

Orris Benson, Blind, Deaf and Dumb

The pet of the New York Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, the most interesting of all the inmates and the one who gives the least trouble to the teachers, is a boy to whom the outside world is an absolute blank. Deaf, dumb and blind, Orris Benson lives in a world of silence and darkness. Under ordinary conditions, left to himself, he would have gone through life a demolate soul wrapped in Cimmerian darkness, knowing nothing, thinking nothing, hoping nothing.

when a child of 3, the direct cause of his affliction being spinal meningitis. In the fall of 1889 he was taken to the New York institution and placed in the male kindergarten at the Mansion house. At the time of admission he had no remembrance of the general appearance of persons or things, but had a somewhat indistinct idea of black and white. The first word he learned to spell by means of the manual alphabet was "key," the

principal explained that Orris has become an adept in the use of the typewriter, rarely making a mistake in the work he does. It is possible for the teachers to dictate letters to him, by means of the sign language used in the way explained above.

He is especially fond of wood carving and he has made several exquisite pieces entirely without help. He also models in clay and has made an accurate copy of General Grant's tomb on Riverside Drive. The form of the building was explained to him and he modeled it with surprising faithfulness. At chair-caning Orris is particularly skillful and works quickly and carefully. When not working at something he sits patiently for hours going over and over in his mind the lessons he has learned.

Nothing pleases him better than to be questioned on some matter of interest that he has studied during the school session. He has thoughts of his own concerning current questions and the teachers are glad to talk with him and watch the steady growth of his intellect. Orris is undoubtedly the most interesting as well as the most talented deaf, dumb and blind boy in the country, and, according to the testimony of his teachers, he is the happiest boy in the institution.



ORRIS BENSON AND HIS TYPEWRITER—HARDLY MISSES THE LACK OF THREE SENSES.

ing. It would be difficult to imagine a more pitiful fate. Fortunately scientific methods and patient endeavor are capable of lifting even such an afflicted individual as one deaf, dumb and blind out of the slough of despond; indeed, so many advantages and resources have already been brought into his life that it is not much of an exaggeration of the facts to say that he is little incommoded by the lack of the three most valuable senses.

When seen by the writer at the institution Orris seemed to be one of the most cheerful boys of all the silent crowd. He was holding an animated conversation with one of the teachers, making use of the sign language by the sense of touch alone, the pressure of the finger on the boy's collar or the back of the hand, or a few rapid touches in the palm being sufficient to convey to him an entire sentence. A tattoo on the finger tips informed him of the visitor's mission. A once the lad faced about with an inquiring look on his features. The principal of the institution, Mr. Enoch M. Currier, asked him a question with rapidly moving finger tips beating on the hand. To the surprise of the visitor the answer came in a queer sound from the boy's lips. It was not hard to make out that he was saying or trying to say, "In my pocket." At the same time a hand went into the pocket and with a laugh, Orris brought out a pocket-knife. The principal explained that he had asked the boy what he had done with a knife that had been given him. It was marvelous that the power of even such crude vocal speech as the boy used could be imparted to one who had never seen or heard since babyhood.

Orris Benson lost both sight and hearing

object having been previously shown to him. Then, little by little, step by step, he learned the names of other common objects. In the same slow, tedious way, he was later taught the elements of speech. The strain upon his brain was so great that at first he was not required to do much at any one time, but the task of learning gradually became less arduous and in time he could understand easy conversation and compose a few simple sentences. After being transferred to the main building he was taught to converse by speech. He now generally makes use of this accomplishment when with hearing persons with whom he is acquainted.

He shows great fondness for history. Accounts of the heroic exploits of the makers of the nation arouse him to such an extent that he has several times expressed regret that he cannot be a soldier. He also enjoys studying geography with the help of raised maps. After getting a clear idea of numbers he began the study of arithmetic, but as yet he is not far advanced in this branch.

At home he sometimes assists his father, who is a carpenter. Last summer he helped a friend during the haying season. In the trade school of the New York institution he learned to cane chairs and in this and various other ways he manages to earn his spending money during the long summer vacation. When alone he thinks and plans and tries to invent something useful. His chief aim in life is to fit himself to earn a comfortable living when his school days are over.

The photographs from which the accompanying pictures were made were taken especially for this article, the boy posing readily in the positions required. The prin-

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