

to the statistics report, who were dumb, and it turned out that they were children who were not old enough to speak. (Laughter.) I hope the suggestion of the New Zealand representative will be adopted. I hope that the Government will bestir themselves to see that at the next census we shall have reliable returns, and I hope that the foreign delegates will give us the benefit of their experience, so that we may get an international system of statistics for the deaf. (Applause.)

Mr FISHER—I am quite prepared to accept the suggestion of the delegate from New Zealand.

The Chairman then put the resolution to the meeting, and there- after declared it unanimously carried.

The CHAIRMAN—It is agreed that the formation of the Inter- national Committee be remitted to the Committee of the Conference. (Applause.)

Mr BARNES—We have a pleasing function at the end of the session, the presentation of the Braidwood medal. Some details of the competition will be found in the Conference Handbook. I ask the Chairman to open the envelope and declare who is the winner of the medal.

The CHAIRMAN—I have to announce that the Braidwood medal has been won by Mr John D. Barton, Royal Asylum for the Deaf, Margate.* (Applause.)

The Chairman then handed the medal to Mr Barton, and at the same time conveyed to him the congratulations of the Conference.

On the motion of Mr Roorda, a cordial vote of thanks was passed to the Chairman for presiding.

THIRD SESSION.

Wednesday Forenoon, 31st July 1907.

Sheriff SCOTT MONCRIEFF PENNEY, a Director of Glasgow Insti- tution, in the chair.

The CHAIRMAN—In the absence of the Lord Provost I have great pleasure in presiding. The first item on the programme are the papers by Signor Ferreri, Italy; Professor Bélanger, France; and Mr Anders Hansen, Denmark, on "the present state of deaf-mute education in their respective countries."

THE PRESENT STATE OF THE EDUCATION OF THE DEAF IN ITALY.

All the study made by the teachers of the deaf during the past thirty years has not produced the desired result. In fact, while Italy stands among the principal civilised nations for her special literature,

* For Prize Essay, see page 165.



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in the school practice she is left far behind, especially as regards her Legislature.

There are many causes for this lack of equilibrium between theory and practice. I will mention only the principal ones, because it seems to me that only these can be of interest to an International Congress like this, and we can find eventually an incentive to progress.

CHARACTER OF THE INSTITUTIONS FOR THE DEAF IN ITALY.

In Italy the education of the deaf is still considered a charitable work, and has therefore all the characteristics of a charitable enterprise. If this character—stamped upon the education of the deaf by nearly all the nations of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries—corresponded to the needs or gave to the schools the desired results, there would be no objections made. We should instead rejoice at the fact, to the honour of human charity. But it is exactly this character of a charitable work which not only does not permit the diffusion of the education of the deaf according to the needs of a country unfortunate in its social conditions, but it also prevents the work from corresponding to-day with the modern conception of every educational institution.

In Italy there is no law to oblige the Government on one hand to give, and the deaf on the other hand to receive, an elementary education. It is true that such a law would prove inefficacious in Italy even for hearing children, where for 32 million inhabitants there are 18 millions quite illiterate. From this it may be seen that Italy has enough to do without providing laws for the instruction of the deaf, of whom 73 per cent. remain now in ignorance and isolation.

Our last census shows that there are in Italy 31,267 deaf-mutes (17,284 males, and 13,983 females), of whom 7,040 are of the age from 7 to 15 years.

On the other hand, in contrast to the excusable negligence of the Government towards the deaf, private charity has assumed, as a natural compensation, an attitude which might be called in commercial parlance, a *monopoly*. This state of things redounds to the damage of the deaf and their teachers.

The deaf are instructed only in those regions where the wealth of the population from prosperous industries permits some "crumbs from the rich man's table" to fall to their advantage; but they are entirely neglected in those parts of the country where riches is a myth, and where assistance from the Government does not exist, or else is exhausted by a few fortunate ones.

In 1892, at the Congress of Genoa, it was decided to entrust to a National Committee the task of extending the instruction of the deaf in the less advanced parts of the country. The Committee, however, did not prove itself worthy of the trust placed in it; having become, by elimination, a "Milanese Committee," all they did was to increase the difference in the treatment of the poor deaf of Southern Italy in comparison with that of the more fortunate

provinces of the North. So that after fifteen years of expectation we are in the same condition as at first.

When we consider the youth of Italy as a nation, there should be no reason to despair if it were not for the danger of still remaining for a long time in *status quo*. This danger has arisen from an equivocation used, it seems for secondary ends, by the men of the Government on one side, and by those of charity on the other. The equivocation is this:—

The Italian Government evades taking any legislative action in favour of the deaf, giving as an excuse the argument *a priori*, that if the State should interfere, it would in this way dry up the source of charity; while the supporters of charity, on the other side, fear that the intervention of the Government would force them to a more just and rational consideration of the work of the teachers; these, in fact, would be obliged to submit themselves to conditions which seem superior to their scanty preparation.

