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Dedicated to the Interests of the Deaf of Australia

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Editorial.

..Wishful Dreaming..

We do not know how it happened, but we dreamt that the Government had appointed a Royal Commission to find out if there was any justification for the complaints made against the hearing administration of the Victorian Society during many years past; whether the administration kept its pledges to the Government and the public re the training of the impotent deaf (the feeble-minded, and the intelligent unemployed adult deaf); to inquire into the reason for the debt on the Society's property; into the lag of the work for the welfare care of the deaf, and why, although attempts have been made to improve the lot of the other special classes of the community, nothing has been done for the deaf.

We found ourselves in some sort of Court House. There was a Judge. A member of the board of management was in the witness box, and Counsel was cross-examining him.

Counsel: (reading from the Society's Annual Report for 1931) "The deaf community, mainly of the artisan class, includes all sorts and conditions, and embraces all religious beliefs, all degrees of mentality and morality - the good, indifferent and viciously bad. With few exceptions, they are of the artisan class, and the main avenue to mental development - hearing - being closed, it is not surprising that they are not as developed intellectually as normal people".

Counsel: (to board member) Did you write that?

Board member: No.

Counsel: Is that your name at the foot of the report?

Yes.

Did you write the report?

No.

Who wrote it, then?

Mr. Abraham, the Superintendent.

Did you see the statement before you signed the report?

Yes.

You will agree, I suppose, that making public statements like that "just isn't done"?

Yes.

"I am aware that many object to the severity of my language; but is there not cause for severity? I will be as harsh as Truth, and as uncompromising as Justice. On this subject I do not wish to think, or speak, or write, with moderation. No! No! Tell a man whose house is on fire to give a moderate alarm; tell the mother to gradually extricate her babe from the fire into which it has fallen—but urge me not to use moderation in a cause like the present. I am in earnest—I will not equivocate—I will not excuse—I will not retreat a single inch—and I will be heard. The apathy of the people is enough to make every statue leap from its pedestal and hasten the resurrection of the dead."

—From William Lloyd Garrison's "The Liberator" (1831)

"The policy of collecting money from a generous public merely to pay doles to keep the Deaf and Dumb in idleness cannot be too strongly condemned. A policy that aims at general, as well as vocational, education, with the object of banishing unemployment and providing opportunities to the Deaf to have homes of their own, has everything to recommend it. The public of Queensland has shown repeatedly its endorsement of this policy of the Queensland Adult Deaf and Dumb Mission."

—From the Mission's Annual Report 1932

2.

Do you believe that working class people are less intelligent than the professional and commercial classes?

No.

Then how came you to sign a statement that you would not make yourself and with which you do not agree?

No answer.

Mr. Abraham claimed to have had mesmeric powers, did he hypnotise you and make you sign the report?

No.

I take it that every member of the board is responsible for the statements that appear in the report?

Yes.

And the Patrons, too?

I suppose so.

The only Patrons of the Society are the Governor and the Lord Mayor, are they not?

Yes.

You will admit that under no circumstances could the Governor and the Lord Mayor allow their names to be associated with such a statement?

Yes.

Yet you went behind their backs and made them partially responsible for it?

Do you know that both the Governor and the Lord Mayor of the period have repudiated any responsibility for the statement?

No.

Well, we have evidence to prove that they have.

A deaf man named Bourke brought the statement in the report under your personal notice, did he not?

Board Member: (frowning) Yes.

Counsel: You do not like him?

I regard him as a nuisance.

Why?

Because he is always writing to the public and making complaints about the Board and the Superintendent.

3.

Is it not rather because he has a bad habit of proving your irresponsibility out of your own mouths?

If that jibe at the working class had appeared in the Press you will admit that there would have been an outcry of indignation from all the workers of Victoria?

I suppose there would.

The Trades Hall Council would have had something very caustic to say about it, and all the Unions would have sent you resolutions of protest?

I suppose so.

Do you know that the deaf and dumb get very resentful and indignant at people traducing them and passing remarks about their mentality?

I believe that they do.

With regard to that statement, did the Deaf Committee ask for the dismissal of the Superintendent and the resignation of the Board?

No.

Did it make any sort of protest at all?

No.

Then how can you claim, as you do in the Annual Report for 1941, that "the Deaf Committee is largely responsible above all for the conduct and good name of all deaf and dumb folk"?

Counsel: Is it not a fact that Bourke was the only one who made any sort of protest against that statement?

I do not know.

Did you read an article inspired by Mr. Abraham that appeared in "The Sun" of 25th September, 1937, in which it is stated the deaf and dumb "are all children whether 16 or 60"?

It was brought under my notice.

Do you know that it was widely read and discussed amongst the deaf and dumb, and that they deeply resented that and many other statements the --- article contained?

I heard rumours to that effect.

Did any of them complain to the Board about it?

One of them did.

Was he a member of the Deaf Committee?

No.

Then how can you claim that the Committee "are responsible for the good name of all deaf folk"?

