

VIII.—LONDON BOARD SCHOOLS AND THE REV. W. STAINER'S HOMES.¹

London Board
schools.

Through the courtesy of the Rev. W. Stainer,² I visited with him two of the London Board deaf-mute schools,³ each of which consists of boys and girls,⁴ one in Winchester Street, Pentonville North, and the other in Summerfield Street, Bethnal Green East. The latter one was expressly selected because the building has been specially constructed as a model building for the purpose. It consists of four class-rooms, formed so as to afford more than ordinary light by means of skylights in addition to windows, in order that the lips may be narrowly watched,⁵ and so as to accommodate twelve pupils in a room. The teachers (thirteen) at the Board schools, who receive £80 a year, and the pupil-teachers (ten), who receive £25 to £15 per annum⁶ are all, with one exception,⁷ females; and the majority of the teachers have been trained either at Fitzroy Square or Ealing. Females, I may add, seem to be generally preferred,⁸ as being more patient and sympathetic,⁹ and procurable at lower salaries. The hours of instruction are every day (except on Saturday and Sunday) from 9.15 a.m. to 12.30 p.m., and from 1.30 to 3.45 p.m.;¹⁰ the hour's interval being for the mid-day meal, which the children bring with them.¹¹ The fee charged is the same as in the other London Board schools, 2d. each per week. The classes are not examined, or inspected, by any Government Inspector, and no Government grant has been made for their support, or aid;¹² but the Superintendent reports half-yearly to the Board. "The children sit at specially-constructed desks, which are arranged in a circular form, so that they may easily observe the movements of the lips of their teachers and of each other—an important arrangement to facilitate lip-reading;"¹³ and these desks are designed after a pattern in use at Riehen, altered by the Rev. W. Stainer. Circular desks, however, are not preferred, and therefore are not to be found at Fitzroy Square, where the desks are placed longitudinally, with a slope on both sides, so that the children face each other, with the teacher at the top end.¹⁴ At the circular desk the teacher sits outside of the circle, whilst objects forming the subject of object-lessons are placed in the centre, on a small table within the circle; and the number of pupils so taught at one time does not usually exceed ten, which is in accordance with the declaration made at the Milan Congress:—

"Considérant que l'enseignement des sourds-muets par la parole a de particulières exigences; considérant les données de l'expérience de la presque unanimité des instituteurs des sourds-muets;

"Déclare

"Qu'un professeur ne peut enseigner efficacement avec la méthode orale pure plus de 10 élèves."¹⁵

A similar declaration had been made at the International Congress held in Paris in 1878; and the subject formed the second of the six questions submitted for discussion at Brussels,¹⁶ which resulted in the following resolutions:—

(1.) "Qu'au début de l'enseignement le nombre des élèves à instruire par le même professeur, et d'après la méthode orale pure, ne dépasse pas 8 à 10;"

(2.) "Que, dans les classes supérieures le nombre des élèves ne dépasse pas 12."

(3.) "Que l'enseignement mutuel ne soit pas admis."¹⁷

But the majority of the teachers to whom I spoke seemed to hold that no teacher should have more than six or eight, at least in the elementary stages;¹⁸ and Mr. Van Praagh appears

¹ For list and particulars of Metropolitan charities, see "Caution to Benefactors of Deaf and Dumb," 1885, compiled by Rev. W. Stainer.

The deaf-mute population of London for 1886, is said to be 1,972—see Q.R., April, 1886, p. 63.

Note recent presentations to him.—Q.R., April, 1886, p. 54.

See also "School Guardian," 25 Feb., 1882, Art. by Canon Smith, "On a Visit to a Deaf and Dumb Board School."

In the new school opened at Rueil in France, under Mr. Magnat as Director, the sexes are separated.—A.A., Oct., 1886, p. 286.

Note Mr. Kinsey's remarks in Paper for Congress, I.C.P., p. 100.

⁶ See Circular.

⁷ Mr. Campbell. See Q.R., April, 1886, p. 54.

⁸ But experts are not unanimous upon this question.

See, however, testimony to the ability and enthusiasm of lady teachers, by Dr. Buxton, Proceedings of Conference, London, July, 1885, p. 4; and

Note the relative numbers in Great Britain, 107 females as against 88 males in Table for Year 1885.—Proceedings, London Conference, July, 1885.

⁹ Note Mr. Kinsey's remark quoted in N.C.

¹⁰ See discussion at Brussels Congress, T.C., pp. 143-165.

¹¹ See Circular.

¹² See Circular.

¹³ See (a) Circular; and (b) I.C.P., Paper by Mr. Kinsey.

¹⁴ On School furniture, refer to—

(a) Paper on "School Management," Proceedings, London Conference, July, 1885, p. 32; and

(b) "Revue Internationale," as above, Feb., 1886, pp. 262 and 263.

¹⁵ C.R., p. 197, and I.C.P.

¹⁶ T.C., pp. 6 and 143-165.

¹⁷ See (a) T.C.;

(b) I.C.P. See also (a) Prof. Bell's address A.A., Oct., 1884, p. 315; and (b) Mr. Kinsey's opinion C.R., p. 291.

¹⁸ Note also T.C., p. 145.