

A SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF IN KENTUCKY¹

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All roads in the Blue Grass region of Kentucky lead to Danville and this little city does not disappoint one, come by whichever road one may. The many fine old trees, the substantial residences, the kindly attitude of the cultured people, the gracious hospitality, all combine to make a sojourn in Danville a pleasure, indeed. Small wonder, then, that Central University for men, Kentucky College for Women, and the Kentucky School for the Deaf, have all prospered here.

It is of this latter institution, I wish to write. A study of the establishment of schools for the deaf would well repay one; but it is impossible to afford that space in this paper. The first such school was established at Hartford, Connecticut; the Kentucky school was made possible by an act of the Legislature in December, 1822.

In 1824, a student at Centre College (now Central University) became interested in instruction for the deaf and rode horseback all the way to Hartford where he worked day and night to acquire the knowledge that would fit him to perform his chosen task. He remained with the Kentucky school until his death in 1869. The first pupils were housed in a small frame building. In 1826, the Board purchased ten acres of land and it has added to this original purchase until now the school uses eighty acres of ground and has the necessary buildings for a separate dormitory for boys from six to twelve years of age, another for boys from twelve to twenty-three, and the same accommodations for girls. There is a chapel, an administration building, a hospital, buildings for the various trades for boys and industries for girls, and a separate group of buildings for the colored children.

In addition to his education, each pupil is taught a trade, with the object of making self-supporting, self-respecting citizens. The boys are taught printing, carpentry, shoemaking, tailoring, dairy and farm work; and the girls, sewing, needlework, laundry, dining-room work and home nursing. In the academic department, the children when received are graded as rapidly as possible, according to mentality. An experienced teacher can look at a child and, with several exceptions in each class, can tell whether or not he will go in to the lowest, highest or middle division. There are usually three beginning classes. During the first three months changes are made

¹Read at a meeting of nurses in Owensboro, Ky.

rapidly, as the child shows responsiveness or the lack of it, and by Thanksgiving, the classes are usually fairly well graded.

Sense training methods are used first, that is, teaching from color and form charts. Lip-reading is begun at once, by having the children look closely while the teacher speaks the name of two objects, "ball, fish" or "cow, flower." Word by word the vocabulary is built up, sound by sound the vowels and consonants are given, the children imitating the teacher.

We nurses think that patience is an overworked virtue in our profession, but think of building a vocabulary a sound at a time, and think of the number of times a sound must be repeated before the child gets it.

At the end of the first year, the child has acquired about seventy-five spoken words and is able to express his wants in simple sentences. Language work is begun by dividing the blackboard into six spaces. Only indicative sentences are used, and the subject, predicate, object, and adverbial and time phrases, are *always* placed in the same position. In arithmetic they count from one to twenty and add from one to ten. A teacher of the deaf is really teaching a new language and that without the medium of translation. English is as foreign to a deaf child as Chinese is to us. The vocabulary is increased and question forms are taught in the second year. In the third year, the children are told a story, and are then questioned on it. Subtraction and addition are added to the arithmetic. Geography is begun in the fourth year, by teaching direction in the schoolroom, in the grounds, in the town and vicinity. Multiplication is added to the arithmetic and direct and indirect quotation to language study. In the fifth year, the state is added to the geography, later the United States. Short division is begun, and history. Until the sixth year all lessons are written by the teachers; now, a few simple text books are used, and in the seventh year, the regular text books, published by the American Book Company. Fractions are added to the arithmetic. Physiology, physics, taxes, partial payments, English and American history, English and American classics in literature and algebra are all taught before the end of the course. Those who complete it are ready to enter Gallaudet, the National College for the Deaf at Washington, D. C.

One of the objects of this paper is to interest nurses in the deaf, and to impress upon them the importance of having a child enter a school while he is young. To see a child enter in September, whether he is six years old, or sixteen, unable to speak a word or make any want known, and to hear the same child in six months' time pray: "Father, we love Thee, we want to be good," brings a lump into one's throat and fills one's heart with the desire to spread the knowledge of

the school's possibilities and thus enable these seriously handicapped children to profit by the instruction offered. Those who enter after they are grown have a bitter time. They often cannot be taught to talk, but in those schools which use what is called the combined system, they are taught the sign language and this gives them a means of communication with their kind.

While one marvels at the grasp of language that is developed, some funny things do happen. For instance, in the Home Nursing examination one girl answered the question: "Name the principal points in personal hygiene," by saying, "The principal points of personal hygiene are forehead, eyes," etc. But on the whole, the papers handed in were as complete and well expressed as any I ever received from a nurse.

The schedule for the Home Nursing course included the following: bed baths, bed making, infant bathing, infant feeding, simple procedures such as, tooth brush drill, filling a water bottle, giving an enema, first aid for burns, for fainting, for hemorrhage, for drowning, for fracture, personal hygiene, household hygiene, keeping a sound mind in sound body by proper supply of well cooked food, air and sunlight, exercise, bathing, rest, congenial environment, knowledge of food principles with the importance and purpose of each one, simple, economical and palatable cooking and realization of the importance of a varied diet.

These children come to the school from all the cities in the state and many from the poorest mountain cabins. So when a girl from an unplastered cabin on the mountainside answers you, "The principal point in personal hygiene is cleanliness; dirt causes disease; one should have plenty of sunshine and fresh air; chickens, dogs and pigs must stay away from the house and the drinking water," one feels, though the language may seem rough, that the school and its teachings will benefit not only the child, but her home and the neighborhood.

An afflicted child usually receives unusual love, and the family and neighbors are almost certain to profit by the habits of cleanliness, by the improved manners, and the consideration for others inculcated by precept and example by all the teachers and officers of the school.

I have said very little about the nursing of the deaf children but we had a daily average of from ten to twelve in the hospital and we treated many others in the out-patient department.

I will conclude by asking you to be interested in the next deaf child you see. You will notice that he will greet you with a smile, and if you give him the least encouragement he will say, "I love you."