ELOQUENT SILENT ORATORS.

The Virginia Association of the Deaf in Biennial Convention.

PRESIDENT RITTER'S ADDRESS

He Urges Separate Institutions for the Deaf and the Blind—Other Important Recommendations.—Superintendent W. A. Bowles Present.

CHARLOTTESVILLE, VA., August 11.—[Special.]—The fourth biennial convention of the Virginia Association of the Deaf was called to order to-night at 8 o'clock in the large Midway Assembly Hall by President William C. Ritter, of this city. There are a large number of delegates present, and an unusual number of visitors from near-by and distant States, among them being quite a crowd from Arkansas.

After prayer the president introduced His Honor, Mayor McCue, who gave the convention a warm welcome on behalf of the city.

Mr. Robert Edward Lee Gilles, of Richmond, responded to the Mayor in a happy and jovial way.

MR. GILLES' RESPONSE.

Mr. Gilles spoke as follows:

Mr. Mayor: We appreciate your hospitable welcome, and I feel it an honor to have the pleasure of thanking you and our hearing friends for your kindly interest in us and ours.

"We are here both for business and pleasure, and we earnestly hope to make a success of both, not only for ourselves, but for you, who will join us with us.

"Our object is the improvement, elevation, and ennobling of our class.

"One special object is to secure a separate school for the deaf, in order that

MR. W. A. BOWLES.
(Superintendent of the Deaf, Dumb and Blind Institute.)

they may receive the undivided attention due them during the few years allowed them while at school. We request the interest and assistance of all who are interested in us. But here let we close, for we are here to work at present. We will endeavor not to make too much noise till the ball comes on. Hush, we are not even here to talk, not even to whisper; we will say all we have to say in signs, the silent language, and leave it to our interpreter to regulate the noise.

Addresses were made by Superintendent William A. Bowles, of the Deaf, Dumb and Blind Institution, at Staunton, who astonished his audience by talking to them in the sign language after only ten months' experience in this particular educational field. Other addresses were made by distinguished visitors, both vocally and in signs.

Hon. John K. Massey was one of the speakers.

President Ritter then delivered his biennial address, and message to the association. Professor Eshen, the chaplain, of the faculty of the Staunton Institution, reading the address for those who could hear.

THE PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS.

Members of the Virginia Association of the Deaf:

Ladies and Gentlemen:—Another two years have passed into history, and with them many events of the greatest and gravest importance to our class. The concern and interest that has been awakened during these two brief years will endure for years and decades to come. Upon this, our fourth anniversary, I greet you each and all, every one of the Virginia Association of the Deaf. I trust that our meeting will be marked by that spirit of harmony and good will which has characterized our former conventions, and which we can point to with pardonable pride. The administration just closing has passed though many perplexities and embarrassments, and I trust you will make due remission for all imperfections and errors that have been committed. We have cause for thankfulness and congratulations that our association has endured the hardships and embarrassments generally of the last two years, and has ever held up as its watch-word, "Duty."

The questions and matters now claiming your most careful and profound attention, of which there are an unusual number, I hope, will receive an harmonious and final settlement.

In obedience to resolutions to that effect this administration appeared before the late Virginia Legislature and endeavored to convince the people's representatives of the pressing need of better facilities for the education of the deaf-mute and blind children of the State. We have abundant reason to be satisfied with the work so far accomplished in this direction.

SECOND BATTLE.

The first battle has been fought and we are upon the verge of the second, and let us hope, the final one. We have been impressed with the deep interest and patience of our law-makers whenever we have appeared before them, or exchanged communications. The State of Virginia's finances has been one of grave concern, not only with the General Assembly, but with the citizens and tax-payers of the Commonwealth. As a portion of the tax-payers of the State, and handicapped as we are in matters of business, we have felt keenly the "stringency of the times." Wastefulness and economy in public expenditure concerns us greatly. But we should not allow a spirit of false economy to get the best of our mature judgment. We must wrestle with the present state of affairs and let the future take care of itself—only hoping that those to come after us will live in an age and condition which will prove the wisdom and unselfishness of our actions, and bestow upon us what credit may be our due.

Within the bounds of the State to-day there have been found over two hundred children lacking two of the most important senses—hearing and speech—of school age and unable to receive the benefits of an education on account of inadequate facilities. They are deemed to grow up in an unfashionable depth of ignorance unless the people's representatives in the Legislature hasten to their relief. Inside this large number of deaf-mute children there are nearly one hundred with sightless eyes crowded out of the State educational institution at Staunton. All of these children are white.

NO CHARITY.

