



HIS EXCELLENCY, LUTHER E. HALL, Governor of Louisiana

THE HOUSE OF MYSTERY.
HONORE DE BALZAC.

The ancient gray mansion known as "la Grande Breche," stands deserted and ramshackle on the very edge of the good city of Vendome. You shall hear why it is tenanted and why folk cast such scared looks at the crumbling walls and the blind windows as they pass by.

Once the Comte de Merret and his lovely wife, Josephine, lived at la Grande Breche. He was handsome, high-spirited, adoringly devoted. She was gentle and spiritual and seemed to radiate an almost unearthly purity of soul. They were happy, the Comte and Comtesse de Merret, in their married life. They were very happy, indeed, until a dashing young Spanish nobleman, the Count Feredia, came to Vendome.

The Spaniard was much impressed by the pure charm of Josephine de Merret, whom he met by chance. Then, one day he disappeared. No one knew what became of him. It was supposed that he went for a swim in the Loire and was drowned. But the body was never recovered. Here is the story, gleaned long afterward from Josephine de Merret's eaves-dropping maid.

The Comte de Merret had gone to his club for the evening, as he did regularly once or twice a week. But this evening he found little to interest him there. So he came home two or three hours earlier than usual. On his way up to his bedroom he stopped at his wife's boudoir to say good-night to Josephine.

Suspicion and a Test.
As his step sounded in the hallway juts outside the boudoir, he was certain he heard a door hurriedly closed somewhere inside the room. Now, the only door in there was one belonging to a clothes closet set deep in the stonework of the wall. The Comte supposed that his wife's maid had just shut it after putting away one of Josephine's dresses. But the maid was not in the room when he entered. The only person in sight was Josephine, who sat in front of the fireplace.

"There is some one in that closet," said the Comte, looking keenly at his wife.

"No one is in there," she replied as though mildly surprised at so odd an assertion.

Without another word, the Comte strode toward the closet door and laid his hand on the knob.

"If you find nobody there," said his wife, as though cruelly hurt by his suspicions, "remember everything will be at an end between you and me."

"Yes," answered the Comte, his hand falling from the unturned door-knob. "Whether I find anyone there or not—in either case everything would be at an end between us. Listen, Josephine, I know you are too holy to commit the mortal sin of perjury—even to save your life. Take this crucifix. Swear upon it, before God, that no one is in that closet. I will believe you; and the door shall not be opened."

"I swear before God there is no one in that closet," she repeated calmly, her hand on the crucifix.

"Good!" assented the Comte.

He rang the bell and whispered an order to the servant who answered the summons. Then he sat down and waited, chatting with his wife as carelessly as though nothing were on his mind. In half an hour or so Gorenflot, a nearby stone mason, was ushered in.

"Gorenflot," said the Comte, "you will find bricks and plaster in one of the outhouses. Bring them here and wall up the door of this closet."

It was a strange command, especially at such a time of night. But the Comte backed his word with the promise of so big a price that the mason set to work with a will. The Comte did not once leave the room, but stood overseeing the job.

When the entire closet door was bricked up and the mason had gone away, the Comte mentioned an errand he wished to attend to at once at the far end of town. He went out.

A New Form of Torture.
Less than a minute later he stepped quietly back into the boudoir—just in time to see Josephine attacking the new-built wall with a trowel. At sight of her husband she fell to the floor in

a faint. For the next three weeks (before leaving the house forever) the Comte de Merret did not stir from that room. And he forced his wife to stay there, too. Once during the first few days they heard faint sounds from behind the wall of brick. Josephine fell on her knees and implored her husband to have the wall torn down. But he answered, indifferently:

"Why should I? You have sworn on the crucifix that no one is in there."

THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF NEW ORLEANS.
(By J. M. Gwinn, Superintendent.)

The Public Schools of New Orleans constitute the largest institution, public or private, in the community. They are housed in a plant worth \$4,250,000, and are distributed in 88 buildings. It requires the services of 1400 teachers to instruct the 49,116 pupils enrolled in the day and evening schools.

