

# AMERICAN ANNALS

OF THE

# Deaf and Dumb,

EDITED BY

**EDWARD A. FAY,**

UNDER THE DIRECTION OF

E. M. GALLAUDET, OF WASHINGTON, E. C. STONE, OF  
CONNECTICUT, I. L. PEET, OF NEW YORK,  
W. J. PALMER, OF ONTARIO, AND  
THOMAS MACINTIRE, OF  
INDIANA,

Executive Committee of the Convention.

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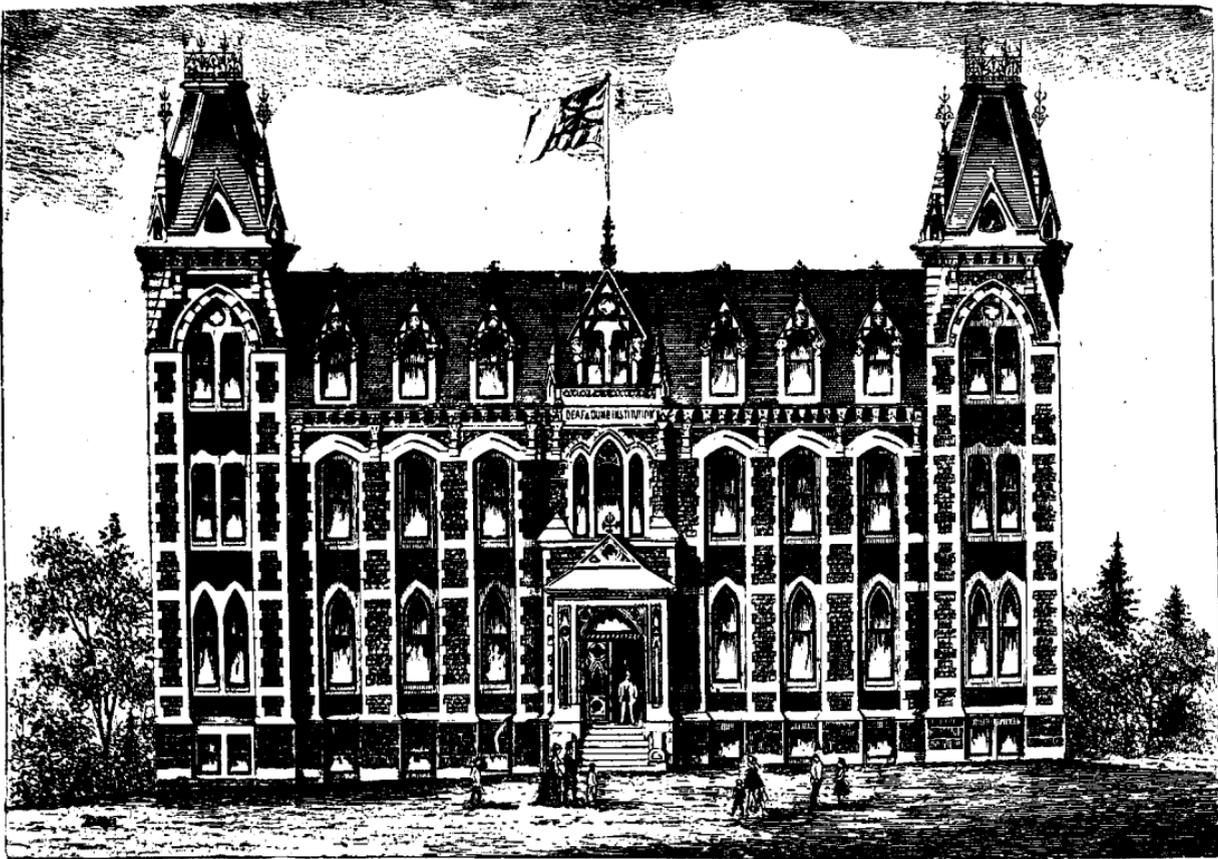
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**OCTOBER, 1877.**

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THE MACKAY INSTITUTION FOR PROTESTANT DEAF MUTES,  
MONTREAL, CANADA.

