessity

of the young negro at the end of the war, in the eyes of any sober philanthropist, was this: that he should be promptly made to learn some way to earn an honest living. The interest which the Commonwealth had in his quickly learning this vital lesson, was perilously urgent, as I shall show. Instead, then, of giving any negro over five years old a pretext of any sort for evading his righteous and beneficent lot of manual labor, we should have bent every energy of statesmanship and government to the task of somehow keeping the grown negroes at their work, and making sure that the young ones were taught to work. To this end nearly all the practical talent and energy should have been bent. The police administration should have been so omnipotent and energetic as absolutely to cut off the possibility of a negro family's subsisting by plunder—vagrancy should have been rendered impossible by stringent laws, apprenticing the loafer to an industrious citizen. The tolerance of idleness in children approaching adult age, by their parents, should have been made a misdemeanor, justifying the intervention of the magistrate. Such a system of *stimuli*, if made effective, must have been harsher than domestic slavery. I reply, yes: but in imposing it, we should be but imitating our conquerors, who ordained that the wise, kindly, benevolent, yet efficient system of the South should give place to their more pretentious but oppressive system. We are fully justified by the rights of self preservation, to imitate their severity. Here is a parable which expresses accurately the folly Virginia has committed. She saw a neighbor of her's, named, we will say, Smith, who was very rich, and who also had a large family of healthy children. Smith is using a part of his abundance, in sending all of his children to school. Now Virginia is not rich, but desperately poor; and it will be "touch and go" if some of her children do not actually starve before the year is out. Moreover, Virginia's children are in so feverish, unhealthy a state, that confinement with books is likely to have no effect, except brain-fever. But the old lady sees Smith's gang passing her door to school every day, with envious eyes. She feels that somehow "book-larnin" is a social distinction. She hears Smith's children "chaffing" hers about their inferiority of privilege, and she can stand it no longer. So she completes her own bankruptcy to buy an outfit of "store clothes," and school-books, and sends all her children. Luckless urchins! what they needed was wholesome food and medicine, not books and confinement. The result of this blind disregard of times and differences, and abilities, is, that about the time famine and the sheriff are both knocking at the old lady's door, her children are sent back to her, in raging delirium from brain fever, either helpless, or rending each other in their phrensy.

Does any one demur, that this picture is extravagant? Then, he has not begun to see the fearful peril of our situation. Indeed, I feel sure that bad as is the present state of Virginia (in consequence of the abolition measure forced upon us) far the worst is yet to come. What are we to do with this young generation of negroes now grow-

ing up? Have men looked that question fairly in the face? It makes me shudder—and the free school is one of the most tragical features in the coming drama. Let these facts be considered. *This coming generation will be a numerous one.* Men, like "Civis," are evidently nursing the secret hope that it will not; and to my mind it is one of the most pitiful evidences of the atrocity of the wrong perpetrated on Virginia by her conquerors, that good, patriotic, philanthropic, christian men here see the evil fruits of that crime looming up so fearfully, as actually to find a grain of private consolation in the *hope!* that a race of human beings among us are advancing to the miseries of extermination. I do not find fault with the hope; it is natural—I shall naturally and justifiably hope that my wilful destroyer may perish before he murders me—I condemn the oppression which has left good and wise men no solace except in that hope. They scan the bills of mortality in Southern cities with a sigh of relief. Doubtless city-life is a devouring gulf for the poor freedman, but Virginia is a rural State; and in the country, the lazy freedman multiplies, unstinted by his poverty. The climate is genial, the winter is short, the persimmons and blackberries span the larger part of the year; the "old hares" are prolific; the old freedmen, once slaves, still do about half work, and produce some provisions; and above all, the process of eating up the white people by petty pilferings is still far from completed. So, between these various resources, country negroes manage to sustain those low conditions of existence, which enable so low a race to multiply; and they multiply on, as yet, very much as in old times. This perilous incoming generation will be a numerous one.