Do you know that Bourke again was the only one to protest, and that he wrote a special pamphlet in answer to the article?

Yes.

Did he send you a copy?

He sent a copy to each of us.

Is it not a fact that the Board has refused Bourke the right to be a member and a subscriber to the Society?

The Chairman: What!

Counsel: Yes, he sent a donation of 10/- to the Society, but the Board refused to accept it and returned the money to him, thereby denying him the right of membership.

The Chairman: Are we in Germany? Is not that what the Nazis would do if a Jew sent them a donation to their funds?

Myself: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Counsel: Not only did the Board refuse Bourke the right to be a member of the Society, but because he dared to stand out against these men trifling with the public, the Board and the Superintendent hunted him down and hounded him out of the Society. They expelled him from headquarters thereby denying him the right to the companionship of his deaf friends, and when he threatened them with a Supreme Court action if they did not withdraw their embargo, they climbed down.

The Chairman: Well, if Bourke has proved the charges he has made against the Board and the Superintendent half as well as the irresponsibility of the Board has been proved in the matter of this statement, I think the persecution of the man is the rankest injustice.

Myself: Thank you again, Mr. Chairman. You seem to be the only reasonable man in Victoria in these times.

The Chairman: Orderly, tell that man that while I appreciate what he says, he is not to disturb the Court with his remarks.

The Orderly walked towards me and touched me on the shoulder - then I woke up. Someone was shaking me by the shoulder and saying, "Here, wake up! You have been talking in your sleep. It is 7.15, and if you don't hurry you'll be late for work".

Though practically every member of the present Deaf Committee is hostile to us, we are not attacking them. We do not blame them for not protecting their mates and standing up for their cause and their class. That they have not done so all these years is due to Mr. Abraham alone. He made the Committee what it is. If you were to ask its members what are the objects of the

Society, what is their duty to their mates, and what they must do to help the deaf in the right way, they could not answer you because they have never been taught.

It was Mr. Abraham's duty to teach the deaf that the only protection the deaf could look to was the protection of the deaf themselves; that the happiness, progress and good name of the deaf and their Society lay in their own hands; that the protection and treatment of their weaker brethren depended upon them; and that if they wanted to save themselves from exploitation and the many disabilities put upon them by the hearing they would have to find a means of making their voice heard.

Mr. Abraham, however, did not want them to know all this. He wanted things so that everything must come through him, so he made the deaf as helpless and dependent upon him as possible. He made them believe that it was their duty to follow, uphold and support him in everything he did. He therefore proceeded to create a Deaf Committee that would be controlled by himself, and this is how he did it:-

Like all imposters he had pleasant manners and taking ways, and a few of the deaf girls thought more of him than they did of their Society or their mates. With them it was Mr. Abraham first and last and all the time and Mr. Abraham right or wrong. To them he was a sort of king who could do no wrong, so he proceeded to use the power such men as he possess over the deaf and dumb to get these girls under his influence.

He had the right to appoint and dismiss all the employees of the Society deaf or hearing.

He also had the right to grant or refuse unemployment relief to the out-of-work. With this power over them they came to see in time that it was to their advantage to keep on his side. He was perpetually scheming to get as many as possible of the deaf into his power or under his influence. By this means he formed around himself a small section known as "the Abraham clique", and proceeded to destroy amongst the deaf community one of the most sacred things in communal life -- comradeship. This clique forms a sort of public opinion in the Society. Around this clique gathered a good number who, although they had lost all respect for Mr. Abraham, for the sake of peace, floated with the tide. It is this section that controls elections to the Deaf Committee.

Mr. Abraham therefore induced as many as possible of those under his influence, as many as possible of the employees of the Society, and as many as possible of those on unemployment relief, to stand for election to the Deaf Committee, and gave himself a permanent seat thereon as Chairman. For all practical purposes he was the Deaf Committee.

All this was done to have the Committee as weak and as pliable as possible in order to bend it to his will. He made the public believe that the Committee was elected by and represented the deaf community of Victoria, when in actual fact he practically elected and entirely controlled it. It was merely his tool, for he imposed his will on it, and could make it do and say what he liked. It had no voice of its own. If it spoke at all it spoke through Mr. Abraham. He made it the worst enemy of the deaf

by using it as a tool to fool the public and to discredit those of us who tried to tell the State the truth about real conditions in the Society.

At one time some of the members were strong and were not afraid to stand up to and speak their minds to him, but he gradually got rid of them and made the Committee weaker and weaker until within the few years previous to his death not one of them would dare to stand up to him.

He was continually casting slurs on their mentality, telling deliberate lies about them, their Society and their cause. They (the deaf) would resent it and grumble about it amongst themselves, but not only did the Deaf Committee not have the moral courage to protest, but it was constantly singing his praises.