AMERICAN ANNALS  
OF THE  
DEAF AND DUMB.

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HISTORY OF THE PROTESTANT INSTITUTION FOR  
DEAF-MUTES, MONTREAL, CANADA.

BY THOMAS WIDD, PRINCIPAL.

IN complying with a request for an historical sketch of the educational establishment for the Protestant deaf-mutes of Lower Canada, it may not be out of place first to take a glance at the state of deaf-mute instruction in the Dominion of Canada when the writer took up his residence at Montreal in the year 1868.

At that period there were four institutions to meet the educational requirements of some 3,500 deaf-mutes scattered over the Dominion, viz: The two Roman Catholic Institutions at Montreal; the Nova Scotia Institution at Halifax; the Upper Canada Institution at Hamilton. The former were the oldest, having been founded in the year 1848, under the patronage of the Roman Catholic Bishop of Montreal and the Seminary of St. Sulpice, (the most powerful and wealthy Roman Catholic corporation in America.) One of these Roman Catholic Institutions is for boys, and the Rev. A. Bélanger is the principal. The other is for girls, and is conducted by the nuns. The Institution at Halifax was established in August, 1856, and has ever since been most ably and successfully conducted by Principal Hutton.\* The Institution in Upper Canada was begun

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\* For a full account of this Institution see the *Annals*, vol. xiv, page 68.

at Toronto in 1858 by Mr. J. B. McGann, who may be regarded as the pioneer of deaf-mute instruction in the western part of the Dominion. In 1868, Mr. McGann was struggling manfully to save his school from hopeless bankruptcy and ruin. The education of deaf-mutes was a new departure to the sturdy pioneers of that period in Western Canada. Some there were who admitted the importance of educating deaf-mutes, but doubted its possibility; others had no objection to the trial being made, but protested against being taxed to support "dummies" while at school. The writer could not help sympathizing with Mr. McGann when he said, "I am obliged to buy my fuel on credit, and keep a pass-book with my grocer and baker. My furniture has been twice distrained for rent and taxes." Mr. McGann's spare moments were occupied in diffusing information respecting the deaf and dumb, and in convincing the public that their education was not only possible, but absolutely necessary. This, coupled with many examination tours, had the desired effect. The government of Ontario came to Mr. McGann's assistance, and in 1870 opened the present noble Institution at Belleville, under the direction of Dr. W. J. Palmer.

It will thus be seen that provision was made for the education of deaf-mutes in the western part of the Dominion, in the Maritime Provinces, and for the *Roman Catholic* deaf-mutes in Lower Canada; but *nothing had been done for deaf-mutes of the English-speaking population, or Protestants, in Lower Canada.* Many of these were the descendants of the early settlers, the United-Empire loyalists. None of their deaf-mutes had received any instruction, except in one or two cases, where the parents possessed sufficient means to send them to Hartford or to England for instruction. The writer had not been long a resident in Canada's commercial capital before the necessity of a school for Protestant deaf-mutes was forcibly brought to his notice by the father of one of them, who appealed with sorrowful heart on behalf of his grown-up deaf-mute son, totally uneducated. Others were soon discovered, some of school age and some past the prime of manhood and womanhood, with no school in the whole Province where their parents could have them taught according to their own religious belief. The writer saw a new field of labor opened for him. His experience for some years as an assistant under the late Dr. Baker, of the Yorkshire Institution for Deaf-Mutes, and as a missionary to

