

Modern Methods in Teaching the Deaf to Speak



FIRST ORAL GRADE.



PRACTICE ON VOWEL EXERCISE.



EXPRESSING WISHES IN LANGUAGE.

The progress of modern methods in instructing the defective members of the community has no better illustration than in the system employed to teach the deaf to speak. Not so long ago it was the general practice to refer to the inmates of these institutions as deaf and dumb, whereas it has been demonstrated that the dumbness is generally a result of the deafness and no necessary accompaniment of the affliction.

Until the last twenty or thirty years the sign language has been the only means of communication to deaf persons and the work of the schools for the deaf was confined to teaching proficiency in the signs. While the sign manual is still the main reliance for the deaf, under more modern methods the mutes are taught actually to speak, and, while they cannot hear their own spoken words, they can determine by the movements of the lips what other people are saying. To quote from a recent writer of experience:

"Oralists base their assumption of the power of the born deaf to acquire articulate speech on the fact that the vocal organs of such children do not disqualify them from speaking, this seeming to point to the fact that it is the inability to hear which prevents the natural development of language, i. e., by the imitation of vocal articulate sounds, the repetition of which, constantly falling on the ear of an infant, at last arouses in turn the instinct to imitate. This he does with gradually increasing accuracy until intelligible speech is the result. The deaf infant, by reason of his infirmity, is cut off from all this and at the end of two or three years he is still where his hearing brother began—able to make vocal but inarticulate sounds—and here he must remain unless specially taught, first to articulate and then to use these sounds intelligently as language."

Awaken Child's Dormant Powers.

"Various preliminary exercises have first to be gone through in order to awaken the child's somewhat dormant powers of attention, perception and imitation, the length of time to be spent over them varying according not only to his mental capacity, but to the amount of home training, spoiling or neglect he has hitherto received. Eventually, however, the day arrives when he is ready to learn his first sound, the idea being to teach primarily those most easy for him to pronounce and lip-read."

"The alphabet, as usually taught to hearing children, is discarded for the present and the child learns only the phonetic sounds. For instance, to pronounce the sound of 't,' his attention is directed to his teacher's mouth, where he sees the upper front teeth lightly resting on the lower lip. This alone will not enable him to say it; the sense of touch (a most important factor in the instruction of the deaf as with the blind) is next brought into use, and the child's hand is put near the teacher's mouth in such a position that he can feel the breath on the back of it, his other hand being placed in front of his own mouth to show him that he must experience a similar feeling on that. He thus readily produces the required sound, which, by the way, is entirely without voice, several non-vocal sounds being taught first as presenting less difficulty. The 't' is then written down by the teacher and read and copied by the pupil, and here we get a sample of the deaf child's first lessons in lip-reading, articulation, reading and writing, which progress simultaneously for the present at any rate."

"In the formation necessary for 'th'—the tip of the tongue between the teeth, the hand is again called into requisition in order that the breath may be felt. All non-vocal articulations are illustrated in this way, careful attention, on the child's part,

to the exact positions of the articulating organs being indispensable, and equal quickness on the teacher's in order to detect any defect in the sound or unnecessary exaggeration or distortion of the features."

Work in Nebraska School.

The application of the oral system of instruction for the deaf can be witnessed any day during the school year at the Nebraska School for the Deaf in the suburbs of Omaha. About one-half of the pupils in this institution are at present being taught orally and the number of those receiving such training is increasing rapidly. Hitherto the oral work has never been taught to such young pupils and so carefully as it is at present, so that those engaged in the profession insist that much better results are to be expected in the near future.

The accompanying photographs are reproduced, giving graphic illustrations of the links in the chain by which the deaf pupils are brought to a realization of their power of speech. While the oral method is not employed to the exclusion of the sign language, nor to that of finger spelling at any time, they serve to define and explain the words and teach the clear and definite knowledge of what to say, while the oral method instructs in how to say it. With reference to this work and its import, one of the intelligent teachers at the Nebraska school, describing the pictures, gives this explanation:

"Our little deaf children are taught just as the hearing are. The first prattle of the hearing little one is 'ba-ba' and the first and easiest utterance of the deaf child, too, is 'ba-ba.' Is it then contrary to nature that the deaf child makes this mistake in its first effort to say papa when the hearing child cannot do better? Having obtained this vowel sound, which is nature's first, we correct the 'b' and try to get 'p' instead. 'P' is only an aspirate, while 'b' has the additional voice, so the child is taught through sight and touch something easier than he had been trying to say."