He taught the deaf that anyone writing to the Press or the public about real conditions in the Society, or anyone standing our against him and his ways was disloyal to the Society, and he would poison the minds of his clique against these, his idea being to make things at headquarters as unpleasant, uncomfortable and as unhappy as possible. The clique did not consider the rights and wrongs of the matter or whether what Mr. Abraham told them against their fellows was true or not. It just believed what he told it, and the clique would do to their mates what it dared not do to Mr. Abraham. Its members would cold shoulder you, spurn your friendliness, and refuse to speak to you. And the Deaf Committee would not be above insulting and humiliating you at Mr. Abraham's bidding, when, if they were doing their duty to their mates, they should be on your side.

By these means they have driven out of the Society all those deaf who might have helped them to put the Society's house in order, get it out of the chaotic state in which Mr. Abraham has left it, bring peace and harmony into the movement once more, and to try and find means to better the lot of the deaf generally.

We do not mean to convey the idea that the Deaf Committee take no interest in their Society. They do, but they do not protect their weaker brethren nor take any interest in the real welfare of their mates because they have never been taught. For instance, the only time we have known a Deaf Committee to trouble itself about protecting their weaker brethren at the farm was at the instigation of Mr. Abraham, and he only did it to annoy, insult and humiliate a new manager that had taken his place there.

Many members of the Deaf Committee ask nothing of the Society but the right to serve it, and sacrifice their leisure to look after the domestic side of the work at headquarters. Mr. Abraham led them astray and mis-directed their usefulness and their enthusiasm.

The present Deaf Committee does not know what it wants nor whom it serves. It is making no attempt to find a way to prevent a recurrence of the unhappy conditions that prevailed in the Society under Mr. Abraham. It has no ambition to try and better the lot of its fellows, nor to find a remedy for the miserable, hopeless, worried and useless lives that has been the lot (including a few members of the Committee itself) of so many of its fellows during the past forty years. This is not its fault. The deaf

community of Victoria is one of which any nation might be proud. Lack of proper leadership is the trouble. There is no one to whom they can look for inspiration and encourage them to strive for better and higher things.

The Board has made Mr. Abraham's lady secretary Acting Superintendent. She just continues the Abraham system and the Abraham methods. The Society is without policy or plan, and just drifting along in the old way.

If you hearing people want to help the adult deaf in the right way, you must see to it that no man is allowed to lead them astray again. You will only make them the worst enemies of their mates.

March 24th, 1941.

Some Balance Sheets.

-New South Wales Society.-

The balance sheet as at June 30th shows that receipts from all sources amounted to £9,053.

Expenditure amounted to £7,631, leaving a balance of £1,421. Receipts from donations, subscriptions and efforts amounted to £8,753. Salaries to staff and commissions to collectors absorbed £2,446. Well over £1,300 was distributed to needy cases, and the hostel served 20,000 meals and provided 5,000 beds.

Also

-The South Mission-

The Mission balance sheet as at 30th September shows that receipts from all sources (for the Mission) amounted to £3,453.

Expenditure amounted to £2,942, leaving a balance of £511. Receipts from subscription and donations amounted to £2,648. Salaries to staff and commissions to collectors absorbed £1,433. £585 was distributed to needy cases.

-The Farm and Home-

Receipts from all sources for the farm amounted to £4,006.

Expenditure (exclusive of improvements) amounted to £3,917, leaving a balance of £89. Salaries and wages absorbed £966.

The farm purchased stock to the value of £1,856, fattened them for market, and obtained for them, together with other produce, £3,216, making a profit of £360.

£384 were spent on improvements.

-The Victorian Society-

The Society's balance sheet as at 30th June 1940 shows that subscriptions, donations and collections from the deaf amounted to £4,742.

Expenditure amounted to £4,337, leaving a balance of £364. Salaries to staff and commissions to collectors absorbed £2,922. Only £406 was distributed to needy cases.

-The Farm and Home-

Receipts from all sources for the farm (including pensions for the inmates and a Government grant of £300) amounted to £2,011.

Expenditure amounted to £2,370, leaving a debit balance of £359. On a wages bill of £914 it produced not one penny's worth of anything nor effected one penny's worth of improvements. And this from a hearing administration that kept telling the public over and over again that it would do its best to make something out of the place!

-Social Security for the Deaf-

We would like to draw the reader's attention to Mr. T. L. Gardner's letter on this subject on page 9. It is pertinent and timely. This has been our ideal too, and what we principally strive for. His remarks and criticism will apply with equal force to Australia.

-We Thank You-

We wish to thank the New South Wales Society and the South Australian Mission for the courtesy in sending us their annual reports.

...FROM HERE, THERE AND EVERYWHERE...

Australia, Please Note!

"Bill 9221, U.S.A., Bureau for the Welfare of the Deaf in the U.S.A. Dept. of Labour:-

- "(i) To collect, tabulate and make public statistics pertaining to the Deaf, their employment and welfare;
- "(ii) To ascertain what fields of employment are available to the Deaf and to endeavour to create such new fields of employment;
- "(iii) To acquaint employers in private industry with the special capabilities of the deaf and to encourage the employment of the deaf on equal basis with the hearing;
- "(iv) To co-operate with the heads of the various departments of the Government and with the Civil Service Commission and States and political sub-divisions thereof in expanding the opportunity for the employment of the deaf in public service, and
- "(v) To co-operate with any public or private agency in the vocational rehabilitation of the deaf.

