

Delivered at Frankfort April 7 1913 before
The State Superintendent's Association *W. J. G. M.*

T H E N A N D N O W

Ladies and gentlemen:

The subject, THEN and NOW, on which I am to talk at this time is of my own choosing. So far as I ~~can~~ now remember ~~or call to mind~~ there is no other subject that presents a larger field for thought than this one. THEN, may refer to the creation of the world, while NOW of course refers to the present time. However, I do not want you to come to the conclusion that I propose to discuss every question that has come before the people of earth from the days of Adam until the present.

The word then, may refer to things of only recent date as well as to Ancient history. Speaking of things two months ago, we can say, then, Mr. Taft was President of the United States, but now, we say that Mr. Wilson occupies that responsible position. Six months ago we say that Col. Roosevelt occupied the first column of the first page of almost every newspaper in the civilized world, but now his name, if mentioned at all, is in small letters and apt to be on next to the last page of the papers that then blazoned his name to the world.

At one time not very remotely, I was on the program for a talk before a teachers' meeting. The wise or otherwise superintendent, or the intelligent or otherwise unintelligent printer changed the wording of the caption and made it read that my subject would be Now and THEN, instead of THEN and NOW, which ^{could} ~~should~~ be construed that I would talk now and then. Now and then, I may do and say things which I afterward very much regret. There are some persons who are now and then termed just a little cranky. In fact, there are a great many of us who are more or less cranky on many of the subjects ^{with} ~~which~~ which we have to deal. If it were not for the cranks the world would make but very little progress. I prefer a crank to a "stand-patter". This last remark does not refer to matters political.

In my talk at this time, I want as briefly as possible to review the progress of education in the state of Kentucky during the last fifty years. In this I shall have frequently to refer to myself,

Had it not been for the cranks we in Kentucky would be fighting Indians, while they of Massachusetts would be burning witches.

something I should like to omit and shall try at all times to avoid seeming egotism. It was fifty years ago next fall that I taught my first school. In speaking of that school and others that followed, in talking of the early struggles of the country teacher a half century ago, and comparing the THEN with the NOW, I hope that I may say something that shall be in the way of encouragement to those who are younger than myself.

It was my misfortune, or rather my good fortune, to have been born in the country, something of which I am not ashamed, but rather a something of which I am decidedly proud. While most of my life has been spent in the towns and cities, yet I feel that it was while teaching in the country schools that I got inspiration that ~~qualified~~ me for the larger duties of life.

I wonder how many of those present today were either born and reared in the country, or who if they did not have that privilege accorded them, have spent at least some ^{portion} of their lives in the rural districts. I want every one of you who were at one time, or who are now country people to hold up your hands. From the show of hands, this really seems to be a country audience I am addressing. Such being the case, I shall feel the greater liberty to speak to you in the way of a heart to heart talk. We at once understand each other.

My opportunities for an education were exceedingly limited. I was the oldest, the first born of a family of children, children born in poverty and obscurity, of humble but christian parents. Of this, I am not ashamed. My father was an honest and God fearing man, while my mother was a christian woman seven days in the week, every month of the year and every year that I ever knew her. To her I owe everything that I am that has any good in me.

At that time the schools lasted but three months in the year, they were taught in the fall, during which time the farmer boy had to help strip tobacco, pull fodder, gather corn, go to mill and assist in dozens of other matters of importance. Lucky was the boy or girl who managed to get more than two months schooling during any one

year.

When I was 14 years old I boarded out and went to school 7 weeks and when twenty years old went 8 weeks to another school. Circumstances were such that it was not my privilege to ever again enter a school house of any kind until about one year later when I was called upon to undertake the arduous and responsible duty of teaching the boys and girls in a little school house about 4 mile^s from the home of my parents.

One Sunday the latter part of August, 1863, while attending church and before the services commenced, I was approached by a man by the name of Evans; He engaged me in conversation and soon asked me if I would not take charge of their school at Poplar Creek. I was almost as much surprised and frightened as I would be now if president Wilson should ~~have~~ ask me to accept a place in his cabinet.

