

per annum. The cost of erecting a suitable building would, of course, vary in accordance with the materials used, but, in our opinion, the interest on the cost would not exceed one-half of the amount paid as rent. Probably, however, Mr. Fish's statement that no commensurate results have been obtained was made in a more extended sense, and intended to impugn the ability of the Director, the quality of the education, and the management of the school generally. We recognise the gravity of the question submitted to us, and have given it our earnest attention. We propose to report the conclusions we have come to—(1) As to the competency of the Director to teach deaf-mutes, and the education the pupils are receiving; (2) as to the general management of the institution.

(1.) As to the Director's competency, and the education afforded by the institution: We find that Mr. G. van Asch was specially selected in England, after careful inquiry by a Commission appointed for the purpose. Since he opened the institution, in 1880, his teaching, and the progress of his pupils, have been very favourably reported on by the Inspector-General of Schools; by Mr. Pope, Native School Inspector; and by Dr. Prins, the Medical Officer. Further, Mr. van Asch's teaching has satisfied nearly all the parents of the pupils who have been at the institution during the last twelve years, some of whom have expressed themselves warmly and gratefully as to the benefits conferred on their children. We inquired ourselves into the articulation and degree of education of the pupils now at the institution. We must candidly confess that at first we were disappointed at the articulation of the pupils. Some of them did not readily make themselves understood by our unaccustomed ear; but after hearing the evidence we are inclined to believe that we expected too much in the matter of articulation, though we are still not satisfied that as much has been done by the teachers in this respect as is possible. (See the Inspector-General's report in the Appendix to the Journals, 1885, No. E.-4, and his evidence before us on the 4th November.) We were certainly gratified by the degree of education shown by some of the pupils. Against this mass of evidence in favour of the teaching at the institution we have only certain statements made by Mr. H. E. Crofts, lately an assistant teacher under Mr. van Asch; and a complaint by Mr. J. Jones, the father of a pupil who has left the institution.

On reference to Mr. Crofts' evidence, it will be seen that his charges against the teaching are somewhat vague—the principal one being an assertion that articulation is not properly or sufficiently taught. It appears that Mr. Crofts learned what he knows of the articulation method from Mr. van Asch himself, and, besides this, in our opinion, he cannot be regarded as a reliable or impartial witness in the case, for the following reasons: It appears from the Journals of the House of Representatives, 1892, to which our attention was directed, that some time since the Director made certain charges against Mr. Crofts, then an assistant teacher, and Mr. Crofts made certain counter-charges against the Director. These were referred to Mr. Beetham, R.M., to inquire into as a Commissioner, who reported entirely in favour of the Director. It will be seen from his telegram to us that Mr. Fish requested us to take Mr. Crofts' evidence. As we did not know his address, we requested the officers of the Education Department to ascertain it. After some trouble they found he was at Feilding, and requested him to attend our inquiry. This he declined to do then, but did so after we issued a subpoena for him, thus causing delay. When he did appear, he wanted us to begin the inquiry, which had been going on for more than a week, again, to allow him to appear as prosecutor, cross-examine witnesses, and go over the grounds of Mr. Beetham's inquiry. This we declined to permit.

Then, as to Mr. J. Jones's complaint, which appears in a letter amongst our papers in evidence, it is that Miss Jones was not taught to speak intelligibly, or to make her own clothing, nor was she sufficiently instructed in needlework to enable her to make her living by it. We carefully inquired into the case, and examined Miss Jones. It is quite true that her articulation is defective, but we are inclined to believe the officers in the institution when they say that this is due to her not being a clever pupil. We were convinced, by our observation of other pupils that the teaching is, and must be, more successful in some cases than others. As to Mr. Jones's other complaint, it does not appear to us that the technical education of the children has been sufficiently attended to, but we have no reason to suppose that Miss Jones has been treated exceptionally.

(2.) As to the general management of the institution: As far as the evidence goes, Mr. Crofts is the only witness who impugns it; but we have carefully gone into this question ourselves, and formed opinions from our own observations. We cannot say that we are as satisfied in this respect as we are with the quality of the education. We would first remark that we are in doubt whether the Director or the Education Department is responsible for the details in which we suggest an improvement is possible. We found that no proper records had ever been kept of the admission and leaving of pupils, of their parentage, addresses, state of health, &c., nor of their advancement from class to class, nor of any examination or other reason for such advancement. An admission register had been supplied to the Director, such as is in use in the State schools. The only use that was made of it was to make some rough, incomplete notes of admissions and discharges in the index; the body of the register had never been used at all. There are, as far as we could ascertain, no records of the progress of the pupils, or of medical and general information respecting them, to which a new Director might refer in case of the present one leaving the institution. We think it injudicious that a young lady (Miss Buckingham) should be left in charge of the principal building at night, as she is stated by the Director to be.

We think sufficient attention has not been given to the technical and practical education of the pupils, and to endeavouring to put them out in life. As we have already pointed out, the Government in their prospectus undertook this duty; and we think the Director should determine, after consulting the parents, to what occupation a pupil should be brought up, and act accordingly. In our opinion, also, drill and some gymnastics should be taught, and we suggest that the teachers might interest themselves in teaching the deaf-mutes the ordinary games which other children play at.