

REPORT

OF THE

TRUSTEES OF THE DEAF AND DUMB ASYLUM,

TO THE

TENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY.

DES MOINES:
F. W. PALMER, STATE PRINTER.
1864.

REPORT.

The Trustees of the Iowa Institution for the Education of the Deaf and Dumb, in obedience to law, respectfully submit to the Governor and Legislature of the State, their Fifth Biennial Report.

In so doing, it is eminently proper that the Board should gratefully acknowledge the continued kindness of a merciful Providence, in protecting the State and all its benevolent enterprises, from the ravages of war. While, in other portions of our land, similar institutions have been seriously crippled or entirely broken up, the one under our charge has been carried on with its wonted efficiency and prosperity. The war, which at first threatened to derange if not to destroy all educational and benevolent enterprises, seems not to have disturbed in the least the work of this Institution.

Our young men, though filled with real patriotism, are prevented by their infirmity from joining the gallant sons of the State in the military service of the country, and so are not drawn away from the quiet paths of knowledge here laid open to them. No general financial embarrassment has arisen, sufficient to prevent the parents and friends of the deaf and dumb from fitting them out and sending them to school.

With so much in our favor, the Institution, as might be expected, has been unusually full; showing that its blessings are in some degree appreciated by the people of the State, and especially by the friends of the unfortunate class for whom it was established.

The whole number of admissions to the Institution for the year 1862-3, was sixty-three; for the current year the whole number is sixty-four.

There will be found appended to this report a list of all who have been in attendance during the last and the present session, with such information in regard to them as is required by law.

Of these fifteen were admitted at the beginning of the present

session, for the first time, while the rest had previously enjoyed the privileges of the Institution for longer or shorter periods.

Among these, is to be found almost every grade of intellect, for the deaf child differs not in natural ability from the hearing one, and our pupils are dull or bright as it has pleased their all wise Creator to make them.

The average of attainment and scholarship is somewhat lower at present than in years past, from the fact a brilliant class left the Institution the last summer, having completed the course of instruction pursued here. This class was permitted, in May last, to make a public exhibition of their attainments, highly creditable to themselves and the Institution, and satisfactory and interesting to the audience assembled to witness their performances.

As the advanced pupils go out from year to year, to return no more, it is no small pleasure to their instructors to feel that they have been the means of raising them so far out of the depths of ignorance into which their natural infirmity has plunged them, and the consciousness of having contributed, however humbly, to their elevation, does much to compensate for the toil and care and anxiety experienced by those in charge of the Institution. That the work is laborious, and the responsibility great, there is pleasure in thought that our efforts are not all in vain.

Two, who have enjoyed the benefits of the Institution in years past, are now usefully employed in teaching; one here, and the other in the American Asylum in Hartford, Connecticut.

The general health of the Institution has been good, thanks to a kind Providence, and the watchful care of those to whom the children were entrusted. There have been during the past two years several epidemic diseases among the pupils, as scarlet fever, measles, mumps and diphtheria, but none of them terminated fatally in a single case. The unwearied faithfulness of the Physician of the Institution deserves more than this passing notice; for, under God, it was the means of averting any fatal results.

Our pupils are especially subject to ophthalmia, from the constant use made of the eye, in study and in school, and there have been some severe cases, though most of them yield readily to the energetic treatment used. One or two, however, have been obliged from this cause to return to their homes. This is an evil to which all schools for deaf mutes are especially liable, and is one which

cannot be wholly obviated. Much may be done by proper attention to diet and cleanliness, but no amount of care and watchfulness has ever proved a complete safe-guard.

Since the date of the last report, some important changes have been made in the management of the Institution.

Mr. W. E. Ijams, who established the school as a private enterprise some nine years ago, and who as its Superintendent has been identified with all its growth and progress, has resigned his position. Under him the Institution has grown from twenty pupils to its present average of sixty-one; and he has had the satisfaction of knowing that his efforts, and those of his assistants in this work, have not been ineffectual. Not less than 125 pupils have attended the school during his administration of its affairs. Many of these cherish a warm affection and a high respect for him, as a teacher and a man; and all of them have learned something, and many of them have learned much, of valuable knowledge, both temporal and spiritual.