adult deaf-mutes in different parts of England, amply fitted him for a career of usefulness, although surrounded by very great difficulties. A long correspondence on the subject of a school for Protestant deaf-mutes in Lower Canada took place in the *Montreal Daily Witness*. Information respecting the numbers of deaf-mutes in the Province was diligently sought for; influential Protestant gentlemen engaged in commerce, science, and education were consulted, and their aid asked for and obtained. There were no reliable returns of vital statistics published for the Province, and the public seemed to know no more about deaf-mutes and deaf-mute instruction than they did in Ontario when Mr. McGann began his uphill labors. Many doubted the writer's deaf-dumbness on account of the easy way he handled the English language and his literary productions. But it was at last ascertained, as near as could be, that there were about 3500 deaf-mutes in the Dominion, some 1300 being in Lower Canada; and, judging by the relative proportions of Protestant and Roman Catholic populations in the Province, there were probably 200 Protestant deaf-mutes, and of these about 75 were of school age, viz., between 7 and 25 years.

The information thus gathered and the knowledge on the subject of deaf-mute education possessed by the writer were published in the *Witness*. More correspondence ensued, and several applicants for education were received by the writer. Further inquiry revealed the fact that the provincial legislature of Lower Canada before confederation had voted \$80,000 for purposes of education of deaf-mutes, but this sum has not yet been paid out, and the record will probably be all that will now remain in connection with it.

During this correspondence in the public prints, which lasted more than a year, (1868 to 1869,) many of the benevolent Protestants in the city of Montreal, ever alive to the wants of suffering humanity, were quietly watching the issue, and taking notes of the facts brought to light. A few of the most prominent of them came forward and took up the subject. Mr. McGann, then principal of the Ontario Institution at Hamilton, was invited to Montreal to give an exhibition of the progress of some of his pupils, and an address on the subject of deaf-mute instruction; this took place at the close of 1868.

On the 7th of January, 1869, a public meeting of those interested in the good work took place in Montreal, and the follow-

ing prominent Protestant citizens formed themselves into a society to establish an educational institution for Protestant deaf-mutes in Lower Canada :

*Ladies.*—Mesdames Andrew Allan, P. Redpath, J. W. Dawson, (McGill University,) Major, Bond, Cramp, Fleet, Moffatt, Brydges, Browne, Workman.

*Gentlemen.*—Charles Alexander, (president,) Thomas Cramp, (vice-president,) Fred. Mackenzie, (hon. sec.-treas.,) Thos. Workman, John Dougall, (proprietor of the *Montreal Witness*,) Wm. Lunn, G. Moffatt, J. A. Matthewson, J. H. R. Moloon, Hon. J. J. C. Abbott, E. Carter, Q. C., P. D. Browne, W. H. Benyon, I. F. Barnard, John Leeming, and S. J. Lyman.

With this influential committee great and rapid progress was made, and next day, January 8, another meeting was held. It was resolved to ask for legislative aid and a charter, and to appeal for public subscriptions. Mr. Mackenzie, the secretary-treasurer, reported that he had made diligent inquiries respecting the probable number of Protestant deaf-mutes in the Province, and believed there were over 200. The committee resolved to rent a suitable house and grounds.

At this juncture, Mr. W. H. Vanvliet, mayor of Lacolle, some 40 miles south of Montreal, made an offer to the committee of their choice of three splendid sites for the proposed Institution. Any of these lots would make a very generous donation to any charitable institution; but the committee thought that to remove the Institution so far away would deprive it of the contributions from the benevolent of Montreal, its main source of support.

On the 19th January, 1869, another meeting was held, at which it was reported that the handsome sum of \$5,950 had been subscribed, and more was promised. The principal collector of this large sum was Mr. Thomas Cramp, the vice-president; the other members of the committee, being otherwise engaged, could not then assist in collecting, or the amount would doubtless have been much larger.

The work of the hon. secretary-treasurer was no sinecure. He sent out hundreds of circulars to ministers in all parts of the Province to obtain the number, age, sex, circumstances, etc., of all Protestant deaf-mutes of the Province. It may be of interest to the profession to learn how far the circulars succeeded in this mixed community, where the Protestants form only a small minority of the population.

