

The school lost six pupils at the end of the year—one, a promising young boy, through a fatal bicycle accident while at home for the summer vacation, and five left with adequate training. A seventh pupil, a girl of fourteen, was kept back from 29th July, either to work at home or for reasons not disclosed to the Director and therefore without his consent.

Ten pupils entered in 1901 as beginners, eight on reassembling in February and two after the short interval at midwinter. The practice of admitting pupils at all times of the year is, however, to be deprecated, for a late-comer in an elementary class of deaf-mutes is a serious handicap to the teacher in charge. As an additional recruit he cannot fall in with the suitable drill of the rest of the pupils, and is therefore a very great hindrance to their progress also. What he requires is individual care and personal attention, and all the time and energy bestowed on him as a single individual is, strictly speaking, at the expense of the rest of his class-mates, usually seven or eight in number. The only condition under which this strict rule may be relaxed is when deaf-mute applicants fall under the head of (improperly) so-called semi-mutes—*i.e.*, such as can readily hear and fairly imitate a few short words if distinctly uttered at a short distance behind them. Children of this description improve rapidly under technical treatment, and are therefore not a drag on a class for any length of time. Exceptional treatment may also be shown in this respect to deaf children above seven, or to much older young people whose deafness is of recent date and who already possess a certain vocabulary of colloquial language. Prompt measures are necessary in their case in order to effectually counteract the strangling influence of the halter of isolation. But the fact that asylums or boarding-in establishments are not suitable homes for all such must not be forgotten. They ought to receive practice in lip-reading and suitable instruction, but away from the society of deaf-mutes wherever possible, and they should be boarded out amongst hearing people. One example of this class of deaf children was received under our care early in February. The boy referred to could neither read nor write, had little knowledge of numbers, but he could still articulate words, though indistinctly and in a low tone. His remarkable progress in speaking and in his general school-work by the end of the year, as well as the improvement in his spirits, I attribute largely to our precaution in teaching him individually and in keeping him in the society of hearing people.

In consequence of the increase in numbers, and also with a view to future requirements, the training of another young teacher was deemed advisable. A young man was appointed, and entered upon his duties on 29th July.

The growth in numbers made us also feel the want of another class-room, a want arising from the fact that silence and freedom from commotion are essential to the detection of imperfections in the tone and articulation of the pupils. Appropriating one of the rooms in the domestic part of the house for a few hours daily was the readiest way of getting relief, and though distasteful to the teachers and the scholars it was a matter in which the Director had no choice.

During the summer vacation a number of present and future candidates in all parts of the colony were examined by the Director. A large percentage of them turned out to be mentally defective; a few had to be rejected on account of advanced age. One little fellow, though designated by medical testimony as an imbecile, on careful examination proved to be of perfectly sound mind. Opportunities offered by these visits were naturally seized to verbally advise parents with regard to the most beneficial mode of treating their infant deaf children.

For the guidances of others it may be remarked that the condition of some infant deaf-mutes might be considerably improved if they were kept less confined within their homes. A deaf child of four, five, or six years of age ought to be at play as much as possible in the open air. He ought to be looking at milking, at gardening, at operations in the workshop, in the kitchen, in the wash-house, &c. He should be allowed to pull a flower, feed the fowls, handle a duster or a brush, bring tools, wash his face and hands—in short, he ought to be treated as an ordinary child of sense; for, be it remembered, instead of getting knowledge through hearing other people talk, sing, or read, his only source of acquiring a smattering of information is by watching and imitating the sensible actions of others.

The beneficial influence of sensible treatment of old pupils in the home circle was noted by the Director on several occasions. Where relatives missed no opportunity of conversing with them on all topics, encouraging them to take a lively interest in their environment, old pupils showed great improvement both in lip-reading and in general understanding. This improvement was particularly marked in the case of ex-pupils who have the advantage of brothers and sisters interchanging ideas with them. The reverse is unfortunately true in a few cases, where parents seem to imagine that the education of deaf children ceases with their school career.

A few words of advice in connection herewith may perhaps be not out of place. Let a deaf person's friends speak to him or her on all subjects connected with home life, the condition of stock, clothing, the weather, the price and quality of articles purchased, &c., and, what is more important still, let them encourage the deaf to ask questions and to express opinions. For example: Have you been outside? Is it fine? How is the road? Shall we take an umbrella? Where is the key of ———? Who bought that knife—spade? How much is it? What time will you return? Did you see Tom? Will he come to see us? When is the steamer coming in? What time do you expect me? &c. Let the parents also see that the ex-pupil is supplied with easy books that will interest him. Old school readers, such as Second, Third, and Fourth Royal Readers and sequels to same, will be found in every way suitable. The use of the daily newspapers, especially columns relating to accidents, fires, locals, cable news, and shipping is also to be recommended.

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The Hon. the Minister of Education.

G. VAN ASCH.