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ARGUMENTUM AD PARENTEM.

AT nine years of age the sense of hearing was taken from me in a single night. I have now a son who is a year and some months past that age. As he was drawing near it, and since, I have often looked at him and considered what I would wish to do in the matter of his education if, like myself, he were to be suddenly smitten with total deafness.

Many a parent has been forced into this cruel situation. Every parent, no doubt, has endeavored to meet it wisely and well. The ability to do so, however, involves the possession of information, or experience, or both, to which few parents can lay claim. Any one, parent or other, but parent especially, who possesses that information and ex-

perience, and attempts to choose his course sincerely, must express his inmost convictions in regard to the education of the deaf.

Not many persons have had an experience that fits them to face this situation better than my experience ought to fit me to face it, both from inside and outside points of view. Of my last thirty-five years of total deafness, six have been spent in business exclusively among the hearing, four as a student in the College for the Deaf, one quarter of each of the remaining twenty-five exclusively among the hearing, the remaining three-fourths of each of these twenty-five being spent in teaching the deaf, in said college, but, outside the time given to that work, in constant and active relations with hearing people.

If, therefore, this boy became deaf, I should confront the problem of his education after receiving a preparation for its solution which in range and completeness can scarcely ever have been excelled by any single human experience. I have not, indeed, been an inmate of a pure oral school ; but, first, I am familiar with the theories and workings and acquainted with the practical results of those schools ; and, second, I think this article will show that I place a fair valuation upon pure oral training so far as it would concern this boy.

Hence, should I fail to solve the problem of his education correctly, the failure would be due to my incapacity and not to a lack of almost the richest possible advantages.

Now to the problem.

This boy's opportunities have been superior to mine at the same age. He has not only perfect hearing and speech (as the speech of boys goes), but he is well grounded in the elements of education. If, now, he became deaf, but retained health and mental vigor, it would be practicable, in my present circumstances, to continue his education at home and under private instruction until he was old enough and advanced enough to enter some

preparatory school like Phillips Academy. His speech and power of understanding speech by sight could be trained during this private tuition, and there would be no reason why he should not retain speech in, for all ordinary purposes, substantial perfection.

Such a course would be my first choice for this boy. But to the statement that I would put him in a school like Phillips there is a great reservation, namely, that I should not fancy, far less assume, that he could be in a class in that school as a homogeneous member thereof. Both experience and common sense declare that no totally nor even partially deaf boy can act in a class of hearing boys as a co-ordinate member of it. On the contrary, he is an indigestible atom. He must be separately treated by his school-mates and separately considered by his instructors. He is like a one-legged man in a game of foot-ball; the twenty-one other players, and the officers of the game, *can* accommodate their efforts to the crippled one, but at how great a sacrifice of their satisfaction, freedom, and power, and at what a tax on the sensibilities of spectators. The deaf boy, no matter what his previous training, if placed unreservedly in a class of hearing boys, is in a situation just as unequal, unnatural, illogical, and cruel. To suppose that all concerned will not suffer accordingly is not common sense, but must be credited rather to parental fondness, the iridescent dream of enthusiasm, or the unscrupulous zeal of partisanship. This boy should not be thus forced nor thus force others. But I would, if he lacked a personal friend among the older boys of that school to fill the part, engage one, or an instructor, who should, on occasions, act as ears for him, and put him in possession of the vital points of lectures or exercises essential to progress and which others obtained in the natural way. By this means, if he had ability, I should hope and believe he could get many (though he would also miss many, and among them some

of the most precious) of the benefits of the course and life of the school, without boring and hindering his class, peculiarly burdening his instructors, and oft humiliating himself. Afterwards, if still proving able, he could pursue in like manner a course in any college.

This would be my first plan, but a slight change in circumstances might defeat it, and I be forced to avail myself of public provision for the education of the deaf. What then?

