

September 7, 1916.

Mr. W. W. King,
Staunton, Virginia.

Dear Mr. King:

I have just received notice of a meeting of the Board of Trustees in Fredericksburg on the coming Saturday morning. I have written to Mr. Davis explaining how I am situated here and asking him to excuse me from attending. We have only about three weeks in which to make our repairs, clean up the buildings, get in supplies, etc., as the summer term closed on August 30th and the fall term begins on September 20th. As we have no Business Manager I have to look after all this as well as conduct the correspondence. We now have five different sets of workmen here, most of them working on a "time and material" basis and it is essential that I be on the job every day to prevent them from losing time, wasting material, or doing something wrong. This keeps me very close to the buildings all day and at night I try to keep up the office work, so you see it would hardly do for me to leave here now. I have not the time to prepare any report for the Board and the various matters that will have to come up before them about this school can be postponed until a later meeting. I think, without detriment to the interests of the school, I wrote Mr. Davis to let me know at once if he considers it necessary for me to be at Fredericksburg, but if I do not hear from him to this effect I shall remain here.

I regret that I shall not be able to go as I have been wanting to talk with you for some time with reference to a rather personal matter in which I should appreciate your advice. About a week ago, without any knowledge beforehand, or without any suggestion at any time that I would consider another position, I was asked to consider the presidency of a state normal school in a neighboring state. The school is somewhat larger than Farmville, about the same age, and well established in every respect. The salary of the position is about fifty per cent. larger than my present salary, and I was given to understand that it would probably be placed at \$5,000 if I would not consider less.

Now, I have never considered seriously giving up my work here. I am a native Virginian and have devoted the past sixteen years to educational work in this state. I believe I have become thoroly identified with it, and I flatter myself that I have contributed something to its development, at least that is what my friends have been partial enough to say. For the past eight years I have given the best period of my life to building up this school at Harrisonburg, and I believe the influence of this school has meant much in the state by raising the standards of normal school work, and by sending out teachers prepared professionally for their work.

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An eminent Virginia educator is authority for the statement that the Farmville school has improved more in the seven years since the opening of this school than in all the previous twenty-odd years of her history; and everyone who is at all familiar with the situation can see the influence of this school in Fredericksburg and Radford, at the latter this school's plans being adopted almost to the letter, even the printed matter at first being almost verbatim copies of our printed matter, in some sections at least. Our graduates are now teaching all over the state, most of them making fine records. Our school is crowded every term and many applicants are turned away for lack of accommodations, even tho we have consistently raised the entrance requirements every year for the past six years.

I have written this, not in a spirit of boasting, but to show that I am not in the least discouraged over our accomplishments here. I believe we have an excellent institution and one with a great future, if properly managed.

This is an excellent location, and I know of no place in the world where I should rather live than in Harrisonburg. I have become pretty thoroly identified with the interests here. I am the President of the Chamber of Commerce, into which has recently been consolidated the Retail Merchants' Association; I am a manager of the Rockingham Memorial Hospital, a deacon in the Presbyterian Church, and am affiliated in a more or less official and personal capacity with several other organizations. Mrs. Burruss is also linked up with the life of the place, and altogether we are very happy here.

The amount of the salary is the last consideration of importance to me. If I may say so, it would probably mean little more to me if I drew here twice my present salary, as I make no effort to accumulate, but use the little income I have for the various interests which make calls upon me. So, the amount of the salary in this proposed position does not particularly attract me.

Since the beginning of my work at Harrisonburg I have looked upon the State's interests as my own personal interests, and I have been as conscientious in the work I have done and the expenditures made under my direction as if this were my own personal property. I have never spared myself, even at the expense of my own physical being, and I have worked night and day for the institution. I have made numerous personal sacrifices for the interests of the school. These I do not, of course, regret, for I am now seeing something of the fruits of my labors.

Now, all this will no doubt appear very egotistical and perhaps you think it strange that I should presume so much

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on your time with matters so personal. My reason is simply that I have talked more freely to you than to any other member of the Board, and I feel that you have been more sympathetic toward this school than the other members, with the possible exception of Mr. White, who by reason of his residence is naturally more nearly in touch with it than the other members.

There have been times when I have felt that my work has not been appreciated or even approved by the majority of the members of the Board. I know that they have had no opportunity such as the old Board had to become familiar with this institution. The old Board was ~~with us~~ during all of the early struggles of getting this started and they saw what I did, and I had their hearty support and encouragement all thru. Under present conditions I have no right to expect the same degree of interest, because I am aware of the expanded powers of the new Board and its broader interests. I have, however, hoped for a sympathetic attitude and a support equal to that accorded to the other schools in the normal school system. It has appeared to me, without ground I trust, sometimes that some members of the Board, perhaps a majority of them, have not been as much interested in the school at Harrisonburg as in two of the other schools, at least, to say nothing of the third. I have feared that this might be due to a lack of approval of my work. Knowing the members of the Board to be estimable gentlemen I have naturally thought that there is something the matter with myself, and that my methods of administration were not approved. This has brought me to the conclusion that perhaps for the sake of the school I might come to a point when it would be best for me to get out of the way for some one who would meet more nearly the approval of these members.

I trust that there is no ground whatever for any such feeling on my part, and I have constantly put it aside whenever it happened to rise; but naturally when an offer comes to me elsewhere I cast over in my mind all of these things and wonder if there is anything to them. In other words, it is the attitude of the Board rather than salary, prestige, or any other factor, which would determine my course. If I could feel that I have the hearty and undivided support of the Board I should be able to put aside the proposition at once. Under the former Board I received two flattering calls to go elsewhere but I decided to decline them at once, because I never for one moment during the six years doubted in the slightest degree that I possessed the full confidence of the Board. I do not believe it is possible for any man to do his best work unless he knows he has the full confidence of his Board of Trustees, and I suppose I am peculiarly sensitive along this line.

I believe you are a good friend of mine personally, and I think you understand the attitude of the Board. I am, therefore, taking this liberty of writing to you to ask your advice in this matter. Not that I want to commit you in any way, for I would not want that, but because I believe you will be frank in advising me as to your opinion of the matter. I have no desire to leave my work here. It would take considerably more than a salary 50% larger and a school three times as large to make me consider it seriously if I could rid myself of the depressing thought that perhaps my Board is not with me unreservedly in my work. If by remaining here I am in any way going to hinder the great growth which this school is entitled to have (and which it will have unless hampered in some way in its administration), then I should certainly want to leave it. I have given the very best period of my whole life to this institution, and I cannot leave it quickly and thoughtlessly; but my love for it is so great and my whole being ~~is so much attached to it~~ is so much attached to it at every point, that I would make any personal sacrifice to aid its growth and success for the future as in the past.

I wish this proposition had never been made to me, but the way in which it comes demands that I give it respectful consideration, and I cannot help thinking about the only factor which is of any importance to me, the attitude of our Board toward my school and whether it would be improved by my going elsewhere.

I really feel very guilty for having written so much of a letter to a man as busy as you are at this time, but I think perhaps you may have a chance to read it on the train on your way to Fredericksburg when you can find nothing else to do, and perhaps you may also find a chance to drop me a word of advice on your return trip or soon after you reach home. Thanking you for being patient with me, I remain,

Very sincerely yours,