



THE CANADIAN MUTE.

Four six or eight pages.

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

R. MATHISON, Associate Editors.
J. R. ASHLEY.

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 deaf 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, payable in advance.

ADVERTISING

A very limited amount of advertising, subject to approval, will be inserted at 25 cents a line for each insertion.

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THE CANADIAN MUTE,
BELLEVILLE,
ONTARIO.



THURSDAY FEBRUARY 1, 1894.

A SENSIBLE DISCUSSION.

The December issue of the *Educator* contained an article by Mr. W. G. Jenkins, of the old Hartford School, on "The Question of Signs," which lifted a somewhat threadbare subject out of the common rut of prejudice and ridicule, and gave it a garb of respectability. Mr. Jenkins always writes sensibly and well, and recognizes the rights of others to hold and express opinions though antipathetic to his own. He is one of a few writers on this and kindred subjects whose productions are read and respected by the profession generally. Our own interest in his published articles may be enhanced by a harmony of sentiment that finds favor without any concession of preconceived views or opinions. Here is a sentence, taken from his introductory remarks, that will serve as a key note to the whole article to which we have referred:—"It must be evident to all teachers of the deaf that the present unrest, and, in some degree, mental confusion with regard to the use of signs, is largely due to their overdoing; and the reaction now in progress in Germany against exclusive oral methods, is the natural rebound against that inordinate zeal which becomes, at last, more concerned about the perpetuation of a system, than for the pupils educated under it." That is well expressed. There is now, and evidently has been for some time past, a tendency in prominent schools for the deaf, and by prominent instructors in these schools, to unduly elevate and magnify the importance of signs as a means of educating the deaf. These exponents of "a sign language," so called, write and talk in defence of their hobby with an enthusiasm and ability that must be regarded as commendable, though manifestly ungenerous and conceited. They insist that that part of our combined system is really the *sine qua non* of the whole, and to deny its supremacy is only to advert to one's ignorance of the real significance of the education of the

deaf. We are fully committed to the use of the combined system, as it is now defined and practised in a large number of schools for the deaf—but we willingly concede much to those who do not exactly agree with us. Among the most pronounced advocates of oralism are some of the ablest and most experienced teachers of the deaf living. The very fact that they are able and experienced,—and we know them to be honest as well, should command respect for their beliefs. Though we would not exclude signs from the system of instruction we favor, we are, like Mr. Jenkins and others of similar views, seekers after the truth, and believe that the whole is generally found in the union of what is best in both systems. Another quotation from Mr. Jenkins' article will stand without comment. It is admirably expressed. He says: "Believing as I do that the way to learn English is to use it, and that the most instructive way to use it is to write it, I, nevertheless find times and occasions when signs are helpful. There are two sides to every question, and the discussion of the use of signs is not a subject that anyone need glow into a white heat about."

Mr. Davidson's criticism of what Mr. Jenkins has written is also fair, generous in spirit, and courteous in expression. It is the conviction of a gentleman who also writes from experience and with marked ability. He candidly avows his sympathy for oralism, as the best means of instructing the deaf, but does not deny that signs have been the means of aiding in the development of that work, as can be so well exemplified in the schools of America, equipped and conducted expressly for the benefit of this class. And here, we contend is where the advocates of a combined system can clinch their strongest argument. It was only recently that oralism won distinguished converts and divided the interests of prominent educators in America. A few schools have been exclusively devoted to it for many years, with a fair degree of success—but since "Old Hartford" was established a century ago signs have held a place of honor in nearly all schools for the deaf. The men and women who have been educated under the combined system, and who have won such honorable distinction in life, are witnesses of its utility. Elsewhere, in Europe, oralism has had as long and as fair a trial. How do the aggregate results compare? Certainly not in favor of the American system. If the use of signs is so great an injury to the deaf, in a true educational sense, why has not this injury developed itself more conspicuously in our schools, and in the lives of thousands of our pupils?