On the 26th January, 250 circulars to Protestant ministers had brought 23 replies, reporting only 5 deaf-mute and 5 blind Protestants.

On the 10th March it was stated that 112 replies to circulars had been received, reporting 38 deaf-mutes, 8 of school age; of 34 blind returned only 5 were of school age. More circulars were sent out.

On April 30, 210 replies were received, reporting 57 deaf-mutes, 35 males and 22 females. Their ages were: Between 16 and 21 years, 8 males and 5 females, in all 13; between 21 and 30 years, 8, being 4 of each sex.

The committee now wished to know—

1. Between what ages can deaf-mutes be educated?
2. Whether both sexes should be educated together?
3. Whether the blind and deaf-mutes should be educated together?

These questions were submitted to several experts, including the writer. All recommended the education of the sexes together, but advised a separate school for the blind, and named the ages at which deaf-mutes could be educated as from 7 to 25 years.

On the 15th December, 1869, another meeting of the committee was held, which the late Rev. Collins Stone of Hartford attended by invitation. He expressed pleasure and satisfaction with his interview with the writer and his testimonials, and recommended them to make a trial with a small school under the management of the writer, with his wife as matron. He kindly offered to allow the writer and his wife to spend a few months in the Hartford Institution to acquire a knowledge of the system of instruction, if necessary. He continued to be a warm friend of the Institution up to the time of his lamented death, which took place a few months after his visit to Montreal.

On the 4th May, 1870, another meeting of the committee was held, and it was unanimously resolved that the writer should at once look for a suitable house and grounds, and open school in September. A house, with ample grounds, in a very healthy locality, just outside of the city limits, (Cote St. Antoine,) was obtained in July, at an annual rental of \$400, with option of purchase within five years for \$8,000, the extent of ground being 58,080 square feet. The house contained accommodation

for about 20 pupils, but very scant provision for teachers. The double doors of the parlor were removed, and the room was used as school-room, chapel and sitting-room for the pupils. Baths were put in and a few alterations made, in order that we might make the best of the small accommodation the house afforded.

At this meeting the committee learned that their attempt to obtain legislative aid for the school had failed, but they were not discouraged, and made another application for a grant, feeling they had the same right to aid from the State as their Roman Catholic fellow-citizens had for their Institution. The government at last made the Institution a grant of \$1,000, which has since been increased to \$1,729.

On the 15th September, 1870, the Protestant Institution for Deaf-Mutes opened its doors, for the first time, for the reception of pupils. During that month and the following October, 11 pupils, 9 boys and 2 girls, were admitted. Of these six paid full fees, (\$90,) and five were free.

On the 1st November, 1870, the Institution was formally opened to the public by the Protestant Bishop of Montreal and Metropolitan of Canada, in the presence of a large assemblage of prominent ladies and gentlemen, and another charitable institution was added to the long list for which Montreal is famous.

During the first session of the new school sixteen pupils were admitted, thirteen boys and three girls, one of the latter being a young woman deaf, dumb, and blind. She was in a most deplorable state. Her constitution was enfeebled by long confinement and neglect, and, at times, she was subject to fits of ungovernable temper; at other times she would show signs of great intellect, and some progress was made in learning the manual alphabet, with the aid of raised letters, which were procured for her benefit. After being a few weeks in the Institution she was able to communicate her wants in signs, and could go about the house unaided. Her health, however, began to fail, and her parents contemplating a removal to the West, and it being found that the Institution in its early infancy had not the necessary accommodation and staff of teachers which her case required, her parents were desired to remove her.

The numerous duties which devolved upon the principal and matron were such as to require all their time and constant care

from early morning till late at night. Eight hours a day for six days a week were spent in the school-room; three hours a day were devoted to teaching different kinds of work about the place, and to training the pupils in habits of industry. Many a night the principal had to sit at his desk attending to correspondence, and the monthly accounts and reports for the meetings of the board of directors. It was, indeed, a year of real hard work, care, and anxiety. The matron, with the aid of a single female cook and the two girls, did all the domestic work of the Institution, and took upon herself the instruction of the classes of pupils of a low grade of intellect. The principal taught two classes and the drawing-class after school-hours, besides acting as teacher of trades, steward, and supervisor. On Sundays a Sabbath-school was held, and three hours were devoted to religious instruction by means of the sign-language.

