

OUR DEAF AND DUMB POPULATION.

BY H. MATHISON,

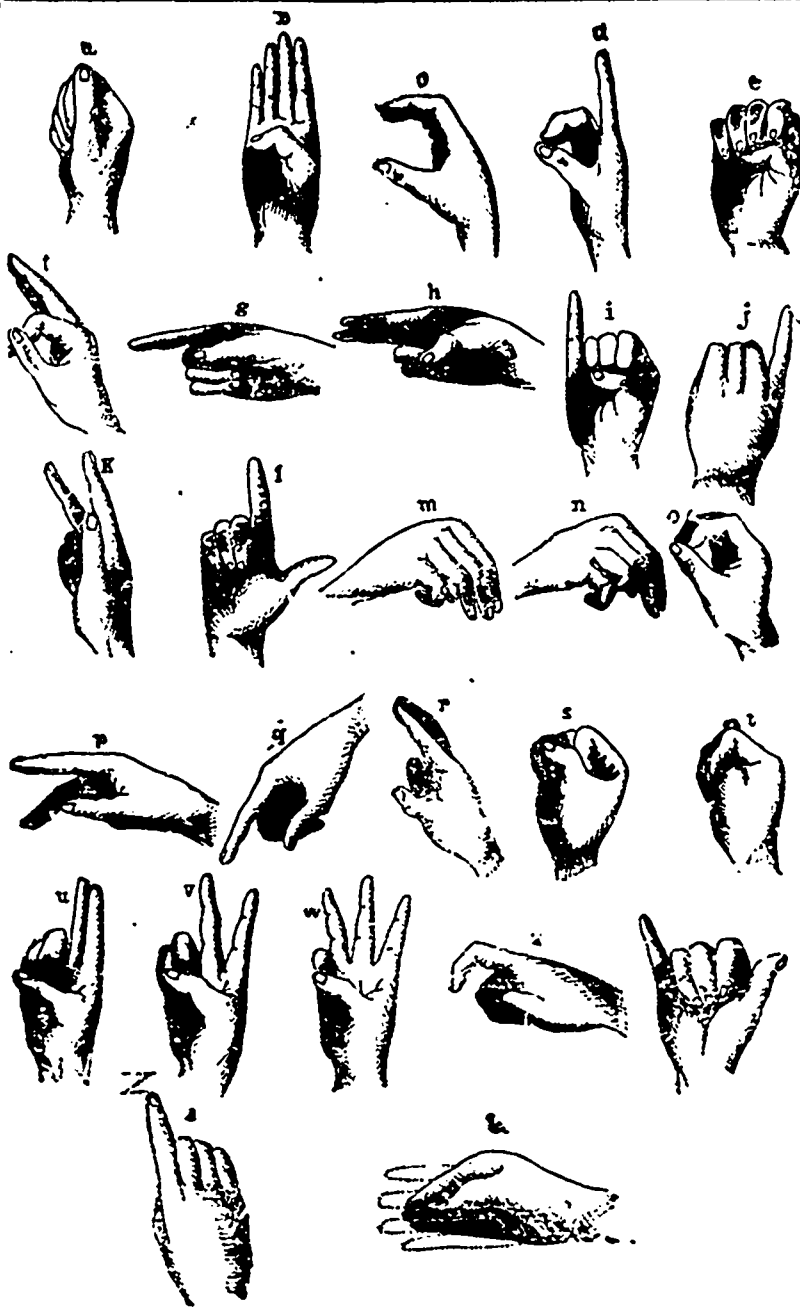
Superintendent of the Ontario Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, Belleville.

In a former article I mentioned the fact of the establishment of the Provincial Asylum for the education of the deaf and dumb, at Belleville. A few words now may be of interest in regard to the methods by which teaching is imparted to this unfortunate class of our population.

The Institution was formally opened for the reception of pupils on the 20th October, 1850, and during the first session there were one hundred in attendance. W. J. Palmer, M. A., was the first Principal, and held office until September, 1879, when he retired. At the opening, four classes were formed, taught by J. B. McGinn, D. R. Coleman, M. A., S. T. Greene, B. A., and Mrs. Effie Terrill; but before the close of the term, owing to increased numbers, two other classes were found necessary, and Mr. J. T. Watson and Miss A. Perry were placed on the staff. The number in attendance has increased year by year until now there are 235 pupils, and up to Sept. 30th, 1884, 661 children had been enrolled. They came from every county in the Province, viz.:—Algoma Dist. 1, Brant 20, Bruce 20, Carleton 20, Dufferin 1, Durham 17, Elgin 14, Essex 14, Frontenac 10, Grey 29, Haldimand 6, Halton 7, Hastings 26, Huron 40, Kent 19, Lambton 19, Lanark 8, Leeds 11, Grenville 4, Lennox & Addington 2, Lincoln 6, Middlesex 37, Norfolk 15, Northumberland 16, Prescott 4, Russell 3, Ontario 18, Oxford 12, Peel 6, Perth 32, Peterborough 12, Prince Edward 4, Renfrew 14, Simcoe 28, Stormont 9, Dundas 8, Guelph 5, Victoria 5, Waterloo 20, Welland 7, Wellington 26, Wentworth 23, York 40, Parry Sound 1, Muskoka Dist. 7, New Brunswick 2.—Total 661.

