

The Charlotte Observer.

TUESDAY, JUNE 24, 1879.

SOUTHERN SCHOOL BOOKS.

Part of the Debate in the Senate Last Wednesday.

From the Congressional Record, 20th.

Mr. Blaine. I have here a modern school book which I got from the library with the imprint of 1879. The honorable Senator from North Carolina [Mr. Vance] was good enough to assure me that any books of that character belonged to past day and had faded out. I am very sure that he would be the last Senator to make a statement.

Mr. Vance. Then I do. My information in regard to Southern matters on that particular point is wider than that of the honorable Senator from North Carolina.

Mr. Vance. Does the Senator from Maine say that he knows the book which he holds in his hand is used in the schools of North Carolina?

Mr. Blaine. No; I do not know that this particular book has yet been introduced; but I know that at the very time the Senator from North Carolina was giving me the assurance that he did not know about it there was a very lively controversy going on in the town of Greenville in his own State between different members of the board of supervisors of schools as to whether this class of books should be kept in; and that was to me a very encouraging symptom, for it began to be the dawn of a better day in that respect. But here is a book published by A. S. Barnes & Co., of New York, Chicago and New Orleans, as the imprint says, a very respectable firm. It is a book called "The Southern Student's Handbook of Selections for Reading and Oratory," edited by John G. James, superintendent of the United States military academy at Austin, and is just now fresh from the press. Whether it is published as a mere amusing thing or whether it is intended for Southern circulation the Senator himself will better inform me than I could inform myself.

Mr. Vance. I have never seen the book before.

Mr. Blaine. It is just from the press. Mr. Vance. I will take a glance at it as soon as I can. I see it comes from Chicago. I believe that is not a Southern city.

Mr. Blaine. It is published simultaneously in New York, Chicago and New Orleans; that is the imprint, 1879. I suppose New Orleans ranks as a Southern city still.

Mr. Vance. Yes, but it is printed in the North for the purpose of meeting the prejudice of some people in the South, to make money out of it, just as the book manufacturers used to manufacture idols to send out to the Hindoos for sale in the same ship with the missionaries.

Mr. Blaine. If the Senator will permit any such suggestion, I will state that generally the place where a book is printed does not tell of its character.

I am quite free to maintain that this is one of the most remarkable books that I ever came across within the limited sphere of my own reading. It quite goes beyond this other book about the heroic conduct of Jefferson Davis and the bad conduct of the Indians regarding the battle of Buena Vista.

* * * * * I think there is not a person who speaks the English tongue who has not heard of Thomas H. Benton and many other distinguished men who have adorned the annals of Missouri. If they had been selecting something worthy for a reading book, if they had taken Mr. Benton's Thirty Years' View and merely transferred to its pages his magnificent description of the character of Nathaniel Macon, they would have done more for the Southern youth than is contained within the four hundred pages of this volume.

Mr. Vance. Will the Senator allow me to ask him if he makes that criticism as a Senator or as a schoolmaster, or what would be most conducive to the instruction of Southern youth?

Mr. Blaine. I do not understand the Senator.

Mr. Vance. The Senator says that if the author of that book had inserted certain things from Benton's Thirty Years' View, he believed it would conduce more to the instructions of Southern youth than all it contained. I ask him if that advice is as a Senator or as a schoolmaster.

Mr. Blaine. Either, as you choose to take it, it will only lodge in the Southern mind.

Mr. Vance. Allow me to ask the Senator if he objects to what is in the book or to what is not in it?

Mr. Blaine. I object to what is in it; and I will come to that.

Mr. Vance. So far we have had nothing of the contents of the book except the names of some gentlemen whom selection has been made.

Mr. Blaine. If the Senator from North Carolina will accept the suggestion that I have the floor, and that I have under the rules of the Senate the right to speak as I choose myself, I will observe some law of courtesy which just at this moment seems to be the celestial and the terrestrial.

Mr. Vance. I accept the suggestion with the greatest pleasure in the world, if the Senator will allow me to remark that I have observed it has been his invariable habit to interrupt any gentleman on the floor and to yield to any gentleman who desires to interrupt him.

Mr. Blaine. Always, but not to have a caustic remark made as to what line of speech I shall take. I shall select that myself, with the Senator's permission.

Mr. Vance. Of course I asked no permission. You had been reading the list of authors in the book, and were proceeding to deliver the South a lecture when you had read nothing from the book itself, and I asked if your objection was urged upon what was in it or what was not in it. If I have reflected on the gentleman I am sorry for it.

Mr. Blaine. From the State of North Carolina—the Senator will permit me to do so in my own way.

Mr. Blaine. I observe the book is reading extracts from P. B. Meek, Mrs. M. Clarke, Miss F. Fisher, T. B. Kingsbury, J. M. Leach, A. W. Mangum, and from the two honorable Senators who are now upon this floor.

I do not find anything in that book from Chief Justice Gaston; from the eminent Mr. Badger, from Willie P. Mangum, from Wm. A. Graham, or from any of the great men of the past who have illustrated the annals of North Carolina. I will go throughout this book. It is more or less entirely of the South as it is related to the rebellion. I do not say entirely, for I do not mean that every page in it is political; but if the honorable Senator from North Carolina—to whom I will gladly pass the book over when I am through with it—will show me one solitary thing in this book intended or suggested to deepen in the minds of the Southern youth any respect for the national government, or any adherence to the Union, I shall be glad to hear it, unless I shall guard myself by excepting some expressions here and there from recent political debates in the Senate or the House in which I do not find any members of both bodies have made declarations of that kind.

Mr. Vance. May I be ignorant to the contrary?—

Mr. Blaine. With great pleasure.

Mr. Vance. Still am ignorant, as I presume the Senator is, of the character

and contents of the book which the Senator holds in his hand, but I take it for granted that at all events it is such as meets his earnest disapprobation. Now I should like to ask, taking it for granted that it is a very bad book, if any institution in the South of an official character—I mean any State school department—has endorsed the book and put it into the public schools of the State?

Mr. Blaine. That I am not able to answer.

Mr. Vance. Then have any private schools adopted it and put it into use?

Mr. Blaine. I am ignorant of that subject as the honorable Senator said he was himself. He said it was not to his knowledge.

Mr. Vance. Then the Senator from Maine tries to hold the whole South responsible for the publication of a book by a private author, the importance of which nobody could prevent if it was a bad book. That is the position now, the Senator stands in according to his own statement.

Mr. Blaine. That is a very small quibble, if the honorable Senator chooses to insist in it. Books are published in every country, and the Senator from Maine stands in no better position than a large hill from a doctor was avoided.

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