The following facts are explained by this equivocation:—

1. The lack of a law on the education of the deaf to complete the general law of compulsory instruction for the children of the people, in regard to the special expedients of our schools.
2. The irregularity in the admission of deaf children placed under the arbitration of the counsel of directors of the single institutes.
3. The unequal length of the school period, which depends upon the caprice of the directors, and not, as it ought to, on a pedagogical and didactic criterion as to the real needs of the deaf who are so fortunate as find a school. The length of the school period in our institutes oscillates from four to ten years, and is not, in any way, arranged as a didactic programme.

For traditional reasons, and for the convenience especially of deaf-mutes in the country, we prefer the form of boarding schools in Italy. This does not prevent, however, that in the more populous cities the form of day schools is also adopted. The parents of the deaf are, however, generally opposed to this, and are decidedly in favour of boarding schools, which certainly excludes any unwillingness whatever on the part of the parents to send their children to school when their instruction is provided for, in fact, even without any special law on the subject.

At present they provide in Italy for only two-fifths of the deaf who are of the age and condition to be admitted to school. This is done (*a*) by funds accumulated in the institutes from donations and legacies made by private benefactors; (*b*) by contributions from the provincial and municipal administration (which contributions are limited and fluctuating, not only because of the parsimony of the public administrators, but also from the fact that the Government which regulates this administration, classifies as *optional* all that is done for the education of the deaf); (*c*) from subventions of institutions of credit and charitable societies; (*d*) from provision made by the State in the form of a subsidy to the private institutes, and by a fixed appropriation to those institutes which had already been endowed by past Governments.

The sums granted to the institutes by the various public bodies mentioned above are generally made in proportion to a given number of pupils to be maintained. The average expense per head in Italy is five hundred francs a year.

METHODS OF INSTRUCTION.

Since 1876 the method of instruction to the deaf in Italy is theoretically that of articulate speech and lip-reading. Practically, however, one cannot affirm the absolute dominion of the famous Italian pure oral method. Two circumstances are opposed to this. The first is a natural one, and consists in the talent of the Italians for gesticulation; the other is artificial, and depends upon the character of our institutions, which insisted on remaining asylums even after the Congress of Milan (1880), and in giving shelter to the adult deaf they have preserved the tradition of conventional mimic (signs). While they have succeeded in excluding the manual alphabet (a minor evil) from the school, they have kept in the schools and outside the mimic, which is of the most serious damage to instruction in language in general, and to oral instruction in particular. (Applause.) One would say that the didactic anarchy in our schools puts into practice the absurd aphorism of Assarotti that "the best method is not to have any."

If to this we add the prejudice that the pure oral method should be applied to all the deaf and dumb, it is easy to understand how and why we are not preoccupied as to special arrangements for the dull and backward deaf children.

For the same reasons, and also because of limited means, as well as for the nature itself of our institutes, the classification of the deaf on Schleswig or Danish system is almost entirely unknown.

The selection of the deaf according to their intellectual capacity is admitted and recognised in theory, but in practice this is not done, generally from the lack of teachers prepared for this purpose, or it is accomplished by natural elimination. Hence backward or deficient deaf-mutes are either rejected from the schools after a brief period of experiment, or they are allowed to uselessly repeat the first classes for the whole length of school period.

We also lack the experience of the kindergarten schools and those of higher education. We are entirely lacking in experience as to the auricular instruction. This instruction, however, came at the right time to unmask the secret of the deaf-mute prodigies of the public exhibitions. (Applause.) I must, however, remember in honour of my colleagues of Italy that this secret is to-day no more a mystery as in the good old times, and therefore the public examinations have lost their miraculous glory. (Laughter.)

Referring to my personal observation and experience, I must also say that of the individuals classified as deaf-mutes and sent to our institutes for the deaf, the approximate percentage of the semi-deaf varies from 12 to 15 per cent. I cannot sustain the old opinion that the semi-deaf are generally weak mentally. Perhaps this

opinion originated from the fact that a semi-deaf pupil is placed more in evidence than his companions who are entirely deaf, and because of this his mental deficiencies also become more evident. (Applause.)

LANGUAGE TRAINING.

In the teaching of language a certain formalism still reigns in the Italian schools which gives too large a part of the instruction to scholastic language and the language of books. In following this false direction, while instead the vernacular should prevail in our schools, the special books for the use of the deaf contributed in great part.

Where the formal grammar is taught, it is not begun until the fourth or fifth year of instruction. (Applause.) The result of language training is limited, either from the brief length of the school course (seven to eight years) or from the already noticed lack of selection of the pupils according to intelligence.

For the same reasons our teaching of arithmetic is very limited. This, too, retains its traditional character of a mnemonic exercise. We are too easily satisfied with a nomenclature of formula and definitions, entirely useless for practical life.

As to the talent of the deaf for arithmetic, I do not think that one can speak of an inferiority in comparison with hearing children. In mental arithmetic the results are the same. Where an inferiority appears in the deaf, it is in the practical application of the calculation, but here it is not a special question of arithmetic, but a question of language. (Applause.) It is difficult for the deaf to understand the use of arithmetical operations, for the reason that he does not understand clearly the language which determines the conditions of a given calculation, or which is used in putting the question in arithmetic. (Applause.)