The causes of deafness were:—abscess 1, accident 1, affection of the ears 2, burn 1, cancer 1, cerebro spinal meningitis 16, cholera 1, colds 31, congenital 262, diphtheria 1, erysipelas 1, fall 14, fever (bilious) 4, fever (intermittent) 2, fever (scarlet) 49, fever (malaria) 1, fever (typhus) 5, fever (typhoid) 6, fever (undefined) 8, fits 18, gathering in the ears 1, gathering in the head 4, inflammation of the brain 7, inflammation of the ears 4, inflammation of the lungs 2, inflammation of the pulmonary organs 2, inflammation of the spinal marrow 1, measles 17, mumps 4, paralytic stroke 1, rickets 1, scabs 1, scalds 1, scald heads 2, shocks 2, sickness undefined 19, spinal disease 30, swelling on the neck 1, tetanus 3, water on the brain 5, whooping cough 6, worms 2, causes undefined 89; in all a total of 661.

It will be seen from the foregoing that of the whole number 262 were born deaf, the remaining 399 having lost their hearing by various diseases or undefined causes. Abbe Lambert and other writers aver that the cause of deaf-muteness may be ascribed to exposure to cold, uncleanliness, scrofulous and nervous temperaments, marriages of consanguinity, a fault in the construction of the ear, exposure to cold directly after birth, drunkenness in one or other of the parents. In Germany the great proportion of deaf-mutes is found among the Israelites, where consanguineous marriages are common and the smaller number among the Roman Catholics, to whom such marriages are forbidden. Hereditary transmission is not of such frequent occurrence as is generally supposed. Not one of the parents of the 661 sent to the institution are known to be deaf and dumb, but a few of the grand-children were mutes, so that the affliction is a hereditary one in these cases. Mutes are married in the Province have speaking children in every case. There may be one who is not heard of, as several instances are reported in the United States where the children of deaf and dumb parents were also deaf and dumb, but they are rare and no theory of transmission can be based upon them. If there is one more than another that seems to contribute to congenital deafness it is the marriage of near relations. It is difficult



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matter to obtain reliable information on this point, but where there are two, three, four and five mutes in the family one-half of the number of parents acknowledge the relationship of first and second cousins before marriage. The relationships existing are stated to be, first cousins, 40; second cousins, 12; third cousins, 4; distantly related, 16; not related, 561; unknown, 21; in all, 661. One family contained 5 mutes, 3 families 4 each, 9 families 3 each, 529 families 1 each, in all 661.

The religious denominations represented include Presbyterians, Methodists, Roman Catholics, Church of England, Baptists, Bible Christians, Lutherans, Mennonites, Plymouth Brethren and others. The Presbyterians and Methodists being the most numerous.

The object of the Institution at Belleville is to afford educational advantages to all youth of the Province, who are on account of deafness unable to receive instruction in the common schools, and all deaf mutes between the ages of seven and twenty, not being deficient in intellect, are eligible as pupils. The regular term of instruction is seven years, with a vacation of twelve weeks during the summer of each year. If a year or two more would be a benefit to a pupil the privilege is usually granted. To obtain a fair general education, speaking children usually attend school a longer term, and experience has shown that it requires years to bring the deaf child up to the point where the hearing child begins. In the United States institutions the number of years allowed are six, eight, ten, twelve and fourteen. It is necessarily individual teaching, and no teacher of the deaf and dumb can instruct more than twenty pupils in a