"To follow through I would recommend to the new administration that a special committee on Social Welfare legislation be appointed to bring the matter to a successful conclusion in the interest of the common good as well as common justice.

"This Bill is prepared for U.S.A. Deaf by Senator Pepper and others".

- "The New York Journal of the Deaf", Aug. 1st, 1940.

Difficulty of Placement of the Deaf.

"At the age of 16 the deaf child had to enter into competition with the hearing world, and he had to find a job. That was not an easy task. A perfectly normal child in a similar position went to the Juvenile Employment Department and if he is fitted for the particular work he wants he is placed in the job. But the deaf child finds himself in a different position. He went to the Bureau and stood there with eyes and mouth open, waiting for somebody to do something for him because he could not make himself understood. Up to a few years ago there was nobody to do it, and then the Mission for the Deaf and Dumb stepped in. Hitherto the Mission had looked after the social and religious welfare of the deaf and dumb, but now the Missioner, knowing that the boy had been training at school in a certain occupation, helped him to secure employment".

- Extract from an address to Dudley Rotarians by Mr. L. Crellin. (With acknowledgment to "The British Deaf Times").

"Social Security for the Deaf".

"When Mr. Ernest Bevin spoke on the subject of Social Security, and put it forward as a goal to be striven for, we felt that he had provided a remarkable slogan to remind us of the necessity for planning and thinking of the reconstructive period that we are all looking forward to.

"As deaf citizens we are naturally as acutely interested in reconstruction as anyone. We are, or should be, preoccupied with its possibilities and problems as any other group in industry, the professions, or that of a social character.

"Possibly Social Security has an even deeper meaning for deaf people in that so many of us have had bitter reason to recognise its non-existence in the past. Let us consider it as Utopian as we like, so long as we have a clear idea of some of the things we mean by it, and of the means whereby we hope to attain it.

"Very few of our older citizens have not vivid memories of some social injustice arising out of some one or other anti-social act.

"What then in deaf affairs should we aim for? As I see it an important role is that of providing evidence of failures to work towards, or to co-operate in Social Security.

"The various and diverse bodies who urge the claims of the deaf upon the public officials, and those engaged in the administration of local government should each ask themselves if they share any responsibility in retarding the cause of the deaf towards greater social security through any failure to co-operate. An honest answer would be that they do. What is urgently needed is a complete co-operative body. That is the first and most important step. Action towards this end should be taken at once and --- carried out with tact and perseverance, and, above all, without personal animus. We cannot afford to overlook the fact that hitherto our collective social conscience towards the deaf has been by no means overactive."

"T. L. Gardner".
(With acknowledgments to The Deaf Quarterly News).

Deaf Mutes Anxious to Join A.I.F.

Rejected in Writing.

Two deaf mutes were among the first volunteers when the Melbourne Town Hall Recruiting Depot opened yesterday afternoon.

They wrote on a piece of paper, 'We want to serve our country'.

The recruiting officer wrote back, 'Bad luck!', and the two men, well dressed and of good physique, walked away very dejectedly.

- The Melbourne "Sun", March 24th, 1941.

... ..

THE STORY OF A DEAF DRUDGE

by

J. P. BOURKE.

(Second (revised) Edition).

Author of "The After-School Problems of the Deaf and Dumb",
"Benevolence and the Banned Baby",
"Fiction and Fact" - A Pamphlet.

"... Added to which was the fact that John was deaf, and therefore was obviously intended to be a hewer of wood and a drawer of water for his inferiors."

- From the Rev. A.H. Payne's "King Silence".

No. 1 Acre Place, Malvern, S.E.4.
Victoria. Australia.

Abraham's Treatment of the Farm Inmates.

"Now, the fact was, that both Mr. and Mrs. Squeers held and considered that their business and profession was to get as much from every boy as could by possibility be screwed out of him. On this point they were both agreed, and behaved in unison accordingly. The only difference between them was, that Mrs. Squeers waged war against the enemy openly and fearlessly, and that -- Squeers covered his rascality, even at home, with a spice of his habitual deceit; as if he really had a notion of some day or other being able to take himself in, and persuade his own mind that he was a very good fellow."

- Dickens' Nicholas Nickleby.

Abraham's management of the Deaf Mutes Farm at Blackburn was a story of callous and heartless exploitation of the most defenceless and helpless people in the community - the impotent deaf (the feeble-minded, and the unwanted and homeless intelligent unemployed deaf).

There was nothing new in his exploitation of them. The deaf and dumb have been the world's drudges all down the centuries. People in every country in the world had exploited them from time immemorial. The difference between them and Abraham was that he was paid a handsome salary to keep them out of the hands of the exploiter.

