

**THE DEAF-BLIND:
A MONOGRAPH**

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The Deaf-Blind: A Monograph by William Wade

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WILLIAM WADE

**THE DEAF-BLIND:
A MONOGRAPH**



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(Aged 11).

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(Aged 7).

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(Aged 13).

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(Aged 5).

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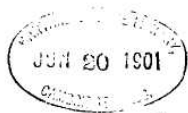
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Arthur Gilman,
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FOREWORD.

The
Deaf-Blind

I HAVE been led to the preparation and publication of this monograph by many and frequent experiences of the incorrect views the public, and even professionals in education, take concerning the deaf-blind. The knowledge by the public that the education of the deaf-blind is by no means the difficult task commonly believed, and the further knowledge of the number of the class who have been educated, and of the advanced position mentally they have attained, should do much to advance their interests and happiness. There is a delusion in the public mind that the task of restoring them to the family of humanity is one of stupendous difficulty, requiring great knowledge and experience, almost amounting to an occult science. The error of this is demonstrated by the fact that none of the many successful teachers of the deaf-blind ever had any previous experience in the work, and one, successful in the most desperate case ever attempted, had had no experience in teaching of any kind. It may be said positively that any good teacher in our common schools, particularly in kindergarten work, is fully qualified to teach a deaf-blind pupil, after she learns the manual alphabet. Such a teacher has intelligence, patience and devotion, and these constitute the whole equipment required.

Even professional teachers of the deaf or of the blind make the error of attaching much too high a value to "experience." Experience is always of some value, whether in breaking stones or in teaching integral calculus, but the experience that is of the highest value is that which the teacher herself gains in the close communion that establishes itself between her and her pupil, the intimate knowledge of the make-up of the pupil in all ways; and all the "experience" of the wide world is worthless compared with that. There are a few bits of experience that prove "handy," but that is about the extent of their value.

It may not be amiss to state here the methods of

**The
Deaf-Blind**

teaching the first steps to a deaf-blind pupil, that the public may see how exceedingly simple the fundamental principles are, and it should be remembered that these principles are exactly the same in the cases of the deaf and of the deaf-blind, the only difference being in the applications—the deaf *see*, the deaf-blind *feel*. Some familiar, tangible object,—a doll, a cup, or what not,—is given to the pupil, and at the same time the name of the object is spelled into its hand by the manual alphabet. By patient persistence, the pupil comes to recognize the manual spelling as a *name* for a familiar object, when the next step is taken—associating familiar acts with the corresponding manual spelling. A continuation of this simple process gradually leads the pupil to the comprehension of language as a means for communication of thoughts. Surely this process is simple enough for comprehension by any intelligent person; and patience, devotion and deep sympathy are not very exceptional qualities in humanity.

I have uniformly used the word "she," in referring to the teacher, for I am convinced that, as a rule, it is 999 to 1 in favor of the woman teacher. I know that men have taught deaf-blind pupils, and have done it well; but, for all of that, the preponderance is overwhelmingly in favor of the woman. She has the true womanly soul; is patient with her charge, devoted to the work, and infinitely sympathizing; and between her and her pupil grows up an affection akin to that between the mother and her child, and even deeper than that in some instances.

I am firm in my conviction that the schools for the deaf, and their instructors, are better prepared for teaching the deaf-blind than are the schools for the blind. The very first need of the untaught deaf-blind is power of communication with others,—call it language, if you wish. Instilling this is the first instinct of the teacher of the deaf, and is the daily work of such a teacher. The teacher of the blind does not need this. The pupils come to her fully possessed of this ability, and this broad distinction should turn the

scale. Of course, very many pupils have been taught in our blind schools, and taught thoroughly well, but I still think that my rule holds good as a general proposition. Certainly there are instructors of the blind who have never had any experience in teaching the deaf-blind who would make as great a success in that work as anybody. Such men as Allen, Hall, Fraser, Fuller, and others, would make a thorough success of the work, and the Perkins Institution for the Blind has crowned itself with glory as the pioneer of the world in it. But the exceptional character of certain individuals or certain schools does not establish a rule; and furthermore, there is a hidden sympathy between the deaf, and between them and the deaf-blind, that is of great value to the happiness of the latter. Repeated observation of the deaf-blind originally taught in blind schools, or under the auspices of such schools, who have afterward been brought into extensive intercourse with the educated deaf, has proved this contention beyond question.

I would strongly urge it on the principals of blind schools, that should any of them have a pupil, already blind, lose hearing, they open correspondence with the head of the deaf school in their State, regarding the further teaching of such a pupil. Or, if preferred, take immediate steps to substitute a comprehension of language addressed manually for the pupil's previous method of receiving thought. The actual work to be done is so slight, comparatively, that no time should be lost in proceeding with the work required.

I would say a very few words as to prints for the blind. Unfortunately, there has grown up in this country a very exaggerated estimate of the great superiority of certain prints for the blind, and views that special prints are the *only* ones of value. Each system has its own special merits and grave faults. As Dr. Job Williams once most convincingly wrote of systems of teaching the deaf, "All are good, but none is exclusively good," and that covers the entire ground. But this much I can, and do, say, most positively: The "Moon" system is very much the easi-

**The
Deaf-Blind**

est to *learn*, and should always be used for the beginning, and after a pupil has learned that, learning others will be a very easy task. I know positively that this has been the case with my deaf-blind friends, and do not see why it should be otherwise with the hearing blind.

I wish it to be understood that what I have said concerning details, such as methods of instruction, etc., must be taken as only elementary, and while it should be sufficient for a teacher to understand therefrom the whole system of education of the deaf-blind, I do not want to bother non-professional readers with dry details which would only confuse them, the more so as my practical knowledge of the matter being *nil*, I might be very likely to lead such non-professionals far astray.

The bibliography of the deaf-blind is, unfortunately, very scant and fugitive; I can suggest only the accounts of James Mitchell (never educated) in Chambers' Miscellany, and in Vol. IV of the complete works of Dugald Stewart; "The Education of Laura Bridgman," by Dr. Samuel G. Howe; "Aspects of German Culture," by Dr. G. Stanley Hall, (pp. 237-276); "The Writings of Laura Bridgman," by C. E. Sanford (reprint from *Overland Monthly*); "Always Happy," the best story of Helen Keller (Partridge & Sons, London); the two "Helen Keller Souvenirs" of the Volta Bureau, Washington, D. C.; "Memoir of Edward K. Dieterich," by Miss S. J. Wrigley (Collins, Philadelphia, 1868); the various Reports of the Perkins Institution for the Blind, South Boston, Mass.; the Report of the American School for the Deaf, Hartford, Conn., of 1887; the recent Reports, and especially the forthcoming one, of the New York Institution for the Deaf, New York, and the two papers by Mr. John D. Wright in the Report of the Proceedings of the Convention of American Instructors of the Deaf, held at Flint, Mich., in 1895.

I gratefully tender my thanks to M. Anagnos, Esq., Director of the Perkins Institution and Massa-