The cost of operating the schools during the past year was \$1,223,030.91, which amounted to \$25 for each child enrolled and \$31.50 for each child in daily attendance through the year. The per capita expenditure by the people of New Orleans for public schools, after due allowances are made for appropriation for new buildings during the past year, was \$3.60. This is much below the expenditure in other cities. Recently, the Board of Education of Chicago collected information showing that for 34 large cities the annual per capita expenditure for public schools ranged from \$8.66 in Los Angeles to \$6.78 in Boston, \$6.50 in Washington, \$4.44 in Chicago, which was the lowest. New Orleans was not included in the list, but with her expenditure of \$3.60 she would fall far below the lowest of any of the 34 cities included in the Chicago study. In view of the small per capita expenditure and of the very satisfactory standard of education now provided in our public schools, the taxpayer may feel that for each dollar expended as much education is purchased in New Orleans as in any other city in the country.

Three new school buildings were occupied for the first time last session, the S. J. Peters School on White and Broad Streets, the Gentilly Terrace School in Gentilly Terrace, and the Danee Colored School on Broadway and Olive Streets. These three schools, with their grounds, have added approximately \$130,000 to the value of the school equipment. With the opening of the schools on September 20th, one additional new school was occupied, the Lakeview School. The building of new schools has been one of the chief activities of the municipal government during the past few years. Many new and handsome buildings have been erected, and have supplied improved opportunities for better education to thousands of children and have brought New Orleans favorably to the front in public education among the cities of the country. While the municipal government has done all it could for providing buildings, the ever rapid growth of the system has made it impossible to meet all of the needs. Conditions are better than ever before, but many additional rooms are needed in order to discontinue the use of basement rooms and part time classes. The system has developed faster than its means of support and the most pressing problem is that of finances, money for additional buildings and additional expense of maintenance.

Finances, books, buildings and methods are important, yet the chief concern is for the welfare and progress of the children. The schools are for the children, and it has been the chief aim of the administration during the past year to increase the enrollment in the public schools, to promote the progress of the children and to strengthen the holding power of the school upon the child. To a notable degree this aim was accomplished. The enrollment was increased to 49,116, which was 1,249 greater than in any previous session. After attracting the child to school,

the next concern is his progress and retention in the system. During the past session, definite steps have been made to ascertain why boys and girls drop out of school and to encourage those who are in school to remain until they have completed the High School course. The "Stay in School Campaign," which was so successful during the week beginning January 18th, produced most satisfactory results.

The statistics compiled by the Division of Educational Research, which statistics will be published in the forthcoming annual report of the Public Schools, showed that most satisfactory progress was made throughout the system in reducing the number of over-age children and in increasing the rate with which children progress through the grades.

New Orleans' Unique Educational Statistics.
The age progress measurements of groups of children made by the Division of Educational Research are the most complete tables of the kind published anywhere by a large school system covering several consecutive years.

There was put into the hands of the twelve hundred teachers last year a large printed sheet containing the following information for each of the eight (or less) grades of each school:

Percentages of children in each grade in each school:

- (1) Over-age on account of slow progress.
- (2) Over-age on account of lost time.
- (3) At-age, but making slow progress.
- (4) Repeating the work of preceding term.
- (5) Enrollment of the school grade.

The facts are presented separately for boys and for girls, for white and for colored. Twelve measurements are shown for each grade of every one of the 88 public schools of the city. The percentages are based upon the records made by the teachers and include the net result of the effort of the home and of the school to further progress of children.

In order that the status in each school may be measured by comparisons, the city averages for each of the above facts are also presented. Finally, in order to determine whether the variation from the city average by a given school is excessive, the average of the variations is also contained in the table.

All of the work has been completed now for two consecutive years. The forthcoming report of the Superintendent will contain the exact figures. Two very significant facts are known already by comparing the tables for 1914-15 and 1915-16, namely:

- (1) Considerable improvement throughout the city has been made in the percentage of children who are over-age on account of slow progress, the improvement, however, being greater in the case of girls.
- (2) Too large a percentage of children are over-age for their grades on account of lost time or interrupted attendance, a matter that demands the better co-operation of the home with the school.

Elimination.
During the past year, the Board authorized a study of elimination in the public schools. The number of children who drop out of school each year, the age at which they leave, the number of grades completed by them and the causes of withdrawal—these are facts that test the efficiency of the system. Just as business requires an accurate knowledge and analysis of loss, so school, for better administration, must know the amount of elimination and the conditions under which it occurs. To this end, every permanent withdrawal from the public schools of New Orleans during the term 1914-15 was reported to the office of the Superintendent for investigation and analysis.

For the high school, a special effort was made to ascertain the immediate causes for leaving school and the conditions which led to the withdrawal. Every pupil who dropped out of high school was visited that the Superintendent might know not only the direct cause of it, but also the conditions which led up to and made the withdrawal possible or imperative.

