

EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT.

RALEIGH, November 17, 1898.

To the Honorable the General Assembly of North Carolina.

GENTLEMEN:—It is proper that at your first regular session under the new Constitution, I should lay before you "information of the affairs of the State," and recommend to your consideration such measures as may be deemed expedient.

The people of the State have reconstructed their government on the basis of the equal rights of all. The State is quiet and tranquil. There is no ground for apprehending that sections will again be separated, or that the peace of the country will be disturbed.

The year now closing has been richly crowned with harvests. The seasons have been propitious. A plentiful supply of bread has been produced for our whole population, so that want in this respect will not be felt during the coming year by any who will labor for a living. Fruits of all kinds have gathered in abundance. The staples of cotton and tobacco are affording fair profits to those who have produced them, while from timber and coal there is a considerable portion of our people are realizing good returns, as in former years. Our commerce is increasing. Our natural resources are more and more in process of development. Our railroads are reverting from the oppression under which they formerly labored, and promising better returns to the territories to which they and the Stockholders, while new lines of communication are being laid out, destined to penetrate and develop the great natural resources of portions of the State heretofore untouched by the hand of improvement. The State credit has been established on a solid basis, thus giving promise that at no distant day the bonds of the State will command as much in the market as those of the most favored and prosperous States.

We have great cause to be thankful to Almighty God for the manifold blessings which He is bestowing upon us; and we can confidently look forward, under His protection and guidance, for a condition of prosperity and happiness which we have not heretofore enjoyed.

STATE DEBT AND FINANCES.

The State debt and finances will doubtless receive the thoughtful and careful consideration of the General Assembly. The amount of the State debt on the 1st of October, 1898, was sixteen million two hundred and nine thousand nine hundred and forty-five dollars (\$16,209,945). This includes estimated amount of past due interest to be funded under act of August 30, 1898, of two millions of dollars (\$2,000,000). The amount (\$18,209,945) is inclusive of bonds issued for internal improvement purposes since May 20, 1891, and prior to the year 1898. The amount of these bonds is one million one hundred and twenty-eight thousand dollars (\$1,128,000), and the estimated interest thereon due and unpaid is one hundred and eighty thousand five hundred and ten dollars (\$180,510).

The amount of interest which has matured October 1st, 1898, and been paid in cash, is one hundred and twenty thousand one hundred and one dollar (\$121,101). The interest maturing at subsequent dates during the present fiscal year is as follows: January 1st, 1899, three hundred and eight thousand one hundred and ninety-seven dollars (\$3,808,197); July 1st, 1899, three hundred and eighty-four thousand three hundred and eighty-four dollars (\$384,384); October 1st, 1899, three hundred and four thousand one hundred and one dollar (\$3,401,101); July 1st, 1899, three hundred and eighty-four thousand three hundred and eighty-four dollars (\$384,384); October 1st, 1899, one million three hundred and twenty-eight thousand dollars (\$1,328,000). The amount of interest above stated as falling due April 1st, 1899, includes interest on bonds four millions five hundred thousand dollars (\$4,500,000), yet to be issued, bearing date October 1st, 1898.

The balance remaining in the hands of the Public Treasurer October 1st, 1898, was one hundred and fifty thousand thirty-four dollars eighty-four cents (\$150,334.84). The amount from taxes, including payments in October, is two hundred and twenty-six thousand seven hundred and six dollars forty-two cents (\$226,706.42). The taxes from several counties remain unpaid, but we cannot expect more than twenty-five thousand dollars (\$25,000) from this source.

The estimated probable expenses of the State government during the present fiscal year will be, three hundred and seventy-five thousand two hundred and thirty dollars (\$375,230). Add interest falling due during fiscal year, of one million three hundred and twenty-eight thousand nine hundred and ninety-six dollars (\$1,328,996), will leave the amount to be provided for one million four hundred and seven thousand eight hundred and twenty-six dollars (\$1,407,826). To meet this the Treasurer will have fifty thousand thirty-four dollars and eighty-four cents (\$50,334.84), after paying one hundred thousand dollars (\$100,000) temporary loan; taxes received since October 1st, 1898, ninety-five thousand one hundred and ninety-five dollars and thirty-seven cents (\$95,195.37); estimated taxes due, seventy-five thousand dollars (\$75,000); proceeds of sale of North Carolina railroad bonds, one hundred and seventeen thousand six hundred dollars (\$117,600), making a total of three hundred and thirty-seven thousand eight hundred and thirty-one dollars and twenty-one cents (\$337,831.31). Leaving the amount of one million and sixty-nine thousand and ninety-nine cents (\$1,069,932.38) to be provided for by taxation during the present fiscal year.