The next fact is, that *the negro is a creature of habit.* Those whose characters were formed in slavery still carry with them two habits gained there; one, that of work (though gradually relaxing); the other, that of loyalty and affectionate respect for "their white folks." The new generation cherishes neither. I know of only one or two, of either sex, who are engaged in any self-supporting labor—they live on their parents, or on pilfering. Does one see any of them apprenticed to any useful trade, or in the regular employment of any business man? I have with me the testimony of the planters; they tell me that, in hiring hands, they always seek middle-aged ones, who were trained in slavery; the younger are not worth hiring, if they ever offer. I have with me the testimony of the middle-aged freedmen, the fathers and mothers themselves. Their complaint is, that the "young ones have no idea of work—they do not know what real work is—what is to become of them, the Lord only knows." All who know the negro character are aware also of that infirmity of purpose which, almost universally renders them inefficient parents. They are either too weak or indulgent, or they are brutally and capriciously severe. Hence, the usual law of negro families is, a low state of parental and filial qualities, dissatisfied parents, and insubordinate children—it was always so upon the plantations, except as the master or overseer guided and reinforced the

father's rule; it is flagrantly so now. The ugliest feature of this coming day is, that the young negroes are evidently growing up with a restive, surly, insolent spirit towards the whites. in place of that close family affection, feudal loyalty, and humble pride in their superiors, which once united masters and servants. How can it be otherwise? The family tie is gone forever—the “carpet bagger” has played his accursed game upon the negro's passions. Suffrage and the free school awaken in the young negro foolish and impossible aspirations, which are fated to disappointment, and whose disappointment he will assuredly lay to the door of his white rivals, lately his kindly protectors. One needs only to walk by the way, to see this change of temper. The ex-slave greets his former “white folks” with a smile of genuine pleasure, and with all the deference of old times. But his son and daughter pass without speech, or with a surly nod, and assert their independence by shouldering white children from the sidewalk. What, meantime, is the temper to which these white young people are growing up? They also are strangers to the family feeling; they know nothing of the kindly responsibility and patronage begotten by the former dependence of the servants; to them these insolent young blacks are simply strangers and aliens, repulsive and abhorred. The sons of the heroes who fell at Manassas and Gettysburg are not likely to imbibe from widowed mothers traditions which will make them very tolerant of “negro impudence.”

The State of New Jersey has emancipated her slaves recently enough, for men now living to testify to the effects of the measure. The account that I have uniformly heard from her citizens is this: That the negroes reared in slavery continued to be useful, but that when this generation had passed away, business men ceased, as a general rule, to employ negroes in any permanent contract of labor. They were found too fickle, uncertain and indolent. Ask a New Jersey farmer to employ a negro for his permanent farm help, and he would answer with a smile at your absurdity. After a time negroes almost ceased to be seen in rural districts; they drifted into taverns, barbers' shops and other places where “jobs” could be picked up. What right have we to flatter ourselves with a different result in Virginia?

Now an industrious community can endure a certain percentage of idlers, but if it be increased too much, they poison the community. The body politic is, in this, like the natural body, a certain amount of poison in its circulation can be endured, and eliminated by the emunctory organs, but if the poison is in larger quantity, the man dies. When the generation of freed-negroes, which works feebly, has passed away, can the white people of Southside Virginia endure the pilfering of a body of negroes more numerous than themselves, who will work not at all? And when the white people are at last driven to the end of all patience by intolerable annoyances, and the blacks are determined to live and not to work, collision cannot but ensue. What shall we do with that generation of

negroes "educated" to be above work? I see no other prospect, humanly speaking, except the beginning of a war of races, which will bring back the provost marshal, and the government of the bayonet, and will, indeed, make us eager to welcome them.