The pressure of ill-health, and a desire to enter the ministry, led to his resignation in September last. He leaves with the best wishes of all connected with the Institution, for his continued prosperity and usefulness.

The Board have appointed in his place Mr. Benjamin Talbot, for nine years a teacher in the Ohio Institution for the Deaf and Dumb; who comes to us well recommended as a suitable person to fill the office of Superintendent. He pledges to the Institution a hearty devotion to its interests and the most earnest efforts to secure its advancement; and the Board trust that their expectations of him will not be disappointed.

It is but fair to note, in this connection that no less than four gentlemen, recently engaged in the Ohio Institution, have within the last year been appointed to the superintendency of as many deaf and dumb institutions in different parts of the country.

The domestic department is now in the hands of Mrs. Mary B. Swan, formerly a resident of Iowa City; and for the last eight years Assistant Matron in the Ohio Institution, where she established an excellent reputation for efficiency and tact in the management of the deaf and dumb. She is aided in the care of the family, by Mrs. C. E. Stone, who has been officially connected with this Institution a large part of the year past.

The intellectual department is under the especial charge of the Superintendent, who as heretofore, teaches the most advanced of the four classes; and has, for his assistants, one speaking gentleman who also acts as steward, a well educated and intelligent deaf and dumb man; and a young lady, also deaf and dumb, formerly a pupil in Ohio, and later in this Institution.

The children, as a whole are devoting themselves to the end for which they came, and are making commendable progress in the use of language, and in the acquisition of knowledge. The division into classes is necessarily somewhat imperfect, throwing together some of very unequal attainments; it is, however, as satisfactory as it can be without increasing the number of teachers.

In the matter of trades little has been done, though a beginning has been made. A broom-shop was fitted up during the past winter, and a few of the larger boys became quite skillful in the manufacture of brooms. A portion of the brooms made has been sold; while the poorer ones have been retained for the use of the Institution, and will supply the establishment for some time to come. Others of the boys have been employed in different shoe-shops in the city; and have made some progress in their chosen trade. One of the older pupils is now quite a nice workman; and has undertaken, with some help from others to do the mending of the Institution.

Our facilities for instruction in trades are rather limited; we desire to do the best we can for the good of the pupils; and when the Institution is fully established on a proper basis, every pupil who desires it should have an opportunity to learn some useful branch of handicraft.

Annexed to this report are the accounts of the Treasurer and those of the late Superintendent, and the gentleman now acting as Steward; showing our receipts and disbursements for the last two years.

The financial condition of the Institution is not as favorable as could be desired, though there is no alarming deficiency in its funds. The present high prices of nearly all staple commodities increasing the expense of living from 30 to 40 per cent., of course there is a severe pressure on all fixed and regular incomes.

The appropriation for current expenses, of \$25 per quarter for each pupil in attendance, is fair, and even liberal for ordinary

times, but at present prices, even with the most rigid economy, the real necessities of the Institution cannot be fully met. The Trustees feel assured that a wise and generous legislature will be disposed to do whatever is right; and respectfully ask that the exigencies of the Institution may be met, either by a temporary increase of the appropriation allowed by law, or by a special contingent fund for the present emergency.

It is the belief of the Board that the present embarrassment of the Institution grew out of the expenses necessarily incurred in its removal to the premises now occupied. The act of the Legislature in 1862, limited the rent of a building to the very low figure of \$300. A perfect compliance with this law was absolutely impossible; if any proper regard was to be paid to the wants of the Institution, whether present or prospective. With a constant pressure on the school for the admission of new pupils, it seemed certain that it could not be properly accommodated in any smaller premises than those then occupied, at a rent of \$600. The buildings now in use are as well adapted to the purposes of the Institution as any that could be secured; and were leased at \$375, which is considerably lower than the rent they would now command. The Trustees consented to this arrangement only after the most careful deliberation, and under the fullest conviction that it was the very best that could be made.

It was found necessary for the comfort and convenience of the household to make some repairs and improvements in one of the buildings now under lease; and these with the furniture and carpeting necessarily procured at the same time, will account for a large share of the present indebtedness.

