III.

VALUES IN THE EDUCATION OF THE DEAF.

A child born deaf remains, unless especially trained and instructed, wholly ignorant of verbal language. This verbal language, which comes in vocal sounds to the normal child through his faculty of hearing, reaches the deaf child only through his vision, and always in silent signs and characters—whether these be movements of the hand, which are called gestures, or of the mouth, which may be termed articulations, or are forms and pictures on the printed or written page.

It is impossible for one born deaf, or one who has become totally deaf in early childhood, ever to gain an adequate apprehension of speech, as this human faculty is used and enjoyed by normal persons. To the deaf, no matter how adept they may become in understanding the import of speech, by observing closely the oral and facial movements of those who speak, oral utterance must ever lack the life-giving quality of sound with all its attendant effects of eloquence, pathos, sympathy, sternness, persuasiveness, humor, and the like. And yet, strange as it may seem, this truth, so easily seen to be evident, was not only ignored by the man who stands in history as the founder of oral teaching for the deaf, but the preposterous claims were made by him that in mental development (1) "the defect of hearing cannot be supplied by the medium of vision," and (2) "abstract ideas cannot be infused into the minds of the deaf and dumb by any process of writing or with the assistance of methodical signs."

Samuel Heinicke (1729–1792) began teaching the deaf in Dresden in 1755. His bold errors, on which he based his claims that the education of the deaf could only be effected through the aid of speech, he acknowledged later, and renounced. None of his many admirers and disciples have ever
ventured to sustain the false principles with which he started out, and yet the spirit of those errors seems to have remained among those who advocate the oral method exclusively; for it is not unusual for them to make such assertions as these: the deaf can learn to use speech as hearing people do; all the deaf can be taught to speak; only through the teaching of speech may the deaf be restored to society; by employing the oral method, the disability of deafness may be practically removed. None of these statements expresses the whole truth. They are at most nothing more than half-truths, more pernicious in their effect than untruths, because more easily misleading.

During the same year in which Heinicke began his work as an oral teacher of the deaf, the Abbé de l'Épée (1712–1789), of deserved renown as a philanthropist and as the founder of the manual method, established a school at Paris in which there were soon gathered a considerable number of deaf children. The methods of De l'Épée were based on a principle diametrically opposed to that with which Heinicke started out. De l'Épée adopted the principle that written characters and ideas may be connected together without the intervention of sounds, as in hieroglyphics; that if sounds are not essential to render written characters intelligible, no more are they to explain gestures or signs.

The limits of this article will not allow any extended description of the methods pursued by the founders of deaf-mute education in Germany and France. It can only be said that while Heinicke made oral teaching, which is always artificial and painfully difficult at the beginning, his point d'appui, using pantomime gestures only to a very limited extent, and in a crude form, because no effort was made to improve and perfect them, De l'Épée found a much broader and much more secure footing, in a means of communication at once natural and encouraging—that language which he took in a double sense from the hand of the deaf-mute himself; and he added, as the work of instruction went on, such oral teaching as seemed desirable and practicable.
The German, serving a false philosophy and striving against nature, sought to build an inverted pyramid, which, as will be shown, has always stood insecurely and liable to fall; while the Frenchman, true to sound science and working with nature, has reared a structure certain to endure because of the depth and breadth and strength of its foundations.

In 1760, Thomas Braidwood (d. 1806), of a distinguished Scotch family, began the teaching of deaf-mutes in Edinburgh. His school attained great celebrity, drawing to it pupils not only from all parts of the United Kingdom, but from the American Colonies. Dr. Johnson, in his Journey to the Hebrides, speaks of Braidwood’s success with his pupils in terms of glowing admiration, and gives an extended and interesting account of a visit to his school. Braidwood taught many deaf-mutes to speak well, and made a greater use of manual methods than Heinicke; but he fell far short of De l’Épée in his development of the language of gestures.

De l’Épée, Heinicke, and Braidwood will hold places in history as facilis princeps, each in his respective country, in the humane work of the general education of the deaf. But the charitable Abbé was the only true philanthropist. His methods were open to the world. He not only declined to enrich himself, even from such of his pupils as were wealthy, but gave his own private fortune to the cause which commanded his heart.