But even if this danger is evaded, I object to this whole scheme of State education for negroes, because, if successful, it can only result in wrong. In every civilized country, there must be a laboring class. The idea that this universal "education," so called, is to elevate that laboring class into a reading body, and still leave them laborers, is a vain vision. The people who are addicted to manual labor are never going to be students, as a body. It is not so in boasted Prussia, nor in boasting New England. Laborers, if taught the arts of letters in their youth, disuse them in their toiling manhood. The brain which is taxed to supply the nervous energy for a day of manual labor, will have none left for literary pursuits. If our civilization is to continue, there must be, at the bottom of the social fabric, a class who must work and not read. Now, grant that the free school does all that its wildest boasts can claim; that it elevates the negroes out of this grade. Then the only result will be, that white people must descend into it, and occupy it. Where then is the gain? I, for one, say plainly, that I belong to the white race, and that if I must choose between the two results, my philanthropy leads me to desire the prosperity of my own people, in preference to that of an alien race. I do not see any humanity in taking the negro out of the place for which nature has fitted him, at the cost of thrusting my own kindred down into it. No amelioration whatever is effected in the country taken as a whole; but an unnatural crime is committed to gratify a quixotic and unthinking crotchet.

Again: Let us grant that free schools effect all that is claimed, for the elevation of the negro; that he is actually fitted for all the dignities of the commonwealth, and for social equality. Then, will he not demand it? Of course. Here then, is my concluding *dilemma*. If these 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*. If the State School Board are working for anything, they are working for this; here is the goal of their plans. The most solemn and urgent duty now incumbent on the rulers of Virginia, is to devise measures to prevent the gradual but sure approach of this final disaster. The satanic artificers of our subjugation well knew the work which they designed to perpetrate: it is so to mingle that blood which flowed in the veins of our Washingtons, Lees, and Jacksons, and which consecrated the battle fields of the Confederacy, with this sordid, alien taint, that the bastard stream shall never again throb with independence enough to make a tyrant tremble. These men were taught by the instincts of their envy and malignity, but too infallibly, how the accursed work was to be done. They knew that political equality would prepare the way for social equality, and that, again,

for amalgamation. It is only our pride which hides the danger from our eyes. A friend from Virginia was conversing, in London, with an old English navy surgeon, who was intimately acquainted with the British West-India Islands. He assured the Virginian that the "reconstruction acts" tended directly to amalgamation, and would surely result in it if persevered in. "Never," exclaimed my Virginia friend, "In our case, our people's pride of race will effectually protect them from that last infamy." "Had ever any people," replied the ex-surgeon, "more pride of race than the English? Yet they are amalgamating in Jamaica. We have the teachings of forty years' experience in this matter; when your emancipation has become, like ours, forty years old, you will see." The Virginian was silenced. Even now, after ten years of the misery and shame of subjugation, one has only to open his eyes to see the crumbling away of the social barriers between the two races. The nearest and heaviest share of this curse of mixed blood will, of course, fall upon the conquered States themselves; but the revengeful mind will have the grim satisfaction of seeing the conquering States reap their sure and fearful retribution from the same cause. Eleven populous States, tainted with this poison of hybrid and corrupted blood, will be enough to complete the destruction of the white States to which they will be chained. The Yankee empire will then find itself, like a strong man with a cankerous limb, perishing by inches, in chronic and hideous agonies. The member which spreads its poison through the whole body can neither be healed nor amputated, all will putrefy together.

Is there any *remedy*? This is the question which will be urged, and those who think with me are listened to with disfavor, chiefly because people do not like to be reminded of a shameful and miserable future, which they suppose to be unavoidable; they prefer to shut their eyes and enjoy the remnants of pleasures which are left them, without disturbance. We shall be asked: Why speak of these things, unless there can be shown a remedy? There might be a remedy, if the people and their leaders were single-minded and honest in their action as citizens. The key-note of that remedy is in "impartial suffrage." In endeavoring to remedy the dangers of the commonwealth, we must remember that we are a conquered people, and have to obey our masters. Otherwise our straight road back to safety would be at once to repeal negro-suffrage. But our masters will not hear of that. What is called "impartial suffrage" is, however, permitted by their new Constitution. We should at once avail ourselves of that permission, and without attempting any discrimination on grounds of "race, color, or previous condition of bondage," establish qualifications both of property and intelligence for the privilege of voting. This would exclude the great multitude of negroes, and also a great many white men. And this last would of itself be no little gain, for many more white men have the privilege than use it for the good of the State. Again, the very misfortunes of the time give us this advantage now, for drawing back

