



JEW'S DEAF AND DUMB HOME  
NOTTINGHALL LANE, S.W.  
THE GARDEN FRONT.  
ALTERATIONS AND ADDITIONS BY EDWARD STOKES ARCHT.



## OUR OUTLYING COMMUNAL INSTITUTIONS. V.

### Some Notes on Recent Visits.

[BY A CYCLING CORRESPONDENT.]

#### JEW'S DEAF AND DUMB HOME.

"To instruct the deaf no art could ever reach,  
No care improve them and no wisdom teach."—*Lucretius*.

On the confines of Wandsworth Common, about four miles to the south-west of Hyde Park Corner, lies the pretty building of the Jews' Deaf and Dumb Home. This Institution was originally started with the assistance of the late Baroness Mayer de Rothschild, and was opened in the neighbourhood of Whitechapel in the year 1863 for the accommodation of three deaf and dumb children. As it grew in size it was successively removed to a small house in Barton Crescent, and to Walmer Road, Notting Hill. Eventually sufficient funds were obtained to provide for its increased requirements, and the present house, "The Grange," was purchased and opened for the reception of about fifty children in June, 1899.

I called one afternoon to visit the Institution, and was received by the cheery Matron, Mrs. Kutner. She bade me welcome, and I sat in her bright sitting-room until her husband, Mr. Kutner, the Director, was able to see me.

Mr. Kutner is a man of intelligence and wide interests. He has just celebrated the twenty-fifth anniversary of his connection with the Institution, though it has not been an uninterrupted course. About twenty years ago he left the Home and became senior teacher at the Old Trafford Deaf and Dumb Home in Manchester, where he remained twelve years, returning after that period to take up the position of Headmaster at Jews' Deaf and Dumb Home. In conversing with him I noticed his remarkably clear enunciation of speech which I take it must be the result of a long habit of careful utterance.

In the conduct of the Institution, which, at present, houses forty-three children (nineteen girls and twenty-four boys), Mr. Kutner has the assistance of four teachers and one probationer. Of the two assistant masters one has always been in "deaf work," as he laconically expressed it to me.

It appears that there is great difficulty in obtaining teachers for the deaf and dumb, and although it cannot be denied that the work necessitates a superlative amount of patience and mental strain,—not less on the part of the children than on that of the teachers, by the way,—still this should not deter young men and women of our community from being trained to what the last Report of the Committee refers to as "so lucrative, interesting and, above all, so humane a profession."

At whatever age a child enters the Institution (and I am told that children are eligible from the age of six) it takes from three to four years to teach him to read from the lips and to articulate, and constant care is necessary during this period to prevent him from falling back into the habit of communicating by gesture.

No "finger-language" is known at the Home. In my school days when boys used to prompt each other under the unsuspecting eye of the master, by means of finger-language, it was not generally known that any other language was taught to deaf mutes, and it was a revelation to me when I first visited the Jews' Deaf and Dumb Home many years ago to see how

much could be done with the children in teaching them to translate their thoughts into words.

Chatting on these subjects, I accompanied Mr. Kutner round the building and was shown the dormitory wing, where all the boys sleep together in one room, and the girls in another.

I thought it a pity that the electric light had not been installed in the Institution. It would have preserved its cleanliness and added to its comfort. Perhaps the £150, which I am told is required to provide it, will be found soon, as also about £500 for a swimming bath, which is much missed. In Notting Hill the Public Baths were quite near the Home, so that the boys could go and practise swimming. Here the baths are too far away, Mr. Kutner says; but surely the Committee should arrange that the boys and girls be sent to the baths occasionally, whatever the distance. They are sent to London for "Town Rambles," which are not nearly as useful, though pleasant enough.

I saw the Infirmary, which has three beds for girls and four for boys—a cottage block at the end of the garden—built by Mrs. James Storn, this year, in memory of her late husband, and the laundry, added also this year, where the linen of the Institution is washed, and where some of the girls assist. The grounds are of two acres in extent, and contain an open-air gymnasium, and there is a vegetable garden, tended by the gardener with the help of the older children, which produced enough last summer to suppress almost entirely the greengrocer's bill.

The boys and girls always learn, and occasionally play, together under supervision; but they each have their own playground.

The winter gymnasium and workshop are large and airy. In the former magic-lantern entertainments are given occasionally, and these, the annual sports, and the various excursions are provided for out of a fund of about £25 placed by private donors in the hands of Mr. Kutner.

In the workshop I saw some cabinet-work of better finish than any I have seen in any similar Institution. The boys have a special master to instruct them, and unlike normal boys are very patient and therefore produce better results. It is a fact that each boy when he leaves to be apprenticed at the legal age of 16 is already a fair mechanic, and after very little while in a shop or factory is equal in capacity to any apprentice of two or three years' standing.

In the refectory, which was formerly the billiard room, hangs a replica of the portrait of the Rev. I. Samuel which was presented to him after his successful and arduous labours in collecting funds for the purchase of the present building. Mr. Samuel has been the *deus ex machina* of the Home since its very foundation, and he must be proud to contemplate the present high position that the charity occupies in bringing it to which he has taken so important a part.

