

MONROE COUNTY

Key West, Fla., January 7, 1895.

Hon. W. N. Sheats, State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Tallahassee Fla.:

Dear Sir: The schools of Monroe county, are at this time undoubtedly in better condition than they have been for several years. They are at present being conducted upon a more systematic method of teaching than has heretofore been done. During the past two years, regular weekly teacher's meetings have been held, and a uniform method of teaching has been adopted, and its application has been demonstrated at these meetings. These meetings have virtually been a course of institute work, and have been the means of developing among the teachers, a better order of school management, and a uniform system of grading and teaching, although but few in number, probably less than any other county. I think that the schools of Monroe county will compare favorably with the schools of any other part of the State.

It is my aim, however, to continue the improvement made in our schools during the past two years, so that when I retire from office two years hence, my successor will find them in good condition in every respect.

We have in the city of Key West, which largely constitutes the county of Monroe, four public schools, two for the whites and two for the negroes. In one of the white schools there is an enrollment of 627 pupils, and in the other an enrollment of 338. In one of the colored schools there is an enrollment of 385 pupils, and in the other 304.

The schools on the other islands constituting the county of Monroe are all in very fair condition, being under good and efficient teachers, who are deeply interested in their respective fields of labor. Many inconveniences are experienced by the teachers and pupils of these schools, on the out-islands, in attending school regularly, since they have to depend largely upon winds and water, and go to the school houses from their homes in sail boats.

The examination law, as a whole, has aroused the teachers employed in the schools to the necessity of studying to know something more of school teaching, than simply going to a school house for five or six hours per day, to take care of a number of children and hear recitations.

Yet, although teachers realized the above, they were compelled on account of the great event to take place, and the uncertainty of the exact nature and line of the examination to go delving into studies and books, over many unnecessary lines to prepare themselves for the purpose of passing the examination. When the examination did take place, lo! the disappointment. After many weeks of hard study, reading and re-reading, preparing for it, and for better school work, the questions that confronted them were upon a different line than what might have been anticipated.

In reply to Question 12 I would say: I am in favor of Uniform Examinations, but I think the questions should be in each branch of a practical order, that will test the abilities of the teacher in practical school work, and not simply to test the memory upon dates and political facts, and points of minor importance in all the other branches. While I am in favor of the Uniform Examination, I think that the certificate procured by any person should be