Gordon (J. C.)

An Address . . .

Upon the Occasion of the
Opening of the First Meeting of
the Oral Section of the
Convention of
American Instructors of the Deaf,
July 4th, 1895.

By Prof. J. C. Gordon, M. A., Ph. D.,
Chairman of the Oral Section.

J. C. Gordon.
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ADDRESS

UPON THE OCCASION OF THE OPENING OF THE FIRST MEETING OF THE ORAL SECTION OF THE CONVENTION OF AMERICAN INSTRUCTORS OF THE DEAF, JULY 4TH, 1895.

BY PROF. J. C. GORDON, M. A., PH. D.
Chairman of the Oral Section.

Ladies and Gentlemen of the Oral Section:—This day and hour mark no crisis but an epoch in educational progress so full of promise for the increased welfare of deaf children that you will pardon me for noting a few facts along historic lines leading to this new era.

That "the world moves" goes without saying. I invite your attention for the moment to a much smaller field: our own conventions of instructors.

In America, oral work for the deaf and dumb has played a role, so humble, that in the earlier conventions the subject, if presented at all, was treated with general indifference or neglect, if not overwhelmed with ridicule and relegated to the limbo of Utopian theories, through the incredulity of those who looked upon such work, in the generality of cases, as rank charlatanry and an imposition upon the public.

No action concerning speech for the deaf was proposed or taken at the first five conventions.

The Sixth Convention,* held in 1868, about two years after the opening of the first, permanent, oral schools in America,

*In point of fact, the 6th Convention, set for 1861, and postponed on account of the Civil War, was never held; but in consequence of ques-

took action recommending the teaching of speech to semi-mutes and the semi-deaf, but held that it was "not profitable except in very rare cases to teach congenital mutes articulation."

Though no action was taken at the Seventh, Eighth or Ninth Conventions, a cursory review of the Proceedings of these conventions reveals the testimony of many individuals to excellent results in many schools both in teaching the deaf and dumb to speak and in teaching them by speech.

It was not until the Tenth Convention, in 1882, however, that a "plea" was entered "that all the deaf children in our schools might be permitted to make the attempt to learn to use their voices and to read the lips of others." No action on this subject was taken at this convention, but in 1886, at the Eleventh Convention, MISS GARRETT'S plea to the Tenth Convention was practically answered by the unanimous adoption of DR. GALLAUDET'S resolution, as amended, which has been presented anew in the constitution proposed for adoption at this, the Fourteenth Convention.†

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tions arising during the interruption of the Conventions, the establishment of oral schools in Mass., and in N. Y., and DR. GALLAUDET'S tour through Europe, a call was issued to the heads of the "regular institutions" to assemble in 1868, "with a view of resuming these conventions." Instructors who were not principals participated in this meeting, and a committee of this body issued the call for the convention of 1870. The Committee of Publication of the Proceedings of the latter body, DR. MACINTIRE, H. S. GILLET and J. C. GORDON, were unanimously of the opinion that the Conference of 1868, called under exceptional conditions, would be the last of its kind. Under this mistaken view, the Committee concluded to regard the First Conference as the Sixth Convention and numbered the convention of 1870, the *Seventh*.

†While this is passing through the press, I may say to the general reader that previous to the XIV Convention at Flint, no constitution or permanent organization had been adopted. At this meeting a constitution was adopted pledging the Convention "as an association to stand committed to no particular theory, method, or system" of instruction, but binding its members upon the subject of teaching speech and lip-reading by incorporating the California resolution upon this subject as follows:

Resolved, That earnest and persistent endeavors should be made in every school for the deaf to teach every pupil to speak and read from

So much for deaf children and the recognition of their rights in this important matter.

But, what about the teachers of speech? What have our conventions done for them? The earlier conventions, of course, did nothing at all.

The first movement in this direction originated in another body. The Third, and so far the last Convention of Articulation Teachers met in New York City in 1884. It embraced a larger membership than any of the ten conventions of American Instructors preceding it, and it was representative of the entire profession to a noteworthy extent.

At this convention the following resolutions were introduced by me and seconded by PRESIDENT GALLAUDET:—"*Resolved*, That the Convention of American Instructors of the Deaf and Dumb be requested to organize a section of the Convention, for the Promotion of Articulation Teaching.

Resolved, That this request be transmitted to the Executive Committee of the Convention."

These resolutions met with hearty and unanimous approval and were formally adopted.

Six years later, in 1890, DR. BELL called the attention of the Twelfth Convention of Instructors to these resolutions, and remarked the fact that there was no record of their having been presented at the Eleventh, or California Convention. The Convention after deliberation took action in cognizance of the request of the Articulation Teachers' Convention, to which attention had been thus called by DR. BELL, and through a

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the lips, and that such efforts should be abandoned only when it is plainly evident that the measure of success attained does not justify the amount of labor. *Provided*, That the children who are given to articulation teachers for trial should be given to articulation teachers who are trained for the work, and not to novices, before saying it is a failure; and *Provided*, That a general test be made, and those who are found to have sufficient hearing to distinguish sounds shall be instructed aurally."