When the new Superintendent commenced his duties on the 1st of October last, the liabilities of the Institution amounted, according to the best estimate we have been able to make, to upwards of \$1100 besides the salaries then due. In the two months and a half which have elapsed since that time, this amount has been diminished to a sum not exceeding \$650 over and above all moneys now at the command of the Board; but this reduction has been effected at the expense of the comfort and convenience of the household. Many things which the Institution absolutely needs we have felt obliged to deny ourselves from the necessity of reducing the indebtedness as far as possible. The Board trust that the Legiala-

ture will accept this statement as evidence that under the present management, every effort will be made to keep the Institution free from debt.

In looking to the future, the great want of the Institution is a building of its own, more conveniently arranged, and better adapted to the wants of the school. Probably no rented house could be found in the State that would answer better than the one now occupied; and any such house would be open to the same objections as the present one.

The main difficulties we labor under, are the want of a proper playground for the pupils, who have to play on the street, if at all in the open air; and an undue degree of publicity and exposure to the unfavorable influences of city life. Of course such an Institution must be in or near a large place and should be so located as to be easily accessible from all parts of the State; conditions which are fulfilled in our present situation; but our present difficulties cannot be obviated, till the Institution has an edifice of its own, on suitable grounds, properly located and tastefully arranged. Let the pupils have for their schooldays, a home that shall be pleasant and attractive, and they can be much more easily preserved from the temptations and seductions of city life.

Our State has granted munificent appropriations for other public institutions, and need not be ashamed to compare its Asylums with those of other States; it now remains that equal justice be done to this Institution, and that by the erection of a commodious and suitable building it should be put in a condition to do its whole duty to the deaf mutes of the State. Whether the time to rise and build has yet come, remains for the State authorities to say. The Board could not discharge its whole duty without calling attention to this matter, and urging again the claims of the Institution to better accommodations.

A more immediate, and perhaps the most pressing want, is a more liberal compensation to the officers and teachers. The last Legislature in the great uncertainty whither we as a nation were drifting, and fearing that the war might produce serious financial embarrassment, saw fit for prudential reasons to reduce the salaries of most persons in the pay of the State; those in this Institution among the rest. Time, and the progress of events, have proved that these fears were groundless, and the precautions taken unnece-

essary. The nation in the shock of war, has lost none of its wonted prosperity; and the people as a whole, have lost none of their ability to bear taxation.

But the unavoidable change in the currency has so enhanced the value of all articles of food and dress, that those depending on fixed salaries, find themselves seriously embarrassed; and the more, if as in our case, those salaries have been reduced below what were paid in times of peace, when currency was equal in value to gold. The Superintendent of this Institution, under the present law, receives but \$700 per annum, a smaller salary than is paid in any other Deaf and Dumb Institution in the country; and the teachers' salaries are, and always have been, lower than those paid elsewhere. It would be but simple justice to the officers in this Institution, to restore their salaries to the old scale.

But more than this is demanded by the interests of the school. If this is to be made what it ought to be, it should be in the power of the Board to pay such salaries as will command persons of suitable and even eminent qualifications for the peculiar work here required. At present, as all through our past history, the Institution is unable to secure the services of experienced teachers, and could not retain them if secured. This difficulty has been dwelt upon at length in former reports, and those now in charge of the Institution feel it with redoubled force. Young men of the requisite talent and energy will not take hold of our work, and devote themselves to it for life, unless the compensation at least approximates what they might obtain in other spheres. Surely so prosperous a State as Iowa will not withhold the means necessary to place her educational and benevolent enterprises on a level with those of her sister States.

We trust that the Institution will continue successfully to carry forward its noble work; and that it will not be crippled in the least by the lack of the necessary means. We believe that the Legislature, like those in years past, will deal fairly with its claims, and in this belief we cheerfully commend its interests to the generous notice and careful attention of the General Assembly.

In behalf of the Board.

J. P. WOOD, President.

BENJ. TALBOT, Secretary.

INSTITUTION FOR DEAF AND DUMB,
Iowa City, Dec. 19, 1863. }