

ONTARIO INSTITUTION FOR THE DEAF.

Report of Superintendent to Government.

BELLEVILLE, Sept. 30, 1899.

DR. F. F. CHAMBERLAIN,
Inspector of Prisons, etc.,
Toronto, Ont.

SIR,—I have the honor to present the Twenty-ninth Annual Report of this Institution for the year ending 30th September, 1899.

With the close of last term I completed my twentieth session as Superintendent of the Institution, and it might be both interesting and profitable to take a short retrospective view of that period, in order to note briefly what progress has been made, some of the results that have been accomplished, and, from the experiences of the past, glean something to nourish our hopes and aspirations for the future. Since 1879 the number of our pupils has been increased and our average attendance of late years has been about 265. The number of teachers has been augmented to meet the demands of additional classes; and now the limit of our accommodation has been reached, although numerous additions have been made to the buildings and grounds. The interior of the main building has been considerably remodelled in order to utilize all the available space, and efforts have been made to render the classrooms cheerful and attractive and the living-rooms as comfortable and homelike as possible. Wood Hall was built some years ago to give us additional sleeping and class-room accommodation, while the Gibson Hospital, a model building, is large enough for thirty patients and provides us with the means of isolating pupils having contagious diseases. A building for the bakery, printing office and attendants' quarters, sewage works, barn, piggery, root house, coal shed and other minor structures, are admirably adapted for the purposes they were intended for. Increasing attention has been given to our industrial departments—shoemaking, carpentering, baking, dressmaking, tailoring, printing, barbering, farming and gardening being now taught in addition to instructions in the laundry, culinary operations and other household duties. Improvements have been made in the internal appointments of the buildings. An up-to-date heating apparatus has been installed throughout, steam kettles and ranges, and coffee and tea urns, of modern make, are in the kitchen, the latest and best laundry machinery fill up the laundry, gas and electricity furnish us with artificial light, a local telephone system brings all the buildings and departments into close contact with each other, chemical fire engines, hose attached to hydrants in the main hallways and hydrants about the buildings on the grounds, in touch with the city waterworks, and our own auxiliary pumps, ensure us prompt means of coping with fire should such occur. These various improvements and additions are very gratifying, and have increased the comfort and safety of our pupils and household, and are important aids in increasing the efficiency of the Institution; but were our success to be measured solely by such external evidences of material advancement we would have little cause

for gratulation. We must be judged by a much more rigid criterion than this, and our success gauged by higher standards. This is an educational Institution, it is with intellects, and hearts, and souls that we have to deal, and while it is our duty to look carefully after the physical comfort and health of our pupils, it is in the cultivation of the mind and morals of the children sent here that our great work lies. It has been our aim to keep fully abreast of the times, to carefully consider ideas and thoughts for the advancement of the deaf throughout the world, to try and select and utilize that which the test of experience has proved to be of value, and we modestly claim that a considerable measure of success has attended our efforts. Our Institution is admittedly on a par with some of the best schools for the deaf in the world, so far as our methods of instruction, the devotion and ability of our teachers, and the excellence of the work accomplished within a given time are concerned. There are schools for the deaf in the United States which are more highly favored than we are with means, buildings, appliances, and a fourteen years' course of study, which are doing better work than we are doing in Ontario. This should not be the case, but it is quite true nevertheless, and I merely state the fact. As I have pointed out in former reports we are hampered here by two adverse circumstances—which can be remedied—the excessive number of pupils in our classes and the brevity of our school term. In none of the better of American Schools are more than fourteen pupils allowed in a class, in many of them twelve, and in some ten is the limit. In our Institution most of our teachers have twenty, and sometimes more, a number which, in view of the necessarily individual character of our teaching, is discouragingly excessive. In nearly all the American institutions the school term is at least ten years, in many it is twelve, in some fourteen, and in at least one or two fifteen years. Our term is but seven years, during which time we are expected to take a child who does not know a solitary word of the English language, or his own name, furnish him with the means of acquiring knowledge, take him through our graded course of instruction and finally turn him out mentally equipped for holding his own with hearing children whose education begins in infancy and is continuous thereafter, whose schooling extends over a period of from ten to twelve years or more, and who begins his course in the possession of a copious vocabulary and a freedom of expression such as can be acquired by the deaf child only by years of hard work in the classroom.

In view of the disadvantages under which we have labored our success has been most gratifying, and, proportionately to the size of our classes and the length of our course, we are not a whit behind any other school for the deaf on the continent or in the world. It will be readily seen, however, how impossible it is for us, in seven years, with classes of twenty, to accomplish what other schools accomplish in from twelve to fourteen years, with classes only half as large as ours; and how futile it is to expect that we shall give our pupils a mental equipment equal to that of hearing and speaking children who have completed the ordinary school course. That we have been able, laboring under the disadvantages enumerated, to attain to even the position we now occupy has been rendered possible only by the intelligent skill, the untiring industry and the absolute devotion of our staff, to whom must be given the credit for the educational progress

of our pupils, and on this, as on other occasions, I wish to bear witness, and I do so most willingly, that, with scarcely an exception, I have always been supported by a staff of teachers and instructors of devoted loyalty and of a very high average of ability. During the past twenty years several of these earnest workers have fallen by the wayside some of them in the prime of life, whose days were undoubtedly shortened by the arduous toil, the nervous drain upon the sources of life and energy which their work demands. Some also have dropped out to assume as great responsibilities in other walks of life, others, again, are still spending their lives in furthering the interests of the deaf and will go on to the end. But, as each one fell, or dropped out, his or her place has been taken by another equally devoted and efficient, so that our great work has been prosecuted with undiminished zeal and increasing success.

