

THE
JOURNAL OF LARYNGOLOGY,
RHINOLOGY, AND OTOLOGY.

Original Articles are accepted by the Editors of this Journal on the condition that they have not previously been published elsewhere.

Twenty-five reprints are allowed each author. If more are required it is requested that this be stated when the article is first forwarded to this Journal. Such extra reprints will be charged to the author.

Editorial Communications are to be addressed to "Editors of JOURNAL OF LARYNGOLOGY, care of Rebman, Limited, 129, Shaftesbury Avenue, Cambridge Circus, London, W.C."

DEAF-MUTISM.

THE combined meeting of the Otological Society of the United Kingdom and the National Association of Teachers of the Deaf which is to take place in London on July 8, on the occasion of the Biennial Conference of the latter body, should be an occasion of more than ordinary interest. Until recently the deaf-mute has been left altogether to the teacher, and certainly great credit is due to the men who, without outside help, carried on the education of the deaf in Britain for nearly one hundred years. A Royal Commission then considered the case of the deaf-mute, and made a set of recommendations, of which, however, only a part became embodied in an Act of Parliament. Teachers now hope that State encouragement in the work of educating the deaf will increase, and that steps will soon be taken to insure that every deaf child will get the best education he is capable of acquiring. If the State has neglected the deaf-mute, the medical profession, in this country at least, has been no less guilty, and the present combined meeting will, we hope, be but the first of a series of co-operative efforts in the interests of the deaf.

The subject chosen for discussion, "The Methods of Dealing with and Developing the Residual Hearing-power and Speech of the Deaf," is but one of the several departments of the study of deaf-mutism which teachers and otologists have in common. It is, however, one of the most important, and quite sufficient in itself to engage the attention of the two societies for a single

sitting. The limits of the subject must be clearly recognised by both teachers and otologists.

No discussion on the merits of the various methods of teaching deaf-mutes in general should be undertaken. The finger method need not be pitted against the oral method, nor the combined method against both. The class of the deaf in whose interests the meeting is to be held are, in a sense, a class by themselves. They have been divided into the semi-deaf and the semi-mute. Although for practical purposes it may be best in the meantime to educate them in the institutions for the deaf and dumb, it would be easy to adduce reasons for considering their case along with that of the child with defective hearing in the ordinary school rather than along with the deaf-mute proper, and it is not impossible that, with better classification and more extended educational equipment, the semi-mute and the semi-deaf may soon be removed from the schools for the deaf and dumb altogether. The class is comparatively small, containing, perhaps, not more than 8 or 10 per cent. of the deaf now in the schools for deaf and dumb children; but if to these were added the many children who are being only imperfectly educated in the ordinary schools, it would be a large one. Otologists will approach the subject of the education of the semi-deaf and semi-mute with a much fuller knowledge of the physiology of hearing and of the pathology of deafness than has been in the possession of their predecessors. During the past twenty years no department of practice has undergone a greater revolution than that of aural diagnosis and treatment. Too much must not, however, be expected from this change, for the revolution above referred to has been influential in the saving of life and the prevention of deafness rather than in the restoration of lost hearing. On the other hand, teachers must consider suggestions emerging from the scientific study of the deaf-mute with an open mind. They must take things as they are.

Many teachers admit that with unlimited resources special methods might be adopted with advantage, which in the present unsatisfactory state of education are impossible. Both sections of the conference must have in view the improvement of present methods, even if such improvement should greatly add to the cost of educating the deaf.

We expect nothing but good from this combined meeting. We know that otologists are fully alive to the need for studying the case of the deaf-mute, and we believe that teachers will not only accept, but cordially welcome their help. The meeting has every prospect of success.