



THE CANADIAN MUTE.

Four six or eight pages

PUBLISHED SEMI-MONTHLY

At the Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, BELLEVILLE, ONT.

OUR MISSION

First. That a number of our pupils may learn type-setting, and from the knowledge obtained be able to earn a livelihood after they leave school.

Second. To furnish interesting matter for and encourage a habit of reading among our pupils and non-mute subscribers.

Third. To be a medium of communication between the school and parents and friends of pupils, now in the Institution the hundreds who were pupils at one time or other in the past and all who are interested in the education and instruction of the deaf of our land.

SUBSCRIPTION

Fifty (50) cents for the school year (variable in advance)

ADVERTISING

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THE CANADIAN MUTE,
BELLEVILLE
ONTARIO



MONDAY, MAY 2, 1892.

THE WINNIPEG INSTITUTION

The management of the Institution at Winnipeg has been investigated lately. The Principal, Mr. McDermid, would not certify to the receipt of potatoes undelivered, neither would he accept meat of doubtful quality; he proposed to manage the school in the interests of the deaf children rather than for the advantage of supply contractors and dissatisfied employees, hence he must be deposed if possible. Vague rumors of mismanagement were whispered about, and if only an investigation were held terrible things would be brought to the light of day. The Manitoba Government ordered an investigation, the parties who knew so much and had so much to say about Institution affair were cited to appear, they were unprepared with specific charges, so a fishing enquiry was instituted. What was the result? It was proved beyond question that Mr. McDermid and his staff, with the exception of two or three disaffected ones, did their duty thoroughly and conscientiously under very trying circumstances, and at all times. The butcher will hereafter be required to deliver wholesome meat and be satisfied with payment for goods actually delivered. The tatting and disgruntled employees ought to be allowed to engage in some other sphere of work without necessary delay; they are too imaginative altogether for positions among the deaf where truthfulness, industry and sobriety are primo requisites.

We congratulate Mr. McDermid upon his complete and full exoneration from the base insinuations made against his management. Mr and Mrs. McDermid were valued and successful teachers in this Institution for years, and we know them both intimately. They left here carrying with them the good will and esteem of every officer, teacher and pupil in the School. Manitoba is fortunate in having them to look after the deaf children of the Province.

Mr. and Mrs. McLean, of the Asylum, Kingston, are visiting our Miss Walker. We are all glad to see them, and hope their visit will be a pleasant one.

THE SIGN LANGUAGE.

The April issue of the *Silent Educator* contained several exceptionally interesting and instructive articles. We purpose here referring to what was written by five well-known and capable educators of the deaf, about the use and abuse of the sign language, and other matters pertaining to the subject. By way of prelude, we deem it a duty, and recognize it a pleasure to bear testimony to the superior diction and vigor of expression that characterize the articles referred to. Men capable of using the English language as they do, must know how to teach it to others. But this admirable feature does not convert us to a belief in the virtue of all that has been said by Messrs. Smith, Jenkins, Kirkhoff, Dudley and Caldwell. We have opinions of our own, and courage enough to express them, even if we come in contact with such doughty champions of particular systems or principles.

We begin with Mr. Smith. The fearless editor of the *Companion* is not long in defining his position as an uncompromising advocate of the "combined system." In this respect we entirely agree with him, and quote approvingly as follows:—"It is a principle of philology that knowledge of language grows according to its use. Hence, it is clear that if children are permitted to use signs on any and every occasion, they will become more and more expert in them, while the English language will suffer by the contrast. The duty of teachers, then, is manifest. They must check and restrain signs as much as possible, and require the use of English instead, whenever and however it can be done. A thorough knowledge of signs will be practically of no importance to the pupils when they leave school and take their place in the world. It is the English language that they will need then, and it is the English language that we must endeavor to give them. That is sound logic. We can subscribe to every word of it, and to much more that Mr. Smith says. But this calls for an issue, in a moderate sense—"My experience predisposes me to favor the English order of construction on any and every occasion. I am inclined to believe that 'the natural order' is rather the unnatural one when related to the English tongue." We, too, are predisposed to favor the order of construction, i. e., to sign the words in the order they are written,—when it is practicable and convenient to do so. But, it is not always practicable nor convenient to follow the exact construction of the sentences. True, when difficulties arise we can resort to the finger alphabet to fill in the connections. The writer of this is disposed to adopt this method when lecturing to deaf persons, but at the same time he is convinced that "the natural order," when used by an expert sign maker, is sometimes preferable. It is certainly more picturesque and attractive. When, however, we offer an invocation to the Deity, we should follow the order of construction as nearly as possible, and be deliberate and distinct in every movement. There is too much precipitate action,—"tearing things to tatters"—by many signers, especially when a reverential demeanor is necessary.

Mr. W. G. Jenkins writes vigorously on lines of argument somewhat similar to the first part of Mr. Smith's article, but when he refers to "an English order of signs" there is an explosion of indignation that places him in an antipodean position. Read this:—"The demand for an English order of signs exalts the sign language to a position it ought never to hold in the school-room. We do not want a system of continuous discourse as a mechanical equivalent for English

The tendency now is to pay more attention to written English and to suppress as much as possible the use of signs. The early years of a child's education are now devoted more to action writing. Signs are indeed used, but only when a distinct gain can be made in the knowledge of English, or in flashing a gleam of light upon what is hard to understand. That too appeals favorably to our judgment, but it involves an extreme view of the English order of signs. We are not prepared to go so far as to relegate this order to the limbo of forgetfulness. We favor "the combined system" in its broadest and most comprehensive sense. We would use signs cautiously, and only when they facilitate an important work, but we cannot regard the English order such a hideous monster as Mr. Jenkins pictures it.