from the ultra-radicalism of our previous legislation: that the mass of white men are now so impressed with the dishonor and mischiefs of negro suffrage, the majority of those white voters having no property, would, even joyfully, surrender their privilege, tarnished and worthless as it is, if thereby the negro could be excluded. This constitutes our opportunity. To this saving reform there is just one real obstacle, and that is, *the timid self-interest of the office-seeking class*. I take it for granted that every sensible man in Virginia thinks in his heart that negro suffrage is a deplorable mistake. But many wish to be elected or appointed to office. These begin to calculate, under the promptings of timid selfishness: "While I should be very glad to see this wholesome reform, it will not be prudent for *me* to advocate it; because, should a movement for it, advocated by me, perchance fail, then all the classes whom that movement proposed to disfranchise of this useless and hurtful privilege, will be offended with me. So, when self-love desires to be elected to some place of emolument, they will remember me and vote against me. Hence, I cannot move in that reform, however desirable." *This is the real difficulty*, and the only real difficulty, in the way of this blessed step towards salvation. If all the men who now cherish aspirations for office, could only be made to act disinterestedly—to forget self, to resolve to do the right and wise thing for the Commonwealth, whether they were ever voted for again or not, the whole thing would be easy. There are a plenty of intelligent young men in Virginia, now without property, who would joyfully join the freeholders in voting to disfranchise themselves for this great end, to make a commanding majority. So that the question, whether the State can be saved from this perdition, turns practically on this other question (as indeed the fate of Commonwealths always practically does,) whether her people can for once act with a real honest disinterestedness. If the people and their leaders are capable of that, they can save themselves; if not capable, nothing can save them. And perhaps the verdict of posterity will be, that they were unworthy of being saved. It will be well for all to look this view of the matter fully in the face. Especially is it necessary for the farmers to see precisely where the deliverance and the obstacle to it lie.

The other branch of our remedy should be to reform our school system, both for blacks and whites, back towards the system of our fathers in Virginia, just as fast as possible. I mean the system which prevailed in Virginia up to 1860. I know that all the self-constituted, pretended advocates of free education disparage that system as miserably partial and inefficient. But our fathers knew what they were about, much better than was supposed. "Young people *think* old people are fools, but old people *know* that young ones are." Did that old system produce perfect results? No. No system in imperfect human hands ever produces perfect results. Did it teach every adult in the State to read and write? No. *But neither will the new one*. That is, the new system will no more be able to

overcome the inexorable law, that the mass of those addicted to manual labor will not and cannot addict themselves to the literary arts, than our fathers were. And after all the fuss and boast, and iniquitous expense, "the upshot" will be that *there will still be just as many adults in the State, who practically will not read, and who will forget how, as before.* And there will be far fewer to use their art of reading to any good purpose. How often will men stubbornly forget that *the art of reading is not education, but only a very uncertain means of education.* With that class for which the free school especially provides, it is *usually a worthless means.* The feasible and useful education for that class is the development of faculties which takes place in learning how to make an honest living. My prediction is already verified in Massachusetts, the very home of the State-school humbug. *The annual reports of their own school superintendents confess it.* A large part of the rural laboring population still do not read, have forgotten how to read, do not care to know, and care not a stiver whether their children know. (Here, by the way, is the cause of this new *furor* for "compulsory education"). Tried by this sober and truthful standard, I assert that the comparative fruits of our old system fully justified its excellence. Again I demand that the "tree shall be known by its fruits." That was the system which reared the Virginians of 1861: that glorious, enlightened generation of men, which comprehended so clearly the vital importance of the great doctrine of State sovereignty, while the Yankee hordes, reared up under this be-praised system of free schools, ignorantly trampled on it with beastly stupidity and violence: that glorious generation which contended for the right so firmly, so temperately, as to win the admiration of the world: that generation which, when moderation availed no longer, formed the heroic armies which followed Jackson and Lee to the last. Yes, it was the old Virginia system that reared the yeomanry which filled those immortal ranks with such a body of privates—so virtuous, so enduring, so brave, so intelligent, as no other generals ever commanded. Yes, "let the tree be known by its fruits." The tree that bore "the rank and file" of the Stonewall Brigade was good enough for me. It may be pruned, it may be watered and tilled, and thus it may be improved. Our true wisdom will be to plant it again.

