

# The Montrose Democrat.

"WE ARE ALL EQUAL BEFORE GOD AND THE CONSTITUTION."—James Buchanan.

McCullum & Gerritson, Proprietors.

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## Miscellaneous.

### A SUDDEN REFORMATION.

The simple story I am about to relate possesses such interest for those who were ever acquainted with the parties concerned, and to others its interest will not only be in its truth, but also in the peculiar soul-touching developments.

In one of the Northern towns of Vermont lived a young man whom I shall call Daniel Byram. He was a lawyer by profession, and one of the most intelligent men in that section of the country. No one possessed the confidence of his friends more than he did, and no one was better calculated to secure the good will and friendship of all with whom he came in contact. Business poured in on him, and failed not to give the utmost satisfaction.

At the age of 27, Byram took to himself a wife from among the most favored ones of the country. Mary Feltton experienced a strange pride when she gave her hand to the young lawyer, and if none envied her, many at least prayed that they might be as fortunate.

But ere long a cloud came over the scene. Conviviality ran high among the members of the bar, and young Byram possessed one of those peculiar temperaments, which at length give the whole body and soul to the demon of appetite. For three years he followed the social customs of the times without neglecting much of his business; but finally he sank to the lowest pit of degradation—when at the age of five and thirty he had become a confirmed drunkard. He neglected his clients altogether, for he could not remain sober long enough at any one time to carry any case through court. The only business he had now upon his hands, was the collecting of some few small debts.

On the evening of his thirty-fifth birthday he joined the Washingtonians, and once more his bright genius shone upon the world. But it could not last long; and amid the example of those who were his constant companions, he went back to his cups, and down he sank, as rapidly as he had risen. In one short year from that time he was a miserable degraded thing. People who had left notes and accounts with him to collect, called at his home, and upon inquiring of his wife where he was, would tell them he was away. Poor woman! they could not bear to dispute her, and they would go their way. They knew full well that the remnants of Daniel Byram were prostrate upon his bedroom floor.

One day a Mr. Vinson called to see him. Vinson had left notes and accounts to the amount of several thousand dollars with Byram to collect, and he was anxious about them. His poor wife answered him as usual—that her husband had gone away.

"My dear madam," returned Mr. Vinson, "I know your misfortune, and I appreciate your feelings, but I must see your husband. If I can see him for even one minute, I can learn all I wish to know."

Mary Byram spoke not a word, but with a tearful eye she turned away, and Mr. Vinson followed her. He found Byram in a back room, stretched at full length upon the floor, with a jug of Meadrum run by his side. With much effort Mr. Vinson aroused the poor man to a state of seeming consciousness, and asked if he had any business with him.

"Yes," returned the lawyer, in a weak, husky, blearing voice, "I have had the money for you over a month. I've deducted my percentage, and you'll find the rest in that trunk. Mary got the key."

Mrs. Byram was called in, the key was produced, and Mr. Vinson found his money—four thousand and one hundred and fifty dollars—all right and safe.

In his worse moments Byram never used for himself a single penny he had in trust. Hundreds there were who labored hard to reclaim the wanderer, but without effect. Yet after the year went by, he sank lower and lower—yet his wife left him not. Her brother, a young lawyer, named Moses Feltton, often urged her to leave her husband, and the same time offering her a comfortable home beneath his own roof, but she would not listen.

At length all hopes were given up. Week after week would the fallen man lie down on the floor, and not a day of real sobriety marked his course. I doubt if such another case was ever known. He was too low for conviction, for those with whom he would have associated, would not drink with him. All, all alone in his own office and chamber, he drank the accursed poison, and even his very life seemed the offspring of a jug.

In early spring, Moses Feltton had a call to go to Ohio. Before he set out, he visited his sister. He offered to take her with him but she would not go.

"But why stay here?" urged the brother. You are all faded away, disease is upon you. Why should you live with such a brute?"

"Hush, Moses," spoke not a word, answered the wife, keeping back the tears. "I will not leave him now. But he will soon leave me; he can not last much longer."

At that moment Daniel Byram entered the apartment. Even Moses Feltton was startled by his appearance. He looked like a wanderer from the tomb. He had his hat on, and his old jaw was in his hand.

"Ah—Moses—how are ye?" he gasped for he could not speak plainly.