The history of the work of Braidwood in behalf of the deaf of Great Britain and Ireland is full of evidences of a mercenary spirit. From the first it was made a family monopoly. Large sums were demanded for a knowledge of the art, and the few to whom it was taught, outside the family, were placed under bonds so heavy as to be practically restrictive, not to teach others. As late as in 1815, when Dr. Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet, the founder of deaf-mute education in America, was seeking to prepare himself, in Europe, for his work, the narrow and self-seeking policy of the Braidwoods closed the doors of every school in Scotland and England against him and compelled him, after the loss of many months of valuable time, to seek in France the instruction he needed. The monopoly of
teaching the deaf continued in the Braidwood family for fifty-nine years, during which period only three institutions of a public character, for the deaf, were established in Great Britain, while, within twelve years after the expiration of the restrictive bonds, eight new schools sprang into existence, two in Scotland, two in Ireland, and four in England.

The merits of the two principal methods, the manual and the oral, have been earnestly pressed by their respective advocates from the earliest times down to a very late day, and controversies over them, always warm and sometimes bitter, as was the case with Heinicke and De l'Epée, have recurred with varying frequency. So long as the question was which of the two should prevail to the exclusion of the other, small progress was made toward a settlement. But within a few years a conciliation and combination of methods have been shown to be both practicable and desirable, and it is in the union of elements, once thought to be necessarily antagonistic, that a careful consideration of "values" in the education of the deaf becomes important.

Professor Fay, of the National Deaf-Mute College, editor of the American Annals of the Deaf, defines the two methods as follows: ¹ "In the manual method, the sign language, the manual alphabet, and writing are the chief means used in the instruction of the pupils, and the principal objects aimed at are mental development and facility in the use and comprehension of written language. The degree of relative importance given to these three means varies in different schools; but it is a difference only in degree, and the end aimed at is the same in all."

"In the oral method articulation and speech, reading, together with type-writing, are made the chief means of instruction, and facility in articulation and speech-reading, as well as mental development and written language, is aimed at. Signs are used as little as possible, and the manual alphabet is generally discarded altogether."

The single objection to the exclusive practice of the manual

method is that under it no provision is made for the teaching of articulation and speech-reading to that very considerable proportion of the whole number of the deaf who are indisputably capable of in these very valuable acquirements. This objection is a serious one, and yet it is true that under the manual method, with oral teaching entirely omitted, the intellectual, moral, and religious training of the whole body of the deaf can be effected much more easily than under the oral method. Industrial teaching can be readily given, and the children, as sent out from the schools, are capable, with very few exceptions, of supporting themselves and of living happily and reputably in the communities to which they are returned, even though they are limited, in their communication with the hearing, to writing, signs, and the manual alphabet. The lack of speech is an inconvenience, but by no means an insuperable barrier to success in business or the attainment of happiness.

The objections to the exclusive practice of the oral method are more numerous and radical. First, and most serious of all, is the fact that with a large number of the deaf it utterly fails; that with another very considerable portion a degree of success is attained so limited as to be little better than failure; that it can be said to really succeed with not more than one-third of the whole number demanding education.

But it is not alone because it must necessarily fail with a majority of the deaf that the oral method is open to criticism. Although, as is intimated in Professor Fay's definition, signs are used to a limited extent in some oral schools, the tendency in the practice of the oral method during the last few years has been toward the entire abandonment of the language of gestures. Teachers in oral schools are not required to have a knowledge of signs—indeed, it has usually been preferred that they should know nothing of the natural language of the deaf, in the mistaken belief that the ability to understand and use it would impair their efficiency as teachers of speech. No better exponent of these sign-abolitionists can be found than Arnold, recently deceased, the director for many years of
the institution at Riehen, near Basle, who says: "As long as signs are found to exist in schools for the deaf, so long the entire cause of deaf-mute education will suffer with a cancer which will sap the marrow of oral instruction."

This disposition on the part of the oralists of recent date to undervalue and reject the sign language demands more than a passing notice. I say oralists of recent date, because the testimony and practice of some of the ablest teachers of the earlier days, men unsurpassed by their successors in learning and ability, was strongly in favor of the use of gestures, even in schools where the aim was to impart speech to the greatest possible number.

Much more testimony could be given from the older teachers of the deaf in Germany, the birthplace and stronghold of the oral method, in favor of the use of the language of signs, and against the policy of the pure oralists of to-day, who in this country, as well as in some parts of Europe, advocate the suppression of signs altogether.