As already explained, his whole purpose in establishing the farm was to enable him to acquire a home and plenty of servants for nothing; to make a little more money out of the Society; to use the place to fool the Board and the public generally, and to make it a show place to impress visitors and -- those whose help he needed. It was also "his little place in the country", his toy and his plaything.

The Abrahams were a poorly-educated, commonplace family, and therefore, were without high culture and without the desires and inclination that foster art and learning. When you got to know them properly, you came to see that no one despised the deaf and dumb or had a greater contempt for them than they had.

When building up the farm, Abraham's need was for good, cheap and docile deaf labour, and he proceeded to make the place a social rubbish-dump. The mentally deficient, the unwanted, the homeless unemployed, men of education and refinement who through deafness had drifted from higher levels, the cultured, the coarse, the timid, the bully, the quiet, the noisy, the ex-prisoner, the ne'er-do-well and the drunken waster were all mixed up without discrimination at Blackburn and "from each and all were exacted labour of the hardest and most servile kind of which drudgery is chiefly required".

Victoria handed these people over to him and gave him unlimited power to do what he liked with and to work and treat them as he pleased, so he proceeded to make the place a hell of toil, of fear, of poverty and of drudgery, and to exploit the farm and everybody on it openly and callously and without pity, shame or remorse. He used the place as if he owned it, and he used the inmates and employees as if they were his servants.

Those who commended him for establishing the farm did not know that he condemned many of us to the sort of life that everybody who is really interested in the deaf tries to help them out of, a life for them that he himself pretended to deplore - "the life of a common drudge". He treated everybody there in the way he told the public it was wrong to treat them and in the way he was paid a good salary not to treat them.

"The second (duty of a biographer), no less surely, is to maintain his own freedom of spirit. It is not his business to be complimentary; it is his business to lay bare the facts of the case, as he understands them. That is what I have aimed at in this book - to lay bare the facts of some cases as I understand them, dispassionately, impartially, and without ulterior intentions. To quote the words of a Master - 'I do not criticise, I do not judge, I expose!'".

- From the Preface to Lytton Strachey's "Eminent Victorians".

The Story of a Deaf Drudge.

The school for the deaf had done its best to lift the deaf above charity, poverty and drudgery, and Abraham proceeded to drag them all back again. He pauperised and degraded us all and made it a crime to be deaf.

By 1909 (the opening of the farm), he had gained complete possession of the Society, had elected a Board that supported him in everything that he did. He had worked things out in such a way that no one had the power to dismiss him. He was therefore his own master and able to do as he liked.

There were two sections at the farm, the feeble-minded (inmates) and the unwanted and intelligent unemployed deaf (employes).

The thing Abraham loved best, next to himself, was money. He thought and talked of nothing else all his life. His whole purpose was to get as much money out of the public as he could with as little trouble to himself as possible. He could not make or get enough of it. The only way he could make and get it was through the Society. He understood, however, that the public knew very little about the real needs of the deaf and took no interest in them and that this did not tend to bring in subscriptions to the amount he wanted. So he was always scheming to keep the subject of the deaf before the public by every means in his power, and he became a past-master in the art of using everything and everybody for propoganda and publicity purposes.

Loving money as he did, he hated parting with it even when it was the right of the deaf to receive it (i.e. either as wages or unemployment relief). He was out to get the cheapest labour he could obtain, and if he could get someone else to pay for this labour the arrangement would suit him nicely, so he forced as many as possible of those at Blackburn to get the invalid pension from the Commonwealth Government even when they had no right to it.

All the inmates therefore got this invalid pension. This was taken away from them and went towards their upkeep. The women inmates did (and still do) all the domestic work on the place, except the cooking. The men inmates did the work of ordinary garden laborers and farm hands. This was what Abraham called training them. A small portion of the inmates' pension was doled out to them in sums ranging from one and sixpence (1/6d.) to five shillings (5/-) a week, according to their usefulness. This was equivalent to the people of Victoria farming out these inmates to the Abraham family and paying this family from 15/- to 18/6d. (when pensions were £1 per week) per week for the privilege of using them as their servants.

The inmates were expected to buy all their clothes and other necessities out of the doles he gave them. Abraham gave us all (inmates as well as employes) other people's cast-off clothing from time to time, so that in our working clothes we looked like a lot of tramps. He remarked once on the grubbiness of my clothes. I said, "Yes, poverty in all its glory". He got upset, for he was capable of making the public believe that we all worked in dinner suits and frock coats and toppers.

None of the women inmates were feeble-minded. They were merely the rejects of the world and unwanted. Some of them were good workers and worth £1 a week. Not only did Abraham pay them nothing, but he made them pay him 17/6d. (i.e. out of their pensions) for the right to work for him. Deaf housewives who visited the farm on occasion got a shock to see the heavy work that the --- Abrahams made these unwanted women do. One of them has a habit of telling you that she has to do a great amount of work, and of spreading out her toil-worn and calloused hands and saying, "Look at my hands".

