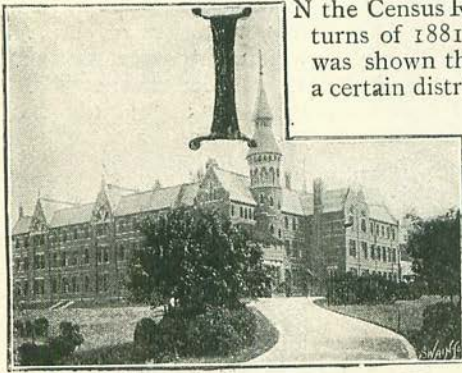


How the Deaf and Dumb are Educated.

BY EDWARD SALMON.



ASYLUM FOR DEAF AND DUMB AT MARGATE.

In the Census Returns of 1881 it was shown that a certain district

in Ireland contained an unprecedentedly large number of deaf and dumb. Not only was the record of the proportion to the hearing and speaking broken, but the relative increase in the afflicted was so alarming, that special inquiry was made into the matter, with a view to ascertaining, if possible, what were the local conditions which had brought so many afflicted mortals into existence. The explanation was at once simple and reassuring. The enumerator, with a genius for actualities thoroughly Irish, had included under the heading Deaf and Dumb all babes who had neither learnt to speak nor to understand what was said to them. I am tempted to make a statement hardly less startling than that of the Irish census taker, and containing just about the same amount of truth. It is that I have heard the dumb speak! or rather, in order that a Commission may not be appointed to inquire into the accuracy of these words, let me say I have heard the reputed dumb speak. "But not really use their tongues?" some of my readers, like many of my personal friends, will no doubt exclaim. Yes, really: I have held converse by word of mouth with children who were born deaf or who became deaf at so early an age that if they ever heard a sound, it has been of the smallest possible use to them. Last year I was privileged to describe in these pages some of the remarkable triumphs accomplished in the education of those doomed to live their lives in darkness. Since then I have had before me, more or less constantly, the question of the education of the deaf, and have come across many things more extraordinary even than the placing of the

blind on all but a practical footing of equality with the seeing.

In these days, what I may call the higher education of the deaf and dumb has reached a stage bordering on perfection and wonderland. During the last twenty years an animated controversy has been carried on by the respective advocates of two systems—the oral and the sign. At times it has waxed hot and strong. On the one hand, the friends of the "pure oral," or German system, seek to assure us that even a deaf child can be taught to speak, and to read with its eyes the words uttered by another person's lips. On the other, the supporters of the sign, or French system, declare that the natural means of communication between the deaf and dumb and their fellows is by motions and the manual alphabet. The general public has gone its way paying little heed to the pros and cons of this most fascinating problem. I may be permitted to say, in a quite judicial spirit, that, whether both are right or partially right, or one is utterly wrong, the enthusiasm and spirit with which both defend their positions are equally creditable. The end aimed at is to give the afflicted an education calculated to advance his or her welfare, spiritual and material, in after life. How differently placed is the deaf and dumb child to-day from the unhappy being born into the world in bygone centuries. Now, every civilised country is equipped with colleges, institutions, and homes for his education. England, which to-day, as the result of private enterprise and philanthropy, boasts many first-class institutions, had at the beginning of the century only one public institution for deaf mutes. In olden times, it was believed that it was hopeless to attempt to get at the brain of a being deprived of hearing, and he or she was regarded and treated as an idiot. To bring a deaf child into the world was a disgrace in the eyes of most people, and one or two cases in which the afflicted were reported to have been educated were looked upon as miracles. Wise men of old! If they lived to-day they would know that it is not only possible to educate a person who is deaf and dumb, but one who is deaf, dumb, and blind also. It was not till the sixteenth century that any serious effort seems to have been made to give the deaf

a systematic education, and only in the latter half of the eighteenth century did two great men arise who started it



THE LATE MR. KINSEY.

on the lines on which it has since been developed. Heinicke in Germany opened a school to teach speech and lip reading, and the Abbé de l'Épée, moved by the want of provision for the deaf and dumb in France, founded the National Institute for teaching by signs, and won for himself the name of Father of the Deaf Mutes. About the same time a man named Braidwood introduced the oral system into England; but it utterly failed to take root.