The system of instruction in this Institution is, to a very great extent, similar to that adopted by the Nova Scotia Institution at Halifax. Natural signs, writing, and the manual alphabet (both single and double-handed) are the chief instruments depended on for teaching. In so small a school great diversity of intellect prevailed, which rendered it necessary to divide the pupils into several classes, and the ingenuity of the teacher was taxed to the utmost to devise methods of reaching the dormant minds of the pupils. Some of our friends suggested that the articulation method as carried on in the excellent school at Northampton, Massachusetts, should be adopted in this Institution, but they soon saw that with such pupils it was an impossibility. The object persistently kept prominently in view during the whole session of the first year, and ever afterwards, has been to give the deaf-mute a knowledge of language (written or otherwise) by whatever methods long experience has suggested as the best and most certain, and to inculcate habits of industry, with moral and religious training.

The public interest in the success of the Institution during the first year was very great, especially towards the close of the session; visitors were numerous, almost daily, which obliged the principal to leave his classes to show them about the place and answer their questions by the slow process of writing; but the good work was perseveringly continued until the day arrived for the first public examination of the pupils, which was held in the Mechanics' Hall in Montreal on the 13th June,

1871, and was presided over by J. W. Dawson, LL. D., F. R. S., principal of the McGill University. There was a very large audience present, including many of the most prominent men of the city. As this was our first appearance before the public, and many drawbacks had attended the session just then closed, the teachers and pupils felt no small distrust as to the results of their labors. They were, however, so kindly received and assisted by the president of the Institution, (Chas. Alexander,) and the secretary-treasurer, (F. Mackenzie,) that they were encouraged to do their best on the occasion, which was attended with great success. At the close of the exhibition, Dr. Dawson asked the audience to adopt a written recognition of the services rendered by the teachers, and their thorough approval of the system of instruction adopted by the Institution. This proposal was heartily approved by the audience, and the chairman drew up the following words, read them to the audience, and presented them to the writer :

“The audience desire me to say that they are very much gratified with what they have seen, and desire to encourage you in your good work, and to express their approval of the pupils.  
PRINCIPAL DAWSON.”

An examination tour through the Province was now resolved on. The secretary-treasurer, F. Mackenzie, Esq., accompanied by the principal and two of the advanced pupils, visited the largest Protestant towns in the Province, and held public meetings and examinations of the pupils at each place. At all of these places the greatest interest in the work was shown by the public. Collections to defray expenses were taken up at the close of each examination. A very enthusiastic reception was given us at Quebec city, where three of the pupils resided and took part in the examinations. A subscription was immediately taken up to provide the Institution with a printing-press and founts of type by a few friends in Quebec, and the handsome sum of \$267.53 was handed to the secretary-treasurer.

During the following session Miss Clara Bulmer was engaged as an assistant teacher, and to instruct semi-mutes in articulation, which relieved Mrs. Widd, the matron, of her duties in the school-room, and enabled her to devote all her time to her own family and the domestic cares of the Institution. A carpenter was engaged to instruct the boys in the use of carpentry tools, and the teaching of printing was undertaken by the

principal. The reports of the Institution and other matters were executed by the boys after school hours.

The first session of eight hours daily in the school-room having proved too exhaustive for the teachers and too wearisome to the pupils, the time in school was reduced to *five* hours for five days a week, and an hour a day was given to articulation with three or four promising pupils, and an hour twice a week was devoted to drawing. This change speedily showed beneficial results. The health of the pupils and teachers improved, and their intellectual progress continued to be quite as satisfactory as previously.