It is a common thought among most people that to educate these afflicted children is a charitable act upon the part of

makes large annual appropriations for the maintenance and support of colleges and universities in different portions of the State—all educational institutions possessing world-wide reputations—then why add to and double our burdens by branding us as objects of charity and allowing us meagre appropriations for the education of only half of our number? "Oh, consistency, thou art, indeed, a jewel." Even in the Legislature, when we have anything of a business nature to request or deliver, we are sympathetically (?) referred to the "Committee on Asylums and Prisons." We accept all true sympathy, but most indignantly reject with scorn all endeavors to place us upon charitable footing, and refuse all common place pity.

In spite of the thousand and one disadvantages under which we labor, we have seen some decided progress made. The day is happily passing—almost gone—when the limit of hope for a deaf man was to be a mechanic or a laborer, and that of the women, a household drudge.

The deaf are assuming their rights to be heard on all subjects affecting their welfare. They pay taxes and enjoy the privileges of voting, and the American and State constitutions make no discriminations against us—though unscrupulous politicians ofttimes endeavor to deny us our rights. We claim to have a better knowledge of what is for the betterment of our class, and having such knowledge and being citizens and supporters of the general government, we demand that our views be given a just consideration in proportion, and our public needs attended to.

NO ANNEX NEEDED.

While pressing upon our law-makers the crying needs of more facilities for the education of the deaf and blind, we should endeavor also to impress upon them the folly of making additional appropriations for buildings to the present institution at Staunton. The twenty or thirty acres of land surrounding the school there are totally insufficient, and the lay of the land immediately adjoining is wholly unsuitable for purposes for which it should be adapted.

The city of Staunton is also rapidly encroaching upon the school, when at no distant day the present buildings will stand in the midst of a flourishing city. The present buildings are admirably adapted to the use of the blind pupils. They all readily go over them without any assistance whatever. Within a few years the whole establishment could be filled with blind pupils. The deaf, on the other hand, would be very disastrously crowded if they were retained in the present buildings, and all things are against more buildings upon that plot of land. With a farm of three or five hundred acres and with from two to three hundred deaf-mute pupils in attendance, many of whom would prefer instruction that would be of assistance to them after leaving school, as three-fourths of them are children of farmers, many thousand dollars would be saved to the State in the way of produce, etc.

It is my opinion, and I am not alone in this opinion, that a new institution for deaf-mutes would be far more advisable, all things considered, than one for the blind. By looking over the ground carefully it will soon be seen by any man that the most deaf children come from the Eastern shore and the Southwest portion of the State. It would, therefore, behoove the State to locate the school midway between these two portions. However, the question of location should not be considered until it has been finally decided to establish a new school for either of the two classes.

NOTHING IN COMMON.

Virginia to-day is one of only four or five States now educating their deaf and blind children in the same schools. Seventy-five and one hundred years ago, when educational affairs in this country were in their infancy and free government was struggling for a firm footing it was to advantage to confine the two classes—the deaf and the blind—to same educational institutions. But what would our fortunate hearing and vision-gifted brethren think if school boards and trustees should now decide to place their schools upon the footing where they were fifty years ago? It is unnecessary and would be exceedingly ridiculous for a man to claim to-day that the present and up-to-date methods of educating the two classes have any interest or harmony one in the other.

There is absolutely nothing in common between the deaf and the blind, except that they are both afflicted. Their respective methods of education are totally different. The deaf rely solely upon vision to receive their education, while the blind rely solely upon their ear. The methods are just as different as the methods of a classical from a technical school. There is a great and deep gulf between the two classes, and intimate association between them is neither profitable or pleasant to either class. Why Virginia should cling to this antiquated and irrational plan of an unnatural union is beyond comprehension.

Besides these three hundred white children struggling along under heavy afflictions there are found to be over one hundred colored children similarly afflicted and with no provision whatever for being educated.

MOST DESIRABLE GIFT.

As citizens of Virginia, educated and enjoying the manifold blessings of a free government, and an independent life we, who are in a position to know, owe it to our sadly-afflicted brethren, to humanity, and, above all, to our God, to leave nothing undone, to never become weary until we have seen our efforts in behalf of a class which a kind Providence has seen fit to place under the ban of affliction enjoying, as we now enjoy, the most priceless thing in this life and the most desirable gift—An Education.

If it was at all necessary, it would be within the bounds of all reasonableness to abandon and curtail all State appropriations for public improvements until there has been provided abundant room

MR. W. C. RITTER.
(President of the Virginia Association of the Deaf.)

for every deaf-mute and blind child knocking at the door for an education. But it is not necessary. Why then shall Virginia be so tardy?

I recommend to your careful consideration the revision of several laws now embodied in our constitution. The name of the association, I believe, can now be advantageously changed, making this body a true alumni association, to which only