The oral system to-day is to be seen at its best at the Ealing Training College for Teachers of the Deaf, now superintended by Mrs. Kinsey, whose late husband and Mr. B. St. J. Ackers, the chief founder of the College, were among the most active spirits in England twenty years since in showing how much there is in the German method. As I made my way to Ealing one day I tried hard to form some idea of what deafness is like. The truth, however, is, that no man with ears and eyes can realise what either deafness or blindness is. To the teacher the difficulty presented by the former is greater than that presented by the latter. A child born blind has the main channel of communication with the brain open, and, so far as speech and hearing, which prepare the way to the education and enlightenment of the mind, go, is on a level of equality with its more fortunate fellows. The deaf, on the con-



MRS. KINSEY.

trary, are little removed in this respect from the brute creation, and, except that they have a human brain, would be worse off than the majority of brutes, which, if they cannot talk, at least have ears. How, then, can a child who has never heard a sound be taught consciously to utter a sound? It is with a view to finding out the secret that we are about to visit Ealing College. At this institution, it should be said, signs are absolutely forbidden, and the children

have to learn to express their wishes by speech, and to understand what others say by following the motions of the lips. The child is first of all taught sixty sounds, on the phonetic principle. Miss Hewett, the mistress of the School, breathes or blows on the pupil's hand, and makes the pupil repeat the process. Say the letters "sh" are being taught. The pupil watches the teacher's lips, feels the breath on the back of the hand, and in a very little while can emit the compound herself. Other sounds are secured by placing the child's hand at the teacher's throat. The teacher pronounces the letter or word, and the child, placing its hand to its own throat, does its best to repeat the sensation just experienced at the teacher's. The whole thing can only be done by the sense of sight and touch, the latter being the sole



"OTHER SOUNDS ARE SECURED BY PLACING THE CHILD'S HAND AT THE TEACHER'S THROAT."

means the deaf have of perceiving sound, which to them is a vibration they can feel. The deaf are taught to speak by touch, and to hear by sight. Having taught the child its letters with their many phonetic modifications, words and simple sentences are formed, the child always writing what she has said on a blackboard. The patience demanded of the teacher is almost unique, and would be quite unique if greater patience still had not succeeded in breaking down the barrier which shuts off from their fellow-beings those who are blind as well as deaf and dumb. In the course of an hour I had ample cause to admire the spirit which, day after day, year after year, is shown by the teachers of the oral system, whether at Ealing or elsewhere. For instance, a little girl who is quick to learn is selected, and the teacher, pointing to another pupil named Winnie, asks "Who is that?" The children are taught for practice sake to repeat questions before answering, and the response is—

"Who is that? That is *Win-die*."

"No! no!" says the teacher, with a look of surprise, which tells the child immediately that she has not spoken correctly: "not *Windie*—*Win-nie*."

"*Win-die*," the child repeats again, and the teacher takes her hand and places it to her throat as she pronounces the name. The result is that the child says "Winnie" instantly. I would commend to those who would care for an object-lesson in the teaching of the deaf to speak and to understand what others speak to say, "Winnie" and "*Windie*." There is, of course, a difference in the movement of mouth and tongue, but it is very subtle indeed. Then watch a friend's mouth whilst pronouncing the two words. The difference in the position of the lips is almost imperceptible. The difficulty about this name having been got over after many failures, the teacher says, "Run to the door," and the child, repeating "Run to the door," suits the action to the words. Then she is told to "Walk to the window." She walks to the door. The teacher sitting at the opening in the circular desk, which is found useful in oral classes, because it enables all the pupils easily to follow not only her lips, but each other's lips, has been carefully read by the child named Winnie, and, having told the first child she is wrong, turns to Winnie, and says: "You walk to the window," which the child does without hesitation. I then admire the excellence of the writing of several of the pupils, and the

teacher, turning to a very bright boy, says: "Go and get me two of Winnie's exercise-books." The boy leaves the room, and returns in a minute with the books. Handing them to Winnie, the teacher tells her to "Take them to the gentleman," and, as the child brings them over to me, I simply cannot realise that I, wide awake as I am, am saying "Thank you" to a child who will know only by her eyes I have said it. Pictures are very useful in educating the deaf. A card, illustrating the nursery rhyme "This is the House that Jack Built," is chosen, and the teacher points to the house, the man, &c., and the child names them. Then the teacher indicates a plot of grass in front of the house.

"That is a field," the child remarks.

"It is not a field," the teacher says; "what is it?"