In sending the boy to a school for the deaf, one of my first wishes would certainly be that his now normal speech should be confirmed and trained, and that he should form the habit of trying to understand speech by sight. I believe that under proper arrangements this can be done as well in a combined as in an oral school; but, to carry out my ideas as to this particular boy, I should want the oral product immediately and in a concentrated time and form. To this end I would place him, if possible, in some school like that at Northampton, where great emphasis is laid on speech and lip-reading, and where also his environment in many other respects would be of the best and purest. At the end of not more than two years I would remove him from that school, for, among others, the following reasons: (1.) During those two years I should hope that he would acquire habits of good speech and knowledge of the principles of it and of understanding speech by sight, and realize the importance of cultivating those powers. If he did, well and good; if he did not, I should fear he never would; but whether he did or not I should equally conclude that the time had come when emphasis should be laid not upon those two powers but upon the general development of all his faculties. I have seen many sacrifices incurred by keeping the emphasis forever upon those two powers. One must suffice. Miss —— is as bright a congenitally deaf person as I know. She was eleven years

in one of our largest pure oral schools. In the sixth year she joined the highest class and passed through its course. There was nothing beyond, and so, in the seventh, eighth, ninth, tenth, and eleventh years, she was actually put through the routine of the sixth year,—the same teacher, text-books, exercises, written and oral, repeated annually for six years. From the last five years she got nothing save practice in speech and lip-reading, and even that only with the same persons and on the same topics. And this at an age when her faculties, most excellent by nature, were ready to expand, and eager to explore the realms of knowledge. Her intellectual murder would have been complete but for the fact that she was partly a day pupil, passing two days each week in a home of wealth and intelligence, and that at the end of the six years of repetition she was placed in a school where the means of communication are not limited to speech. I am acquainted with several other cases similar to the above, where young men and women have remained in pure oral schools for ten, twelve, and even fifteen years. (2.) I think that women are admirably fitted by nature to teach children and young boys and girls, but not to have the education of boys approaching young manhood entrusted to them. If the tenderest, most refined, and sweetest impressions I have received as boy and man came from women, so also did the loftiest, the sternest, the justest, and the truest come from men. The body of teachers in one of the foremost high schools in the United States, themselves women, recently deplored the fact that there were so few male teachers among them, for, they thought, the young men and women growing up under them would profit by the daily impression of masculine attributes.* (3.) I have often observed that the persistent and long-

*Since the above was put in type I have seen this same opinion expressed by female members of the faculty of one of the leading colleges for women in this country.

continued forcing upon pupils' minds of speech and lip-reading as paramount objects of education has unfortunate and unhappy effects upon character—effects that tend to make a deaf person insincere, and neither happy in himself nor fair to others, nor capable of seeing himself in just relations. For example, it is known that certain classes of pupils, taught by the pure oral method, habitually place sentinels in the teachers' absence so that they may enjoy natural intercourse among themselves by signs. When the teachers return, all are intent on their tasks. What is the effect on character? Forced into habits of cheating as children, will they cease to cheat as citizens? Again, the pupils of the oral branch of a certain school which has also a non-oral branch are accustomed to speak of the pupils in the latter branch as "the deaf-mutes," as when they say to a teacher or in a composition, "We played ball with the deaf-mutes." Is this a healthy, not to say a moral, habit of mind to foster in children? Is it not beneath even the level of that class of persons who habitually speak of any deaf person as a "dummy"? Again, not long ago an orally taught lady of my acquaintance entered a dry-goods store in a large city in company with a hearing familiar, and said to a clerk: "Please show me some nainsook." The clerk looked puzzled an instant, then said: "I beg your pardon, but I do not understand you." She saw that she was not understood, and repeated emphatically, "I wish to see some *nainsook*," while the poor clerk bent his head and listened with all his might, but was again compelled to indicate his inability to understand her. Once more she repeated, "Nainsook—nainsook," the clerk glancing about, hoping that people did not notice his embarrassment, but still shaking his head despairingly; whereat she flounced out of the store in a dudgeon, exclaiming to her companion, "That man is an idiot!" My note-book shows many other cases of those so taught who

Hold aloof from other men
In impotence of fancied power.

(4.) In my daily life, especially in that part of it passed exclusively among the hearing, I am often in situations where more power of understanding speech by sight than I have would be of great service. I am also, and as frequently, in situations where such a power would fail to relieve me, unless it was so perfect as to be quite the equivalent of hearing. For example, last summer I stayed several weeks at a house with about twenty people. Two-thirds of them learned to use the manual alphabet. Of these the majority used it with freedom and facility. One day, on a sailing party, I turned from the view to find the whole company laughing heartily. Instantly, with the laugh at its broadest, a young lady turned to me and spelled, "How do we know that Cæsar had an Irish sweetheart?"—and at once, with the laugh still rippling, she added, "Because when he got to the Rhone he proposed to bridge it!" Immediately I was "one with my kind." My laugh chimed in with theirs, and little there lacked of perfect sympathy. Now, if to any, to how many totally deaf lip-readers could this have happened? True, by repetitions more or less numerous and prolonged, the point could be conveyed to their minds at last. But what of the company? In all probability it would lapse into one of several conditions: watching the repetitions with varying degrees of interest, waiting with Christian resignation for them to cease, or plunged in a discussion as far from the Cæsarean conundrum as the heavens are far from the earth—like that which, indeed, presently ensued: whether Gladstone, if adrift in an open boat with a negro laborer, would be justified, on account of its importance to the world, in saving his own life at the cost of the laborer's—a discussion in which the manual alphabet again enabled me to take part, without being a pensioner upon the company.

