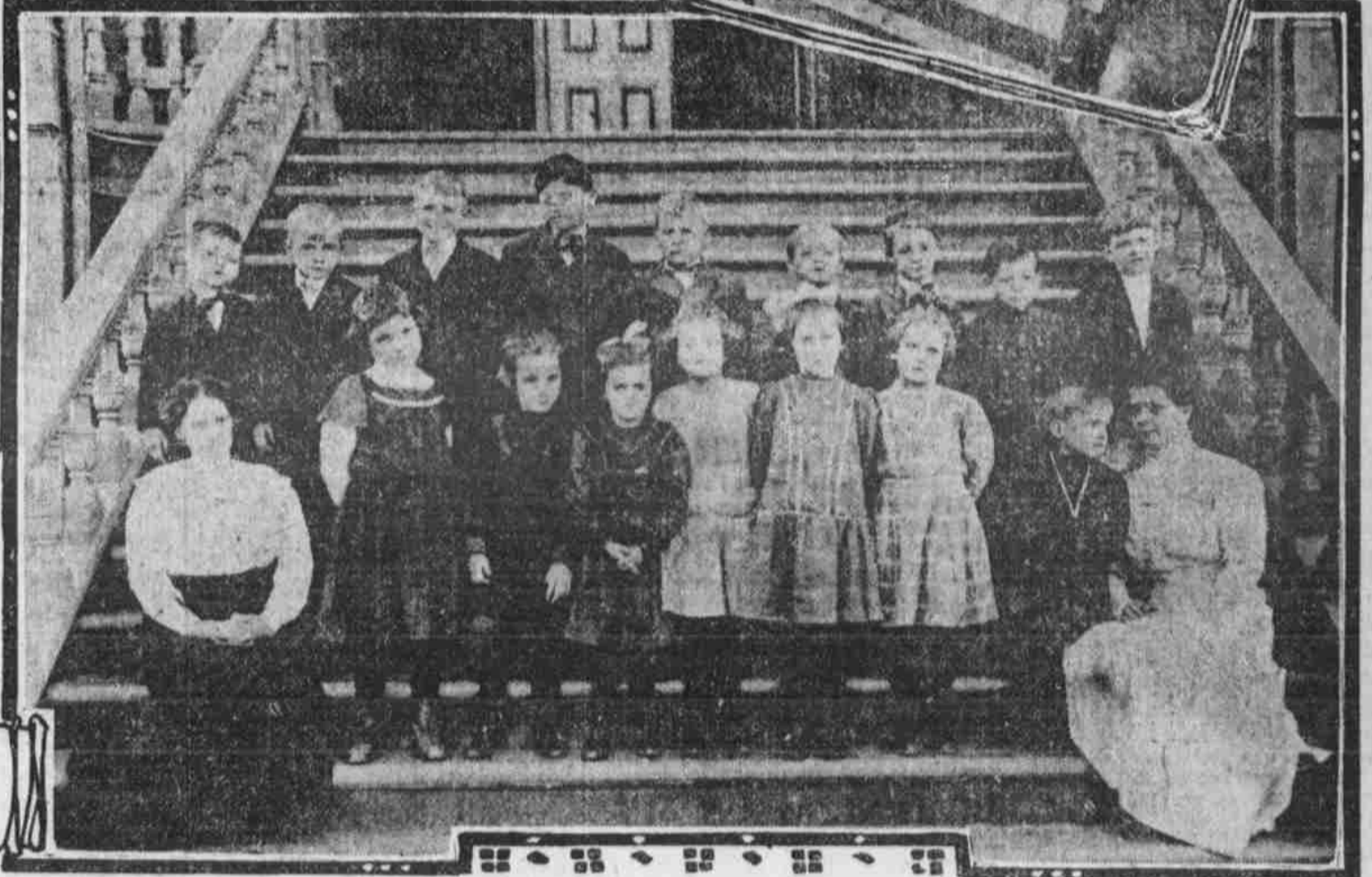


How a Deaf Child is Taught to Talk Like Other Folks



HEARING with the eyes is a rather new art, but it is being taught with more or less success in the schools for the deaf of the United States, and the Nebraska school, located in Omaha, is not behind in this work.