On the 20th January, 1873, the Governor-General of Canada, Lord Dufferin, and Lady Dufferin visited the Institution, and conversed with the pupils in the double-handed alphabet, much to their delight and surprise.

The board of managers felt the urgent need of larger and better premises for the Institution, as every year since the first public examination the number of pupils admitted into the small house used by the Institution exceeded 20, and on one occasion there were no less than 27, besides the principal, matron, assistant teacher, and two domestic servants, crowded together in the building, which could only comfortably accommodate 15 at most! Many applications for admission were refused or postponed. The difficulties of the board of managers in raising funds to meet current expenses were very great, the Institution having to depend for support on public subscriptions, the fees of paying pupils, and the \$1,000 grant made by the provincial legislature, which all together were never sufficient to keep the Institution from debt by current expenses. The salaries of the teachers (principal and matron included) did not exceed \$600 a year, and the utmost economy and frugality were practised in all expenditures. Still, the finances of the Institution continued in rather an unsatisfactory state. The managers tried from time to time to raise funds for enlarging the building, or to buy more land and build elsewhere. One lady manager, Mrs. C. J. Brydges, whose active benevolence is well known in Canada, managed with no small trouble to collect \$2,061 towards a building fund, and others of the board of managers exerted themselves in the same direction; but not much success attended their efforts on account of great financial depression at the time.

The census returns of Lower Canada were published in 1873-'4, and showed a total of 1,669 deaf-mutes—883 males and 786 females; but every attempt to find the number of those who were of Protestant parentage failed, and these returns proved of comparatively little value to the Institution. New cases of Protestant deaf-mutes continued to be reported to the principal and president of the Institution, but nothing particularly was done to induce them to enter the Institution on account of its financial condition and the want of proper accommodation.

Matters became worse in 1876, when failures in trade and financial depressions were universal. The Institution was without funds and much in debt. The prospects of a larger building and better times were to all appearance as far off as ever. The managers felt much discouraged, and to keep the Institution going the secretary-treasurer and the president advanced money from their private funds. As the dark cloud gathered over the prospects of the future of the Institution, and "while we were trying," as the worthy president of the Institution stated at the last annual meeting, "to make both ends meet, in the time of our great anxiety God raised up a friend to help us in the very way we wished—that is, to extend our efforts by means of a larger building—and put it into the heart of an old and respected fellow-citizen, Joseph Mackay, Esq., to give us a splendid piece of land, and to erect thereon at his own expense a stone building capable of accommodating 80 pupils and their teachers."

The corner-stone of this magnificent gift was laid on the 6th June, 1877, in the presence of a large number of ladies and gentlemen, on which occasion this kind and Christian friend of the deaf and dumb—who will ever keep his name in grateful remembrance—addressed the large assembly as follows:

"MR. CHAIRMAN, LADIES, AND GENTLEMEN: The Institution for which this building is being erected has had as yet a brief career of usefulness. Among its founders and friends may be numbered leading citizens of Montreal, besides ladies and gentlemen, and I think special mention should be made in this connection of our worthy chairman, Mr. Charles Alexander; our secretary, Mr. Frederick Mackenzie; Mr. Thomas Cramp, Mr. Andrew Allan, Mr. Dougall, senior, who is always doing good wherever he goes, Mr. Widd, the principal of the school, as well as the governors and managers, who have done good work. The work of the school was commenced in 1870, with

