

OUR PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS.

By Mrs. Alice T. Terry.

MR. PRESIDENT, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN: When I was asked to speak before this representative body of my fellow deaf, the National Association of the Deaf, I desired to choose only the subject that will emphasize in the clearest manner all our activities in behalf of our kind. Therefore, nothing suited me better than "Our Happiness," for after all, people will come to know us better, and they will like us infinitely better if we can impress upon them that, despite our affliction, we are constantly seeking our own betterment.

Just now in the public eye, in Convention assembled, I should like nothing better than to have people say of us that "we look happy." If they can say that they will not pity us. On the other hand, our cheerfulness and our hopefulness will inspire them and cause them to wonder all the more at their own short-comings. It must have been precisely this impression of us that so inspired Secretary of the Interior, Franklin K. Lane, into one of his greatest speeches, that he delivered before Gallaudet College Alumni Association in Washington, D. C., a year ago. He said, in part: "Nature in one of her mysterious moods placed her hands upon your ears, and in so doing dared you to presume to play life's game as men and women. You took up that challenge. *You have triumphed* and WE WISH A SHARE IN THAT TRIUMPH."

A few more similar happy speeches by our great and influential men, published and sent broadcast, and the deaf will be in the truest sense "restored to society."

For, by then, people will have become more thoughtful, they will have forgotten to merely *pity* us in their eagerness to commend us and grant us an equal chance in life.

Not long ago, a California woman, the president of one of the greatest organizations in the State, was asked to speak before an audience of deaf people. Obviously the invitation had not appealed to her, but when she faced her audience she confessed rather remorsefully to her interpreter that she had always thought that "deaf people had such a dull look in their eyes." She saw her mistake, and at once congratulated them upon their smiling, radiant faces, which moved and inspired her into a truly eloquent address.

This is only one instance in many where the deaf have made true and lasting friends. People will turn to us instinctively, if they think that we are happy.

Then, and in accordance with the spirit of modern progress, in which all things move, we are not to stand still. Our happiness would not be secure if we did. That is the basis of our Association activity. That is why we have conventions. In this we are doing precisely like other people. It all goes to speak the nation-wide spirit of unity and progress.

Let me speak now of our younger generation—our thousands of little deaf children throughout the United States. Let it always be the foremost object of the National Association of the Deaf to look after these unfortunate little ones and endeavor to see that they are started right on the road to Education. No one understands them better, no one loves them better than we do. Of all the methods by which deaf children are taught, the "combined method" stands out pre-eminently the best. It is the one true and tried method. It answers the practical and *educational* (I cannot emphasize that word education too strongly) requirements of the deaf child. It educates him mentally, morally, spiritually, physically—in short, makes him wholly and truly happy. The Oral Method may benefit the *few*, but *not* the many.

Now in convention, and rejoicing in our ability to combat successfully life's battles, let us again credit our education to the "combined method" that was so extensively used in our schools in those days.

O, for a return of the good old days! We cannot have again on earth the immortal Abbe d'Epee, the Gallaudets and others; but we can and we will keep alive their practical, imperishable ideals on deaf-mute education. The act of destroying these ideals produces upon the deaf world an unspeakable sadness. It means to us just what it would mean to this country if it substituted some one else for George Washington or Abraham Lincoln.

It may be argued that the amazing growth of Pure Oralism is a sign of progress. It cannot be, because the results do not justify the sinful waste of time and labor spent. Any system of teaching before it can be called *progressive* must be able to show widespread and lasting results. As a rule these orally taught pupils, when through school, seek the other deaf to learn their sign language, fall in love with them, marry them and forget what they learned in articulation. This need surprise no one, for it is only natural. We have learned from experience that the world is not over-kind nor over-patient with the "deaf voice." Semi-mutes or those who lost their hearing after they had acquired fluent speech, have a hard enough time of it, but for those who never heard a spoken word in their lives the effort to converse orally with people is painfully embarrassing. There is no remedy for the defective "deaf voice."

California being the mecca of so many tourists, I have here had opportunities to meet and talk with graduates and former pupils from nearly every school in the Union. In the usage of spoken or written English they hardly differ one from another. In no instance have those from the Oral School demonstrated the pure oral claim of teaching better English. And, always, the products of the "combined method" schools show more knowledge, more adaptability with the ways of the world.

A beautiful young deaf lady said to me sorrowfully, "I was born totally deaf. My mother kept me in a pure oral school for the first

five years. While they succeeded in teaching me to speak and read the lips to some extent, I did not know the meaning of the words I learned." Poor little child, how was she to know? Nothing but the illustrative language of signs and manual spelling will adequately explain the meaning of words to the eager little deaf-mute child. Later, when this girl was placed in a "combined method" school, her progress really began. But the struggle and tension of oral teaching had undermined her health. And she has never been able to finish her education. Nevertheless, she has profited wonderfully by her mastery of the sign language which she has since learned from her deaf associates. And now the best I can say of her is that she is **happy**.

No doubt every one of you can rectite similar instances of the harm and disappointment caused by those oral zealists. But when will parents of little deaf children know better?

Our public schools are characterized by strong, active Parent-Teacher Associations. They have eliminated much of the political influence that had always been a blot upon their schools. When we can model our deaf schools more and more after these public schools and in that way succeed in getting parents properly enlightened we will be able to halt this oral evil.