As the preachers say when called to another and better field of operation than the one they now hold, I could have said, "I will pray over the matter". I did not as I remember pray over it, but I told Mr. Evans that I would think over it. And I did think about it all the time the man of God was preaching. I went home ^{and} told my parents what offer had been made for my services and asked their advice.

I think my mother and father were just about as much surprised as I had been. They suggested that as the term of sentence was for only three months that I might try my hand at teaching and in the event I did not like the profession I might then turn my attention to some other calling.

In a few days, I went to see the man who had enough confidence in me to risk my teaching his children and the children of his neighbors. It is well enough to remember here that this^s school was not a public school, but that it was a private affair that must be paid for by subscription of those who wanted to educate their boys and girls. The per capita at that time was so small and insignificant that the trustees, that is if there were such persons in that district, did not deem it worth while to report the children of school age.

Mr. Evans went with me to see the people and ascertain how

much they would contribute toward having a school taught at Poplar Creek, for the next three months. He was a good man and recommended me very highly to those with whom I was ⁱⁿ acquainted. After riding over the neighborhood we got \$43.00 pledged for the whole term. I accepted the subscription paper and announced that on the next Monday week I would be on hand to begin my career as a teacher.

On that bright Monday morning in September, I mounted my horse and rode to the school house where I was to teach. There were about a dozen boys and girls present to greet me on my arrival. The building stood on the bank of Poplar Creek, from which the school derived its name, a name which still holds good until this day. The house was built on pillars three or four feet from the ground, under which was afforded a most excellent place for the assembling of the hogs which collected there to sleep and raise hog rackets. Of course, there was as a result of the collection of these animals a very large and active ^marray of fleas that at times kept both teacher and pupils quite busy in the way of scratching *and smushing these pests*

Notwithstanding these little difficulties and annoyances, it was not long before the school was organized and was in good running order. And by the way it was a business school. I at once became interested in the work and while I taught many years and many terms in after years, yet I believe I taught as earnestly in this school, though with but little salary attached, as I ever did in any school of a later date where the surroundings were more favorable and the pay much larger.

While teaching this school, I was not annoyed by the ringing of the telephone over whose wires some fond parent was finding an excuse for some tardy pupil, nor were there any threats against the teacher for some supposed neglect of duty, or ^{for the} threshing of obstreperous youngsters. Neither did the children study their lessons by electric light, but by a tallow dip, or by the blaze from a pile of hickory chunks. The boys had not learned the use of the deadly cigarette, nor did the girls dress in hobble skirts that prevented the free use of their lower limbs, as there were some of those girls who were about as swift of

foot when it came to playing town ball, bull pen, or chasing the fox as were any of the boys.

There was no fear entertained by the parents that the children while away from school and on the road to or from home would be run over by an automobile, or mashed to death under the wheels of a locomotive, as the nearest railroad was 100 miles away and the fastest moving vehicle then was an ox cart or a log wagon which any boy or girl could evade or out-run.

Like every other thing earthly, that school had an end. The three months were soon numbered with the things that were and then only lingered in the memory of those who were most directly interested. At the close of the session teacher and children bade each other a kind and affectionate adieu.

Of course, after the school closed, I naturally wanted my money. While we may not be teachers in the sense that we are out for the money there is in it, yet we must all have some of the "long green" in order to keep soul and body together. The next day after the close of the school, I mounted the faithful horse that had carried me back and forth from my scene of duty and went among my patrons to collect what might be due me for my work. My patrons responded most nobly. Of the \$43 that was due me, I collected \$40, all in five dollar bills. I later received \$1.50 more making \$41.50 in all, with \$1.50 due me which is yet uncollected.

As I rode home, I felt very uneasy, fearing that some of the money might jolt out of my pocket and thus be lost to me and my heirs forever. When I arrived at home, after putting my horse in the stable, not forgetting to give him a good feed of hay and corn for his service, I went into my bedroom, which was on one end of the front porch. I closed the door behind me, put my foot against it for fear of intrusion took out my wealth, counted it over carefully, spread the eight five dollar bills on the bed, stepped back, gazed at that pile of greenbacks *and* right there that afternoon, while looking at that money, I felt that I was one of the wealthy men of the nation.