sixteen pupils; the largest number yet in attendance was twenty-five, during the session of 1874 and 1875. The total number connected with the school from its formation is forty-one; some of these have continued through several sessions, and others have remained for only a few months. Of the twenty-two in attendance last session, seven have paid full fees, five partial fees, and ten were free pupils. Of the education given, it may be sufficient for me to say that it is under the able and judicious direction of the principal and his assistants, and embraces intellectual and spiritual culture, as well as instruction in several of the useful arts of life. The pupils are prepared, when they remain a sufficient time in the Institution, to make their way in this world, and have their minds and hearts turned to the higher realities of the world to come. What a blessing to the afflicted! And thus the founders and supporters are made a blessing, as stewards of God's bounty. The government of our Province has given a small annual grant in aid of the Institution, but its support has been chiefly drawn from private benevolence. Feeling deeply the importance and value of the work done, and wishing to promote its success and extension, I resolved some time ago, as announced in a letter addressed to you, Mr. Chairman, on the 24th of November last, to erect this building, and to place it and the grounds attached to it in the hands of trustees, to be used by them and their successors for the education of the Protestant deaf and dumb of this Province. Several conversations with Mr. Widd, who spoke of the immediate necessity of larger buildings, and the difficulties in obtaining funds, led to this decision, specially when on mentioning it to a relative, the reply was 'Why not do it yourself?' I only add, that I trust and pray this building may be completed without any accident or untoward incident, and be carried to a speedy and successful completion; and for years and generations to come the Institution may, through the Divine favor, prove a source of manifold blessings to the afflicted class whose good it seeks, and may never lack generous, warm-hearted friends, and wise and godly instructors to carry on the work."

The board of managers have resolved, as a token of their gratitude to Mr. Mackay for his noble gift, to change the name of the Institution to "The Mackay Institution for Protestant Deaf-Mutes." The new Institution is expected to be ready for occupation in the fall of 1877. It is being erected on one of the most picturesque sites on the Island of Montreal, commanding a view of the St. Lawrence, the mountain, being visible from so many points, being situated on Cote St. Luc road. It was originally intended to erect a building to accommodate about 50 pupils, but after much careful thought and study Mr. Mackay decided to construct a much larger building, to accom-

modate from 80 to 100. The style of the building is Gothic, having four façades of rock-faced courses, with trimmings and openings, water-table belts, courses, and bands of cut stone. The building will be 95 by 50, and three stories in height, having a well-elevated basement and mansard roof, ornamented. There are two towers, one at each end, and the main entrance is in the centre, with a handsome flight of stone steps, portico, etc. The basement is 10 feet high; the floor being level with the ground, will afford abundance of light and air. There are three entrances; one on the north side for baker, butcher, etc., and one for the girls and one for the boys to the play-ground, with doors opening into the hall and wide corridor, and refectory 43 by 20, with openings on three sides, with serving-room, teachers' dining-room, kitchen, scullery, laundry, larder, cook's pantry, store-rooms, lavatories, fuel cellar, and two boilers for heating the building with hot water. The ground floor will be 15 feet high, and will contain an octagonal vestibule 12 feet in diameter, opening to a hall 20 by 14, having a handsome staircase six feet in width in the centre, and two returns of four feet. On the left are two rooms, a class-room 37.7 by 25, and the boys' recreation-room 37.6 by 16. Both these rooms can be made one for meetings, etc., by sliding the doors out of the way which divide them. On the right is the office and board-room, with safe, 16.6 by 16, and teacher's room, 18 by 16, and corridor between them, with staircase and private entrance leading into the girls' recreation-room in front, 20 by 16, and in rear a class room 19 by 16. The second story will be 12 ft. 6 in. high, and will contain a library 18 by 12, two bedrooms or dormitories, each 16 by 16, and ten bedrooms, each 11 by 16; girls and boys' lavatories, hall in the centre, with corridor 8 ft. in width, and staircase at each end. The third story will be 12 ft. 6 in. high, and will contain dormitories, hospitals, and lavatories, nurse's rooms, galleries, etc. To secure thorough ventilation and warming, the ventilating and smoke flues, each 3 by 2 ft., are carried up through the centre of the building, with register at the floor and ceiling on each story. The heating apparatus will consist of two of Spence's hot-water boilers, connected so that they can be worked separate or together, with coils in all the rooms, halls, corridors, dormitories, etc. The work, which is of the most substantial character, was designed and is being carried out under the superintendence of John James Browne, a Montreal architect.

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