The visitor looked at him for a few moments in silence. Then, as his features assumed a cold stern expression, he said in a calm but strongly emphasized tone:

"Daniel Byram, I have been your next best friend but one. My sister is an angel—but married with a demon. I have loved you, Daniel, as I never loved man before, for you were noble, generous, and kind; but I hate you now, for you are a devil incarnate. Look at that woman. She is my sister—the only sister God ever gave me. I wish her to live with me, but she will not come to me. Thus do I pray that God will soon give her joys to my keeping. Now, Daniel, I do sincerely pray that the first intelligence that reaches me from my native place, after I reach my new home—may be—that you are dead!"

Byram gazed upon the speaker some moments without speaking.

"Moses," at length he said, "I am not in earnest!"

"As true as heaven, Daniel, I am. When I know you are dead I will be happy, and not until then—so go on. Fill your jug, and—"

"Stop, stop, Moses. I can reform."

"You cannot. It is beyond your power. You have had inducements enough, enough to have reformed half the sinners in creation—and yet you are lower than ever before. Go, and die, sir, as you see like, for the moment that sees you thus will set mourning free!"

Byram's eye flashed, and he drew himself proudly up.

"Go," said he with a tingle of that old powerful sarcasm that had often electrified a jury, "go to Ohio, and I'll send you news. Go, sir, and watch the post."

With these words, Daniel Byram hurried the jug into the fire place, and while yet its thousand pieces were flying over the floor, he strode from the house. Mary sank fainting to the floor. Moses bore her to the bed, and then having called a neighbor, he hurried away, for the stage was waiting.

For a moment Daniel Byram hovered over the brink of the grave, but he did not die. The girl of bandy will save you," said the doctor, who saw that the abrupt removal of all stimulants from a system that had for long years subsisted on almost nothing else, was nearly sure to prove fatal. "You can surely take a pill and not take any more!"

"Ay," grasped the poor man, "take a pill and break my oath! I will never take a pill and break my oath! I will never take a pill and break my oath!"

He did live; an iron will conquered the messenger death had sent, and Daniel Byram lived. For one month he could not walk without help. But he had help—joyful, powerful help. Mary helped him.

A year passed away, and Moses Feltton returned to his native home. He entered the courthouse at Burlington and Daniel Byram was upon the floor pleading for a young man who had been indicted for forgery. Feltton started with surprise. Never before had Byram looked so noble and commanding, never before had such torrents of eloquence poured from his lips. The case given to the jury and the youth was acquitted. The successful counsel turned from the court-room and met Moses Feltton.

They shook hands but did not speak. When they reached a spot where none others could hear them, Byram stopped.

"Moses," he said, "do you remember the words you spoke to me a year ago?"

"I do, Daniel."

"Will you take them back. Unsay them now and forever?"

"Yes, with all my heart."

"Then I am in part repaid."

"And what must be the remainder of the payment?" asked Moses.

"I must die an honest unperjured man. Each that has bound me thus far was made for life."

That evening Mary Byram was among the happiest of the happy. No allusion was made in word to that strange scene of one year before, but Moses could read in both the countenances of his sister and her husband the deep feelings they did not speak.

And Daniel Byram yet lives one of the most honored men in Vermont. Five times he has sat in the State Legislature, twice in the Senate and once in the National Congress, and he is yet a noble man, and an ornament to society, declining all offers of public office which he does not for.

Many who read this will know the character of the man I have thus used, and will at once recognize the true individual beneath the fictitious names I have borrowed.

### ELECTION OF COUNTY SUPERINTENDENT.

This may possibly be the last number of the Journal that will meet the eyes of Directors, before they assemble to elect County Superintendents for the next three school years. The proper performance of that duty is the duty of every citizen who has the right to vote.

The original design of the bill establishing the office, will be to secure the best of the State, and the country will be equally injured. It is, therefore our design as one amongst the thousands of Pennsylvanians who have been watching the workings of this new feature in our educational system with intense interest, frankly to state the conclusions to which our observations have led.

Three years ago, few Directors or others had any clear view of the necessity, nature, and scope of the office. The natural consequences were, in the first instance, numerous mistakes in selection and compensation. These have been, however, corrected, and the office is now in a position to do its duty to the satisfaction of all.