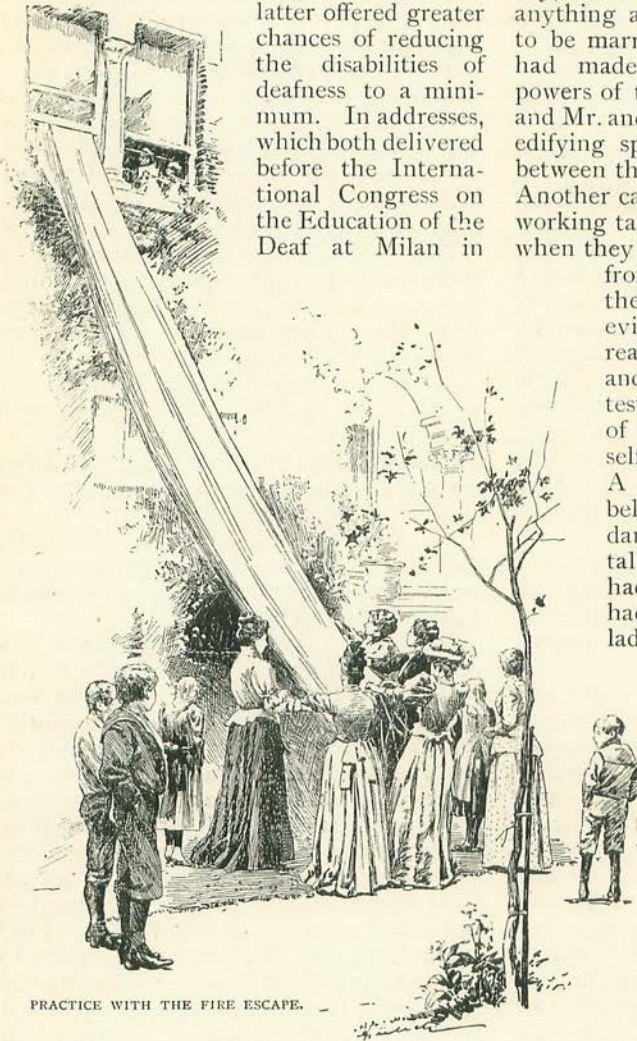
The child shakes her head, and the teacher takes her to the window, and points to the garden. "What is that?"

"That is a garden," answers the child, and she then understands that the grass around the house in the picture represents a garden, and not a field.

Mrs. Kinsey some time ago secured a canvas fire-escape. The children find it great fun getting out of the window and shooting down to the ground. Presently, therefore, we went into the garden to see some practice. Mrs. Kinsey tried an experiment soon after she received the escape, and found that she could get the dozen or more children out of the house in the event of fire in less than five minutes. As they came down one after another, they laughed and talked, saying how they liked it. I did not notice a sign during my two visits to Ealing College, and it seemed to me, rightly or wrongly, that what the pupils could not say by word of mouth they simply left unsaid.

The question now to be asked is, of what practical value is the oral system? Does it enable the deaf who have been thoroughly trained under it to take their place in the world on anything like equal terms with the hearing? Some oralists would not hesitate to give an affirmative reply. Mr. Ackers, to whom, as I have said, the existence of Ealing College is chiefly due—as another well-known oral school in Fitzroy-square is due to the munificence of the late Baroness Meyer de Rothschild—went into the matter thoroughly when his little girl, at three months old, lost her hearing. Mr. and Mrs. Ackers travelled in

Europe and America studying the French and German systems, and came to the conclusion that the latter offered greater chances of reducing the disabilities of deafness to a minimum. In addresses, which both delivered before the International Congress on the Education of the Deaf at Milan in



PRACTICE WITH THE FIRE ESCAPE.

1880, they gave some instances of what had been found possible under the German system. Whilst Mrs. Ackers knew cases where as many as three foreign languages had been acquired by oral pupils, Mr. Ackers told several instructive anecdotes. In their visits to deaf people they never met anyone who could have been mistaken for a hearing person, he admitted; but they heard the congenitally deaf speak, and were understood by them. One apprentice they saw stuttered, but spoke intelligibly, nevertheless. Indeed, his master said he spoke a great deal too much, and was always talking with his fellow apprentice. Mr.

and Mrs. Ackers interviewed a thriving deaf dressmaker, who, however, proved shy, and was with difficulty induced to say anything about herself. She was engaged to be married, and her lover, hearing she had made so poor an exhibition of her powers of talking, rated her roundly on it, and Mr. and Mrs. Ackers were treated to the edifying spectacle of a spirited altercation between the deaf girl and her sweetheart. Another case referred to a congenitally deaf working tailor, who was at the court-house when they called. There had been a theft from his master's shop, and he was the chief witness. He gave his evidence by word of mouth, lip read the advocates who examined and cross-examined him, and his testimony resulted in the conviction of the prisoner. Mrs. Kinsey herself told me a remarkable story. A country doctor who did not believe in the oral system, at a dance or an evening party, was talking to a young lady whom he had not met before. He said he had been informed there was a deaf lad in the room who had been educated on the oral system, and he would like to test the lad's ability to speak, and to lip read. The young lady replied that she supposed he meant her brother, who was deaf from birth, but spoke perfectly.

"That is my brother," she said, indicating a youth standing some distance away.

"Oh, nonsense!" cried the doctor, "I have just been talking to him, and he hears as well as I do."

"He is deaf as a post," answered the young lady, "and has not heard a word you said."