The best and surest gauge of success of any school is the degree of prosperity enjoyed by the graduates after they have left school, and the estimation in which they are held by their neighbors and friends. During the past twenty years over 900 pupils have gone out from this Institution. I have been able to keep in close touch with nearly every one of them, and am pretty thoroughly acquainted with their condition in life and their social status. It is with feelings of pleasure and gratitude that I am able to say that the subsequent careers of our graduates have been such as to reflect honor on our Institution. A large majority of them live in Ontario, but some of them have become scattered in the various western Provinces, in all parts of the continent, and the old world, in our own Province they are to be found in Toronto, Owen Sound, Collingwood, Sarnia, Stratford, Guelph, Windsor, Chatham, London, St. Thomas, Woodstock, Brantford, Hamilton, Georgetown, Peterboro', Lindsay, Cobourg, Belleville, Kingston, Perth, Ottawa, besides many other towns and every county. All of them, with few exceptions, are earning an honorable and sufficient livelihood; most of them have happy homes, and nearly all are happy, contented, law abiding citizens, and enjoy, as they merit, the confidence and esteem of their fellows. What would have been the condition of these deaf people but for the training and education they received at this Institution it is useless to conjecture, though not difficult to imagine. What they are now we know, and in the success achieved by them is found abundant justification for the provision made for their education and instruction by the Province.

While it is profitable to pause occasionally and take a brief retrospect of the past, yet it must not be forgotten, that it is towards the future that our faces should habitually be turned. Gratifying as has been the record of our Institution, it would not be wise for us to remain satisfied with past achievements, to think that we have reached perfection or attained the summit of success. In our work, as in all other, there is no such thing as standing still, progress is only made against difficulties, discouragements and adverse elements. He who rests upon his oars not only ceases to advance but drifts steadily downwards towards stagnation. Whenever we come to that state of mind that we can view our work with perfect composure, resting upon past achievements, then our usefulness is gone. A rational dissatisfaction with even our best efforts in the past, and an earnest striving after the unattainable, are the indispensable requisites for future pro-

gress and higher achievements. We have been nearly twenty years in the service of this Institution; it is not at all too young and more capable will carry on the work which I have laid down; but whether my future service be long or short, my ideal that I have for this Institution is the perfection of method of instruction for the deaf and its achievement. This ideal can never be attained, but we do aim to accomplish as much better than that of any previous year. This has been done in the past with the inspiration of progress we shall endeavor in the future to make greater achievements with renewed zeal for the results.

MISCELLANEOUS

Our per capita rate this year slightly lower than it was last year.

The favorable report of the Primary Examiner, Mr. Burrows, of Nanawane, is exceedingly gratifying to teachers and others interested.

The general health of pupils since my last report, has been fairly good considering the large number in the Institution. The physician's report gives particulars.

The dry season during the summer accounts for our short crop of potatoes; we shall have to produce five or six hundred bushels of potatoes through the session. We have a deficiency of hay, oats, corn, clover roots and vegetables for our needs.

We are under continuing obligations to the Grand Trunk, Canadian Pacific, Central Ontario and Kingston and Pembroke Railway Companies for reduced fares for pupils, teachers and officers, during the summer vacation. All the officers and trainmen, from the highest to the lowest, have been most kind in every way to everyone connected with the Institution when traveling over their respective lines.

Miss Ada James, who had a year's leave of absence to recuperate, joined the staff again on the opening of school this session, looking and feeling better than she has done in several years. Miss Nina Brown temporarily in charge of Miss James' class, did excellent work with the little girls under her tuition. She would be a desirable acquisition to the permanent corps of teachers.

Mr. Alex. Matheson, Bursar of the Institution, about eight years, owing to continued ill-health, resigned in August last. Mr. Matheson was a genial gentleman in every way and the cause of his leaving us was sincerely regretted by numerous friends both in the Institution and the city of Belleville. Mr. W. Cochrane, the new Bursar, has the necessary ability and he will be a good financial officer. His twelve years' experience as Assistant Bursar of the Asylum at Kingston admirably fits him for his position.

The clergymen of the city have ministered to the pupils of the various denominations with unabated zeal. During the year we are indebted to the following reverend gentlemen for kindly attentions: Rev. Canon Burke, Right Rev. Monseigneur Farrelley, V. G., Rev. T. J. Thompson, M. A., Rev. Charles E. McIntyre, Rev. V. H. Cowart, Rev. M. W. Maclean, Rev. Father Connelly, Rev. C. W. Watch, Rev. J. J. Rice, Rev. N. Hill. We were especially pleased to have a visit from the Right Reverend Archbishop Gauthier, of the Kingston Diocese. He evinced a sincere and hearty interest in our work generally and gave us words of encouragement which are genuinely appreciated.