

22/1

GENERAL DEPARTMENT.

EDUCATION—No. 43.

CALCUTTA, THE 4TH JANUARY 1878.

RESOLUTION.

READ—

The General Report on Public Instruction for the year 1876-77.

THE financial position of the Government of Bengal at the opening of the year 1876-77 compelled the Lieutenant-Governor not only to impress on all heads of departments the urgent need for the exercise of strict economy in the administration of the revenues, but also to make considerable reductions in the budget grants which it was originally proposed to assign under the several heads of provincial expenditure. During each of the years which followed the introduction of the system of provincial finance established in 1871, the local Government had at its disposal accumulated balances which were available to meet any surplus of expenditure over receipts, and charges were consequently admitted on a scale which the current income of the Government would not have justified. These balances, however, were surrendered to the Government of India in partial liquidation of the liabilities incurred by Bengal during the scarcity of 1874, and the Government found it necessary, in settling the provincial budget for 1876-77, to keep the sanctioned expenditure strictly within the amount of the expected income of the year.

2. The Department of Education, in common with the other departments of the provincial administration, suffered under these necessary retrenchments. The grant originally intended to be assigned was Rs. 25,38,333; but this sum was successively reduced, first to Rs. 24,92,236, and eventually to Rs. 24,67,236. The actual expenditure of the year was Rs. 24,61,599, of which Rs. 4,71,814 represent departmental receipts, and the balance, Rs. 19,89,785, is the net Government expenditure. The gross expenditure in 1874-75 was Rs. 25,11,830; the sanctioned grant for 1875-76 was Rs. 26,14,010, and the actual expenditure of that year amounted to Rs. 26,32,444. The figures are not quite accurately given in the opening paragraphs of the Director's present report; but it will appear, from what has been said, that the expenditure of 1876-77 from the Education Budget was about half a lakh below that of 1874-75, and nearly 1 3/4 lakhs below that of the year 1875-76.

3. The officers of the department exerted themselves loyally and strenuously to carry out the orders of Government, and to prevent the diminution of the grant from injuriously affecting the progress of education. But it was inevitable that so serious a reduction in the available funds should not only arrest development, but should in some cases result in an actual decrease in the number of schools and pupils; and this decrease has occurred in middle schools generally, and in primary schools in the great majority of districts. There was also a considerable decrease in the number of schools for special instruction, but this did not arise from the reduction of the grant, but from the closing of several normal schools of the second and third grades—a measure which was carried out by Government upon grounds independent of financial considerations.

4. Under these circumstances, the Lieutenant-Governor regards it as a satisfactory proof of the general soundness and vitality of our educational system that, notwithstanding these disadvantages and drawbacks, the number of schools and colleges under inspection, and the pupils attending them,

showed a marked increase during the year. The figures are given in the following table :—

CLASS OF INSTITUTIONS.	1876.		1877.	
	Schools.	Pupils.	Schools.	Pupils.
For general instruction—				
Government institutions	259	24,208	267	24,595
Grant-in-aid ditto	1,872	87,379	1,842	88,193
Primary and Circle Fund Institutions	13,270	353,166	13,665	351,648
Unaided institutions	2,358	66,111	5,629	120,517
For special instruction*	91	4,940	75	4,398
Total	17,850	535,804	21,478	589,351

* Schools for special instruction are all Government institutions, except 15 aided normal schools with 852 pupils and one unaided technical school with 255 pupils.

5. An examination of this table shows that the increase in the number of Government schools has not been accompanied by a corresponding increase in the number of pupils; that though grant-in-aid schools have diminished by 30, the number of pupils in them has increased; that schools supported from the primary fund show an increase in numbers, with no increase in pupils; that a large additional number of unaided pathsalas have been brought under inspection; and that, notwithstanding the decrease in the number of schools for special instruction, the pupils attending them have not very greatly diminished. If the unaided institutions, which are of course unaffected by the finances of the department, are excluded from the returns of both years, it will be seen that while in 1875-76 there were 15,492 schools with 469,693 pupils, in 1876-77 the number of schools rose to 15,849, but that of pupils diminished to 468,834.

6. If the schools are classified, not according to the budget grant from which they are supported, but according to the character of the instruction imparted in them, the results of the year are as follow :—

CLASS OF INSTRUCTION.	1876.		1877.		Average number of pupils at each school.
	Schools.	Pupils.	Schools.	Pupils.	
SUPERIOR					
Colleges	18	1,404	20	1,792	90
Higher English schools	173	32,529	180	32,957	183
Middle	623	34,072	511	30,072	59
SECONDARY					
Middle vernacular	1,259	59,304	1,045	51,718	50
Intermediate English schools	.....	.....	112	4,328	39
Ditto vernacular schools	.....	.....	1,501	52,650	35
PRIMARY					
Primary* schools	13,216	348,510	12,272	302,550	25
Female	427	11,331	430	12,027	25
SPECIAL					
.....	91	4,940	75	4,398	58
Total	15,807	492,090	16,196	492,492	.....

* In the report for the previous year, all schools aided from the primary fund were classed as primary schools. The figures have been corrected in this table.

Unaided primary schools are not shown in this table, the standard of instruction in these not being accurately defined. Intermediate schools appear as a new class in the returns of 1876-77; in the previous year intermediate English schools did not exist, and intermediate vernacular schools were included in the primary class. The falling off in middle schools, and especially in middle English schools, is very noticeable, the number of middle English schools in 1875-76 being the same as that of middle English and intermediate English together in 1876-77. In the middle vernacular schools the loss is not so great, as the majority of the intermediate vernacular schools have not come down from the middle class, but have risen from the primary class. But it is estimated that of the 214 middle vernacular schools which have disappeared from the returns of the year, about 40 or 50 have been entirely closed, and the rest have fallen to a lower class. Primary schools show a decrease of nearly 1,000. This means that, in round numbers, 1,300 of these schools have been raised to the intermediate class, and 1,200 have disappeared from Bengal generally, while no less than 1,500 new schools have been added to the list in the two districts of Midnapore and Balasore.