

AN ADMIRABLE CHARITY.

The Mackay Institution for Protestant Deaf Mutes and the Blind—Interesting Description of the Methods It Employs—Many Prominent People Enlisted in the Work.

PERHAPS no institution is better known to a large proportion of Montreal people of all grades of society, than the Mackay Institution for Protestant Deaf Mutes and the Blind. It occupies a capital site on the Cote St. Luke road, below the Cote St. Antoine road, about 10 minutes from the picturesque ruins of Ville Marie Convent. Behind it stretches undulating, tree-dotted farm-land, broken by carefully planted orchards, while, from its windows, one enjoys a wonderful panorama which embraces Mount Royal, the Lachine rapids, a glimpse of Lake St. Louis, and the Lake of Two Mountains, to say nothing of the Victoria Bridge, and the purple crest of Belœil.

Most of us, possessed as we are of sight, hearing and speech, hardly even dare to imagine or measure what the deprivation of any one of these three would mean. The incalculable horror of being, perhaps, suddenly stricken deaf, or dumb, or blind, is too terrible to think about. How much more appalling to have never, from one's birth, enjoyed the possession of those

faculties most of God's creatures have had bestowed upon them. And yet, strange as it may appear, a visit to "Mackay" has far from a depressing effect. In fact, the patience, the cheerful acceptance of a Will higher than all earthly powers, the perseverance which conquers obstacles, insurmountable one would suppose, practically demonstrate

invaluable lessons. Though, with the exception of the superintendent and instructors, all the inmates of the institute are afflicted in regard to hearing or sight, it would not be easy to find a happier, more contented congregation of human souls.

Up to 1869, little or nothing was known in this Province about the instruction of deaf mutes and the blind. It was then that Mr. J. B. McGann came to Montreal, with several pupils, and lectured on the necessity for such a school, and the steps to be taken for its formation. It is to the credit of the enterprise of Montrealers, that within two years the "Protestant Institution" was opened, with 14 pupils.

At first it occupied a small house on the Cote St. Antoine road. But in 1876, the late Mr. Joseph Mackay magnanimously offered to erect new and more suitable buildings on the present site. In 1877, the foundation stone was laid, and the following year the Earl and Countess of Dufferin formally declared it open. Ever since, the institution has been under vice-regal patronage, and has, I think, always been in a flourishing condition, owing to generous legacies bequeathed by well-known Montrealers, the bequests of the late Messrs. Mackay being the largest.

Among those who have ever taken the liveliest interest in this splendid work are Mr. Wolferstan Thomas, the present president, Mr. Charles Alexander, Mrs. Wolferstan Thomas, Mrs. P. S. Stevenson, Mr. and Mrs. Robert MacKay, Mr. George Durnford. The elective governors and the board of managers number in their lists many influential citizens.

Mr. and Mrs. James Widd, themselves deaf mutes, were the first superintendents. They were followed by Miss McGann, daughter of Mr. J. B. McGann, previously mentioned. Some years ago, Miss McGann became Mrs. J. Imrie Ashcroft, and she and Mr. Ashcroft were joint superintendents. Since the death of her husband, Mrs. Ashcroft has ruled alone. And it may be most sincerely asserted that no one better qualified for the position could be found. Her work and her influence are of the highest character possible. One has only to visit the institution to realize the affectionate regard in which she is held by all her pupils.

There are, at the present time, between 60 and 70 pupils in residence. Under 10 of these are blind, and the rest are, the larger number, totally deaf—I do not say "dumb," because in most cases it is the deafness which is responsible for the dumbness, and these children are taught to speak. The institution also receives those of defective hearing and imperfect speech, and their progress is marvelous. These, it may be mentioned, receive the education of ordinary schools, and that in a class by themselves, the manual alphabet and signs not being used at all. The children, one and all, however, receive, and are retentive of an amount of general knowledge which is nothing short of miraculous. Many of the boys and girls have entered the institution in a condition one might almost term imbecile—not from any weakness of mind and brain, but simply because, being of poor parentage, their faculties have not had any opportunity of being developed. And three months after their entrance the most



A Bright Pupil.



One of the Girl Inmates.



"STANLEY."