It will be observed that this constitutional provision applies to speech and lip-reading only as subjects of instruction, and that the Convention is specifically precluded from any interference with particular methods or systems of instruction.

committee presented the following report which was adopted: —"*Whereas*, At the last Convention of Articulation Teachers of the Deaf, a resolution was adopted looking to the formation of a section of the American Instructors of the Deaf, 'for the promotion of articulation teaching;' therefore be it

Resolved, That the Oral Teachers of this Convention be invited to form a Section for the purposes indicated, to be organized under its own officers, the hours of meeting to be determined by the appropriate Committee of the Convention, and to be so ordered as to harmonize with the general meetings and with the Normal Section."

The oral teachers present thereupon met, adopted a resolution of thanks to the Convention, and selected an Executive Committee for the Oral Section, which action was reported to the Convention and formally approved during the final session of the Convention.

The Thirteenth Convention, held in Chicago in 1893, assembled for a brief business-session only, the literary or educational programme having been assigned to a Committee of the World's Congress Auxiliary to the Columbian Exposition and consequently no opportunity arose for the Executive Committee of the Oral Section of the Convention to enter upon its duties until this year.

So it comes about that eleven years have passed since you, assembled in an independent organization, first preferred your request; but "all things come to him who waits," and, to-day, for the first time, the Articulation Teachers of America meet as a recognized, integral part of the Convention which through its venerable Executive Committee gives you even more than you asked or sought, in suspending all other work during the sessions of this section.

For the courtesy and recognition accorded, I stand here as Acting Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Oral Section to thank the Committee of the Convention, and the members of the Convention I see before me in this large assemblage.

And in uttering the sincere and heartful thanks of the Committee, let me not forget to speak a word of thanks for

the oral teachers of America, now numbering about one-half of the actual teaching force of our profession.

Nor let me be unmindful of some two thousand eight hundred and one deaf children under instruction wholly by oral methods, and two thousand three hundred and eighty, more, receiving the boon of speech and lip-reading in larger or smaller measure as special subjects of instruction.

For all these, and the unnumbered thousands of deaf children to be benefitted by the progress of the future, together with the fathers and mothers, and brothers and sisters of them all, we speak most hearty thanks, and trust that our words and deeds may prove no empty form.

In thanking you as members of the Convention, I am not unmindful of the fact that in previous conventions, especially the Eleventh and Twelfth, special needs of oral instructors have not been entirely ignored, but this larger measure of intelligent and generous recognition touches our hearts most profoundly.

And this, all the more because we are not unaware of the fact that the very nature of our work compels innovations, subjecting our every action and every motive to scrutiny that is not always friendly, and criticism that is not always just. We do not complain of this, for we recognize that such is the inevitable fate fate of reformers, however wise and prudent they may be, or however needful the reform.

Our expectations are not great, we have nothing to ask beyond the best opportunities for instruction and mutual improvement within our reach, and we simply wish to thank you for whatever measure of recognition and support is accorded to us, and to the work of instruction especially assigned to us.

Members of the Oral Section: who can doubt that from the work here done, and the workers mutually taught and teaching, there shall go forth into all our school-rooms the good that comes from increased skill, earnest zeal, kindly sympathy, and the contagion of the boundless enthusiasm which fills the hearts and irradiates the faces of the good men and better women I see before me.

May God grant us more knowledge, and help to advance the sacred interests intrusted to us, so that our successors in looking backward and downward to our lower level, may smilingly forgive and forget all our short comings, as they say of us: "They, 'traveling by a dim and perilous pathway,' proved by their works that they loved the deaf and dumb and every one who labored with a pure heart in the common cause for their upbuilding."

Well may we believe in the possibility of progress. Our work is young. Two generations carry us back to the days of the pupils of BRAIDWOOD, HEINNECKE, aud the ABBE DE L'EPEE.

There are those here to-day who have grasped the hands of the sainted GALLAUDET and of SICARD'S famous pupil, LAURENT CLERC.

The first pupils of the first pure-oral school in the world, bald, perhaps, or grey, have not yet "shifted into the lean and slippered pantaloon." (Arnolds of Richmond, 1839.)

The first regularly employed articulation teacher in America has not yet had time to begin to grow old and she is fittingly represented in this Convention by her daughter who is with us here to-day.*

Our dear friend MISS FULLER, sitting yonder, the principal of the Horace Mann School, in Boston, has been longer in continuous service, than any other teacher of speech in the country, while I, your speaker, now the oldest, male, American-representative of those "men who presume to teach before they have learnt," began to try to teach speech one month earlier than MISS FULLER, in 1869.

Yes, this work is young, lacking the garnered wealth of experience transmitted by tradition through experts to novices in other lines, even in the special work of instructing the deaf.

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*The reference here made is to MRS. ALICE NOYES SMITH, daughter of DR. J. L. NOYES, Sup't of the Minnesota School. Her mother as MISS WADSWORTH, of Hartford, was the first, regularly employed teacher of articulation in an established American institution.

And this is no slight reason for our seeking, when possible, the advantage of a summer institute, in order that we may increase the efficiency of our instruction, that the larger and still larger numbers of pupils intrusted to us may receive the greatest possible benefit from our labors.