The claim has been made by the promoters of the pure oral method, that in recent years great improvements have been made in Germany and elsewhere, leading to much more satisfactory results. But this is denied in many quarters, and in the publications of Mr. J. Heidsieck, an instructor of experience, now living at Breslau, much is said to prove the unsatisfactory character of a great deal of the oral teaching going on at present in Germany. In a personal letter received a few months since, Mr. Heidsieck, referring to a visit I made to Germany in 1867, says: "I assure you, if you should take the same journey again, your judgment as to methods would be exactly as before. The deaf-mute institutions would present themselves to you in greater numbers and in more elegant garb, but in the method of instruction you would scarcely discover a difference or progress worthy of mention. The results of the German method rest for the most part on appearances. It makes an overpowering impression on the layman when he hears from the mouth of the deaf mute a few intelligible words; but of what use is this artificial work to the
life of one deprived of hearing if he is without the most scanty knowledge, and is not also able to make himself understood in the least in writing? The German school at present lays the whole stress upon articulation; with unspeakable tortures the effort is made to force the deaf to speak in pleasant tones, and to read from the lips what is spoken; and in this scarcely any progress is noticeable. Out of a hundred deaf mutes there are not five who could take part in a conversation with hearing people, whose speech could be understood, and who would be able to read from the lips with accuracy."

But the discussion of this topic would be very incomplete were no mention made of the opinions of manual teachers. Indeed, they are the only fully competent witnesses in the case as to the value of gesture language, for they alone, by the admission of their German brethren, among whom the sign-language, as acknowledged by one of the most eminent, is "limited to haphazard culture"—they alone know what the language is in its full development; they alone have taken pains to master it, and to acquire a faculty in its use equal to that enjoyed by the deaf themselves.

Dr. Gallaudet, in his last official report as principal of the school he founded at Hartford, a report made in 1830 after fourteen years' experience of practical teaching, discusses the importance of the early establishment of a full and free means of communication between teacher and pupil. Convinced that this cannot be found in any form of words, whether spoken or written, for a very long time after the pupil has entered school, he turns to gestures as affording a means of communicating thought at once natural, even spontaneous, to the deaf child, and easy of acquisition and development by the teacher. He announces the principle on which the method pursued in his school is based to be the elevation, to as high a degree of excellence as possible, of the natural language of signs employed by the deaf and dumb, so as to make this language itself a complete medium of communication between instructor and pupil on all subjects.

Some years later Dr. Gallaudet published his views on the
"Value of the Language of Signs in the Education of the Deaf," in a series of articles contributed to the *American Annals of the Deaf*, vol. I., Nos. 1 and 2, 1847, which are recommended to those wishing to pursue the subject.

Not a few young deaf persons have come under my observation, whose education was begun and continued for several years in oral schools in which the use of the language of signs was forbidden, but who had opportunities later of acquiring and using it. These persons have assured me that the knowledge of this language, and freedom in using it, gave their mental life a new phase of activity and growth as delightful and helpful as it was surprising. They looked back with bitter regret to their early school-life, from which, with a mistaken and ignorant kindness amounting to cruelty, that element had been stricken out, which Hill, one of the most eminent German oralists, accepts and uses as "the one in which the mental life of the deaf mute begins to germinate and grow; the only means whereby he, on his admission to the school, may express his thoughts, feelings, and wishes."

It would be interesting, did the limits of this article permit, to show the similarity between the Chinese language and that of gestures, as suggested by certain writings of the eminent missionary among the Chinese, Dr. Morrison, and to refer at some length to a remarkable treatise by the great French philosopher, Condillac, on the language of action, which, he argues, was man's first means of communicating thought. Equally interesting would it be to cite the opinions of Tylor, the well-known English writer, on the development of civilization; of Valade, the accomplished French instructor of the deaf; and of De Haerne, the learned Belgian statesman, lately deceased, who wrote ably on the natural language of signs; of still greater interest, in certain points of view, to consider the scholarly writings of Colonel Garrick Mallery, of the National Bureau of Anthropology, on the language of signs as developed among the American Indians—essays which have always commanded the admiration of instructors of the deaf.

The best results in the education of the deaf can be obtained,
not by the exclusive practice of either the manual or the oral method, but by making use of both, in such combinations as may be most practicable, and adding aural teaching for such children as possess a degree of hearing sufficient to comprehend articulate sounds.