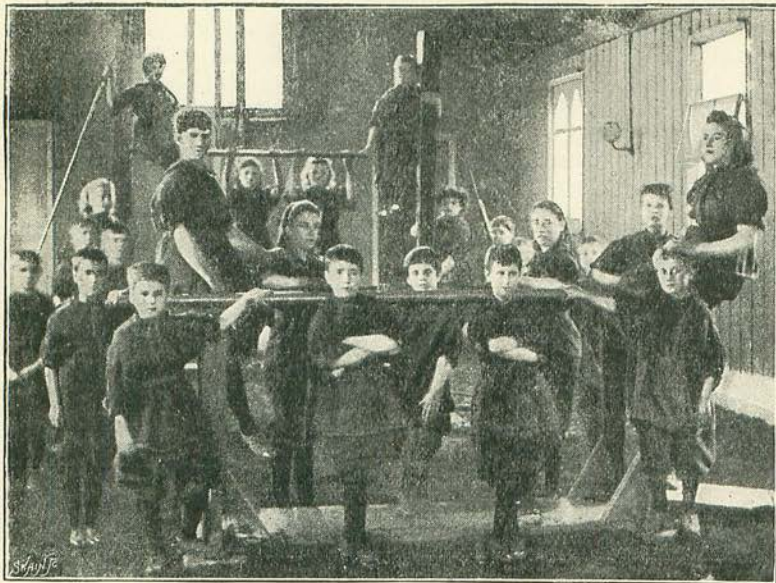
If that did not convince the doctor of the merits of the oral method nothing would. He, however, is not the only person who has been deceived, momentarily, at any rate, by the deaf who have acquired speech. In the Mayor's office of a great Midland town, I am told, one of the clerks, who has been deaf from infancy, holds his own without inconvenience to himself or anyone else.

So far we have been considering the education of the deaf and dumb from the brightest and most favourable point of view.

Ealing College receives only the children of parents who can afford to pay a first-class price for first-class attention and first-class results. How fare the afflicted when their lot is cast less pleasantly? What of the thousands of children of poor but deserving, as well as of pauper, parents brought into the world deprived, so to speak, of their ears? The institution referred to at the beginning of this paper as the only public one in existence at the beginning of this century is the Asylum for the Deaf and Dumb founded just one hundred years ago, in Bermondsey, and subsequently removed to the Old Kent-road, where it has now a splendid home. In the course of this year the centenary of the Asylum will be publicly celebrated, and much will, no doubt, be published descriptive of its great and good work. The institution was from the first a success, and since its commencement 5,000 deaf and dumb children have been received and educated by it, some 2,000 having been apprenticed to trades, at a cost of about £18,500. As the Asylum grew, it was deemed wise to establish a branch at the seaside, and if the philanthropists who inaugurated it with half a dozen inmates in 1792 could see the outcome of their work in two imposing institutions—one in the Old Kent-road, the other at the south-east corner of Margate, they would have cause to feel that their lives had not been spent in vain. The children, who are born of poor parents—grooms, gardeners, carpenters, carmen, labourers, working men of all kinds, are sent for a year to the Old Kent-road, and are then drafted to Margate, where, in addition to receiving the best education which a large school can supply, they receive also the health which is to be found on the North Kent coast, if anywhere. The Asylum is in charge of Dr. Elliott, to whose skill as a photographer we are indebted for several of our pictures. Dr. Elliott was one of the distinguished body of men who at first found it difficult to believe that there was anything in teaching by the oral system worth the time and trouble it involves. Experience has convinced him, as it has convinced others, that he was wrong, and, within the limits rigidly prescribed by opportunity and nature, he supports the education of the deaf on the German system. There are at Margate 300 children, of whom all except eighty are being trained to speak and to lip read. Fresh from Ealing as I was, I appreciated instantly the difficulties which beset

Dr. Elliott. At Ealing each child can receive individual attention. At the Margate Asylum and similar institutions they are of necessity taught in classes of perhaps a dozen. The wonder is that under such circumstances they ever learn to articulate or to lip read at all. They do, however, and some of the results are quite remarkable. Several children to whom I spoke understood what I said without apparent difficulty, and some had voices so pleasant that I wondered whether, if the children had been blessed with the organ of sound, they would not have made most excellent singers.