No doubt it is known that there are in existence day-schools for the instruction of the deaf and dumb under the regis of the School Boards—there are thirty to forty such centres—and it is a burning question amongst teachers whether these or Institutions do the more useful work.

From what I have gathered I should certainly think the latter, because more individual attention can be given where children are under continuous observation, as they are here, than otherwise, and because the grading of the children can be better effected in Institutions than in day-schools. The Board School have adopted a half-way measure in some cases by boarding out children who attend day-classes. Under this system a certain measure of supervision is exercised.

The condition for their entry as inmates into the Home is simply that the children shall be deaf and dumb, shall be poor, and shall be Jews. The Home holds a certificate for the admission of 31 boarders and 22 day scholars—the latter of any religious persuasion; but it seems little use has been made of this subsidiary provision. Outside the Jews' Deaf and Dumb Home it is not believed that more

than a dozen Jewish children are to be found in schools in any part of England. It has been conclusively proved, though perhaps the fact is not generally realised, that very few children are actually born deaf. There are instances, of course, and in the school there are two, both members of a family of nine children all born deaf, of parents who were congenitally the same. But in nearly every case the complete deafness has arisen from illness or accident in infancy. The deaf and dumb intermarry, and where the deafness is not congenital nearly always have normal offspring. It often happens that a deaf and dumb man marries a normal woman, but rarely does the opposite occur.

Every boy is, as I stated, apprenticed when he leaves the School, and Mr. Samuel S. Oppenheim undertakes the herculean task of finding the masters for the boys and supervising the lads during their term of apprenticeship. It is not difficult to find masters, apparently, but it were well if a higher class were available. The idea seems to be to select small shops, where it is supposed that the lad will have a better chance of learning his trade, but it is forgotten that in these days trades are so divided that in small shops only a minute part of the particular trade is practised, or mere slop-work. Better, therefore, would it probably be to put a lad in a large factory, where he would at least learn more.

I was told that since the school was opened nearly 200 children have been educated there. It is curious to note that in all deaf and dumb schools the boys outnumber the girls, but the reason for this is not very clear.

A blind and deaf girl was admitted into the Home this year, but though given a patient trial could not be retained, as there are no facilities at the disposal of the Institution for the special treatment which such a case demands. In reading this in the Report, one's memory goes back to the case of Laura Bridgeman, who was also born blind and deaf, but who was successfully taught through her acute sense of touch to communicate her thoughts by means of finger-language. This case is many times referred to by Darwin in his "Expression of the Emotions," and elsewhere, being quoted by him as evidence to prove that many of our emotions are expressed instinctively, and not as a result of imitation.

I endeavoured to obtain some information as to the present position of past inmates. So far as Mr. Kutner knows all are earning a living. One, Marcus Barnard, is a designer of wall-paper, and travels up and down the country selling his designs. He left the Home some twenty years ago. Another former pupil, Moses da Costa—a delicate boy—started as a cigar-maker, and now employs several men in Glasgow. He brought a sovereign with him the last time he came to the Home "for the poor deaf and dumb." So far as the girls are concerned, the same rooted objection to domestic service exists here as elsewhere. Of course it would only be practicable to employ them in the Home, where provision could be made for half-a-dozen girls, but no inducements will bring the parents to see the advantage of this, and as a consequence the Institution does not include any former inmates on its staff. There is one old pupil at Sir George Faudel-Phillips' embroidery factory doing well; another is a mattress-maker and another a button-holer, and so on. Mr. Kutner is in constant correspondence with old pupils, and last Purim twenty-five came to the Institution to join in the revels. They were smart-looking men and women he assured me.

Many visitors come to see the Home, including not a few would-be teachers, whose object is to watch the methods adopted. In the visitors' book, dating from 1868, I noticed the names of Dr. Symes Thompson, the late Dr. N. M. Adler, Sir Henry Thompson, Mr. Leopold de Rothschild and Professor F. Max Müller, each commending the work and ways of the Institution.

I wish that I could dilate on Mr. Kutner's methods of teaching the children or on the satisfactory Government Reports issued annually since the school was certified in 1894, but space does not permit of it.

I will only mention one other detail of interest. There is a notice-board in the schoolroom, on which are posted short letters from any child who can think of anything to write to interest the others. The collected letters are called very aptly the "School Newspaper," and I will give two samples:—

"Rosen has not returned to school yet, as her brother, Philip, has got the fever. I think he has gone to the hospital. I am very sorry for him. The girls are very sorry that Rosen has not returned. They miss her very much."—Jenny Defries.

"Last Saturday afternoon the girls saw a horse slip and fall down in the Northcote Road."—L. Merskey.

The Committee say in their Report that "they are confident that the Institution only requires to become better known to receive greater support." I trust that by these Notes I shall have helped in some small way to effect this better knowledge.

F. S. F.