The stocks and bonds held by the State in corporations, and interest due from said corporations, is as follows: Stocks, eight million five hundred and thirty-four thousand five hundred dollars (\$8,534,500); Bonds, four million two hundred and thirty-four thousand dollars (\$4,234,000); Interest, four hundred and seventy-two thousand five hundred dollars (\$472,500). Making a total of thirteen million two hundred and forty-one thousand dollars (\$13,241,000).

I recommend that some mode be provided to ensure the payment of this interest, and of such interest as may be due the State in future from corporations.

The report of the Public Treasurer will contain full details of the public debt, with recommendations as to the best means for providing for interest. I have full confidence in that officer, and respectfully commend his statements and views to the consideration of the General Assembly.

The estimated value of all the property in the State, lands and their improvements included, is two hundred and fifty millions of dollars (\$250,000,000). I do not regard this as an extravagant estimate, but assuming that it is, and putting it at two hundred millions (\$200,000,000), it is clear that the people of the State are fully able to carry on their government and at the same time provide for the payment of the interest on their debt. An ad valorem tax of one per cent on two hundred millions would raise two millions. At a half per cent, it would be one million. A citizen worth five thousand dollars clear of debt, would pay twenty-five dollars to the State, in order to raise the million that will be necessary—and so on in proportion. The interest on the State debt should be met promptly and in good faith, and the taxes necessary to meet it should be levied. The Constitution which we have all sworn to support, provides that the public debt "shall never be questioned." If we hesitate to meet the interest of the debt, or if we fail from any cause to make due provision to meet it, we thereby "question" the debt, and do violence

to our solemn obligation. I believe that the General Assembly will impose, and that the people of the State will cheerfully pay whatever amount may be necessary to meet the interest on the debt. I believe it will be popular to make such provision, but whether popular or not, it should be done. The great question for a statesman is, what is right?—what does duty require under the circumstances? If the answer is, do a certain thing, do it, and leave it to time, events, and a just public judgment to vindicate and sustain the deed.

INTERNAL IMPROVEMENTS.

The people of the State are so fully committed to internal improvements that I deem it necessary to say but little on the subject. Since the close of the rebellion the State has been extended to the Wilmington, Charlotte and Rutherford Road—to the Fayetteville and Western Road—to the Chatham and Goldsboro Road—to the Tarboro and Weldon Road, and to the Western North Carolina Road. The work on the latter Road is being vigorously prosecuted between Morganton and Asheville. A company has been organized, under an act of the General Assembly at its last session, for the Western Division of this Road, and it is expected that during the coming year the route will be surveyed, and much of the work put under contract. While I would properly estimate the importance of other internal improvements referred to, I could not overstate the value of the extension west of the Blue Ridge. These Roads, one to Palm Springs and the other to Ducktown, will open to immigration, and will greatly improve and benefit a region of the State which has heretofore been neglected, and which is equal to any in the world in natural resources. There is no work in which the people of this State are more fully committed, both by interest and inclination, and I have every confidence that it will reach that point to which it is destined to reach.

IMMIGRATION.

The Constitution provides that "there shall be established, in the office of the Secretary of State, a Bureau of Statistics, Agriculture, and Immigration, under such regulations as the General Assembly may prescribe." The attention of the General Assembly is respectfully invited to that portion of the report of the Secretary of State herewith transmitted, which refers to this subject. No State in the Union presents greater inducements than ours does to immigrants. I feel sure the General Assembly concurs with me as to the importance of encouraging immigration; and I trust that body will at once adopt such measures on the subject as it may deem practicable and efficient in their operation. We have a salubrious climate, a variety and fertile soil, an abundance of the most valuable minerals, inexhaustible water-power, fine grazing lands, vast forests of timber of all kinds, a long sweep of sea-coast, and, in fine, everything, material and physical, which in a country in some respects almost new, can attract immigrants and fill the measure of their expectations. Our government is now settled on a solid basis. The laws are over all alike, and are faithfully and honestly administered. Society is peaceful and tranquil. Immigrants, therefore, will not only be welcomed by our people, but will be protected and respected, and a fair field will be opened to them, in common with those who are here, to improve their condition.

EDUCATION.