Whatever may have been the cause, however it is certain that, in 1854, the duty of selecting County Superintendents was so performed as to produce one or other of the following results: Either,

1. An incompetent person was chosen, who, of course, failed, no matter what the salary. Or,

2. A competent person was chosen, who, in most cases, failed or was greatly crippled in his operations by total inadequacy of salary. Or,

3. A competent person was selected, with adequate salary, who fulfilled the just expectations of the friends of measure.

From this it would appear that fitness in the person and adequacy of compensation are the elements—the essential conditions—of success. Of course, as in all other cases, there are instances that appear to conflict with this conclusion; but on close inspection they will be found rather to confirm it. For example: one Superintendent may have been so well qualified for the station and so devoted to the system, that he discharged his duties at a most shamefully inadequate salary. But who will argue from this, that it is the right of the public to individual patronage? Or, if any have been that all the conditions appeared to be secured—both adequacy of salary and skill and experience in the art of teaching—yet fail.

Yes! who will condemn the office of County Superintendent; because, here and there, a good teacher may have made a poor Superintendent? Many as able lawyer, a successful physician, a successful merchant, a successful farmer, may be made a poor Superintendent.

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Teachers, and the administrative officer of a complicated school system.

It would be no difficult task, at the present juncture, to run over the whole State and show the correctness of the conclusion just stated. There are full success or of entire failure of success might be anticipated. In strict accordance with them, but it is neither proper nor necessary. What we have to do with now, are general results. There are no plain that he who runs may read, and requires no announcement of the facts on which they rest, from us.

Taking it for granted, then, that experience has fully justified the wisdom of the Legislature in requiring the selection of a fit person and the payment of a sufficient salary, for these two questions arise:

1. Who is a fit person for the office? In answer to the first question, it may, in the words of the school law, be replied that fitness consists in:

1. "Literary and scientific acquirements." These are both indispensable, and the degree of them should be considerable. In every county, schools of every rank and grade—from the primary to the high school, and its full round of branches—either are or must soon come into existence; and to discharge the office properly, the Superintendent must be qualified "to examine" all the Teachers, "to visit" them, and "to give such instructions in the Art of Teaching and the method thereof in each school" as the condition and grade of each shall require. How can this be done except by one who is scholar enough to teach the teacher of the highest branch in the highest school in his county.

2. "Skill and experience in the Art of Teaching." is another requisite and is also exacted by the law—not only skill to know but practice to do. It is no doubt true, that in some instances, the office has been well filled by persons of no great, or possibly no actual experience in the art. This is owing to the known fact that some men have naturally in them so much of the elements of the Teacher and such a love for the work and the cause, as to supply, to a great degree, all other defects. But the exception only proves the rule; for the instances of failure for want of this element have been too numerous to leave the question doubtful. The safer and the legal rule, is in all cases, to require this "skill and experience."

But mere learning and professional skill are not sufficient, unless, as the law and the necessity of the case everywhere intimate, they are accompanied with the power to make them efficient. Hence,

3. "Ability to impart knowledge and give information publicly, as well as privately, as the case may require." The passage of the act of 1854—in addition to the public meetings for the examination of teachers, and the visitation of schools in the presence of directors and parents thereby prescribed—the holding of district and county institutes, associations and meetings for the improvement of teachers, and the delivery of public lectures and addresses for the furtherance of the system, and explanation of the law, have become so general and are so far to be so beneficial, that they may now be regarded as an integral part of the Superintendent's duties. All these occasions impose the duty of addressing the public; and the officer who does not do this, no matter what the cause, fails in his duty. The ability, therefore, to speak in public should be embraced amongst the requisites of fitness for the office.

4. "Energy of character and love for the work." are the last essential that need be mentioned. Without these, the highest degree of scholastic attainment, of professional skill, and of power of expression will fail, for the great moving forces of the required character will be wanting. With these present in large degree even a medium of qualification in other respects, may succeed.

Amongst the qualifications necessary to this most important office, it is, of course, not deemed requisite to speak of temperance, honesty of manners, or knowledge of human nature. These are requisites to the safe and efficient discharge of every public trust; the one in question being no exception to the general rule but rather demanding them in a greater degree than most others. In a word, and aside from special requisites, the nearer the character of a County Superintendent approaches to that of the Christian gentleman, the greater will be his acceptance and success.