Right then, I felt richer than I had ever been before and in fact such was the case. I had never before in my life owned or had, in my possession such an accumulation of wealth. Only once previously had I been the possessor of more than five dollars at any one time. Of course, I was rich. The money was all mine. I had made it, I had earned it, I owed no man anything.

While this incident occurred a half century ago, yet I now call to mind those eight bills. My recollection is they were at least six inches wide and about a foot and a half long. In fact, the bills completely covered the whole bed so that I cannot now remember the color of the quilts that were used for covering when the nights were cool. I can say with Whittier, with a slight addition:

"Ah! memories of ^a sweet summer eve
Of moonlit wive and willowy way,
Of stars and flowers, and dewy leaves,
And smiles and tones more dear than they"

And of those five dollar bills which were soon spent for either pleasure or profit.

For some time after this eventful period in my life I felt that I had so much of this world's wealth that it would not be necessary for me to ever again go out to earn more money. But before a great while, one of the bills was broken and that was soon spent, then another and another until at last I was again reduced to the necessity of going to work, go to the poor house, be a charge upon my parents and the neighborhood, or starve. Thus I sought another school that would pay me a better salary than my first one.

The next fall I secured the school at Do-me-good. My popularity at Poplar Creek had made it easy to secure this position which paid me \$20 per month for three months. I boarded out among the ^cscholars. The per capita was 83 cents to the child. As this was not sufficient to pay the teacher, the remainder was made up by popular subscription. It was while teaching this school that I became imbued with the idea that I should make this my profession.

I must say however, that my education was somewhat limited and I felt the necessity of better qualifying myself for the duties of

the school room, but the opportunity never presented itself for attending any college or higher school. My only show for that education which I wanted was to apply myself at night and at other odd times. Thus I became a graduate of the hard school of experience and will say without egotism that I stood at the head of my class.

Year after year I secured schools that paid better than the ones before and each school requiring more scholarship than the preceding. It mattered not to me how difficult the task might be, from some cause I was willing to undertake the job and as it happened I always managed to make good. Before I quit the work, I have no doubt that had I been called to take charge of Vanderbilt University that I was fool enough to have undertaken the job. "Where there is a will there is a way."

It would perhaps not be out of place to say something of the examinations required a half century ago in order to secure a certificate to teach in the public schools. With my first school I did not have to have a certificate to teach as the school was a private one. But my second school required that I should undergo that trying ordeal. At that time instead of County Superintendents, there was a man at the head of the schools who was called a Commissioner.

I went to Eddyville, the County Seat to get my certificate. The Commissioner held his office up stairs over a grocery in a little back room that was about ten feet square. Certificates were of two classes; first and second. First class certificates were good for three years, and second class ones for one year. Of course, it was with fear and trembling that I went into the presence of the Commissioner, but he was kind and obliging. He seemed to regret the fact that the law made it imperative that he should examine me.

I was asked to spell a few words in the blue back spelling book. I did not miss a single word. In geography I was asked the number of zones, the longest river in the world, to name the two oceans that bound the United States, the name of the Capital of Kentucky and the river that ran through my county. I solved an example in compound num-

bers, read a few lines in the fourth reader, stumbled on a question in grammar and after suffering from fright and exhaustion for about twenty minutes, the examination was declared closed and I was granted a first class certificate. For this I paid 50 cents. I am sorry that I have lost or misplaced that valuable document.

I however have a certificate that was issued three years later and this one with several others received since that time, are kept as souvenirs of the old time teacher. The following is an exact copy of a certificate received July 17th, 1867:

"This certifies that James J. Glenn, possessing the other necessary qualifications, and having this day appeared before me and passed an examination as to his ability to teach the elements of a plain English Education to-wit: Spelling, Reading, Writing, Arithmetic, Geography, English, Grammar and History, I find him well qualified therein, and is entitled to a first class certificate as a teacher for this county.

July 17th, 1867.

James C. Church,
Commissioner for Lyon County."

For the next few years, I taught school in various districts, all these places so near my home that it required but a few hours ride or walk to get back to the parental roof. It had come into my mind that I should really like to take a trip from home to learn something of the ways and manners of the outside world. Although more than thirty years of age, I had rarely been so far away that I could not hear the dinner horn when it blew at noon.