There are in the United States and Canada at the present time eighty-four schools for the deaf, in which 9652 pupils are receiving instruction. Of these schools thirteen, having 402 pupils, are conducted on the manual method; nineteen, containing 1104 pupils, follow the oral method, while fifty-two, containing 8146 pupils, are conducted under the combined system. Considering that this system prevails in sixty-two per cent. of the schools, containing eighty-five per cent. of the pupils now under instruction, it may justly be called, as it often is in Europe, the American system.

In effecting the combination of methods under this system, circumstances suggest, and often compel, differences of detail. The most satisfactory arrangements are possible in large schools, where each method may find its proper subjects in sufficient number for advantageous classification. No more favorable conjunction of elements in a single establishment could possibly occur than exists at present in the Pennsylvania Institution at Philadelphia, the second in point of numbers, and third in age, in the country. With its 500 pupils, and a corps of officers and teachers unsurpassed in ability, experience, and skill, this school will in a few months be removed from crowded buildings in the heart of the city to a fine estate of sixty acres in the suburbs, where, at a cost of nearly a million of dollars, a commodious and beautiful group of buildings has been erected, in which a division of the pupils into primary, intermediate, and advanced departments will be made, with an oral school quite distinct from all the rest. Industrial teaching will be provided for, as also special physical culture in a large gymnasium. Under a management at once progressive but cautious and severely practical, each method will be given its full opportunity; the sign-language will be accorded the position and respect it deserves, but will at the same time
be used with judgment, and the half successes in articulation
will be promptly transferred to that department in which they
can be more advantageously trained.

In this model school the combined system will exist in a form
worthy to be imitated wherever the numbers under one man-
agement are sufficiently large to warrant similar divisions into
departments. In smaller institutions, or in those of large size
where buildings already erected do not admit of the adop-
tion of the Pennsylvania plan, the combined system may be,
and is in many well-ordered schools, operated with results far
more satisfactory than is possible in a school wedded to a sin-
gle method.

Among the nineteen in which the oral method prevails, and
in which the sign-language is unwisely prohibited, there are
those in which earnest, faithful, intelligent work is done, and
where the results in many individual cases are most commend-
able, sometimes even brilliant. But many children are retained
in them that never succeed in speech, and who would derive
far greater advantage under the manual method. In all these
oral schools the sign-language, in spite of rules against its use,
is a constant means of communication among the pupils.

The marked success attending the operation of the com-
combined system in this country has attracted attention in Europe,
and when, a few years since, a Royal Commission was appointed
in England to inquire into methods of educating the deaf and
other special classes, witnesses were summoned from this
country to furnish full information to the commission as to
the workings of our American schools. The advantages of
the oral method and the combined system were presented
by competent witnesses, and their testimony was published
along with the report of the commission. The managers of a
new school about to be established at Preston, England,
made a careful study of this testimony, and were influenced
by it to adopt the American combined system, in spite
of conditional offers of considerable sums of money from
promoters of the oral method in England. I am satisfied
that the policy of the managers of this English school would
be generally followed in the organization of new schools for the deaf, if those who have the responsibility of their establishment would study the subject of methods as intelligently and as impartially as it was considered at Preston. And I am equally convinced the day is not distant when the combined system, broader than any method, because including all, will be accepted even in the country of Heinicke, where the narrowness and insufficiency of his method are shown by such a vigorous writer and so unimpeachable a witness as Heidsick.

To sum up the "values" in the education of the deaf, it may be said: (1) that the language of gesture should never be banished from any school; (2) that all who undertake to teach or train the deaf should master this language; (3) that, at the same time, gesture language should be regarded as a means, never as an end; (4) that a careful and prolonged effort should be made to teach every child to speak; (5) that the education of everyone found capable of acquiring speech should be so conducted as to promote facility in speech to the highest degree possible, without sacrificing those other objects of education which are admittedly of more consequence than speech; (6) that every child found incapable of success in speech should be taught by the manual method; (7) that moral training should be carefully attended to, and that religious instruction of an undenominational character should be afforded; (8) that industrial and physical training should have prominent places; (9) that artistic ability should be carefully fostered and encouraged; (10) that wherever sufficient hearing remains to distinguish articulate sounds, pains should be taken to train and develop this faculty, so that, if possible, it may become a channel of intelligent communication, and (11) last, but by no means of least importance, that all teachers of the deaf should be highly educated persons, carefully trained for their profession, and should possess in no small measure that disposition which "is not easily provoked," which "seek-eth not her own," but "endureth all things" and "is kind."

Edward M. Gallaudet.

National College for the Deaf,
Washington, D. C.