

My coming in contact with such a large number of teachers and other experts was of the greatest professional value to myself. I had many opportunities of discussing with my colleagues the more important problems connected with the education of the deaf, and was gratified to find that, judging by their verdict, we in New Zealand have been proceeding on right lines. Differences of opinion naturally occurred on some points, but these were mostly of minor importance. Among the teachers I met the consensus of opinion was overwhelmingly in favour of the oral system, which is fast gaining ground in England, and which is practically the only system in use on the Continent. Indeed, I scarcely met a teacher who, theoretically at least, was not an oralist. Some, however, disputed the applicability of the method to all cases of deaf-mutism, and contended that for a percentage of their pupils, notably those of feeble intelligence, the manual system was necessary. It was also claimed by some teachers that children commencing school life at a more advanced age than is usual can be more rapidly and efficiently educated by silent than by oral methods. In a good many so-called oral schools in England I found silent classes taught mainly by the manual alphabet and by writing. The percentage of pupils taught by silent methods varies much in different schools, and tends to get less and less as the oral system gets more and more firmly established. I carefully observed the work done in some of these silent classes, and found nothing to make me change my previous conviction—viz., that the oral system rightly applied can do more for deaf children of poor mental endowment than any silent system can do. The knowledge of language and the vocabularies possessed by the pupils in these silent classes appeared to me to be inferior to those of deaf children of similar mental power in purely oral schools such as our own. The humanizing effect of oral instruction and of oral expression is beyond question, and the mental and moral effect of the ability to utter even a few words vocally is of higher importance to the child himself than that of the ability to write and read hundreds of words would be. Until he can express himself as other people do, by voice, he feels cut off from humanity; but when he can say two or three words he becomes a man and a brother. The presence of silent classes and the use of the manual alphabet in oral schools for the deaf appear to me to be objectionable in every respect, and should not be tolerated. If, contrary to my opinion and experience and to that of many eminent authorities on the subject, there should be deaf children incapable of responding to proper oral treatment, these should be removed to a separate school and kept entirely apart from the oral pupils, especially outside of school hours, as is done at Manchester and elsewhere. I am afraid, however, that in some schools there is too great a tendency on the part of teachers, particularly in the earlier stages of oral instruction, to despair with regard to cases that present special difficulties, and that the temptation to get rid of such difficulties by removing the unfortunate children to the silent class is one that is ever present. In my own experience I have frequently met with cases of pupils, for some years disappointing from an oral point of view, becoming very satisfactory oral pupils.

In the European countries visited by me there is practically unanimity of opinion among experts as to the superiority of the oral system of instruction. Signor Ferreri, of Milan, one of the greatest living authorities on the subject of the education of the deaf, in discussing the question with me gave his opinion as follows: "With deaf children of feeble intellect not much can be attained under any system of instruction, but at least as much can be done orally as by any other system, and the uplifting mental and moral effect of oral expression is immensely superior to any other mode of expression." Herr Vatter, of Frankfurt, the doyen of the oral system in Germany, a teacher of world-wide celebrity and of wonderful skill, informed me that during the fifty-two years in which he had been labouring as an oral teacher he had not met with one case of a mentally sound deaf-mute that could not be efficiently educated by means of the pure oral system. In France this opinion is also held, and the brochure entitled "*La Parole et Les Sourds-muets de Faible Intelligence*," written by the distinguished professors of the National Institution at Paris, Messrs. Marichelle and Thollon, is a very able psychological study of the question, which I commend to your notice. In it the authors prove very conclusively that as a means of developing the mental powers of deaf children of weak intellect the oral method is indispensable.

The English schools are remarkably well planned and well equipped. The arrangement of the schoolrooms in the more modern schools is to be preferred to that of our own. There is a large central rectangular hall which is used for assembly, drill, lectures, &c. (In some of the day schools dinner is served to the pupils in it.) On each side of this hall are the class-rooms, each with a glass door opening off the hall. The headmaster from his desk in the hall can command a view of what is going on in each room.

In some of the schools, notably Stoke, Doncaster, Anerley, and Margate, open-air class-rooms are made use of during the summer months, and the teachers in these schools speak highly in their favour, and consider that they have a very beneficial effect on the general health of their pupils, and that consequently they promote the efficiency of their work.

Kindergarten materials and methods are freely made use of in the lower classes of most of the schools, and in some of the London County Council schools and in other schools I saw very good work of this kind being done. The Montessori appliances are in use in some of the schools, and are highly approved of. The particular merits of the Montessori system appeared to me to lie more in the spirit of the system than in its appliances. The latter, however, as a means of training and developing the senses are admirably selected. It was a great disappointment to me to be unable to see the system actually in operation at Rome. Owing to the Italian elections being held during the time I was in Rome the Italian schools were closed, and did not reopen until after I had sailed from Naples. However, what I saw of the system in England appealed to me much.