Meanwhile, we are to continue our activities in behalf of these helpless little children. The lack of sufficient funds need not necessarily discourage us. For remember, there is one power in the world greater than money. That is the power of Right. Ultimately it triumphs and sweeps everything else before it.

The successful adult deaf have long been desirous of a place on the Board of Control of their Alma Mater. Such a yearning is natural. It proves that they have made good and in the name of justice want to go back to take a voice in the policy and destiny of their schools. Who but they could so well impress the little pupils and inspire into them the example of emulation?

When we graduated, the superintendents invariably sent us forth into the world with this command, "Be brave; be truthful." How the best of us have succeeded, God only knows. The fierce battles we have fought alone; the prejudice of deafness we have had to overcome also alone; the ceaseless struggle to prove to a cold, callous world that we are just like other people; in short, through sheer determination to ultimately triumph! Then to have our Alma Mater question our ability to serve on its Board of Control—does it prove that they are our friends and *wish a share in our triumph*? There is much room for doubt.

These Boards are in truth usually made up of persons who do not KNOW the deaf; cannot know their needs, and who are not altogether to blame if they, through misinformation, are misshaping the destiny of our schools.

A prominent educator, an ex-superintendent of a deaf school, recently declared that this Board of Control business is a game of politics. It may be—and that reminds me to say that I wonder why Pure Oralism, which has been so long and faithfully pursued, has not yet fitted some of its graduates sufficiently well for politics.

The spirit of independence is so thoroughly imbedded into suc-

cessful people that even now the blind clamor to be recognized as INDEPENDENTS. They are tired of being considered dependents, and blame their parents and teachers for it. Independence makes happiness complete and ability manifest.

One of the greatest forces for right in this day is the Evangelist Billy Sunday. Of course, some have objected to his wild, uncouth gestures; nevertheless, they have been greatly enlightened by his double force of delivery. When questioned about his method, Mr. Sunday replied, "My gymnastics in the pulpit—I employ them because I want to illustrate what I am saying. I want to appeal to the eye as well as to the mind. That is the Bible, man, parable, parable!"

This man who has moved and inspired millions, is he not some sort of an authority? Mark that line, *I want to appeal to the eye*, that is to say, the voice alone is not enough. If Mr. Sunday were familiar with the methods used in deaf-mute education, he would say of the Pure Oral Method, "It is not sufficient." In this day of increased inventions, increased noises, who knows but that there will yet come an universal language of signs?

About that word *mute*. Lately some of the teachers of the deaf, presumably the oral champions, have requested that we drop that word altogether. We have practically eliminated *dumb* and were glad to do so. Now it is easy to see why they would drop *mute*. It interferes with their imaginary oral progress. It would not be honest to drop that word. It describes properly those of us who are unable to use articulate language, who never could and never will. It is not a bad word, as they would have us think.

Some of the most sublime passages in literature are characterized by the word *mute*. Is not the powerful appeal in moving pictures *mute*? Again, since the great European war, the magazines have said with force and effect, "Piano of Paderewski is *mute*, great Pole grieves at war ruin." If we drop *mute* we will have to change the signs for *deaf*.

As I have said, people like us best if we maintain always the cheerful face and the stout heart with a willingness and eagerness to work. But so long as states, through their legislatures, enact laws that humiliate us, or unjustly discriminate against us by cutting us off from the employment we seek—because of our affliction—how are we going to keep up our courage? Right here is the need of powerful State Associations. Let the deaf of every State organize themselves into a strong, wide-awake Association for their protection, their own salvation. Then the next best and most loyal thing for them to do is to join the National Association of the Deaf, and adhere to it the rest of their days.

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As we grow in membership, so will we grow in power and influence. There lived, and not long ago there died, in California, one of the world's greatest and bravest of men, Joaquin Miller. We are now near the hillside which was his home. He evinced great interest in the several deaf people he met. No doubt many of you know him as the author of "Columbus," which is conceded by many to be the greatest American poem. My only wish is that the great poet had seen it rendered in the sign language. On this occasion I am going to declaim a part of it, for it embodies the spirit of true progress. It should spur and help us in our ceaseless labors for our fellow-deaf, and in our dearest of all aims—our pursuit of Happiness:

COLUMBUS.

Behind him lay the gray Azores,
Behind the Gates of Hercules;
Before him not the ghost of shores;
Before him only shoreless seas.
The good mate said: "Now we must pray,
For lo! the very stars are gone.
Brave Admir'l, speak; what shall I say?"
"Why, say 'Sail on! sail on! and on!'"

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They sailed and sailed, as winds might blow,
Until at last the blanched mate said:
"Why, not even God would know
Should I and all my men fall dead;
These very winds forget their way,
For God from these dead seas is gone.
Now speak, brave Admir'l speak, I say."
He said: "Sail on! sail on! and on!"

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Then pale and worn he kept his deck,
And peered through darkness. Ah, that night,
Of all dark nights; and then a speck—
A light! a light! a light! a light!
It grew, a starlit flag unfurled!
It grew to be Time's burst of dawn.
He gained a world; he gave that world
Its grandest lesson: "On! sail on!"

Mr. Greener: I am sure we all enjoyed the reading of this paper. I move that it be printed in the proceedings, and that we thank Mrs. Terry for preparing it.

Motion carried unanimously.