

MONTGOMERY COUNTY.

● I have received your letter of the 1st December, asking certain statistical information in regard to the condition of the Public Schools of our County, and suggesting the following topics to which my replies should be necessarily directed.

“First, the condition of the Public Schools under the old local law; by what funds supported, and what degree of efficiency the schools attained.”

I find that the most complete answers which it is in my power to make, to these interrogatories, are contained in the two Annual Reports which it was my duty to make, for the years ending June 30th, 1861, and 1862. Although very willing to save you the trouble, by making a summary of these small pamphlets, it seems better, on reflection, to place the whole in your hands. The reports are brief, and so divided, that you can readily select information upon the points you may desire to have laid before you.

You will find from these Reports that a very good Local School Law was made for our County, in 1860, and a system not very dissimilar to the present, was inaugurated, and carried on for a year with tolerable success. But, in the following year, the working features of the system were crippled effectually by an “amendment” of the law which took away our funds, as shown in the Report for 1862. The School system dragged along from that time, but never recovered from the blow thus dealt.

Our experience thus affords strong evidence in favor of the necessity of a general State law, that protects the Schools from hasty local legislation. It is my full conviction that if no obstruction had been thrown by the Legislature in the way of our operations commenced in 1860, we should have a much more favorable report to make of the Schools for the quarter ending November 15th, 1865.

This is the next point of inquiry.

The number of pupils, who attended school, shows boys 544, and 481 girls, total 1,025.

Aggregate paid for salaries of teachers \$2,720.

Incidental expenses, (about) \$150.

Number of Schools in operation thirty-five.

Our Board adopted the “Sliding Scale” in fixing the Teacher’s salaries, beginning with a minimum of \$75 per Quarter, for fifteen scholars and under, and increasing by the rule laid down in the By-Laws, that is, adding \$2 per pupil from fifteen to twenty-five, \$1.50 from twenty-five to thirty-five, \$1 from thirty-five to sixty; but we have agreed, with the view of making the salary of the Teacher as good as can be at present, and at the same time offering a premium for his promoting attendance, to count as *full pupils* all who attend *more than half* the number of days in the Quarter; and, of those who attend less than half that number, we add up their days’ attendance, and divide by the whole number of days in a Quarter, and carry the quotient to the number first named. This seems somewhat complicated, but it serves to promote attendance, and swells the Teacher’s salary, always too little for a good Teacher.

The five School Commissioners, comprising our Board, agreed to receive and distribute the new books among the Teachers. This plan involves considerable labor, but it has important advantages. We all have vehicles, while the Teachers have none. Besides, by taking the books in person, the Commissioner can urge with more effect than the Teacher, the importance of their general diffusion, can explain the low terms on which they may be purchased, &c. Probably, when the schools are once well supplied, it may be left to the Secretary of the Board to take the entire charge of distributing books.

Under this head, I may remark that the new books take very well in some Schools, and go off slowly in others. The return of sales made to me during