In January 1876, I made my arrangements to visit Frankfort, the capital of my state. This was 37 years ago. I had seen a railroad, but had never been inside a coach. Up to this time, my traveling had been astride a horse, on a wagon drawn by oxen, or on foot, all of which ways are a tolerably safe way^s of locomotion, but rather slow for this day and time.

In order to catch the train that was to take me from home and loved ones, it was necessary to ride 20 miles to the station, where I

was compelled to stay all night at a hotel, the first time in life where I had ever registered as a guest at a hostelry. The train was due the next morning awhile before day light. Of course I did not sleep much that night. I was afraid the train would get in ahead of time and leave me.

I was up and dressed long before any of the guests thought it necessary to get out of bed. I was at the depot long before time for the train to arrive, knowing that if I missed getting aboard that I would have to wait another 24 hours for the next one. I bought my ticket and with bated breath listened for the whistle to blow announcing the coming engine down the road, saw the mighty moving mass of matter coming in my direction and at first it seemed as if the train would mount the platform and smash the life out of the whole bunch of us.

I know I appeared green and in fact that color was written all over my face and my every action. We are all green when it comes to things of which we know nothing. Country boys and girls are however no greener in the cities than the city boys and girls are when they visit the country.

A few years ago, soon after moving pictures made their appearance, a woman and her daughter from the rural districts were in my town one day. After they had done their trading they had an hour or two to spare before returning home. As they walked down the street they were attracted by one of these shows. They went in and took a front seat so as to be able to see the thing as clearly as possible.

In a short time the room was darkened, the machine began to buzz, a light was thrown on the canvas and soon the show commenced. The picture represented a street ^{Scene} ~~corner~~ in a city. Men, women and children, with wagons, buggies, and traffic were moving in every direction. An automobile whizzed by and caused the woman to dodge. She looked up the street of the moving show and saw a number of automobiles coming tearing down toward the front. She jumped up, grabbed her daughter and said, "Sallie! its time to get away from this place. One of them things a minute ago missed us not more than three feet and here comes a whole

gang of them and somebody is going to get killed."

That woman was not to blame for her ignorance. She thought there was danger. I was not to blame for having some uneasiness in regard to the safety of railroads. I however stuck to the thing, feeling that it would be rank cowardice to back out, especially after I had secured my ticket. I watched others get into the coach and followed my leader. He took a seat and I took another. I well remember when the train pulled out that I grabbed hold of the arms of the seat that I occupied, held my breath and braced myself, feeling almost certain that the thing was liable to slip from under me. I soon got used to the new condition of things, enjoyed the situation and before I arrived at my destination regarded myself as a great traveller.

On my arrival at the capital, I found the legislature in session the very thing I had wanted to see. For ^{thirteen} ~~fifteen~~ years I had been voting for the men who were making our laws. I wanted to look upon the assembled wisdom of our supposedly great men. My representative introduced me to a number of our law makers. I mixed with these men and in a very short time I learned that the average legislator was nothing but a man and the great majority of them very little men at that.

But enough of this. By this time the schools of the state were very much improved. Time after time the legislature of the state had passed measures submitting to the people of the Commonwealth propositions to vote upon themselves taxes for the purpose of a betterment of the public school system. It was on the 16th day of February, 1838, now 75 years ago that an act of the legislature established a system of public schools ^{for the State of Kentucky} ~~with which to make it effective~~. The only money available was the interest on \$850.000 a remnant of a fund that had been received from the Federal government a few years before.

An act of the legislature was approved February 26, 1849, to submit a proposition to the voters of the state to levy upon themselves a tax of 2 cents on each \$100.00 worth of property for school purposes. At the following August election the proposition carried by a majority of more than 2 to 1. In March 1854, another act of the legislature authorized the people to vote on themselves 3 cents additional for school

purposes. At the following August election this carried by a majority of nearly 3 to 1.

