

it will be quite impossible for these children to be adequately educated during the time they are likely to remain here. The extreme desirability—in fact, the absolute necessity—of commencing the education of deaf children as soon as possible, if proper results are to be obtained, cannot be too often or too strongly insisted upon. The mental condition of a deaf child that has been allowed to reach such an advanced age as twelve or thirteen without education is appalling, and can only be dimly conceived by any one who has not been faced with the problems of educating such a child. Parents of deaf children, therefore, should bring them as soon as may be under the notice of the proper authorities in order that their education may be commenced as early as possible. The benefits of early education are not to be overestimated. Under present conditions, unfortunately, children cannot be taken at the school before the age of six years, except as day pupils; but the home training of young deaf children should be taken in hand from infancy, and information and advice as to how to carry this on may always be obtained on application to myself. Such early instruction as can be given in the home by intelligent parents is of great subsequent value to the child. It forms a foundation on which, later on, the teacher is enabled to erect a superstructure by means of which the imprisoned mind of the deaf child may reach a mental plane somewhat approaching that of the normal child. The gulf separating the untaught deaf child of six from a hearing child of the same age is as nothing to that which will exist if the education of the former is neglected for six or seven years more. Yet it is precisely in such cases that attempts are most frequently made further to abridge the period of education. It is by no means an uncommon thing for the parents of such children to suggest their removal after four or five years at school, whereas those parents who have had their children admitted at the proper age are commonly eager to have the benefits of education extended to them as long as possible.

At the end of the year seven boys and five girls were removed from the school, having reached a satisfactory standard of education. Their ages at the time of leaving and the number of years they had been at the school ranged from fifteen to twenty-three years and from five years and a half to eleven years respectively.

The pupil being trained at the Ruakura Experimental Farm left at the end of the year, having completed a course of three years' training there. On leaving he received a very good report from the Manager, Mr. Primrose McConnell.

The number of Maori pupils on the roll during the year was ten. This indicates a considerably higher percentage of deafness in the Maori than in the European population of the Dominion. Indeed, if deafness were as prevalent among the Europeans in New Zealand as these figures would show it to be among the Maoris, our total roll number for the year would have been 210 instead of 115. It is difficult to obtain reliable information as to the causes of deafness among Maori children, but it is at least probable that in a considerable number of cases the deafness might have been prevented had proper medical attention been given. In at least seven out of our ten Maori cases the deafness appears to be acquired rather than hereditary, and in the three other cases it is doubtful.

With one exception there were no cases of serious illness among the pupils, whose general health was extremely satisfactory. The teeth of ten of the pupils were attended to at the Dental Ward of the Christchurch Hospital. These by no means represented all the cases requiring treatment, but only the most urgent cases. I think it would be preferable to arrange with a dentist to perform what dental work is required at the school itself. The expense of such an arrangement would be more than compensated for by the increased capacity of the pupils for receiving instruction that would ensue were all their teeth put in a healthy condition.

Arrangements should be made for all the pupils to be examined and, when necessary, treated by an otologist. In the best schools for the deaf in other parts of the world this is done as a matter of course when pupils are admitted. There is always a possibility of improvement in the hearing being effected in certain cases by skilled treatment, and it is only by such examination, quite beyond the reach of many parents, that the advisability of such treatment can be indicated. Of even more importance, from a scientific aspect, is the assistance that these examinations of so many cases of deafness and a study of their history would be towards arriving at a proper understanding both of the causes of deafness and of the means to be adopted to prevent it. The researches of Dr. Kerr Love, of Glasgow, and of Mr. Macleod Yearsley, of London, made in connection with their work for the schools for the deaf in Great Britain, have been of the utmost scientific value. They tend to show that deafness is mostly due to preventable causes, and that in a comparatively small percentage of cases only is it hereditary. Both these distinguished men hold out strong hopes for its ultimate abolition.

In spite of shortage of staff, the work of the school as a whole went on satisfactorily and with credit to the staff. The school was inspected and examined in April and in November by Mr. T. H. Gill, who made a favourable report on each occasion.

Several inquiries were received by me from deaf persons desirous of learning lip-reading but unable to come to the school for lessons. In such applications it is common for mention to be made of "the lip language," as if the pupils here made use of some special language and not ordinary English. It should be almost unnecessary for me to state here that there is no such thing as a "lip language," and that what is meant by lip-reading or speech-reading is merely the ability to recognize what is said by the outward appearance not merely of the lips, but of the vocal organs generally. Lip-reading or speech-reading is an art that can be acquired only by constant practice, and, like other arts, skill in it varies in individuals.