

TENDER APPEAL FOR NEGRO DEAF MUTE

Editor Samuel Miller, of the
Lynchburg Advance, Stirs
Legislative Committee.

Groping his way to the center of the room, Samuel Miller, the blind editor of the Lynchburg Advance, last night made to four committees of the General Assembly, sitting in joint session, a remarkable and pathetic plea for the negro deaf and blind of Virginia, pointing out how the State, by the annual expenditure of a small sum, might "transmute a burden into a blessing," and turn into useful and industrious citizens a class now existing in practical savagery.

"Think of these poor people, gentlemen," declared the man himself blind, but with a mind finely cultured; "think of these people to whom the sunshine means nothing, as they grope their way through life. They are in eternal darkness. They have no light; but it is in your power to illuminate their minds. You can make them self-supporting. If they grow up in idleness you will have to support them. It is a duty to humanity that you owe, and a duty to your religion.

How can a deaf negro boy obtain a conception of what is right and wrong? We are sending missionaries to convert the heathens of foreign lands, but we have heathens right at our own doors. They have no ideas of God or morality, for it is not possible to get ideas into the head of a person who does not understand language. They are living in serfery and when their passions are aroused are so dangerous as wild animals. But we can teach them gentlemen first for their own sake and then for our own. We can train them so that instead of being a menace they will with the others less unfortunate contribute to the common good; we can transmute a burden into a blessing. This work you are now doing nobly for the whites and I thank God for it. What we ask you now is to do the same things for those still less able to help themselves—the negroes."

Deaf Mute Present.

There were a half dozen deaf mutes in the room and the hearing was one of the most remarkable and at the same time one of the most pathetic ever conducted in the Capitol.

The two finance committees on school met together in the Senate chamber at 8 o'clock and with Captain Bowman, chairman of the House Finance Committee, acting as chairman of the joint session, proceeded to take up the bill asking an appropriation of \$15,000 for the establishment of the Virginia School for Colored Deaf and Blind, and an annual appropriation of \$10,000 for maintenance. Mr. Houston, who introduced the bill in the House, read the measure and explained its objects. He also read a speech on the subject prepared by W. C. Ritter, a deaf mute, president of the Virginia Association of Deaf, Dumb and Blind. Mr. Miller was then introduced. He spoke very earnestly and his speech carried great weight. His picture of the blind beggar on the roadside and his reference to the actual happiness of the unfortunates when properly cared for, as at the Staunton school for whites, were very pathetic. It was a touching scene, the blind editor, knowing so well whereof he spoke, pleading for the blind.

Prof. J. E. Ray, principal of the North Carolina School for the Deaf, Dumb and Blind, spoke in behalf of the establishment of the negro school in Virginia. He explained the operation of the school in North Carolina and gave many illustrations of how deaf, dumb and blind negroes have been trained so as to become, despite their affliction, good farmers, seamstresses and laborers of different classes. There are only two States in the South which have not hitherto provided schools for these unfortunate negroes, and Virginia is one of these two States. North Carolina has the largest and best equipped school for the negro deaf and blind in the South and the statements of Prof. Ray were therefore given careful attention.

Much interest was manifested in the matter by the members of the committee, several of whom made inquiries from time to time. No vote was taken on the bill.