As long ago as 1894 Prof. J. A. Gillespie, then in charge of this school, had begun instruction on oral lines. In an interview with Alexander Graham Bell, printed in *The Bee* during a visit he made to the Omaha school in that year, Mr. Bell said:

"The Nebraska institution is celebrated the world over for its progress in teaching the deaf to hear. The method in use here was originated by Prof. J. A. Gillespie and is revolutionizing the manner of instructing these unfortunates. For a number of years teachers in the institution have been accustomed to ring a dinner bell to summon their pupils, but it never seemed to occur to anyone that a child that could hear a dinner bell might be taught to hear speech. It remained for Prof. Gillespie to attempt this, and he has demonstrated that 16 per cent of our deaf mutes could be taught to hear and speak; and when you consider that the census of 1880 reports about 34,000 deaf mutes in this country, you see how important this matter is.

"The method pursued by this school is to form those pupils who can hear any loud noise, such as a dinner bell, into classes, and teach them to articulate, thus transforming them from deaf mutes into ordinary deaf people. While I was in Europe I was questioned very closely about this Nebraska institution and the work it is doing, but was unable to give a very extended idea of the matter, as I had never visited it; so I resolved to avail myself of the first opportunity and investigate the matter fully. The institution has gained a reputation in his thing which is world wide and has done more to change the general idea regarding this subject than anyone ever dreamed of."

Since Mr. Bell gave that interview to *The Bee* after visiting the Nebraska school, the institution has kept in the front rank among schools for the education of the deaf. To convey an understanding of the new and better method as it has been developed at the present time, it will be pertinent to quote Mrs. Arline B. N. Moss of St. Louis, a noted and successful teacher.

"We begin at the beginning," says Mrs. Moss. "When a deaf person wishes to master lip reading he must learn perfectly just what shapes the lips take in making all the sounds. The vowels are taken one by one and the pupil is drilled in these sounds over and over for hours at a time. Then the consonants are taken. It seems almost hopeless to them at first, but in time they begin to distinguish them. As soon as the vowel and consonant sounds are mastered then we begin to form words. It is like learning to read and to

speak all over again. It is practice that does it. I talk some days till I am almost hoarse in an effort to let the pupil see just how the letters should be formed.

"Then I sometimes have him practice before a mirror. In that way he can watch his own lips move as he pronounces certain letters or combinations of letters."

The method here described is practiced at the Nebraska school with encouraging success. While it is hard, at first, for the little ones to comprehend such a thing as sound, they are eager to learn and soon begin to imitate the lip movements of the teacher, who must have illimitable patience. Reward comes in seeing the gleam of gratification that comes to their faces when the realization dawns that they are being asked to make sounds, and that this is possible. Experienced teachers bear testimony that, once interested, the deaf children develop a wonderfully keen insight. Their sense of touch is also very acute, and some of them can detect vibrations of the vocal chords in a surprising way.

The present number of pupils in the Nebraska school is 165, distributed among fifteen classes, giving an average of eleven pupils to each teacher. "It will be understood," says Superintendent Booth, "that instruction is largely individual; therefore the number of pupils under one teacher must be smaller than in the case of hearing children. Especially is this true with oral classes where speech is taught and lip reading is the medium of instruction. The best authorities agree that oral classes, for best results, should not contain more than from six to eight children."

The pupils range in age from 6 to 21, and the classes in their work cover ten grades, carrying them through arithmetic, algebra, English grammar, American and English history, and giving a year of Latin, preparing them for Gallaudet College for the Deaf, an institution maintained at Washington by the United States government, and which deaf students from all the states attend for a full college course free of expense for tuition or board.

The graduating class last year contained seven students, two of whom are now at Gallaudet college. Nebraska's present representation at Gallaudet includes seven students in the various college classes. The present high class of the school contains twelve pupils, all of whom will, it is thought, graduate in June.

The total number of pupils that have been enrolled in the school since its founding in 1869 is 829, coming from seventy-nine counties of the state. At this time fifty-three counties have representatives in the school. Douglas county has forty-one, Lincoln fourteen, Kearney, Knox and Dodge each seven, Dixon six, Hall and Custer each five, Pierce, Saline and Otoe each four. The state of Wyoming maintains three pupils in the school at an annual cost of \$269 per pupil.

IN THE KINDERGARTEN GRADE

KINDERGARTEN PUPILS AND TEACHERS

Omitting cost of buildings and the interest on the money invested, the cost per pupil to the state for maintenance and instruction approximates \$250 per annum.

The number of pupils who have completed the prescribed course and received a diploma of graduation is ninety-five. A far larger number, having completed a partial course, have received certificates of honorable dismissal.