This old system evinced its wisdom by avoiding the pagan, Spartan theory, which makes the State the parent. It left the parent supreme in his God-given sphere, as the responsible party for providing and directing the education of his own offspring. This old plan, instead of usurping, encouraged and assisted, where assistance was needed. It was wise again, in that it avoided creating salaried offices to eat up the people's money, and yet do no actual teaching. It was supremely wise, in that it cut that Gordian knot, "Religion in the State school," which now baffles British and Yankee wit. It set that insuperable difficulty clear on one side, by leaving the school as the creature of the parents, and not of the State. It was

wise in its exceeding economy, a trait so essential to the State now.

I would have our rulers, then, avail themselves of another circumstance growing out of our calamities, to disarm the overweening zeal of the State school men. We can truthfully say to them: "Your system, whether best or not, is simply impracticable for Virginia. You see that she has stretched taxation to the verge of confiscation; and yet her debt cannot be paid and that costly system carried on." Let two separate "Literary funds," then, be created, one for whites and one for blacks, each separate, and each replenished from the taxation of its own class. Let "each tub stand upon its own bottom." Instead of the State undertaking to be a universal creator and sustainer of schools, let it invite parents to create, sustain, and govern their own schools under the assistance and guidance of an inexpensive and (mainly) unsalaried Board, and then render such help to those parents who are unable to help themselves, as the very limited school tax will permit. And let *the existence of some aspiration* in parents or children be the uniform condition of the aid; for without this condition it is infallibly thrown away. "One man may take a horse to water, but a hundred can't make him drink."

R. L. DABNEY.

Union Theological Seminary, Va., Feb. 21, 1876.

[For the Southern Planter and Farmer.]

IN MEMORY OF A VIRGINIA YOEMAN WHOSE LIFE
WAS A PATTERN TO US ALL.

We present to our friends the following sketch, furnished us by an esteemed correspondent, of the career of that most excellent man and successful farmer, Mr. JOHN S. NICHOLAS, Sr., of Buckingham. As advanced in years as he was when the war reached its issue, he did not fold his hands and mourn over what *had been*; but, to the end of his days, observed a diligence in business, and a cheerfulness of temper, that made him, in these times of gloom, a pattern for those still favored by youth, and whose energies needed *only the will* to succeed. Before the war, when comfort was general, the affairs of most men were so arranged as to enable their families, without much other suffering than the loss of one dear to their hearts, to get along. Now the case is entirely different; if the head of the family does not struggle to make this provision, the almshouse, or the charity of relatives, *is the only hope of his family*, without God has vouchsafed him sturdy sons on whom his wife and daughters may lean for support. Mr. NICHOLAS, in that he showed the fruits of a manhood which is the portion of us all, and in a way to indicate its chief characteristic, *independence*, did not live in vain.—ED.

This gentleman, whose lamented death occurred the 5th of November, 1875, was born at Seven Islands, in Buckingham county, December 11th, 1803.

His energy, business sagacity, purity of character and public spirit, made him an honored type of the Virginia gentleman and farmer of the generation, now so rapidly passing away, and an example to the young who are pressing forward as their successors.