As a result of this study, the forthcoming report on elimination will show not only the immediate cause of every withdrawal from our high schools, but it will also point out the relation between this elimination and age, course of study, slow progress, length of time spent in high school and reason for attendance. An effort has also been made to show the connection, if any, be-

tween the economic condition of the home and the length of a child's school life.

New Orleans' Public Schools.
The public schools of New Orleans have had a phenomenal growth during the past 12 years. It is doubtful whether any other great city in the country (12 years ago) can show a better record of progress than is shown in New Orleans. The information given in the table below is obtained from the report of the Superintendent of Public Schools for 1902-1903 and for 1914-1915. As will be seen in the table, twelve years ago the total valuation of public school property in New Orleans was, approximately, \$1,700,000. Now it amounts to \$4,250,000. The cost of operating the public schools 12 years ago was \$543,000. Now it is \$1,223,030.91. Other interesting facts may be found in the table.

Enrollment and Attendance of Pupils.
The total enrollment of pupils in the day and evening schools was 49,166. The day schools enrolled 44,850, which was an increase of 529 over the preceding year; the night schools enrolled 4,266, which was 720 more than the enrollment for the session 1913-14. The total enrollment included 24,151 boys and 24,965 girls. The enrollment in the white day schools was 40,380, distributed as follows: Elementary School, 422; Deaf Class, 11. There were 8736 enrolled in the colored schools. The enrollment in the evening schools was 4266, of whom 3145 were males and 1121 females. The total enrollment was 65.5 per cent of the 81,734 children of school age in the parish.

The average daily attendance of pupils for each of the 176 days the schools were in session was 38,812. This gives an aggregate days attended by all pupils in the day schools of 6,601,592. The average attendance of pupils for each of the 72 nights the evening schools were operated was 2205, or an aggregate of 158,760 nights attended by all pupils. The net cost of operating the schools for the year was \$1,223,030.91, which sum, divided by the aggregate of the days and nights attended by all pupils, gives 18 cents as the daily cost of operating the schools for each child in attendance.

The average daily attendance in the white schools was 32,183. The percentage of attendance based on enrollment in the white day schools was 73.7.

The average daily attendance in the colored schools was 2962 males and 3667 females, a total of 6629, or 75.8 per cent based on total enrollment, or 32.2 per cent based on the total number of colored children of school age in the parish.

During the past year, it has been for the first time a duty, under Act 214 of the 1912 of the General Assembly of the State of Louisiana, for the Parish School Board to take the school census. Formerly this work was done by the Board of Assessors. The results of this census strongly emphasize the following facts:

- (1) It would be better to distribute school funds by some new plan to be defined upon the basis of children in attendance, teachers employed, and duration of school year, rather than by the present method.
- (2) Accurate censuses are extremely difficult to make and entail useless expense. The forthcoming report of the Board of School Directors will set forth in detail the careful methods devised for the local census and a complete analytical exhibit showing by age, sex and color the number of children within and without the schools; also the numbers, respectively, in public, private, and parochial, and, finally, the numbers of unemployed children between the ages of six and eighteen years.

One of the chief problems for the coming session will be the selection and adoption of text books for all elementary schools. This is the first time in many years that New Orleans has been privileged to adopt our own text books, and it is of highest importance to the future progress of the schools that the very best text books be selected. The School Board will organize committees of teachers and principals and give practically the whole year to the study of various text books in order that a wise selection may be made when the adoption is made at the end of the coming session.

The High, Normal and Nicholls Industrial Schools opened on the 13th of September and the first week was devoted to entrance and conditional examinations. These schools, with all the other schools in the system, began the regular work of the present session on Monday, September 20th. The course of study and the text books used will remain the same as during the past session.

	1902-1903	1914-1915	Per cent increase 12 years
Public Schools	67	88	31
Value of equipment	\$183,750	\$326,900	77
Value of buildings and grounds	\$1,695,500	\$4,250,000	150
Operating expenses	\$543,008.15	\$1,223,030.91	125
Number teachers (day schools)	800	1,282	60
Number teachers (evening schools)	0	116	-
Number pupils (day schools)	31,114	44,850	44
Number pupils (evening schools)	0	4,266	-
Number of pupils (high and normal)	2,207	2,630	117
Minimum salary	\$350	\$475	35
Maximum salary	\$600	\$902.50	50

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