Mr. J. D. Kirkhoff is interesting, because he is so devoted to his hobby, and he also writes with a freedom from affectation that is refreshing. He is extremely radical, however, and we take issue with him at once. Signs are to him what a red rag is said to be to an angry bull. They make him furious. He would exterminate them now and forever. The manual alphabet is not quite so objectionable in his estimation, because "it is teaching English with English," but it is defective. His hobby is visible speech, or articulation. Mr. Kirkhoff would have all deaf children taught by this means only. We hope, and believe, that he will never see his wish realized on this continent. He refers to some statistics of the Clarke Institution to fortify his position. Are not pupils admitted to that institution on the basis of their ability to articulate? We are convinced from observation and experience, that comparatively few deaf persons, who must depend on their ability to read lips for social and general intercourse with the public, can succeed with their teachers, or those whom they know well, and whose manner is familiar to them, they may be able to carry on a connected conversation. With many others, whose articulation is governed by no scientific rules, and who acquire habits that interfere with observation conversation of any kind will be hedged about by difficulties. All deaf children capable of articulation should receive the benefit of such instruction as will develop this power, but we doubt the expediency of confining even such pupils to one source of information, and conversational pleasure. There are many other deaf persons who can never become proficient lip readers nor capable of intelligent articulation. If the day should come when "the pure oral method is dominant in all schools for the deaf on this continent, it will introduce an era of retrogression in the education of this class that will bring lamentable results.

We admire Mr. D. C. Dudley's slashing style of composition, and the courage with which he enunciates his belief, but we cannot endorse all he says. In his admiration for natural signs he rushes into extremes that would not be expected from one so capable and experienced as a teacher of the deaf. If we understand him correctly he would not tolerate a teacher under his control who was not a master of the sign language, no matter how well qualified he might be in other respects. In short, he would make the ability to sign well a *sine qua non* of the teacher's qualification. That is an extreme view of the case, and one we cannot sympathize with. There are other remarks and suggestions by Mr. Dudley, in his article, with which we heartily agree.

Mr. W. A. Caldwell is commendably brief and reasonable. We can find nothing to criticize in his article, and will

flatter his vanity with the assurance that we practice, in teaching the deaf just what he recommends. This is desirable.—"It could be easily shown that the sign language is responsible for some of the errors made by the deaf. With all its faults we love it still. A doubt it is used to excess in many cases for the deaf, and in this particular a reform is certainly desirable."

Principal Crouter's open letter to the President of the National College to which we have referred, has called forth an exhaustive reply from Dr. Landet. It is shown that the formation of an oral department, on the basis proposed by Mr. Crouter, would involve an additional annual expense of at least \$10,000. This expense, too, would be incurred for the benefit of not more than twenty-five students. Dr. Landet does not think that oral instruction is neglected under existing arrangements. There are ten teachers who devote much time in giving daily instruction to students of the college in lip reading, and previous experience has shown that those students who were taught by the pure oral method, before entering the college, did not suffer any loss of vocal powers while passing through the course of study. At present, instruction in speech and speech reading is afforded to all students of the college. The department of articulation is under the charge of Prof. Gordon, who is a well-trained teacher of speech to the deaf.

We quite agree with the *Deaf Mute Journal*, that the proper remedy for an improved technical education for the deaf, would be found in raising the standard of industrial training at the state and provincial institutions. This is the view we took of the matter when discussing it in a former issue of *The Canadian Mute*. If a technical department were added to the present facilities of the National College, it would, no doubt, prove a valuable acquisition, but there are ample opportunities for students to acquire a substantial training in the general trades at primary schools. Where such provisions do not exist, or are deficiently conducted, they should be supplied, or improved. For general purposes, and in a majority of cases, the training received under a competent instructor at the institutions, would be found sufficient to meet the requirements of life.

This, from the annual report of Principal Crouter, of the Pennsylvania Institution, is worth particular mention:—"So much depends upon correct first steps that nothing is omitted in the effort to enable the pupils to take them. Some of our most skillful instructors have charge of the work during the primary period, their success, even with the duller pupils, is very noticeable and gratifying." And again we quote approvingly:—"It is a great mistake to permit a pupil to flounder along in a grade unsuited to his capacity and stage of development. He not only makes doubtful progress himself, but he greatly hampers the work of the rest of the class, and the close of the term finds him but little more advanced than at the beginning."

The *Kentucky Deaf Mute* tells of the jealousy and conduct of a pupil in that school, as a result of the credit marks she received at the recent examinations. Out of a possible 100 she got only 60, and, because others obtained more, she wrote home asking her parents to remove her. Her brother came for her, but as she had no reason for leaving, Supt. Argo refused to give his consent. The parents were then communicated with, and they insisted on her removal. She left with the assurance that her school days there were over. The foolish whim of the child could be excused, but the conduct of her parents was inexcusable.