"In the first illustration Miss Bamford, in charge of the first oral grade, having assiduously adopted those methods which are deemed the best for beginners, until she has made them her own, is pictured giving the little boy his first lesson, and what first lesson could better satisfy his parents? While this picture was in preparation the summons to recess was given, when another pupil at once arose and practically showed the success of the method employed by asking his teacher in spoken words whether he were to give the requisite class-signals for dismissal, saying clearly, 'one-two-three-four.'"

Acquiring Articulation.

"In figure 2 the child is seen at practice upon the vowel sound 'e' in a scale exercise of several vowels. As in learning music, the child requires simple scales and exercises first, so in acquiring articulation the simplest and fundamental sounds are first given and then from these words and sentences are immediately constructed. The pupils of Mr. Shreve, who is a graduate of Nebraska university and whose natural executive ability is supplemented by ample technical skill in this department, show the good results obtained from constant and methodical syllable drill."

"The next picture is that of the third oral grade, and it shows an interested pupil and his teacher, Miss Jack, whose work at the normal school was known for its success in demonstrating when enough had been taught on an indicated line and taught thoroughly. The work of this grade requires the wishes of the pupils to be expressed in spoken language, as shown in the figure. Can it be denied that the best

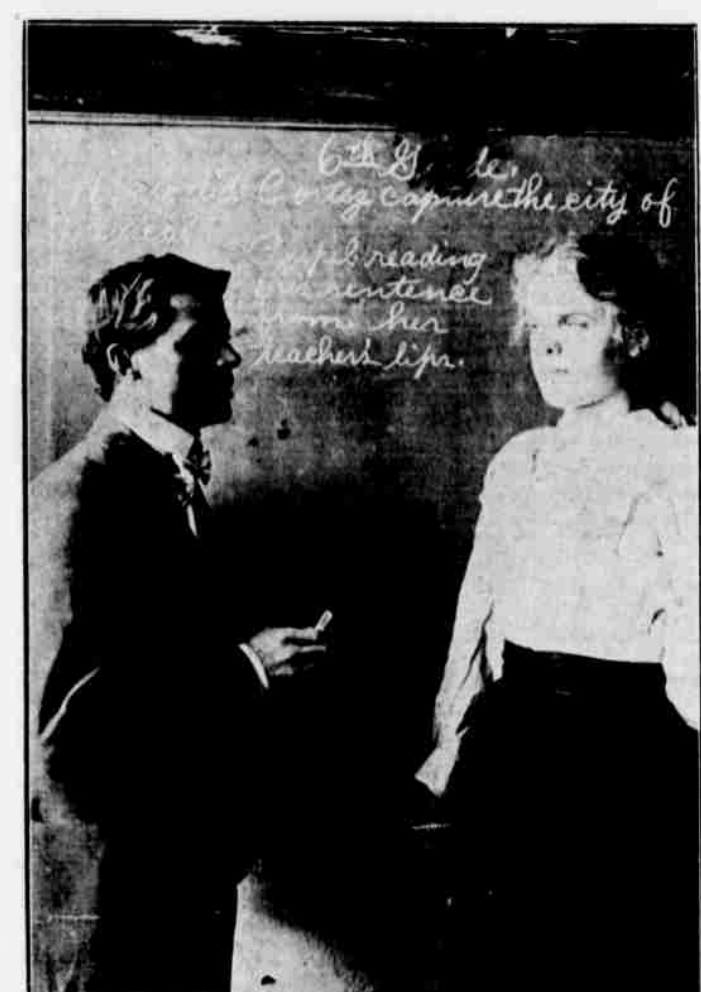
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GIVING PUPIL DRILL ON LETTER "D."



MAP DRAWN FROM MEMORY.



HIGHEST ORAL GRADE.



SKILLFUL ARTICULATION OF HISTORIC NAMES.