The answer to the question: "What is an adequate salary?" will depend mainly on the locality and the experience of the past three years will, in many cases, modify past action on this point. Many of the Conventions fixed the salary in 1854, under a total or very material misapprehension of the nature of the office, the amount of service required and the degree of good to be effected. Now, in many parts of the State, all these points are comprehended, and the action of directors will no doubt be different. No one who knows the people of Pennsylvania will, for a moment, suppose that injustice will be done in regulating the compensation of those who are found to be amongst the most useful, most laborious and most important of our public officers. The actual amount must, as just remarked, depend on the circumstances of each case; still, certain general principles are indicated by the nature of the office and the wants of the schools, which it may be useful to elicit.

The first point to be determined is, whether the whole, or only a portion, of the officer's time will be required for the full discharge of the duties of the office. This will wholly depend on the number of schools in the county. If they are materially over 100 and should be increased, then the best policy and the most productive of good, will be to "pay for" and require his whole time and services. In such cases more than half of the year may be most beneficially devoted to school visitation, which to be effectual, should be full and frequent. The rest of the year can be profitably devoted to the improvement of the teachers in one or more institutes of greater or less duration, to the officer's own improvement and to the preparation of his reports, &c.

In smaller counties a less portion of an officer's time will be needed, and the salary may be in proportion; but in all cases enough should be given to secure his whole time and efforts to the service of the schools while in operation, and to the improvement of the teachers during a portion of the recess.

The only other general principle to be kept in view in arranging the salary, is that of making it large enough to command the very best professional talent within the reach of the Convention. For reasons already given no other should be thought of.

The man, then, whom Law, Experience and the wants of the system demand for County Superintendent is:—A practical Teacher, who is also an accomplished scholar, and a ready public speaker; with sufficient love for it to undertake and carry to perform the great work before him; and the salary should be sufficient to compensate him, as far as money can, for the efficient discharge of so great a labor.

Whenever such a man is found, he should be selected. If he has already been found he should be retained.

At the present time it may be proper to recall to the attention of Conventions to elect County Superintendents, that section forty of the school law of the 8th May, 1854, confers upon the State Superintendent of Common Schools, very considerable powers in reference to the commissioning of the person elected County Superintendent, as the shall deem necessary, and shall then issue his commission to the person properly qualified, who shall have received the highest number of votes.

Under this provision it is competent for any citizen, and it would seem to be his duty, to make objection to the commissioning of an unqualified person, and to set in operation, for the good of the system in this respect, the powers vested in the State Superintendent. In view of this fact, the true course for Directors in their Convention will be, to vote for none unless such as by learning and professional skill are fully qualified to discharge all the duties of the office.—*Pa. School Journal, April.*

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Flintheart gave an audible sigh, and proceeded:

"So you are alone in the wide world, an orphan, with none to provide or care for you?"

"None save him who tempests the wind to the storm lamb; I'm, whose unsleeping eye is over all the creatures He has made; who watches narrowly our conduct, and notes it in His book of Remembrance, the contents of which shall one day be pronounced before an assembled world, and each receive his reward according to what is written therein."

These words of the youth grated harshly upon the ear of Flintheart; they sank into his breast like drops of molten lava, and he felt his guilty, covetous soul as tho' they were barbed arrows. Outraged conscience awoke from its lethargy and goded him with its stings. In agony of spirit he buried his face in his hands, and again was silent for a few moments; but, by the exercise of a rugged will he speedily crushed those noble instincts of a perverted nature, and "Othello was himself again."

At this juncture, his spouse entered bearing the viands prepared for the boy, which she proudly placed upon the table, without uttering a word.

"Sit up," said the farmer, "wife has not prepared a feast for you; but if you are hungry, and I presume you are, plain fare will do."

"Beggars mustn't be choosers," snappishly ejaculated Betty.

"Come, come, don't hurt the lady's feelings," replied Flintheart in a compassionate voice, "his sorrows are heavy enough already."

Willie remarked, as he rose to take a seat at the table:

"I am very sorry to trouble you, but I was so cold and faint when I got opposite your house, it seemed impossible for me to go farther, and I resolved to stop and crave your hospitality for the night. I am sure you will lose nothing by my kindness."

You know the Bible says: 'Cast your bread upon the waters, and it shall return to you after many days.'"

"We don't believe all that there is in that book you speak of," said Betty contemptuously.

Willie was greatly shocked at this reply of his hostess, for he had been taught from infancy to regard the Holy Scriptures as the revealed will of Jehovah, and without giving a reply, sat down to his furnished repast, of which he partook eagerly, not having tasted food during the past day; and when at length he arose much refreshed, and resumed a seat by the fire, his host asked him "whether he was bound?"