Some of the men inmates, like the women, were also good workers and first-class in special branches of work, as, for instance, flower-picking and spade work. They could run rings round us more intelligent deaf (myself included), and we used to feel ashamed of ourselves when digging alongside them to find that they could beat us easily.

Most of the intelligent deaf started on 5/- a week. If Abraham liked you and you were a good worker, he increased it to 10/- or 15/- a week. A few received £1 a week. He thought this a munificent sum for a deaf worker.

We all worked twelve and a half days a fortnight. He gave us Saturday afternoon off, but divided us into equal batches. Half of us had to remain on duty on one Saturday afternoon and most of Sunday every fortnight. He made us work on public holidays. The hours of work were from 7 a.m. till 5 p.m. with three quarters of an hour off for breakfast and an hour off for dinner.

He promised, and kept promising, that he would make the place pay, but he had no intention of making it pay. His whole aim was to live there in ease and luxury and with as little trouble to himself as possible, and to get as much pleasure out of the farm as he could. He had never had any experience of agricultural work of any sort, and no one demanded that he should make it pay. It was merely a sink down which thousands and thousands of pounds of public money was thrown. His only fear was that his Board would worry him if he spent too much of the Society's funds on the place. His whole aim, therefore, was to keep down expenses, without hurting his selfishness, and he made us pay a terrible price for it.

He drove a very hard bargain with and exacted his pound of flesh from us all, and never mind how hard we worked or what merit or capacity we showed or how diligent and industrious we were, we could not hope to better our lot under him. It could not even win us a little butter on our bread, for he never gave it to us, except as a special favour on Xmas Day and New Year's Day.

The following is a sample of how he worked and used the inmates:-

G.W., a pensioned inmate getting 2/6d. a week, was about thirty years old at his death. He was a thin, weak man with some chest complaint. He was principal flower-picker. He had charge of the flower shed as well, his duty being to put the cut flowers in vessels of water. He had to be out in all weathers. I have seen him out in the pouring rain in a sopping wet overcoat. He seldom finished his work in the flower shed before 8 or 8.30 at night, after being on duty since 7 a.m. This happened night after night. Everyone on the place was a witness to it. He sometimes, on very hot days, to serve some whim of Abraham's, had to be out picking flowers at 5.30 or 6 a.m. My work sometimes brought me out at this hour and I saw this for myself.

About fifteen days before his death, W. had acted as guide to one of the blind deaf men who had been on a visit to friends. Coming home by train late at night, leading the blind man, W. was so ill and weak that he had to stop and rest every few minutes. The blind man asked W. what was the matter? He told him he had a pain in his side. From Blackburn Station to the farm is an easy walk of twenty minutes to an average person. It took W. over an hour on this particular night.

The blind man, on arriving at the farm, knocked up Abraham and informed him of the serious state W. was in. The following morning Mrs. Abraham demanded an explanation from the blind man as to his reason for disturbing them so late at night. He answered that he had only done his duty. Mrs. Abraham said that there was nothing wrong with W., that he was merely suffering from Asthma.

The Story of a Deaf Drudge.

W. went about his work as usual next day, but was so weak and ill that he fell down again and again. It was only then that the Abraham's found that he was really ill. He was sent to a public hospital. Eleven days after leaving the farm he was dead.

Abraham was a very insulting fellow. He made fear the principle of his management, and having been given unlimited power over weak and helpless men who had no protection against him, he came out in his true colours as an arrogant and insulting bully, but cloaked it all with a plausibility and a pretended kindness that deceived the State for forty years.

He would neglect, overwork and exasperate us all with his bad treatment and soured our tempers thereby, and when we resented it and got out of hand he would make us pay for it by heaping scorn and contempt upon us.

To those of us who could take care of ourselves, it was his custom to take advantage of our helplessness in getting other work, to snarl at, browbeat and tell us to clear out and get another job. I got a shock the first time he broke out at me in his coarse, arrogant and insulting way.

I was told, though I never saw him do it, that he punched and slapped the faces of the inmates on occasion, but I have seen both him and the deaf overseer, whom he put in charge of us, knock the inmates about.

He referred to the farm by various names, one being "the Society's Garden of Eden", but in actual fact it was a mixture of a workhouse and a Dotheboy's Hall. I could draw a parallel between Squeers and his wife and Abraham and his wife. Here is a parallel scene between Dotheboy's Hall and the farm:-

Because he had been the first person to say a kind word to him, the poor drudge Smike had clung to Nicholas Nickleby. Nicholas, however, worried at the injustices, cruelty and brutality that went on under Squeers, had hinted to poor Smike that he (Nicholas) might in desperation be driven to leave, and Smike had run away.

Squeers, however, had caught Smike and brought him back and had assembled Nicholas and the entire school in order to witness the flogging of Smike.

"Squeers caught Smike firmly in his grip, one desperate cut had fallen on his body - he was wincing from the lash and uttering a cry of pain - it was raised again, and again about to fall - when Nicholas suddenly starting up cried 'Stop!' in a voice that made the rafters ring.

'Who cried stop?' said Squeers, turning savagely round.