Given the condition of the present school arrangement, it is a good result for us, when at the end of the school period the deaf pupils are capable of a simple epistolary correspondence and of executing without a mistake the four elementary rules of arithmetic.

Religious instruction has a large place in the programme of the Italian schools for the deaf. This is explained if one considers that Italy is a Catholic country, and that the institutes for the deaf are generally entrusted to the religious orders. This last circumstance will also explain the teaching of morality, which is based upon that of religion.

One great advantage of the Italian schools is, I think, the teaching of handwork. This is done everywhere, not only with an educational aim, but also to initiate the deaf into a profitable and lucrative work. Every institute in Italy has two departments, school and workshop. The literary instruction is given in the morning, and that of the workshop in the afternoon or evening, according to the season.

The trades preferred are shoemaker, tailor, and carpenter; but there are also taught occasionally that of bookbinder, printer, of woodcarver, and a few others.

To give an example of the prevalence of the first three trades mentioned, I would say that in thirty institutes (male section) the most common trades are distributed thus:—Trade of shoemaker in twenty-eight institutes; trade of tailor in twenty-five institutes; trade of carpenter in nineteen institutes.

The best results are found in the workshops of the shoemaker. It is an easy trade for Italians, and is easily followed by the deaf after leaving school. The principal advantage, too, is in being able to exercise it independently with whatever master.

TEACHERS OF THE DEAF.

The teachers of the deaf ought to be obtained, after a special training, from those already certified as elementary teachers. (Applause.) This is the theory. In practice, however, the thing goes differently. The majority of the teachers of the deaf in Italy have not been trained in the Normal School, but were placed in the special schools for the deaf by the supporters of charity, who think that a sentiment of compassion and disinterestedness is sufficient, this opinion being justified by the common life of the religious societies.

The fact is that the teachers of the deaf in Italy are inferior in pedagogical culture and legal position to those of the elementary schools.

Neither does the Normal School of Milan give good results. It has remained, even after the change in the method of teaching, in the primitive state, and numbers some pupils only because these are dispensed from any practical exercises. Hence their training is only theoretical, and does not correspond at all to the needs. In conclusion, one may say that when the teacher of the deaf in Italy begins to teach, he is still in the stage of *experimentum in anima vii*.

In correspondence with the lack of training and appropriate culture is also the ridiculous salary they receive. This amounts to from five hundred to two thousand francs a year. The most fortunate finally attain a salary of three thousand francs a year . . . after thirty years of work, that is when they are quite worn out. There are but few institutes which guarantee their teachers a pension.

Among the information desired by this Congress is that of whether travelling scholarships are provided by the Government. Out of charity to my country I will not reply. (Laughter.)

In conclusion, I will say that finally a part of the teachers in Italy have understood the necessity of an organisation, and following the example of our colleagues in other nations, have founded a *Union*, which I have the honour to represent here, bringing to you, as their President, their cordial greetings. (Loud applause.)

THE EDUCATION OF DEAF-MUTES IN FRANCE.

Statistics of the French Schools, June 1907, and a Study of the Actual State of the Education

By ADOLPHE BÉLANGER.

(Translated by Mrs ADDISON, Glasgow.)

WHEN the Abbé de l'Épée, about 1760, opened wide the doors of the little school, which he founded in his own house, to deaf-mutes, he could not foresee, in spite of his almost apostolic zeal, the splendid development to which this work of charity, of justice, and of social regeneration would attain throughout the world.

Before giving a brief outline of the actual state of deaf-mute education in France, I wish to take this opportunity of expressing my great respect for the name, so well known throughout the world, of the man whose heart has been large enough to consider equally the afflicted, not only of his own country, but of the world. Of his method we need not speak here. Science, the devotion of his successors, the continual progress of the human mind have invented, even created, new methods. Can it be said that the last word has been spoken even yet on this point? Permit me to associate with this tribute the name of our great French educationalist, M. J.-J. Valade Gabel, the originator of the intuitive method, and the other not less glorious name of a man recently deceased, M. O. Claveau, Inspector-General, to whom France is certainly largely indebted for the introduction of the oral method. (Applause.)

Ladies and Gentlemen, I know you have also had your great educationalists, whose names you delight to honour—John Bulwer, William Holder, John Wallace, George Dalgarno. Were they not also truly pioneers? Was it not Thomas Braidwood who founded at Leith, near Edinburgh, the first deaf-mute school in Great Britain? Am I not particularly favoured at this time and place, in the cradle of deaf-mute education, to offer them, in the name of my fellow-countrymen and of my own, our grateful and respectful acknowledgments?

Previous to entering fully into my subject, I ought to have offered my grateful thanks for the very kind invitation which your zealous and eminent Secretary, Mr Illingworth, extended to me personally. I have much pleasure in thus meeting with my colleagues of Great Britain. Have we not all the same ideals? the instruction and the happiness of our dear deaf-mutes. Have I not already frequently expressed during my long career my recognition of this *entente cordiale* between the professors of all nationalities? I have been able, through the experience of years, to appreciate its good effects. My excellent confère and friend, M. Van Praagh, whose recent decease we all lament, would not have contradicted me—he who, long ago, was one of the most faithful collaborators on the paper which I then edited