In this paragraph Mr. Davidson evidently admits more than he intended. "If signs could be confined to the lecture platform, there would be little or nothing to say against them, but the question is whether by endorsing and teaching the sign language we do not retard the pupils' progress in learning English, which is the essential means to all exact instructions, &c. Just how much the progress of deaf pupils has been retarded "in learning English," by the use of signs, the records of our schools must determine. The oralists must settle this question to their own satisfaction with the facts already collected and comparisons so readily available. We want Mr. Davidson to define just what he admits. In the Pennsylvania School, with which he is connected, the rival systems are being impartially and thoroughly tested, by means of an organization superior to what exists elsewhere. Are the orally taught pupils confined to this single means of obtaining information on all subjects, whether in class room, chapel, lecture hall, or on the

play ground? If the test is really an impartial one they should be. It might be possible for pupils so restricted to obtain some information from a lecturer who is familiar with the peculiarities of lip reading or articulation, as now practised, but the subject must be discussed with special care for their needs. When such pupils finish their schooling and go out into the world, where the teachers aid cannot be relied on, how will they gather knowledge and find mental pleasure from the careless and often very defective articulation of those with whom they must associate? Then the real test of the rival systems in the education of the deaf will become: and, unless the American oralists greatly improve the results already obtained, the advantages will remain on the side of the combined system.

MR. SPEAR'S OBJECTIONS.

DEVELOPER, N. D. Jan 6, 1901.

MR. EDITOR, In the issue of your paper of January 1 I note the following: "Our genial friend Mr. A. R. Spear of the North Dakota School cannot excuse the presumption of a deaf person who attempts to address an audience orally. It still puzzles us to understand how Mr. Spear who is a deaf man, can so authoritatively condemn the oral efforts of the deaf." You are eminently correct in referring to our would-be oral readers as "presumptuous," and their efforts as "attempts." But it is not their presumption which I particularly object. It is the colossal presumption of the other fellows, who would have us believe these attempts are triumphs, who make them a basis for magnifying the importance and value of speech to the deaf in their education, and in their social and business relations, who insist to them as having weight to determine us in this little matter of the proper methods to employ in the education of the deaf. In this mighty bustle for the "truth" let us test all things. To me it looks like the search for truth up to date has consisted mainly in kicking the sign language, discharging deaf teachers, and putting hearing ones in their places and falling in our faces before a mighty god whose name is "Promotion of Speech to the Deaf," and the truth the poor miserable truth, which consists in preparing the deaf for the highest plane of usefulness and happiness of which they are capable, is left to look out for itself. The deaf themselves want the truth, and they will heartily endorse legitimate efforts in the speech promotion, but they know that speech has its limits, they know the comparative value of speech and the language of signs. They have a deep-seated notion that more of their real happiness in this world is bound up in the latter than in the former, and so they scramble to their seats with looks of steel. But they don't object to speech when it is made subservient to the truth. Myself being a most zealous searcher for truth and knowing the importance the "promoters" are liable to attach to these attempts, which the truth as thus far revealed, shows us to be of no significance in the education of the deaf, I have ventured to call down a few of my friends, who, without knowing it are obstructing our search for the truth. Now as to the latter part of the quoted remarks that head this epistle, "I have read that in Germany teachers of the deaf hold that the deaf are incapable of expressing an opinion about themselves or the method by which they are educated." I was not aware, however until I read your article that the opinions of the learned German professors were also held by teachers in Canada—the land of my birth and home of my childhood. You are puzzled you say. Surely the fact that hearing is necessary to natural, and in extended discourses, agreeable and intelligible speech, except in rare and most favored circumstances, is not so fearfully and wonderfully obtuse as to be beyond the understanding of the deaf. The deaf easily can comprehend the value and utility of signs and the manual alphabet and never lose sight of it in the mighty rush after "truth." Why then can they not understand the other and equally plain fact? You do not do yourself justice in confessing you are puzzled over such an easy question. You say "I condemn the oral efforts of the deaf." I protest I do no such thing. I once saw a man without arms who had learned to write with his toes, but he was a dime museum freak. In my slow and laborious search after truth I have arrived at Belleville from which point I perceive that about fifty per cent of the "promotion" business including the oral reading at Chicago, are of the dime museum freak order and it is this that you mistake for oral efforts. How far on the road of "truth" are you behind me, Mr. Editor?
A. R. SPEAR