Exigencies of space forbid me to go fully into all I saw and heard and did in a seven hours' visit to the institution, during which, under Dr. Elliott's guidance, I played the part of amateur examiner and inspector of the deaf and dumb. First I went over the whole place to get a general impression, and then spent a considerable time with various classes. The great difficulty with the dumb is language. Signs indicating mere facts and objects they adopt naturally, and are not difficult to understand. Language, however, whether they are to be taught to speak or not, they must have, if they are to communicate intelligibly with the hearing world. Dr. Elliott, by signs, asked a child, whose parents are both deaf and dumb, whether she had a brother deaf and dumb, and if he went to school. Her answer in dumb motion was, "One—school not yet—London." Interpreted, this meant, "I have a brother who has not yet gone to school. He is in London." To develop language, the silently taught children are made to write fully a description of the actions of the teacher; the oral pupils, of course, learn language by speech. Dr. Elliott points to his hat, places it on his head, and tells a class of girls to write. Two make the mistake of saying that "he placed the hat *in* his head," and it is not the simplest thing in the world to show them the difference between "in" and "on." The junior oral classes are both sides of the classes where the children are taught by signs. The noise they make momentarily suggests that it must be very distracting for the teachers and pupils in the intervening room. One forgets that neither teacher nor pupil by the sign system hears a sound, and that in the midst of the din they are in quiet. The best teachers of the deaf by signs are the deaf, I should say, just as the best leaders and teachers of the blind are blind. For the oral classes, of course, a teacher with ears



GIRLS' GYMNASIUM—MARGATE.

say, undoubtedly, orally hopeless. A visit to the gymnasium, where the girls shown in the accompanying picture went through a variety of difficult exercises in a manner which frequently compelled my unheard applause, was particularly interesting. What a Spartan race English women would be if they were all trained to the muscular exercise which the deaf girls at Margate undergo! It is not surprising to hear that they

and distinctness of delivery is indispensable. When the children reach him from the Old Kent-road, Dr. Elliott tries them orally. If, after the year's exhaustive trial to which they have already been subjected, he comes to the conclusion that the child is incapable of doing any good under that system, he puts it to a sign class. Many who are treated thus could, no doubt, be taught orally, if the teacher could give them continuous individual attention; but in a large institution this, as has been said, is impossible. Moreover, the time allowed is barely sufficient to enable everything desirable to be done with the most promising. Parents naturally are very anxious that their children should be taught to speak, and the joy of a mother and father who send their child to the Asylum a mute, and receive it back years later with a voice, and an eye which is a fair substitute for the ear, can well be imagined. Sometimes, however, all the patience and ingenuity of man are incapable of teaching the child to articulate, and in this case, if the parents have set their heart on the oral system, the disappointment is terribly keen. One child I saw cannot get beyond a squeak which, heard in the dark, would be taken for that of a mouse. Dr. Elliott put her into a sign class, but the sorrow of the mother induced him to give the little one another trial. The experiment is more considerate for the mother than the child, who is, I should venture to

give the visiting medical man of the Asylum very little to do.

After dinner at one o'clock, the boys had some dumb-bell and club practice. They are well disciplined by a teacher who takes



EVAN WILLIAMS (AGE 9).

RHODA PIPECK (AGE 10).

pride in his work, but to me the most attractive, as it was also the most amusing, feature of the performance was the presence of the little lad, Evan Williams. Such a mite, standing three feet high at most, would under ordinary conditions not be permitted to take part in this exercise. The lad watched the class one day, however, made a special appeal to the teacher to be allowed to join it, and, with a dignity and a precision quite touching, he imitates every movement of body and swing of the arms of the instructor. He should prove a born athlete, were as his frame is at present. The girls also practise with dumb-bells, and one of

teacher then told them to write "Mr. Salmon." The majority spelt the name correctly: two spelt it "Sammon," and one "Simon." At Dr. Elliott's request I dictated a sentence. Every eye in the class was on the alert, as I said the first thing that occurred to me: "It is a very fine day." Pencils went to work with eager rapidity, and in a minute all slates were turned for my inspection. They all had the words right, except one or two who left out the "a." I said several other things, which were read from my lips without difficulty. Addressing a girl, the offspring of deaf and dumb parents, Dr. Elliott said:—



ADVANCED ORAL CLASS—MARGATE.

the most skilful of them is Rhoda Pippeck, who is depicted with little Evan in our illustration.

The next thing to be seen is an advanced oral class, made up of girls and boys of ages ranging from 12 to 15. They all rise respectfully as Dr. Elliott and I enter the room. They are in the midst of a lesson in writing from dictation, and, when they have resumed their seats, Dr. Elliott introduces me: "This is Mr. Salmon," he says, "who is going to write an article for THE STRAND MAGAZINE on the Asylum." One or two pupils seemed to have missed what he said, but most of them smiled as they followed the words, and one boy said interrogatively, "Mr. Sammun?" The

no question about the genuineness of all this, or of the thought the child brought to bear on the subject. Great emulation exists among the scholars, and when, as frequently happens, one makes a stupid reply, the others laugh good-naturedly and with a full appreciation of the fun.

Shortly after the inspection of this class, prayer time arrived, and the last I saw of the deaf children at Margate who are taught on the oral system, was in a large room. The girls, two deep, were ranged down one side and the boys up the other. All eyes were fixed on Dr. Elliott as he stood at the table and read several short prayers. The "Amen" to each came distinctly and promptly, and then the Lord's Prayer was

"Did your mother go to school?"

