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MEN

OF

THE SOUTH.

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ented and learned member of the Louisiana bar, and grandson of Governor Claiborne, the first Governor of the Territory of Orleans and of the Territory of Louisiana; and Charles Louque, the author of the last Digest of the Supreme Court decisions of Louisiana.

An accomplished scholar and linguist, he speaks Spanish, French, and English fluently, and even Latin. Self-reliant in the consciousness of his great abilities and fertile in resources, the comprehensive grasp of his mind makes him the master of every situation. High-minded and conscientious, of scrupulous honor and spotless integrity, he possesses a dignity of character and suavity of manner which stamp him, par excellence, as a representative of the best elements of the old creole race.

Mr. Bermudez is fond of travelling in the old world, and has made no less than seven trips to Europe, where he generally passes the summer months resting from winter toils, and visiting at different times all the historic points of interest on the continent—Paris, Rome, Marseilles, Bordeaux, Venice, Naples, Vesuvius, and the ruins of Pompeii, where he was present while the excavations were in progress. On a visit to Rome, in 1870, he had a private audience with the late Pope Pius IX., by whom he was created a Knight of the Order of Pius IX., the only member of that order in America; a signal honor of which he considers himself wholly unworthy. When in Europe, Mr. Bermudez and his family were on terms of personal intimacy with the ex-Queen Isabella of Spain, and with King Alphonsus and his sisters, the Infantas Pilar, Paz, and Eulalia, with whom his eldest daughter, Alzire Bermudez, completed her education at the Convent of the Sacred Heart, at Paris, where numbers of children of the nobility finish their studies. At the instance of King Alphonsus, Mr. Bermudez on one occasion explained to him the concurrent working of the Federal and State governments in this country.

Mr. Bermudez was married in June, 1853, to Miss Amanda de Maupassant, a lady of French descent, and has five children living. His eldest son, Edward J. Bermudez, studied law

at Columbia College, New York, under Professor Dwight, and was admitted to the bar of that State, and after admission to the Louisiana bar is now practising law in New Orleans.

REV. W. H. RUFFNER.

VIRGINIA.

WILLIAM HENRY RUFFNER was born in the year 1824, at Lexington, Va. He is a son of the Rev. Dr. Henry Ruffner, the founder of the Presbyterian Church at Charleston, W. Va., President of Washington College, Lexington, and author of numerous well-known theological works. He was educated at Washington College, from which he graduated in 1842, but remained as resident graduate a year longer. From 1843 to 1845 he employed himself in the manufacture of salt on his father's estate near Charleston, Kanawha county. He next devoted a year to the study of theology at the Union Theological Seminary, Hampden-Sidney, Va., and another at the Princeton Seminary, New Jersey. From 1849 to 1851 he was Chaplain of the University of Virginia; and from the latter year to 1853, Pastor of the Seventh Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia. While filling this pastorate he published a work entitled "Charity and the Clergy," which appeared as a part of what was known as the "New Themes" controversy, which freely criticised the practice of the church and its clergy and led to warm discussion. Returning to Virginia on account of his failing health, he engaged in farming, preaching only at times, but writing a good deal, if not as much as ever. It is as a writer, indeed, that he is chiefly known outside of his State and church. He was a leading contributor to Dr. Stuart Robinson's *Presbyterian Critic* in its day, and has written much and admirably on social and theological subjects in other publications. The subject that perhaps has called forth the finest efforts of his pen, however, is public education, which he has ably served not with pen alone. Of this Virginians at least do not need to be told. Before the war Virginia had no

efficient public school system. After the war the State Convention which assembled in 1867-68 under the Reconstruction Acts, framed a constitution that provided for a general system of public schools, to be supported by taxation, State and local, supplemented by the interest on the literary fund. The first Legislature that met after the adoption of the constitution gave effect to this constitutional provision by electing him, in 1870, as the first Superintendent of Public Instruction in the Old Dominion. The words *gave effect* are used here advisedly, for in electing him the Legislature virtually executed the whole provision, since he at once shouldered the work and carried it through. Within thirty days after his election he submitted to the Legislature a complete school law, which is still the school law of the State, and one of the best in the Union; and, on the passage of the law, proceeded without delay to organize the school system under it, proceeding with such energy and ability that at the end of the first year, 1870-71, he reported one hundred and fifty-seven thousand children (white and colored) in the public schools, an increase of nearly one hundred thousand over the attendance of the year before, the enrolment of whites being more than doubled, while that of the colored pupils was quadrupled. And the schools have ever since steadily improved, and steadily increased in attendance until, in 1877, the whole number of pupils enrolled amounted to two hundred and five thousand, exclusive of some twenty-five thousand in private schools. Such being the fruits of his administration, it is scarcely necessary to say that at the expiration of his term of office in 1874 he was re-elected for another term of four years; so that he is at this writing still at the head of the public schools of Virginia. It was fortunate, indeed, for the proud old commonwealth that the organization of her school system fell into his hands. The task involved an immense amount of work, in a sparsely settled country, with small means, and against strong prejudice on the part of the old land-holders; and, furthermore, was complicated with the difficult question of the two races.

It is almost certain that the administration of the system in the hands of any other man likely to have been selected would have been a lamentable failure, as it has been in some of the Southern States; for the whole subject was new to the people, and there were few men in the State of high administrative ability who at the same time were thoroughly acquainted with the science of education, and exactly fitted by nature for the work, as he unquestionably is. Under the embarrassing conditions imposed by the situation, and in the face of all obstacles, he has established the system on a firm foundation; and, though opposition still exists, and murmurs are still heard, there is no feature of the State government now more strongly rooted in the affections of the people of Virginia than the public schools. Meanwhile, his literary powers, as already implied, have efficiently seconded his administrative powers, his official reports being among the ablest of the kind that have appeared in this country. In addition to these, he has from time to time published a number of papers on the subject of public education in the columns of the Virginia press or in pamphlet form, of which the most notable, perhaps, is a series of letters, appearing originally in the Richmond papers and the *Educational Journal of Virginia*, in reply to an attack on the public free school system by the Rev. Dr. R. L. Dabney, of the Union Theological Seminary. The letters of this series have been republished in a collected form, and present one of the most convincing and triumphant defences of State education ever made in our own or any other country. Upon the whole, he must be acknowledged to stand in the front rank of the public educators of his time.

DR. J. G. BELDEN.

LOUISIANA.

JAMES GRIDLEY BELDEN was born, September 22d, 1822, at Moscow, N. Y. The Belden family is of English descent, their ancestors having emigrated to this country about the year 1640,