We now have something like a definite idea of what Mr. Spear does object to. The above communication clearly defines his position, and we find it is not just what we concluded it was, a former utterance—and criticism. He does not so much object to deaf persons exercising their vocal powers for the education and entertainment of assemblies, if they have sufficient confidence to make the "attempt," as he does to "the other fellows" claiming such efforts as triumphs of their system, etc. "The other fellows" here referred to are the oralists, for whom our Dakota friend seems to entertain a meagre respect. This disposes of much that we adversely criticised. We object to "the other fellows" doing such things, too, or claiming what they are not justly entitled to. The position we occupy in this controversy about systems has been repeatedly defined in these columns. We have said, and repeat the

behof, that deaf persons including those who have been orally taught, should have more information as to the value of signs and the manner in which they possibly can from these persons. Mr. Spear's doubt unintentionally said, neither have we any opinion about themselves or the method by which they are educated. We were fully expressed a curiosity to know how a deaf person could authoritatively condemn the oral efforts of others. His allusion is a manifest divergence from the question at issue, so far as anything we have said is concerned. Hence, it will be, when better acquainted with the ideas of Canadians here, that we will be behind him in our search for the truth in educational matters. We are pursuing the same course, and expect to reach the same conclusions.

The *Chronicle* informs us that the organization of the school partnership has been accomplished with good results at the Ohio School. Now it is proposed to re-organize the domestic department by adopting "the family plan" which, we are told, "will give the children the benefit of better physical care and better moral training." That certainly is a good deal, and we are somewhat curious to know just what the "family plan" signifies.

"Gurney," which is said to be a *de plume* for Prof. Jenkins of old Hartford, is credited with the origination of the term "collective system" as now applied to the popular combined system for instructing the deaf. It was used in these columns before Mr. Jenkins or any other person employed in the expression a good idea, so far as we know. But the man who first used the term is an appropriate one, and we keep good company.

The *Deaf-Mutes Journal* has entered upon the twenty third year of its publication, the issue of January 31, containing the 1115th. It does not grow old. May its influence increase, and the good of America be still more benefited thereby. It is a good paper.

HAMILTON HINTS

From our own Correspondent

Syria Pettit, of Stone Creek was a visitor in the city lately. He is an intelligent mute, and the city mutes will be glad to see him up this way whenever convenient to himself.

The large page of the *Canadian Mute* alphabet, in your paper, is a capital. It attracts immediate attention and makes people more interested in it. An unlimited number of friends have asked me for a copy, and I have promised them one if it is kept up in your paper. Probably it is a fair means of helping to increase your subscription.

Samuel Smyth has opened an upholstery and repairing shop on Jones Street South, where he will be pleased to receive any furniture for repairing at moderate prices.

Jan. Mosher poses as the champion deaf-mute draughts player of Hamilton and so far as that goes, it seems he has got claim to that title. Another champion at a different game is J. H. Byrne, who would be pleased to meet any local deaf-mute who thinks he can dispute the title at chess, either in person or through correspondence.

Chas. Mortimer, of Milton, is in the city at present. He says business at Milton is pretty slack now owing to the frost and slicy unions of Milton and Hamilton being on strike. He will, some others, have been laid off a short time.

A meeting of the mutes of the city and suburb has been called by Mr. R. Byrne, in the Y. M. C. A. building, cor. Jackson and James Streets, on 26th. The object is the organization of an active literary and debating society. More details later.