"No, sir."

"Then is your mother ignorant?"

"No, sir."

"Is she clever?"

"Yes, sir."

"And yet you say she never went to school?"

I thought this would probably be more than the child would follow; but, after an instant's reflection, the answer was given:—

"Her father taught her."

"Your grandfather taught your mother?"

"Yes, sir."

There could be

repeated by the entire body. If I did not catch every word, I can only say that it is but seldom that one can catch every word even when the prayer is uttered by a congregation more fortunately placed.

By way of contrast to this final experience at Margate, I lost no time on my return to town in attending the Deaf and Dumb Church in Oxford-street. Here the service is silent, and never was silence so eloquent. A congregation which gives expression to the prayers at its heart through the fingers, which sings hymns by signs, which follows a sermon not a word of which is spoken aloud, and a church without an organ and without a choir, are a novelty indeed. For two hours every Sunday morning and evening there is a service during which not a sound save a cough, or whisper from the altar, is to be heard. A strange feeling of incompetency comes over the visitor who is blessed with ears as he kneels, but only dimly comprehends the meaning of the prayer, as he stands up to a hymn which is not vocalised, as he regards the wonderful variety of motions by means of which the chaplain delivers a sermon some twenty minutes in length. The church is in charge

of the Rev. Dr. William Stainer—the acting chaplain, as he facetiously styles himself—a brother of Sir John Stainer, the great musician. Curious it is that one should have made himself famous through the medium of sound and the other should have devoted himself to the world to which sound is a meaningless term. Dr. Stainer is one of the most self-sacrificing of men. Whilst this year is the centenary of the Old Kent-road Asylum, it is also the jubilee of Dr. Stainer's connection with the deaf and dumb. For fifty years he has laboured in their cause, and he has an

ambition which few entertain but many realise. He wishes to die a poor man, and, seeing that a slice of his capital and a portion of his income go every year to the advancement of some work or other intended to benefit the deaf and dumb, he will certainly attain his ambition if he is spared. Dr. Stainer became a teacher in the Old Kent-road institution in 1842. Thence he migrated to Manchester, where there is one of the best deaf and dumb asylums in the world, and eventually he took holy orders for the sake of the afflicted. To write a record of his life would be to furnish more than one chapter in the history of the efforts made during the nineteenth century to ameliorate the lot of the deaf and dumb. In 1872 he was appointed Chaplain of the Royal Society for the Deaf and Dumb in Oxford-street, the position he now holds, and in 1874 he was induced by the authorities of the School Board for London to take in hand the great work of providing for the education of the hundreds of deaf and dumb who were, on account of their infirmity, allowed to go uneducated. With this object he started centres of instruction for the deaf and dumb,

and later a home where children who lived too far from any centre to attend daily might be kept from Monday to Friday. To-day there are several homes in London which owe their existence to the initial energy of Dr. Stainer. To these homes are chiefly sent pauper children, some of the inmates having been actually found wandering in gutters like stray dogs, abandoned by those whose parental instinct was not strong enough to teach them a duty which even the lower animals observe. Most people in London probably know of Dr. Stainer's homes in the Pentonville-road. Here one



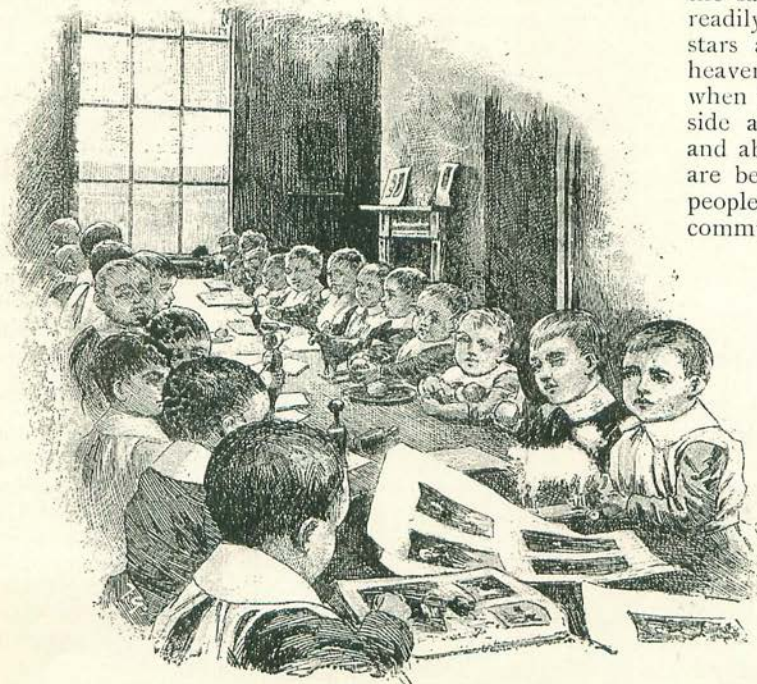
DR. STAINER PREACHING AT THE DEAF AND DUMB CHURCH.