The attention of the General Assembly is respectfully invited to the report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, herewith transmitted. That officer is diligently engaged in his duties. I am satisfied, from my knowledge of his character and qualifications, that he will be able to put in operation, at an early period, under the sanction of the General Assembly, a system of "schools and means of education" in all respects better and more extensive than any heretofore in existence in the State.

The University of the State is inseparably connected with the free public schools. Both should be fostered. Education in agriculture, mechanics, mining, engineering, and in all the useful arts and sciences, should be encouraged. Normal instruction should be provided for at once, that we may have well educated teachers of our own for our public schools.

Nearly all the State school fund, the proceeds for the most part of the funds deposited with this State by the general government in 1836, has been lost. It is unnecessary to show how it was lost, or to dilate upon the advances here matched from us. Here are vain for what is past. Let us improve the present, and address ourselves to the future. We must have free public schools for all: all the children of the State at whatever cost. This is a duty which can neither be postponed nor evaded. So thoroughly am I impressed with this duty, and so earnestly am I committed to every feasible measure to render its full performance certain, that but for the assurance that it will be thus performed I would despair of free popular government in North Carolina. "Education is the cheap defence of nations," not only from without but within. It is that light which distinguishes refined and civilized from barbarian races. It forms and compacts the only society among men which is worthy of the name. It touches the earth, and blossoms with luxuriance; its soil yields its choicest fruits, its mines open and pour out their varied treasures, and its rivers and seas are whitened with commerce, which carries with it not only exchangeable wealth, but ideas in government, literature, science and art. It is the only sure basis of good morals, or without it the Divine Word, the foundation of all truth, would be a sealed book. It is the strongest link that can be erected to protect the rights of property. Property holders, are therefore, specially interested in promoting education.—Taxes for such a purpose should be cheerfully and promptly paid. The affluent and the enlightened can afford to care in this respect for the poor and the ignorant, since it is not merely their duty, but their highest interests are thus best served. But little, if any of the money expended for education is sent out of the State. It remains with us, and while our people are thus enriched with knowledge, they are not rendered poorer even in money, as the latter is collected from the citizens by one hand of the State and immediately disbursed to them by the other.

The people of the State are anxious that industries and worthy immigrants should come hither and settle among us. It is a primary question with all such immigrants whether in the communities or States in which they are invited to settle, there are facilities for educating their children. If we do not put in operation as good public schools as there are in other portions of the country, we cannot hope to attract to the State any considerable number of immigrants. They will continue to turn their steps towards other regions, not more inviting than ours, it is true, in climate, soil and material resources, but in which they can secure for their children, at the public charges, a system of schools to fit them to become intelligent and useful citizens. The people of North Carolina have long been a unit in favor of education. From the days of Yancey, Murphree, Stanly, Cameron, Gaston, Caldwell, and others, to the present, their enlightened statesmen of all parties have enjoined this as the first duty of the State.—I am persuaded that the purpose to educate the rising generation is as firmly fixed upon us as any former period. This is a "free" on which all can agree. A rivalry can exist in this respect which will be generous in its nature, which will violate no sacred rule of charity, and which, honoring those who may engage in it, will confer immeasurable benefits and blessings on this and future generations. I recommend, in the most earnest terms,

that the General Assembly during its present session provide for a general and uniform system of public schools. The schools for the colored children should be separate, but in all other respects there should be no difference in the character of the schools, or in the provision made, to support them.

The Board of Education and Trustees of the University will doubtless make reports to the General Assembly at an early day as to the condition of the educational interests confided to them. Both these Boards are fully organized, and have transacted some important business.

PROTECTION TO LABOR.

The Constitution provides that "the General Assembly shall provide, by proper legislation, for giving to mechanics and laborers an adequate lien on the subject matter of their labor."

In the conflict always going on between capital and labor, the latter is more likely to suffer if on the former, first, because money or capital is power; and secondly, because capital is generally controlled by a greater degree of intelligence than that which characterizes the laborer, and is therefore better able to effect this, in a legal or moral point of view, between a contract broken by a mechanic or laborer, and an obligation, unperformed by a capitalist or employer. The mechanic and the laborer should be protected, but not to the detriment of the employer when the latter is fully complied with his obligation. The law should be so framed, while laboring, and the reward of his labor will be realized, and so effect this, in a legal or moral point of view, between a contract broken by a mechanic or laborer, and an obligation, unperformed by a capitalist or employer. 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