class and do good faithful work; a less number can be taught with corresponding advantages; the larger the class the slower the progress and the smaller the class the faster the progress. The subjects taught are writing, reading, composition, arithmetic, geography, history and drawing. Language, and the ability to express it, is the great want of deaf mutes, and practical exercises in its use occupy the greater part of the school hours. Instruction in articulation and lip-reading is given to those who can profit by them, but the system relied upon is the combined one—Manual alphabet, writing, signs and articulation—on which nearly all American instructors are agreed, and which has grown out of an experience of 66 years in the United States. Dr. Peet, Principal of the New York Institution, in speaking of the combined system, says that "It recognizes the fact that all words are mere signs to the profoundly deaf, and are representative of ideas and not of sounds; that it is the eye and not the ear through which the mind is reached, and that the language of gestures, which are the natural pictorial expressions of the visions in which the deaf-mute thinks, and to which he invariably resorts when compulsion is not put upon him, is a valuable instrument in his instruction. It also recognizes the fact that alphabetic language, of which, when he comes to school, he is entirely ignorant, must be acquired by him in order that he may read understandingly and write idiomatically and correctly. It also recognizes the fact that the manual alphabet is the clearest and least ambiguous instrument of personal intercourse conducted in the language which hearing persons employ, and is the most easily interchangeable with

writing. It also recognizes the fact that the fleeting motions of the lips are, for the purposes of instruction, obscure and uncertain. At the same time it defers to the undeniable desire on the part of parents and friends that the deaf children so dear to their hearts should understand them when they speak to them, and should greet their ears in reply with spoken words." It is often asked, How is a deaf child taught when he is first sent to school? In the first place he is taught how to form the letters of the alphabet with his fingers and to write them. Then he is shown a number of objects, the names of which embrace the whole alphabet. As he writes the name the object is put before him and he thus associates the object with the name ever afterwards. He is taught and told to "Touch the hat" and asked "What did you do?" to which he will reply in writing, "I touched the hat." Other exercises follow and in time he will have learned the use of personal pronouns, verbs, adjectives and other parts of speech, acquire a natural system which teaches by practice without rules of grammar; be enabled to attach words directly to ideas, and to express his ideas in writing and understand simple language when written by others. Some make more satisfactory progress than others, and although the most favored are behind thoroughly educated speaking persons, the wonder is that deaf and dumb children can be taught and learn so much.

While the mind is being trained the fact that nearly all the pupils, after they leave the institution, will be compelled to rely upon their own resources for a living is not forgotten, and the day is divided into hours of labor, study and recreation, with a view of securing habits of industry and promoting health as well as intellectual and moral development. The boys are taught shoemaking, carpentering, farming and gardening; the girls tailoring, dressmaking, knitting, the use of sewing machines, plain sewing by hand, fancy work, and various household duties. The industrial department is looked upon as a very important part of the establishment. Throughout the country ex-pupils may be found, self-sustaining members of the community, employed as artists, decorators, wood-carvers, printers, shoemakers, machinists, carpenters, farmers, bookbinders, sailmakers, blacksmiths, carriage-makers, moulders, spinners, tailors, milliners, seamstresses, dressmakers, and domestic servants. A few are carrying on business for themselves and a considerable number are married, settled in happy homes, blessed with speaking children and a fair share of the comforts of life. Some are entirely self-supporting, others partially so, and a few dependent upon the generosity of their friends and relatives.

Every deaf child in the Province may have the benefit of an education, if its parents or friends are willing to send it to the Institution. There is room for all applicants at present, and, if more accommodation is necessary to meet the wants of the future, it will be provided. A letter to the superintendent will secure particulars of admission and any desired information. If parents feel themselves unable to pay \$70 a year, admittance may be had on board, tuition, care, books, and medical attendance secured free of charge. Only eight or ten of the 235 now present pay anything, so that the institution may be said to be practically free. Indigent orphans, in addition to above, are clothed by the Province. The expenditure for maintenance last year amounted to \$40,953.68 or \$168 for each pupil. The legislative grants have always been sufficient for the necessities of the Institution. Efficient inspection is a guarantee that care of the pupils is all that can be desired. The following are the names of the officers and teachers:

Cabinet Ministers in charge: Hon. A. S. Hardy, Provincial Secretary.
Inspector, R. Christie.
Superintendent, H. Mathison.
Physician, J. B. Murphy, M.D.
Bursar, A. Livingston.
Matron, Mrs. M. Spaight.
Clerk and Storekeeper, D. S. Canniff.

Teachers:—D. R. Coleman, M.A.; J. T. Watson, P. Denys, S. T. Greene, B.A.; J. H. Brown, J. B. Ashby, D. J. McKillop, Mrs. Effie Terrill, Miss S. Templeton, Miss M. M. Ostrom, Miss M. S. Sawyer, Miss A. Horkins, Miss M. Bull.

Industrial Inspectors:—Miss H. B. Luckenstaff, M. O'Donoghue, Wm. Hurac, and, Wm. Douglass, Supervisor.