finds again conditions differing from those which obtain both at Ealing and at Margate. The children are sent to Dr. Stainer from some sixty different Boards, and are mostly paid for by the Poor Law Guardians. Some of them go to Dr. Stainer's homes as mere babes. He prefers to have them as young as possible, believing that education begun early is the most effectual. Whilst some of his charges are younger than any at Ealing or at Margate, he does something for the older ones which Dr. Elliott so far has not been able to do for his pupils. He has started workshops in which boys are taught bootmaking, tailoring, carpentering, wood carving, and other trades, and he is able in the course of time to ascertain what callings they are individually most suited for. Kindergarten and Slod work naturally plays a considerable part in the curriculum at the Pentonville Homes. As regards the girls, they are taught every sort of domestic duty, laundry work, &c., so that, given the opportunity, they are fitted to accept places as servants, sempstresses, laundry maids, &c. Let us take a peep first at the latest arrivals. At the moment I saw them the little ones were having their tea. There was no sort of shyness about the majority of them. Many

greeted me with a smile; one boy, not long since rescued from the streets, in his delight proved somewhat intractable, and one girl closed her hand and shook her thumb at me most vigorously. This I learned meant "good"; whether that she considered herself the good one of the bunch, or that it was good of me to come to see them, I do not know. The method of teaching is pretty much the same as at Margate. Those who can be taught to speak are taught, but the conditions keep the number small. The workshops are the chief novelty in Dr. Stainer's homes. The boys seem to take great interest in their work, and some have proved not only efficient, but excellent workmen. One adjunct to the carpenters' room gave rise to an anecdote worth recording. A steam engine in the laundry beneath is used for the purposes of the saw-bench and the turning-lathe. The boys have learnt that the broad belt of leather which comes up through the floor is moved by the machinery below. There was lying on the floor part of a tree trunk. They know that trees come out of the ground, and being asked how they grow, they conclude that the same sort of hidden power forces them up. The forces of Nature are not easily made comprehensible to them. In the same way they are not readily convinced that the stars are not holes in the heavens, and are only visible when the lights on the other side are lit. Space, time, and abstract ideas generally are beyond the majority of people who can hold hourly communion with their fel-

lows. What wonder that they should be almost wholly beyond the deaf?

The deaf mute, all unconscious of his great infirmity as he is, is a very superior person. There is a consensus of opinion bearing out this statement. Those people who are ready to regard the deaf and dumb as stupid would be well advised sometimes to take care

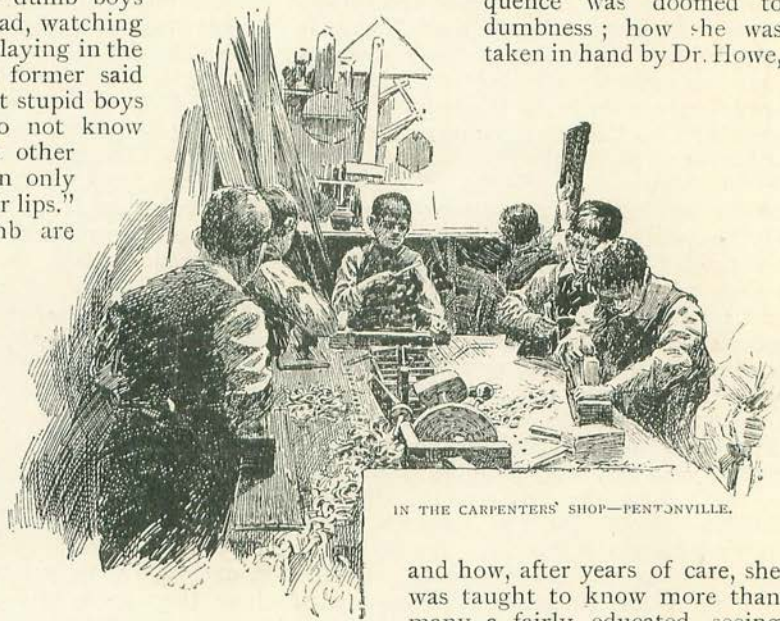


KINDERGARTEN - PENTONVILLE.

that the deaf and dumb have not already made up their minds to regard their visitors in the light of the stupid party. Many years ago Dr. Stainer recollects coming upon two deaf and dumb boys at the Old Kent-road, watching some hearing boys playing in the street. One of the former said to the other: "What stupid boys they are. They do not know how to talk to each other as we do; they can only make signs with their lips." The deaf and dumb are very much of the view of the tribe of North American Indians, who, though in possession of all their faculties, were reputed to seldom open their lips. They regarded signs as the natural means of communication. In one respect the deaf and dumb have an advantage over the hearing world. From whatever cause, they show, in most cases, an extraordinary indifference to pain. The matron at the Margate Asylum, in response to my inquiry on this point, assured me that where one would have the greatest difficulty in getting an ordinary child to have a tooth out, the deaf and dumb will have three or four out, with not so much as a protest. To pull three or four, or even five out at a sitting was indeed a constant practice, until mere humanity compelled her to forbid it.

