

THE DEAF AND DUMB CONGRESS.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE AGE.

Sir,—Will you kindly allow me space to reply briefly to Dr. Fredell's letter, in which he seeks to gag the deaf mutes by hinting that our president, Mr. E. J. D. Abraham, was speaking for himself alone in his address. To anybody who was present and saw the addresses of the speakers who followed Mr. Abraham it would be at once apparent that Mr. Abraham but voiced the opinions of the deaf and dumb themselves, which, indeed, they proceeded to express themselves with a vigor and force which made Mr. Abraham's address appear by comparison exceedingly mild. Anybody who will take the trouble to read the resolutions passed at our congress will at once see that we are in complete accord with Mr. Abraham. The question is an educational one, not a medical one, and that the doctor is completely out of his element and hopelessly at sea is shown by his vague guess at the number of deaf mutes in proportion to the hearing. A glance at the census returns will convince anybody that the deaf and dumb are nearly ten times as numerous as the doctor has stated. Dr. Fredell says he has read all the addresses and letters on the subject of the congress. If this is so, I cannot imagine how he can have misunderstood so grossly what we are driving at. We do not wish to injure the existing school, nor to set up a rival school, but demand reforms, advocating Government management and a system of free and compulsory education, so that there shall be no need to pass around the hat for our education, seeing that we pay rates and taxes the same as other people, and are entitled to free education without having the stigma of charity attached to it. Till this reform can be carried out I am in hearty accord with the doctor that the public should generously support the school by their contributions, and thereby minimise the injustice under which the deaf labor. As regards the rival systems of oral and manual, let the deaf and dumb themselves decide. The doctor, however, forgets, or perhaps was never aware, when he speaks of the difficulty of the oral system being enormously increased where the pupil has acquired manual signs, that signs to a large extent are natural to the untaught deaf mute, and can only be eradicated by a severity perilously bordering on cruelty. That the oral system is held in utter detestation by the majority of deaf mutes, and that if compelled to learn it they make little or no use of it, must be patent to all fair minded people who have seen much of the deaf and dumb.—Yours, &c.,

SAM. W. SHOWELL, Missionary to the Queensland Deaf and Dumb and ex-Teacher of the Deaf.

2nd January.