This 5 cent tax, with the interest on the bond of \$850,000 gave a per capita of only 83 cents to each child of school age. The war between the North and the South came on and during that period very little attention was given to the schools of the state. But on January 26, 1869, an act of the legislature was approved permitting the people to vote an additional tax of 15 cents. At the following August election this was ratified by an overwhelming majority. This gave a new impetus to the cause of public schools in the State of Kentucky.

On the 24th of April, 1882, an act of the legislature authorized the people to vote an additional tax of 2 cents with the understanding that the school fund should be equally distributed to every child of school age without regard to race, color or previous condition of servitude. The people also ratified this act and thus was established the system, which while not what we might like it to be is still a system that affords every boy and girl of the Commonwealth an opportunity to at least secure a good common school education.

Fifty years after the system of public schools had been established by the legislature, or in July 1888, which is now 25 years ago, the educators of the state celebrated the semi-centennial of this event by holding a convention in Frankfort. The meeting was held in the capitol building. I had the honor of delivering the address on that occasion. And now 25 years later it is my privilege to appear before this body of earnest men and women, educators of our beloved state.

The public school system of the state is but four years older than your speaker. The year of his birth the amount paid out to all the teachers of the public schools of the State amounted to only \$7,554.20, not as much money as is now paid for teaching one school in a town of the fourth class. When I commenced my career as a teacher, the per capita was 83 cents, now it is 500 per cent greater than then, while for the present year the sum paid to the public schools of the state is approximately three million dollars. I look back over the past, dur-

ing the years I was engaged in teaching, the ten years spent as superintendent of my county, and the many years that I have served as a member of the Board of Education of my town, a position I have held since the organization of our city schools, and thank God for the wonderful progress that has been made during that time.

The past fifty years have been crowded with events, one upon the other have they come with such rapidity, that we fail to remember them all and recognize the fact that during that half century there has been more progress in education, in religion, in the arts, in science and discovery than in all the ages past. Notwithstanding the whines, the growls and the fault findings of the grouchy pessimist, the world is growing better as the days go by. This year is going to be better than the last, but the next one will be better than any other that has come and gone.

In this ^{the} evening of my life I come before this association of educators who are younger and wiser than myself. While I am possessed of more or less vigor, while I am as strong in my likes and dislikes as when in my younger days, while my steps may be somewhat infirm, my days of usefulness pretty well spent, yet I have as much at heart, the welfare of the boys and girls of my state as I did when I first started out a half century ago a country teacher. I am still strong in the faith and want to see no backward step in the onward march for higher and better things.

I have seen the old log school house with its backless benches torn down and split into kindling wood, and in place thereof the modern building with its up-to-date furniture, inviting the children of a great state to enter therein and prepare themselves for the duties and responsibilities of life. I have seen the old blue back spelling book, (peace to its memory) banished from the school room and in its place installed, what some term a wonderful improvement. I have seen the old teacher fall out of the ranks because he was either not able to keep up with the procession, or was unwilling to adapt himself to the new condition of things. I have watched all these forward movements

with a keen interest and am able to thank my creator that I have never as yet thrown one obstacle in the way of the wheels of progress.

I have witnessed ^{with interest} the growth of the Kentucky Educational Association and other Educational Movements for more than a quarter of a century. There are bright spots in my memory ^{when} ~~what~~ I call to mind the fact that I was present at the organization of the first County Superintendents Association ^{of the State} ~~and~~ that I was the first president of that meeting, and that I was re-elected to a second term. I was the first president of the Kentucky Reading Circle and was twice its president. The teachers of the state have twice made me the presiding officer of the Kentucky Educational Association.

While it may be and is perhaps the case that my days of usefulness are pretty well passed, it may be in the future that I shall not be able to add much to either the pleasure or the profit of these meetings, it may be that I shall simply be a "hanger-on" of the educational gatherings of the state, yet with all this I do most humbly crave that I shall have the good will and the prayers of the good men and women of the state who have done and are still doing so much for the up-build and uplift of the boys and girls of Kentucky.

While I may not be able to go in the lead, may not be able to stand where the battle rages the hottest and the fiercest, still I want to be regarded as a member of the old guard that never surrenders. May the next fifty years be brighter, happier and better and fuller of good things than all the years that have past.

I am done.