Wonderful as are the results which have been achieved in the education of the deaf and dumb on both the oral and the sign systems, I cannot conclude this account of how it is done without some reference to an achievement more wonderful than either. It is a work difficult enough in all conscience to educate the blind or the deaf and dumb; but, unless one actually knows of a case where a child, practically born deaf, dumb, and blind, has been educated, it is simply incredible that beings so absolutely isolated can be made to know the meaning of things both material and spiritual. Yet it has been done in America and England several times. Readers of Dickens's "American Notes" will remember the

pathetic and beautiful account he gives of Laura Bridgman; how, having a fever shortly after birth, she was left deprived of eyes, ears, and almost smell, and in consequence was doomed to dumbness; how she was taken in hand by Dr. Howe,



IN THE CARPENTERS' SHOP—PENTONVILLE.

and how, after years of care, she was taught to know more than many a fairly educated seeing and hearing being knows. What Dr. Howe did in America, Mr. Andrew Patterson, the late devoted head master of the Manchester Institution, did in England. He came across a little girl who had been abandoned in a dark and damp cellar when some two or three years of age. The news of Dr. Howe's success induced Mr. Patterson to try his hand with Mary Bradley. Removing her from the school where, poor helpless mortal, she was driven nearly mad by the teasing and cruelty of the other children, Mr. Patterson put her in a room alone to see what she would do. She immediately occupied herself in finding out with her hands where she was. When he started to teach her, he took some object, a pen, say, and then made the signs for "pen" on her fingers. By repeating this day after day, with a variety of things, he hoped to make the imprisoned brain realise that there was some connection between the signs and the object. But no apparent success attended his efforts. One week, two weeks, three weeks, four went by, and Mary Bradley's mind seemed as blank as at the hour they started, when suddenly, one day, her face brightened. She understood at last! A breach had been made in the wall which hedged her in. "She had

found the key to the mystery," says a writer who, twenty years ago, published an account of Mr. Patterson's great work in a brochure which few, except specialists, possess probably to-day. "Placing her hand on each of the objects separately, she gave the name of each on her fingers, or rather signed them on the fingers of her teacher, as her mode of describing them." What a moment for the teacher! What unutterable joy must have suffused his heart as he realised that he had found a way to an imprisoned brain and a human soul! He instantly cut out the letters of the alphabet in cardboard, and when in time he had made her understand the meaning of these, he got a case of type which she learnt to compose into words. He taught her to write, and she actually wrote to and received letters from Laura Bridgman. Like her, she was very quick and eager to learn; and, when a boy similarly afflicted was sent to Mr. Patterson, she took the greatest interest in assisting in the lad's education. As they got to know each other the two became close friends. Sometimes they would be sitting together talking with their fingers, when Mr. Patterson tried to approach them unobserved. The boy invariably warned his companion that Mr. Patterson was coming. They never confused one person with another, and their memories were remarkable.

As example is better than precept, so I hope the facts contained in this article will point a moral which it is impossible now to enforce at any

length. A hundred years ago, De l'Épée is reported to have given utterance to two opinions: first, that the world will never learn to talk on its fingers in order to have the pleasure of conversing with the deaf and dumb; second, that the only means of restoring the deaf and dumb completely to society is to teach them to hear with their eyes and to express themselves *viva voce*. The case for the pure oral system could not be more pithily stated than in these views of one who found it necessary to rely absolutely on signs.

The Royal Commission which sat three or four years ago on the subject, issued a report containing several noteworthy recommendations. Every deaf child must be educated, was the moral of these. It was hoped the Government would give effect to these proposals last year; but they did not get beyond the printing of a Bill. Brave men and women have in their private capacity devoted their lives, and often their incomes, to the indigent and the poor deaf mute, and upon such Christian energy everything has depended. This is not as it should be, and the Government have it in their power to do a just and generous as well as a wise and politic thing. Experience has shown what, under proper conditions, the oral system can accomplish, and any Bill which assists the reduction of the number of deaf mutes will conduce to the advantage of individuals by making them more self-dependent and to the advantage of the State by adding to the number of capable citizens.



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