The school maintains an industrial training school, and teaches carpentry, printing, painting, shoemaking and farming to the boys, and dressmaking and laundry work to the girls. The former pupils of the school are generally following the occupations thus taught at school and as a rule successfully.

The last Nebraska legislature, responding to a request of parents desiring it, passed a law making the employment of the oral method compulsory in the future work of the school. The oral method aims to give speech and lip reading to deaf children, and where skillfully applied under favorable conditions the method in other states has proven a success. At present all new pupils, or those entering schools this fall, are being taught orally. These constitute two classes. In addition to these, six classes formerly taught orally are continued under the oral method. The seven remaining classes, made up principally of the older pupils, heretofore taught manually, are continued, and will be continued, under the manual method until their graduation.

It will take time, probably several years, according to Prof. Booth, for the oral method to entirely replace the manual method, by graduating the manually taught and by training the new pupils as they enter exclusively by speech. The process is thus an evolutionary rather than a revolutionary one, a process of natural growth rather than of destruction and attempted reconstruction.

Since 1755, when the Abbe de l'Epée established a little school in Paris for the systematic education of the deaf, supported by his own small income, great strides have been made by those

interested in the work. Before the good abbe began his work only occasional cases had been known in which nobles or men of great wealth had succeeded in finding peculiarly equipped and devoted men to teach their deaf children. At the same time that l'Epée took up this work others in England, Scotland and Germany were teaching by the oral method, but were catering only to the rich and keeping their methods secret. The French priest opened his doors to all. Thomas H. Gallaudet, sent to Europe for training in 1816, found no welcome where the methods were so closely guarded, but at the l'Epée school he was warmly welcomed and was taught what Abbe Sicard, then in charge, knew. So it was when Gallaudet opened the first school in the United States, at Hartford, Conn., in 1817, he could give instruction only in the sign language and by the manual method. This plan was continued for half a century.

In the oral method all manual forms of communication, either gestural signs or finger alphabet, are abolished. All instruction or communication is spoken, except that writing is taught as in any ordinary school to hearing pupils. A little book, "Syllabus on the Education of the Deaf," published by the otological section of the American Medical association, asserts that in Europe at present the oral method is almost universal, "while the United States is the stronghold of manualism." It also gives figures showing that in 1901 Europe had 356 schools out of 423 teaching the oral system, while the United States in 1910 had eighty-two and Canada two oral schools out of a total of 152. Pupils taught in purely oral schools in the United States in 1910 numbered only 2,809 out of a total enrollment of 12,332. This indicated an average of but 22 per cent orally taught in this country, against an average of 80 per cent in Europe. Germany, Norway, Holland and Switzerland teach the deaf by the oral method exclusively. In addition to the 2,809 pupils mentioned as receiving oral instruction in the United States, 4,753 others are put down as being "taught wholly or chiefly by the oral method." This would bring the percentage of the United States up to about

60, or only twenty points behind Europe as a whole.

The grounds of the Nebraska School for the Deaf comprise twenty-three acres, ten of which were given to the state by James Bonner. The first building erected was the present north wing, in 1871. At present the plans count seven large buildings, one being a handsome new auditorium, and four small frame buildings. There is a staff of thirty-odd teachers, and Superintendent Booth considers the Nebraska institution as one of the best in the land. He is not alone in that opinion, and in addition it can be said that the location and surroundings are almost ideal. Majestic maples and widespread cottonwoods surround the buildings, and orchard, vineyard and garden are carefully cultivated and supply the inmates with a wholesome variety of food for the tables.

An association of parents and guardians of deaf, or partially deaf, children of Nebraska has been formed, to be known as the Nebraska Parents' Association to Promote the Oral Education of the Deaf. The officers are: E. J. Babcock, president, North Loup; Major C. F. Scharmann, vice president, Omaha; Mrs. A. N. Dafoe, secretary, Tecumseh; J. F. McLane, treasurer, superintendent schools Florence; executive committee, Major C. F. Scharmann, Superintendent J. F. McLane, John S. Reed, Lincoln; Al N. Dafoe, Tecumseh. The organizers feel that the parents of deaf children are the ones most vitally interested in their education. They wish to have them become as nearly as possible like hearing children, taught and trained to talk with their families and friends, and understand ordinary conversation by reading their lips.

The law passed by the last legislature for oral instruction provides that speech shall be used during the entire school life of all children hereafter entered in the Nebraska School for the Deaf who are capable of receiving oral instruction, and it has been demonstrated that there are but few that are not capable of being taught orally. In case any are found who are incapable of receiving oral instruction they will be taught by such other method

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