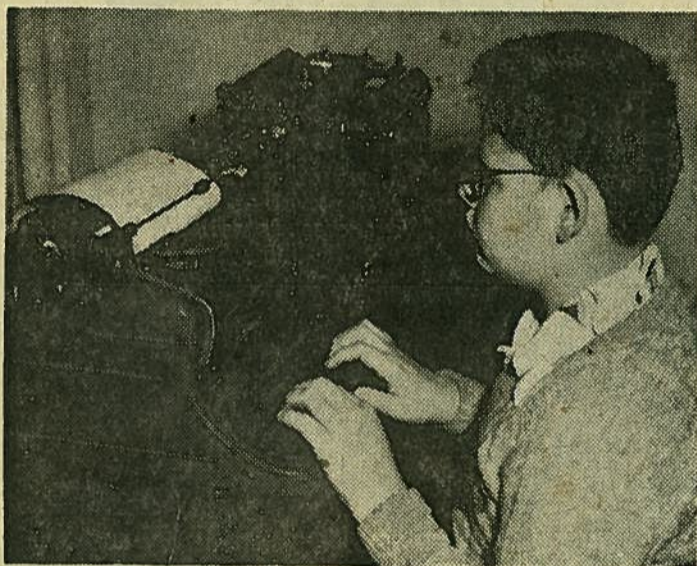




Five-year-old **Heather Stewart**, who arrived for her first day of school yesterday, gets an easy introduction into the serious matter of lessons by being allowed to play with blocks for a while.



(Gazette Photo Service.)

Stanley Dunning, aged 12, practices his typewriter lessons

of interest to WOMEN



Lessons By Feel: While 11-year-old **Bobby Hebert** studies his reading lesson in braille (front), **Miss E. Scott** helps **Norman Maranda**, aged 12, learn his geography from a braille map. (Gazette Photo Service.)

But They're Mischievous, Too

Learning Is Serious Matter For Blind School Children

By OLIVE DICKASON

When the bell rings at the school at 6980 Sherbrooke street west these mornings, the children that gather for their lessons are just as gay and as talkative as any youngsters. But anyone watching them soon becomes aware that the children while active, are careful in their movements; and there is little scampering and darting back and forth.

The reason is that they are either blind or have only something like 10 percent of their vision.

"That doesn't mean they don't get into mischief," laughed Miss E. Scott, who teaches the sight-saving class. "They're just as mischievous as any normal, fun-loving youngsters, I can tell you."

There are 12 children from all parts of the province attending the school, which is run by the Montreal Association for the Blind, at present. Courses are the standard ones, plus typing and braille. "We are very anxious to encourage parents from anywhere in the province to send their children to school," said J. T. Heggie, principal. "It is too often the habit to keep such children in the background, sometimes educating them very little."

The record of achievement among blind students is actually very high, Mr. Heggie, who is blind himself, went on. "The files show that 89 per cent of those who have graduated from our school have become self-supporting. Several have made a name for themselves as music-teachers and musicians. Others are earning a steady livelihood in the workshops of the Montreal Association for the Blind. Still others have taken up store-keeping, farming and various occupations."

Up To Grade 9

The school was opened in 1913. It teaches everything from kindergarten to grade nine; after that, arrangements are made for students who wish to continue to attend West Hill High School, then perhaps McGill. Two such McGill graduates are now in Ottawa, one with the National Research Council and the other with the department of citizenship and immigration.

"The students are usually very eager to learn and to get on," said Miss Scott. At one time most of the children attending the school were totally blind; now the sight-saving class has taken the edge in importance. In this class, books with large print and typewriters with giant-size type are used. "We have been successful enough on occasion to be able

to send a child back to ordinary school after a couple of years with us," said Miss Scott.

All the children, whether totally blind or nearly so, are taught braille. Miss Elizabeth Forrest has been teaching this subject for 25 years. "It takes a child about two years to become proficient in braille," she said. The school has a comprehensive braille library, including such familiar titles as *Bull-dog Drummond*, the westerns of Zane Grey, *Anne of Green Gables*, *Little Women*, the complete works of Dickens.

Many ordinary games have been adapted so that blind children can enjoy them. There's chess, for instance, checkers, and dominoes. Some of the boys even play such games as football . . . with a bell inside the ball to help them keep track of it.

While great progress has been made against blindness, a new eye disease has made its appearance, which attacks premature infants. The school has now started a kindergarten for such children.