

## BEST FOOT FORWARD

**SOUTH BE ALIVE TO IMPORTANCE  
OF CORRECT RECORDS.**

Poor Showing of State of Virginia in  
Matter of Books—Partly Due to  
Neglect to Co-operate With National  
Bureau of Education.

BY MRS. W. M. STROTHER.

One of the broadcast injunctions of the Holy Book is that of him who may be called analytical apostle: "Let all things be done decently and in order." It seems that one great forward step made in this generation has been toward orderliness.

We have had the signs of times interpreted to us by so many seers, from so many viewpoints, that we are slowly and surely coming into the breadth of vision which gives us the sense of true proportions. This true subordination of the past to the present and future, of the non-essential, of the passing to the lasting, is traceable through all the degrees of our progress in knowledge. "Truth has been defined as coalescence, and as the constitution of human society approaches the ideal of perfection, the old and serviceable trinity of duty, power and privilege must still determine the degree of worldly rank.

That the Southern States possess this power of coalescence to perfection is shown in this systematic co-operation with each other in the upbuilding of the South industrially. It is beginning to come to the front and to be felt also in the educational outlook of the South as presented at the Southern Educational Association's meeting in Lexington, Ky., two weeks ago. But the power that will come from the co-operation between the South and the national scheme of education was dimly profigured in the fine speech of Dr. Alderman's, which should be scattered through the South as a campaign document, by the educational association.

The Southern States refuse to co-operate with the United States Bureau of Education even in the small matter of sending reports.

### Books in University, College and School.

The writer has received letters from several prominent Virginians, commending effort made in these articles, to rouse Virginians to a greater pride and interest in library activities.

All who have commented have seemed surprised at the poor showing of our State in the matter of books. One or two have questioned the correctness of the statistics on the subject, and wondered who gave them in. Now, this kind of critical comment is very acceptable and is much appreciated by the writer. It gives an opportunity to say a few words on the subject that is disturbing the peace of mind of all true lovers of the South, and specially of Virginia. This is the indifference and carelessness of our people in making accurate reports of our educational institutions to the United States Commissioner of Education. It seems impossible for the United States Bureau of Education to get true and prompt tabulated statements on this subject from those whose greatest pride and ambition should be to properly present the truth, in regard to the State's status in educational matters.

The trained librarians of the few public libraries of the South are organizing library commissions in each State, in their desire to get accurate reports on libraries. They are humiliated at the low rating given our institutions, but they cannot be indignant with the national commissioner, because he uses the same means of collecting facts in all the States.

To the student of educational statistics, the South is an enigma. Our institutions receive the poorest possible rating. It is indifference or is it laziness, or is it simply incompetence in the individuals whose duty it is to make these reports. The writer was told by a librarian in Western Massachusetts last summer that Virginia was woefully lacking in library facilities, but this did not prepare for the shock that was felt when the United States reports were investigated. The writer of these sketches has been almost a year trying to get these reports on Virginia libraries revised and corrected, for the sake of accuracy in these sketches. Some have taken great interest and have helped, others have agreed that it is correct enough. Indeed, the truth is humiliating enough without being misrepresented.

It seems strange that Richmond should be first made aware of her unhealthy condition by records of vital statistics of the United States, and now they are blaming those who made the returns.

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