'I', said Nicholas, stepping forward. 'This must not go on!'

'Must not go on!' cried Squeers.

'No!' thundered Nicholas. 'I say must not', repeated Nicholas, 'shall not. I will prevent it! You have disregarded all my quiet interference in the miserable lad's behalf', said Nicholas; 'you have returned no answer to the letter in which I begged forgiveness for him, and offered to be responsible that he would remain quietly here. Don't blame me for this public interference. You have brought it upon yourself, not I!'

'Sit down, beggar!' screamed Squeers, almost beside himself with rage, and seizing Smike as he spoke.

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'Wretch', rejoined Nicholas, fiercely, 'touch him at your peril! I will not stand by, and see it done. My blood is up, and I have the strength of ten such men as you. Look to yourself, for by Heaven I will not spare you if you drive me on.'

'Stand back', said Squeers, brandishing his weapon.

'I have a long series of insults to avenge', said Nicholas, flushed with passion, 'and my indignation is aggravated by the dastardly cruelties practised on helpless infancy in this foul den. Have a care, for if you do raise the devil within me, the consequences shall fall heavily upon your own head!'

"He had scarcely spoken, when Squeers, in a violent outbreak of wrath, and with a cry like the howl of a wild beast, spat upon him, and struck him a blow across the face with his instrument of torture. Smarting with the agony of the blow, and concentrating into that one moment all his feelings of rage, scorn and indignation, Nicholas sprang upon him, wrested the weapon from his hand, and pinning him by the throat, beat the ruffian till he roared for mercy."

Amongst the inmates at the farm was a lad named S. He could not be educated. He had a habit (which he could not help) of placing his hand to his mouth and giving a yell. He had not intelligence enough to know that it annoyed anyone. Abraham, who hated noise, took a violent dislike to S. He came into the dining-room one day in a towering passion just as we sat down to a meal. I had my back to S. at the time, but I noticed everyone looking in his direction. I am almost sure that Abraham banged S. about the head, but I cannot swear to it. When I turned round, S. was crouching over the table and Abraham was standing over him in a fury. The lad was staring up at Abraham with a look of fear on his face. He ended up by taking S. by his coat collar and dragging him out of the room. I would like to emphasise that S. was not doing anything wrong. He was doing something that he could not help.

Had I interfered, this, very likely, is what would have happened:-

Myself: "Here, leave him alone, you".

Abraham: "Who said leave him alone?"

Me: "I did".

Abraham: "Clear out, you vile hound!"

It was his custom if we dared to show enough spirit to resent his contempt, insults and tyranny, to snarl at us and tell us to "clear out". And he once did call me "a vile hound".

I never thought to interfere.

By such methods as these, he had brutalised the whole farm, and we took that kind of treatment as a matter of course and as one of the penalties we paid for our deafness.

The deaf subordinates at the farm took their cue from Abraham and knocked their fellows about. We who had to take refuge there soon came to see that if we wanted peace we would have to learn to look after ourselves, for bullying went on from top to bottom.

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The supervision of the inmates was very lax. Abraham made no attempt to discipline those there and to teach them the value of good manners and good order. He only wanted our work and did not want to be bothered with us in our leisure hours more than he could help. He neglected the inmates and left them to fend for themselves by placing the deaf in charge of the deaf, men without tact who kept order by punching and knocking the unruly about. It saved him and his family a lot of work, time and bother. The deaf overseer whom he placed over us is a rough unpolished fellow and a notorious bully. He boasted about and was proud of the fact that everybody on the place was afraid of him. Practically everyone who passed through the farm complained about him.

The reader will say that such things are not allowed in British communities, and will want to know why we did not complain about them. The answer is that we took all this as a matter of course and as one of the penalties we paid for our deafness. We never thought to complain and we would not have known whom to complain to, even if we had had the courage to do so. I know now that the Board was there to control Abraham and to see that he did not use us all in the way I have tried to describe above, but to serve his own ends he was perpetually warning us against his terrible Board. I was to find when I got to know them properly that they were his friends, not ours. If I had complained, the others would have been too timid to back me up, and the Board would have believed Abraham and not me. They would have behaved like the Board of Guardians did when Oliver Twist was brought before them in order to be got rid of for "the impious and profane offence of asking for more" ("I hope", stammered Mr. Limbkins, (to the magistrates who refused to sanction the indentures binding Oliver to a chimney-sweeper) "I hope the magistrates will not form the opinion that the authorities have been guilty of any improper conduct, on the unsupported testimony of a mere child"). It would only have ended in his turning me out of the farm; but, as I have stated above, I never thought to complain, and, as I was to learn by bitter experience later on, no one would have taken any notice of me if I had complained.

Even if, by some possibility, the Board had investigated these things and found that they were true and tried to dismiss him, he would have snapped his fingers at them, taken refuge behind the deaf, sent the Board about its business, and got another Board. I know, because he was to do all this later.