We appreciate, too, the advantages from meeting here our friends who are not engaged in oral work. Their ever-growing stores of pedagogic treasures have been enriched by the still living traditions of expert teachers of the deaf and dumb, and we hope to learn from and profit by their experience, even while we modestly, yet firmly, continue to seek for "the more excellent way."

In so doing, let us keep our minds and hearts free from prejudice, tolerant to the views of others, interpreting words and acts in a kindly and generous spirit, weighing opinions with care, yet "accepting nothing upon mere authority however venerable."

Fully imbued with modern, scientific methods, let us not fear to put doubtful things to the test of experiment under carefully observed conditions, remembering that "old and feeble is all theory, and young and vigorous is ever-renewing practice."

With these words of counsel, my friends of the oral section, I might have done, but I would be recreant to duty if I did not speak a work of encouragement to you who are engaged in this most arduous work.

The real strength of the improved methods which you represent is in the large measure of success which has crowned your efforts. Science, philosophy, and scholarship have been at work and are producing their natural and legitimate results. Hence you do well to seek further self-improvement, and to elevate your professional qualifications.

With Roger Bacon we may say: "We must not stick to what we hear and read, but must examine most strictly the opinions of our ancestors, that we may add what is lacking and correct what is wrong, but with all modesty and consideration." With this caution, I may say that to you it is given to draw counsel and wisdom and inspiration from many fountains.

We should be profoundly grateful for the researches and recorded views of the philosophers, famous scholars, educators of gigantic mould, and benefactors of mankind, who have made specific and definite contributions to the discovery and application of the science and the art of oral instruction in its different phases.

The hour will not permit me even to call the illustrious roll. It includes the Italian philosopher, JEROME CARDAN; the Spanish scholar and practical teacher, JUAN PABLO BONET; the learned DR. AMMAN of Holland; quaint JOHN BULWER of England; GEORGE DALGARNO, the Scottish philosopher; DRS. HOLDER and WALLIS, founders of the Royal Society of Great Britain; the learned BUFFON of the French Academy, author of the famous report of the Academy upon the great PEREIRE'S labors; the sagacious DESCHAMP of France; the elder BRAIDWOOD of Scotland, whose methods are set forth by GREENE in *Vox Oculis Subjecta*, and by DR. WATSON of London.

Here belongs the ABBE DE L'EPEE, author of a treatise upon *Speech* and *Lip-Reading*, who abandoned the practice of speech-teaching in favor of his peculiar system of methodical signs, long since discarded and now unknown; here belongs the accomplished HEINNECKE, founder of the German method, and here the philosophical BARON KEMPELEN, an original investigator of the mechanism of speech.

The great Swiss, PESTALOZZI belongs to us, or we to him, as the rediscoverer and popularizer of the intuitive method. Among his pupils we may name DR. ESCHKE of Berlin, son-in-law of Heinnecke, MORITZ HILL, (under Pestalozzi at Bunzlau), NAEF, fellow-townsman and pupil of PESTALOZZI at Yverdun, where he was principal of a school for the deaf, and the distinguished VALADE-GABEL who adapted PESTALOZZI'S method to the oral and written instruction of the deaf and dumb. Here, too, we find the philosopher and philanthropist, BARON DE GERANDO of the Paris institution; and the scholarly LEON VAISSE, brought to our shores by the elder DR. PEET to introduce BEBIAN'S method which in Paris had displaced the DE L'EPEE-SICARD system of "methodical signs." VAISSE returned to France, adopted the intuitive method, became

noted as a savant and an educator, and an earnest champion of the oral method. Here, too, belongs Dr. Seguin, claimed by two continents, who was the biographer of Pereire, and the first savant to enunciate the relation of "sense-training" to "mind-building," and to prove his theory by educating the feeble-minded through the senses of touch and sight.

This list would be far from complete without the names of Dr. David Hirsch of Holland and the Cav. Sig. Jules Tarra of Italy.

Among the living I cannot forbear the mention of Dr. Buxton and Dr. Elliot of England, and in our own country, Professor Alexander Melville Bell, the prince of phoneticians, and his illustrious son, Dr. Alexander Graham Bell, who came to the United States upon the invitation of our friend Miss Fuller, many years ago, to devote the larger part of his life, with contagious ardor, to the cause in which all before me are so deeply interested. Still other names are equally worthy of mention here, but I must pause.

The duties of the day and the rich programme before you, forbid that I should detain you longer save to remind you, members of the oral section, that this is not a mere holiday outing to be given over to the mild pleasures of the pic-nic season, nor a political convention to be "stampeded" for this thing, or that thing, by the passions of the hour; but the responsibility of moderation rests upon us, as, rising above the mists of the past, we see the whole profession advancing to a higher plane, with this section in advance, marching forward upon a peaceful mission, through evil report and good report; our only rule, the golden rule; our only law, the law of love; and emblazoned upon our banner, a banner never to be lowered, upon the one side: "*Wisdom openeth the mouth of the dumb,*" and upon the other, "*Malice towards none with charity for all.*"