The boy having been removed from the pure oral, but still necessarily sent to some school for the deaf, what

next? Judging from all the pupils I have seen coming from the former schools, his general education would not then be sufficiently advanced to admit him to the Introductory Class of Gallaudet College, his time having been (with my full approbation) so largely devoted to oral training. I should therefore seek to place him in some school which had an instructor of its highest class in whose ability and character I had confidence. Several such instructors in as many schools are known to me. As to the means of communication with him in that class, I should still prefer speech, but should wish that no time whatever be devoted to it at the expense of his general development. When it failed in speed or certainty, let the manual alphabet or writing serve the end at once. As to signs, this boy would never need them, yet I should not only not oppose, but approve his acquaintance with them, because I know that they would tend to make him sympathetic, and contribute immensely to his comfort, happiness, sense of humor (than which there are few greater stays in life), and capacity for receiving vivid impressions from fine and strong and living personalities.

After one year of such preparation the boy would probably be able to enter the Introductory Class of Gallaudet College. In saying that I should (still being obliged to keep him in some school for the deaf) enter him there, it may seem like lauding one's own wares. But the reasons are very plain, and to me very cogent. They are mainly, (1.) The faculty are high-minded and capable men, sincerely devoted to the work they have in hand. (2.) Both my personal experience and observation assure me that, if he has the wish and the will, he cannot only preserve but improve his oral powers while in the College. (3.) The curriculum, while not perfect, is fitted to test, train, and give full scope to the powers of the ablest deaf students who have yet undertaken it, and a special course for special abilities or aims can at any time be arranged. (4.) As I "get on,"

the physical basis of life seems more and more important. For its cultivation the College life and regimen are exceptionally favorable. The regular habits, plain food, freedom from anxiety, and especially the abundant provision for in- and out-door exercise with congenial companions, are all favorable to physical development. All that is needed in the boy is ordinary prudence. I have seen many a puny, sickly boy enter the College, apparently "on his last legs," and leave it a strong, sturdy, symmetrical, vigorous man. (5.) Among the ablest of my deaf acquaintances there are several who have never entered the College. They include men taught some by the pure oral method, others in schools not pure oral, and still others who were never in any school for the deaf. One fact applies to all of them. It applies with especial force to two that I have in mind. Both lost hearing when half-grown. One of them was in a pure oral school; the other was taught in like manner, but privately. In certain ways these two are the equals of any of my deaf friends. Both are bright, keen, successful business men. In that respect perhaps a college course would not have improved them. Yet I have often looked at them and thought how much such a course would have added to their happiness in themselves, their weight as citizens, and their value as friends, because, after every visit with them, I feel that their intellectual horizon is bounded by the daily newspaper and immediate practical affairs. One of them, as already said, an extremely bright and able man by nature, but limited as above by education, recently asked me, in a kind of anxious way, "Do you enjoy the so-called (*sic*) great novelists, Dickens, Bulwer, and so on?" I replied, "There is hardly anything in life that I enjoy more." His face fell, and he said, "Well, I envy you. I have tried and tried to get interested in them, but I just can't. They are to me all stupid and dull!" This man has a fine library bequeathed him by his father, but it is little more to him

than so much furniture. A college training would certainly have made him a real heir to this storied wealth of all the ages.

Very soon after this boy had entered college, if he showed no natural bent to any particular calling, I should try and turn his thoughts to the importance of choosing one, and of making his reading and observation apply to it.

If he pursued his course uninterruptedly, he would graduate while still less than nineteen years of age. I could fairly hope that he would come out sound and vigorous in body, unsapped in vitality, with excellent oral powers, and with a rounded development of mind and taste. He would still be young enough to pursue, if necessary, some years of preparation for his chosen calling.

And whatever might be his fate on the troubled seas of life I should feel that, all things considered, I had done my best for his health, happiness, and usefulness.

AMOS G. DRAPER,
Professor in Gallaudet College, Washington, D. C.