

What is true of these remarks with regard to bodily actions applies with still greater force to all his manifestations of mental life. It is here where our trouble with him not only begins, but where it never ends. Cope with the deaf-mute's want of mental grasp and of intellectual capacity, and you drive back and override his physical infirmities. Were this subject better understood by the community at large, experienced teachers would be more readily excused for their aptness in looking at material display and outward show in institutions for deaf-mutes with some degree of indifference and even suspicion. To them, palatial buildings with ornamental entrances and well-kept gardens are excellent appurtenances, useful gifts to be admired and to be grateful for, but they are by no means all-important, their real value and actual influence are often overrated, they are but means to an end, and afford no guarantee whatever for excellency of educational achievement.

Having regard to future and permanent arrangements respecting our deaf-and-dumb, the following questions must be deemed pertinent to the subject, and worthy of our careful consideration:—

1. Are our deaf-mutes to be always boarded and housed in a large building, independent of number, sex, age, and stage of education, as is done in some parts of the world?

2. Are they, on the contrary, to be treated after the manner of ordinary children—that is, lodged and boarded out with families of their own social status, and attending in the ordinary way schools specially provided for them, as is also done in several countries?

3. If grave objections can be pointed out, upon social as well as upon educational grounds, to both these systems, is it possible, in a new colony, without vested interests in these matters, to devise a plan whereby most, if not all, of the advantages of both systems may be retained, and most of the disadvantages be dropped?

4. Assuming such a plan to be possible, what is its scope, and what are its limits?

Although recent and former experience would suffice to enable me to sketch out such a plan as that referred to in these questions, it would be undesirable on my part to assume that I am qualified to draw the above lines of demarcation with precision, without having once more opportunities of closely observing the working of European institutions of long standing, and without noting the latest results obtained in them. The main feature of it, however, may be readily indicated—it is, that the advanced pupils be separated from the younger ones, and be allowed to associate with families and persons engaged in the ordinary avocations of life.

The number of pupils in attendance during the first portion of the year was forty-one, and during the second part thirty-nine. To the withdrawal from the school of the two brothers who left in the winter holidays the Director could not object, as the father brought proof that he had offers from a jewellery-manufacturer and a watchmaker to receive them as apprentices.

The proportion of boys to girls in the institution was as twenty-seven to fourteen, and of pupils who had previously attended to beginners as thirty-four to seven. Twenty-four children belonged to the southern and sixteen to the northern part of New Zealand. Otago contributed eight, Canterbury fourteen, Westland two, Wellington eleven, Napier one, and Auckland five.

Amongst the newcomers of 1893 there is one little boy of seven years who will never attain to anything like average proficiency on account of his feeble intellect. There is another of twelve years, whose case differs so widely from the rest, and is so extraordinary, that it requires more than a passing notice. I refer to the condition of the orphan who was brought to us from the Auckland orphanage on the 9th March. It is beyond doubt that, though this boy can hear perfectly well and has an *intelligent expression*, he is actually dumb. This sounds so paradoxical that I add further particulars. To the special inquiry why the boy was of little or no use, as stated in the letter requesting admission, the honorary secretary of the orphanage replied, "Because he *has been dumb* from childhood, and has therefore been unable to acquire any measure of education." Again, from the honorary treasurer's letter urging admission I quote "We find we cannot teach him in our home, and it is important that he should be put in the way of ultimately earning his living, and not be an encumbrance to others all his life."

Examination further shows The boy's tongue is perfect in shape and size, and his other organs of speech are intact. He has the use of his hands, and although lame in one leg he can walk fairly well. On being asked, *vivà voce*, to bring a garden implement he will do so readily, and use it intelligently also. As he cannot talk, he can neither read nor write. Though he appreciates what is said to him on simple matters, he *cannot count*, and when asked, soon after his admission, to show the number seven on the ball-frame he could not do so. As for speech or articulated language, he may be said to be completely devoid of it.

I confess previous to my own examination of this boy the description as quoted above seemed to me the usual mistake of taking imbecility for deaf-mutism. After it, however, and since, I have regarded him as a kind of physiological and psychological marvel, and as a specimen of humanity to be marked "exceedingly rare." There is some satisfaction in being able to state that after a year's practice of this boy's vocal organs, and from a systematic exercising of his dormant muscles, a decided change for the better has been wrought. May it continue.

The two new assistant teachers—Miss Jane Reid and Mr James M. B. Crawford—entered on their duties immediately after the holidays. Their being new to the work of teaching deaf-mutes militated, of course, against the study and rapid progress of their pupils. It was my duty and immediate care, therefore, to give them model-lessons, and to alternately attend in their classes so as to show them, by precept and example, what are the first principles of the oral system of educating the deaf, and how to apply those principles in a correct manner.

I have, &c.,

G. VAN ASCH.

The Hon. the Minister of Education.