

X
VIRGINIA SCHOOLS
BEFORE, AND AFTER THE REVOLUTION,

WITH A SKETCH OF

FREDERICK WILLIAM COLEMAN, M. A.,

AND

LEWIS MINOR COLEMAN, M. A.

AN ADDRESS

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

SOCIETY OF THE ALUMNI
OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA,

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BY

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PREFATORY NOTE.

For valuable information in regard to Frederick William Coleman, my grateful acknowledgements are specially due his lifelong friend and class-mate, Colonel Frank G. Ruffin, of Richmond, and his old pupils, Professor Edward S. Joynes, M. A., LL. D. of the University of South Carolina, and Professor Gray Carroll, M. A., of Fauquier; also to Gov. Jno. L. Marye, of Fredericksburg, and Dr. John Roy Baylor, of Caroline, both old "Concord boys."

In preparing the sketch of Lewis Minor Coleman, apart from my personal recollections, I have been greatly indebted for many important details to his widow, Mrs. Mary Ambler Coleman, of Fauquier, and to the Rt. Rev. Thomas U. Dudley, M. A., LL. D., Bishop of Kentucky, long a pupil at "Hanover." Reference has also been made to the admirable sketch of Lewis Coleman by his closest friend, Professor Charles Morris, M. A., published in the *University Memorial*.

Touching the genealogy of the Colemans, my thanks are due to Mrs. Alice Coleman De Jarnette, of Caroline, niece of Frederick W. Coleman, and to George W. Fleming, Esq., of Hanover, half-brother of Lewis M. Coleman.

I desire also to make acknowledgment to my friend, Dr. Bennett W. Green, of Norfolk, and to Mr. Frank Rives Lassiter, of Petersburg, both keen antiquarians, for verifying references to colonial records.

In appending such a volume of notes and number of citations to so slight a contribution to our educational history, I may, perhaps, lay myself open to the imputation of affectation of research and vanity of display. But, after mature deliberation, I have deemed it best to make them. The field of investigation is "virgin soil," and this is far from an exhaustive discussion of this most interesting subject. The scanty information contained in the text has been gleaned from a very considerable number of books. These books, with scarce an exception, have no indexes, and the references I have given may prove suggestive and render no small service hereafter to some one, who may possess the requisite leisure to make a more thorough study of our colonial secondary education. It is almost needless to say that only a portion of the address was delivered.

Mr. President, Gentlemen of the Alumni, Ladies and Gentlemen:

I come to speak to you of two men who deserved well of the State—two men who wrought a great and lasting work in Virginia, yet whose names are to-day but a mere memory to all save kinsmen and friends, and whose services, illustrious as they were, are fast becoming but vague tradition.

I shall speak of them in homely fashion, as befits the theme; for their lives were in truth so simple, so direct, so veracious, that they disdain, as it were, all efforts at brilliant rhetoric, and check with robust scorn the rippling periods of studied eulogy.

Both of them carried off the highest honors of this University—both of them devoted their great attainments and commanding energies to the furtherance of her fame and of her usefulness—and to both of them belongs in almost equal measure the supreme distinction of having so changed the whole face of secondary education in this Commonwealth, and of having so raised and ennobled the profession to which they consecrated their lives, as henceforth drew to it no mean part of the very flower of our youth.

I come to speak to you of the life and work of Frederick William Coleman, the virtual founder of Concord Academy, and of his nephew and pupil, Lewis Minor Coleman, founder of Hanover Academy—as truly the pioneers of the New Education in our Virginia of the nineteenth century, as were Colet and Erasmus the pioneers of the "New Learning" in the England of the sixteenth.

With a rough impatience, characteristic of the high spirit and imperious nature of the man, the elder broke sharply with every tradition of "the old order" as to

methods of instruction and the treatment of boys, while happily for the permanent success of the bold experiment, he was promptly seconded by the courageous efforts of his gentler pupil, who caught up the spirit of the master whom he revered, and, by many wise modifications, developed to full fruition the noble, though crude, ideals of his kinsman.

Working on essentially the same lines as did Arnold of Rugby, when as yet even the name of the great Englishman was unknown to them, they wrought so honestly and fearlessly, with such manly enthusiasm and single-mindedness of purpose, that within a brief space of years they raised, as I have said, the whole tone of secondary education in the State, both as to methods and morals, and so improved the quality of academic instruction, that this University in turn was enabled to advance the standards of the higher education and establish such severe tests of scholarship as would have been manifestly unjust prior to that time.*

Not often is it given to a pioneer to look upon the full fruition of his venture, but happily public opinion in Virginia was ripe for revolt from the old monastic ideas of school discipline. The tiny spark kindled in the neglected "broom-straw" fields of Caroline spread with lightning-like rapidity, and both of these men lived to see, as the fitting crown of their labors, the establishment of schools in every section of the State—in Tidewater and Piedmont, in the Southside and in the Valley—created by sheer force of noble example—informed with the same high spirit as that of "Concord," and fashioned on the same model as that of "Hanover."

And at the very outset, let me say that, apart from the great reforms they established as to methods of instruction, it is difficult to overestimate the debt which the profession of teaching, *as a profession*, owes these men.

*Col. Ruffin dwells on this point in his admirable letter to me in regard to Frederick Coleman's work.

It is idle to tread delicately and use ambiguous phrases. Up to the time that their decisive influence in shaping the lives of young men began to make itself felt as a social power to be taken into account, and the notable results of their chosen work had compelled recognition of the inherent dignity and nobility of their calling, it is but bare truth to say that, save by grudging acquiescence, the teacher, *as a teacher*, rarely "sat above the salt."

If the teacher happened to be a clergy man, he received, of course, the respect due his cloth.

But I am speaking of the teacher pure and simple, and of the social status of his calling in the eyes of the ruling class.

The Virginian, along with his strain of English blood, inherited his full share of what is euphemistically called "English conservatism," and, late into the present century, many a man, who in theory held extreme democratic doctrine as to equality, denied it in practice on more than one social point, and clung with true English tenacity to the traditions of the eighteenth century society. Exceptions there were, of course, even outside the clergy, as we shall presently see in the case of the progenitors of the Colemans, but, as a rule, the schoolmaster was looked upon by the Virginia gentry with a feeling somewhat akin to that with which the private tutor and domestic chaplain was regarded in the great houses in the days of "good Queen Anne"—when he was held a sort of upper menial, who humbly withdrew from the table after the first course, unless my lord was in his cups, and, calling another bottle, bade him remain as the butt of his tipsy satire, or my lady was graciously pleased to challenge him to a game of tric-trac to while away the long, dull winter evenings.

And to speak truth, there had been much in the character of the early Virginia school-masters—much in the character of many of their successors in the present cen-

