

I came to the conclusion that the methods used in this school certainly encourage spontaneity, readiness, and originality, while there is no sacrifice of thoroughness. The instruction by the teacher is only a small part of the work; the children do most of it, while the teacher directs. The English-teaching was excellent nearly everywhere—marked by good appreciation of the books, by excellent reading, by clear and accurate oral expression of thought in answer to questions or in continuous speech, and by excellent enunciation and pronunciation throughout.

SPECIAL SCHOOLS.

Of late years much attention has been devoted to the education of abnormal children—blind, deaf, crippled, and feeble-minded—in Great Britain, Germany, Switzerland, the United States, and elsewhere. The scientific instruction of the blind and deaf is, of course, no new thing; but in these branches of special work more good is possible than formerly. The long-continued observation of skilled teachers and of medical and psychological experts has rendered it possible to secure better classification, and has practically settled many questions of method that were formerly considered matters of individual opinion: *e.g.*, although a few of the old teachers still cling to the old “manual” method or to the “mixed” method in the teaching of the deaf, nearly everywhere all the best teachers have adopted the pure “oral” method—at all events, for deaf children of normal intelligence.

Fortunately, the need of establishing special schools for crippled children is with us unknown, otherwise it would be interesting to note the thoughtful and kindly treatment they receive in the Tavistock Place Invalid School, and in similar schools in London and other large cities of the United Kingdom. The problem to be solved in regard to all these classes of children is twofold—to develop as far as possible their physical, mental, and moral powers, so that they may, in their own limited way, at least, find some joy in a reasonable existence; and, secondly, to teach them some occupation that will enable them, in whole or in part, to maintain themselves—this will have the effect not only of lightening the burden on the community, but also of giving the individuals greater moral dignity, and so of preventing them from sinking still lower in the scale of life. There is a general agreement among specialists who work for the education of the mentally defective that the test we propose to use in New Zealand for the classification of such cases is the best that can be applied in practice—namely, that the *feeble-minded* children, as distinct from *idiots*, are those who can keep themselves clean and out of personal danger, and, further, as distinguished from *imbeciles* (who can also satisfy this test) are those who can be trained to earn their own living, wholly or partly, in subordinate positions.

Schools for the Feeble-minded.

The methods used for the mental training of these children vary considerably; the teachers themselves admit that they are experimenting—feeling after the best methods. A large school has lately been built for defectives on the outskirts of Frankfurt. There is a site of 5 acres, but the playground is almost as bare as a drill parade-ground. When I asked the teacher why they did not have gardens in which they could teach the pupils the simple operations of gardening and agriculture, he said he thought it was an excellent idea, but it had never been thought of for these children. In this school the method adopted in intellectual instruction seemed to be to go nearly on the same lines as with normal children two or three years younger—as if we were to make Standard III their aim, the end of their elementary education, instead of Standard VI, as in the case of ordinary children. That mistake has not generally been made in London, or Glasgow, or Bristol, or New York, where special concrete methods of instruction are employed, but not always quite successfully. In one school in London I saw a class being taught elementary notions of domestic life, with the aid of a doll tea-service; each thing was taken up, its use was asked and explained, and it was put in its proper place on the miniature tea-table. So far, so good; but the weak point was that many of the children had never seen the real things the toys were meant to represent, and the latter were so small that many of the children did not recognise the toy milk-jug or the toy sugar-basin—the whole business was, to some of them at all events, a confusing abstraction. In a similar class of a New York public elementary school I saw some children given apples and knives (somewhat blunt). They were in a junior cookery room with small gas-rings on the benches in front of them. They talked about the apples, cut them in two to see what was inside, cut them again (into quarters), ate one quarter, and related their experiences (the apples were