

THE NEED OF PROPERLY QUALIFIED TEACHERS FOR THIS WORK.

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Whatever the method employed in the teaching of the deaf, it must be used intelligently, and trained teachers are needed to make it efficient. It is possible for a deaf child to be well educated by any method. The oral method, of late years, has been attracting particular attention as the ideal one, and has grown in favor as its success has been more and more demonstrated.

I believe that for its own good, its growth has been a little too rapid, and for that reason, there has arisen quite a bit of useless and unfortunate controversy over the excellences of the various methods. More attention should be paid to the training and equipping of teachers whatever the process of instruction may be. Greater progress will be made in the education of the deaf if the standard of teachers is raised. It is disgusting to hear a poorly prepared teacher vociferously contend that his or her method is the best, when as a matter of fact, he or she is not prepared to teach successfully by that method or any other. Those who would enter the work of teaching the deaf should be instructed as to the difficulties they will encounter and then be told the best way to overcome them. I think that St. Louis and the Middle West are to be congratulated that you have here in St. Louis, the Central Institute for the Deaf, which I am sure will fill a much needed want in the preparation of competent oral teachers for the deaf. There is a demand for such schools of training, and principals and superintendents of state schools and other schools all over this country are ever on the lookout for trained teachers. There are thousands and thousands of persons who, ignorant of the deaf, imagine that they could, with very little special study, prepare themselves for teaching the deaf, but we who have been associated with the deaf for years, realize and know that until such persons have had training and a few years of experience, they would scarcely be worth their salt. They need first to learn something of the deaf child's manner of thought and form of expression, so that they may the better adapt themselves and their methods to his needs.

The opening up of a means of communication with the mind of the deaf child is the most difficult task. There are difficulties in

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the teaching of language which arise in the instruction of the deaf, of which they who have never associated with the deaf have no conception. The principal object in the education of the deaf in most schools is the development of language. The teacher of the hearing has really very little to do with the development of the language of his pupils. They absorb it from their environment. The deaf child must be taught it, and methods and forms are necessary to expedite matters and make up for the repetition which in developing language is the chief aid to those who can hear. The teacher of the deaf must have patience, intelligence, and a knowledge of how to use the best devices which have been invented for the instruction of the deaf. With all of these qualifications and preparations, the teacher of the deaf will find great difficulty in bringing her pupils to the point where they can write simple language correctly in a reasonable length of time. To the deaf child any written or spoken language is a foreign language. The foreigner comes to our country, ignorant of the English language. But he comes with a conception of what written and spoken language is, because he is familiar with his mother tongue. He learns English by comparing it with his own language. He has a lexicon to which he can refer. He hears the spoken word day after day and many times a day, and so in a short time, he is able to make his wants known in English. The deaf child comes to school without any such language in which to receive instruction. He has no lexicon and has no language to compare his English with.

The lack of all of these things makes the teaching of language to the deaf child most difficult, and, until language has been well developed, it is very difficult to develop the reasoning powers, the feelings and the will of deaf persons. It is not strange to those who are familiar with the deaf that it takes them so long to learn to use the language well. After a course of ten or twelve years in school, the language of the deaf is, on the average, very much as the language of an intelligent foreigner who has been studying English a few months or perhaps a year.

Teachers of the deaf have to resort to devices and forms to do the elementary work in language, which the hearing child acquires by absorption. It is the familiarity with these forms and the need of them, and with the methods and devices for teaching the deaf, that such a special school as you have here in St. Louis is intended to impart.