The deaf, being human, like mostly everyone else, grumbled at the food at the farm (myself included). If it could have been a lot worse, it also could have been a lot better. The Abrahams table groaned with all the good things of life. The best was not good enough for them, but anything was good enough for us. We never tasted butter, except as a special favour on Xmas Day and New Year's Day, dripping of an unappetising and unpalatable nature being used instead. Someone dubbed it "cart-grease". We got enough to eat, receiving our food in a patronising way as if we were being granted a favor. Many complained that there was not enough nourishment in it for them to do the hard work that was expected of them. Bread and jam was the staple diet, the jam being mostly home-made, and as unappetising, unsightly and unpalatable as the dripping.

The cooks used to complain that the matron (Mrs. Abraham) would not allow them to cook as they liked, but bound them down to fixed amounts always much less than the average. Though some of us who had to have recourse to the farm were decent men and women used to the average refined home, yet the ordinary refinements of the table were completely lacking. We never saw a table-cloth, except on Xmas Day, and our meals were served in horrible, chipped

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enamel plates and cups and saucers that would have disgraced a prison. The table manners of some of the inmates (including the overseer) were awful. The humiliation and degradation of ordinary decent men having to use such crockery and put up with such manners was terrible.

In 1907, he told Victoria that if she would give him the money to build a farm and home and hand the impotent deaf over to him, that he would regard them as a sacred trust from the State, and tenderly care for, guard and train the mentally deficient and give the unemployed work. Then he went behind the country's back and said, in effect, to everyone on the farm (and to all those outside it who through their helplessness had to seek his aid), "Submit to me and go my way, and you are safe. Oppose me and I'll smash and break you, and my Board, the Charities Board, the Government and the public of Victoria, which are there to protect you from me, will back me up in everything I do to you".

That statement is not as incredible as it sounds, for that is how things worked out. I dared to stand out and oppose him, and if you care to read on to the end of this story you will see how he smashed and broke me.

Conditions at the Farm at the Present Time.

Whilst on the subject I thought it best to give a summary of its history since 1925, and an outline of conditions there at the present time.

By 1925, Abraham and his wife had grown tired of the farm. He had found a new toy and plaything in the new headquarters at Jolimont that he had induced his Board to purchase the previous year.

His wife and family had gone to reside outside Blackburn, and, not caring to stay on at the farm alone, he had placed his nephew in charge and had joined his family. He would not let go his hold of the farm, however, and visited the place occasionally just to keep up appearances. He was playing the dog-in-the-manger. He would not look after the place himself, and he would not let anyone else manage it. The consequence was that the farm, and the inmates, were being neglected. The deaf overseer told everybody "not to work too hard". Some members of the Board found out what was going on, forced him out of the place, and put a new man in charge.

Abraham, however, was not going to have anyone there whom he could not control, and within a year not only did he drive the new manager out, but he also drove off his Board those members who forced him out of the farm. He thus got control of the farm again, and he never let go his hold of it again till the day of his death.

During the next ten years, managers kept coming and going, and the farm got more and more neglected, and in the end Nature swallowed it up again. So long as he could keep his hold on the place, the inmates could go to the devil for all he cared. All the cultivated parts have become overgrown with weeds, the gates are off their hinges and the whole place has become tumbled down and shabby. As a consequence, all the money, time and labour spent on improving the place has been wasted.

There is a similar farm in South Australia, and, last year, on a wages bill of £966, it sold produce and live-stock to the value of £3,216. Whilst Blackburn, on a wages bill of £914, did not produce one penny's worth of anything.

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In 1935, Abraham placed his son in charge of the farm, and he has been there ever since.

In 1936, he (Abraham) put aside all pretence of trying to make anything out of the farm, and stated openly in the Annual Report for that year "that trading had ceased and the produce of the inmates' efforts is being given to various hospitals and charities".

Taking things away from one charity and giving it to another, and then the Board complains that it has not sufficient funds to carry out necessary repairs to the farm!

In 1907, Abraham chided Victoria for her supposed neglect of the im-potent deaf, and told her that to regard the mentally deficient "as mere waste material was heartless", and having for twenty-seven years exploited their labour to serve his own ends he dragged them back again to the very condition he pretended to deplore.

He reduced them all to the condition of slaves, for they gain nothing from their work. They drudge and toil all day, and everything they produce is given away. The deaf overseer's job has therefore become a sinecure, and he gets £4. 10. 0 a week.

The son is a better man than ever his father was, but he has no ideals for the deaf. He grew up on the farm, and is there for the sake of a job, and because he is very fond of the place. His wife is a cultured and refined girl, and the sort that the deaf need around them. She would, I am sure, rather help the deaf than exploit them. Everyone speaks well of her. Both she and her husband put themselves out to be agreeable, helpful and gracious to the inmates. Which is more than the old couple ever did. The old atmosphere of cruelty and fear has vanished, but the farm itself is just stagnating. Each pensioned inmate now gets an allowance of four shillings (4/-) a week, which they are entitled to under the law. Some of them still complain about the food, and, I for one, do not blame them.

(To be continued).