

## THE WORK WITH THE JEWISH DEAF

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The term "deaf" applies to persons who, through the misfortune of sanguineous marriages, are born deaf, or who, through serious illness at an early age, lose their hearing power and cannot therefore learn how to speak. They are commonly known as "deaf-mutes" or "deaf and dumb." As for those who lose their hearing power in after life, they are called "hard of hearing," and are an entirely different problem. The subject of our attention is, therefore, the deaf and the work being done for them. We may divide this into educational, social, religious, philanthropic and self-support work.

## EDUCATIONAL

In countries where education is compulsory, as it is in the United States, the authorities see to it that the children afflicted with deaf-mutism are sent to the deaf-mute institutions, where they are brought up and educated in the proper way.

There are two methods of education, and both of them have their supporters and their opponents. One method teaches the deaf the language by means of a manual alphabet and signs made by the movements of the arms and hands, thus enabling them to express themselves by signs when among themselves and by writing when with the hearing people. This is called the sign method or the method of least resistance.

The other method trains the deaf by scientific mechanical means to articulate and to speak, also to understand speech by watching the movements of the lips, thus enabling the deaf to become as nearly normal as possible. This is called the oral method.

The object of educating the deaf is primarily to afford them a uniform means of expression and understanding, thereby increasing their usefulness and helping them to become self-supporting as far as their natural handicap will permit.

Although both methods have the same aim, they differ in that one considers that the deaf will not benefit by instruction anyhow, and follows the lines of least resistance (which, by the way, has the support of the deaf themselves), while the other

method tries to make them as nearly normal as possible. This is a wide subject, and therefore impossible to treat here. It is, nevertheless, one of the most important matters affecting the welfare of the deaf individually and as a class. Both methods when pursued singly have proven a failure, and authorities on the education of the deaf are beginning to agree that the best system would be a combined sign and oral method, signs for use among the deaf themselves, and the oral when they come in contact with normal people. However it may be, the deaf receive a fair academic training in the deaf institutions in this country, and their knowledge when they graduate is about equal to a high school education, the school term being twelve years.

## INDUSTRIAL

In order to equip the deaf with a means of earning their livelihood, the institutions for the deaf train their pupils in certain trades, which have been considered especially adapted to them, as they do not necessitate speech. Printing (composing and feeding), carpentry and tailoring have been generally adopted, and some institutions have also included laundering, hat-making and gardening. Owing to the limited means at the disposal of the institutions, the training obtained by the pupils is necessarily rudimentary and the deaf have to pass through a good deal of apprenticeship before they can obtain real work on the merit of their skill, and be self-supporting. At this point especially the deaf require a helping hand. Without this, all the education and training received at the institution would amount to nothing as far as earning their livelihood is concerned. This is where the Society for the Welfare of the Jewish Deaf begins its work.

The Society, through its employment bureau, secures apprenticeships for the graduates at fair salaries. This bureau also finds positions for the adult deaf, without discrimination of sex or creed, it being the only agency of its kind in this country. As a result of training, the deaf in the above mentioned trades, there has been an overcrowding. The employment

bureau has solved this problem by securing apprenticeships for such people, in trades not included in the curriculum of the institution. The results have been so satisfactory that it puts to nought the claims of institutions that the deaf cannot adapt themselves to every trade.

Of course, much depends upon the individual qualities of the deaf, too. The method of education employed while at the institution also plays an important role. If a lip-reader, the deaf will be more acceptable to employers, and will make a success in business, while if only a signer, his field would be limited. It may be apropos to mention here that the average deaf, despite this handicap, grasps, learns and performs any work quicker than the average normal person. The reason for this is supposed to be the wonderful power of concentration that is developed in them through the use of signs and lip-reading. It does not, therefore, take long before the deaf apprentice feels that he can do more responsible work. The labor agent of the Society is again on the job and brings about the desired result.

The employment bureau also finds employment for those who for some reason or other lose their positions, and it sometimes handles the same applicant three and four times during the year.

The following figures will illustrate the work of the bureau covering a period from July 1, 1913, to April 15, 1914:

Total number of positions found, 211; total number of applicants handled and placed, 177—male, 152; female, 25—Jews, 144; Christians, 33.

We have classified applicants as follows: Lip-readers and articulators, lip-readers only and signers only.

Of the lip-readers and articulators there have been 64, with an average salary of \$12.50 per week.

Of the lip-readers only there have been 73, with an average salary of \$10.25 per week.

Of the signers only there have been 40, with an average salary of \$6.30 per week.

These figures speak for themselves, showing clearly the value of the oral system as an industrial asset.

They are divided according to trades as follows:

Architectural draughtsman ..... 1  
Bird-cage makers ..... 5

Bookkeepers' assistants ..... 2  
Bookbinders ..... 3  
Bootblacks ..... 2  
Bottle washers ..... 8  
Bushelman ..... 1  
Car repair man ..... 1  
\*Carpenters and cabinet-makers.... 8  
Cementers ..... 2  
Chandelier-maker ..... 1  
Clerks (shipping) ..... 6  
Clerk (clerical work)..... 1  
Cleaner ..... 1  
\*Compositors ..... 17  
Cut-glass worker ..... 1  
Driver's helper ..... 1  
Electrical workers ..... 5  
Engravers ..... 3  
\*Feeders ..... 18  
Finishers on skirts..... 3  
Feather workers ..... 2  
Flower workers ..... 2  
Generally useful ..... 11  
\*Hatter (hat rounder)..... 1  
Houseworkers ..... 2  
Jeweler ..... 1  
Machinists ..... 7  
Moving picture actor..... 1  
Operators on  
Sweaters ..... 1  
Lapels ..... 1  
Cloaks ..... 1  
Pants ..... 1  
Rubber goods ..... 5  
Shirts ..... 2  
Skirts ..... 2  
Waists ..... 1  
Button-holes ..... 1  
Package openers ..... 3  
Packers ..... 8  
Picture-framer ..... 1  
Plumber's assistant ..... 1  
Pocketbook-makers ..... 4  
Porters ..... 3  
Polishers ..... 2  
Pressers ..... 4  
Rhinestone setter ..... 1  
Salesmen ..... 2  
Sign painters ..... 3  
Soldierer ..... 1  
Sponger ..... 1  
\*Tailors ..... 5  
Glue table man (in paper boxes). 1  
Upholsterer ..... 1  
Varnisher ..... 1  
Woodworkers ..... 2

\* Usual trades taught in institutions.

## DETAILS OF EMPLOYMENT BUREAU WORK

Our society maintains an office at the United Hebrew Charities Building, 356 Second Avenue. This building is located in the center of the city, and is easily accessible from any part of the city. The majority of the Jewish philanthropic and charitable institutions having their offices in this building, their co-operation is easily secured. Our office is open every day from 9 A. M. to 5 P. M. The hours during which applicants for work may apply are from 9 to 11 in the morning every day, excepting legal and Jewish holidays.

When the deaf applicant comes to our office for work he is treated with courtesy and respect. We make him feel at home as much as possible, and create for him an atmosphere of confidence, so that he tells freely what his aspirations are, and what he would like to do. After having a good talk about his past life and his future plans, he is asked to fill out an application blank. Our chief aim is to get a position to fit the applicant, and not as it has been the custom, to fit the applicant into any position. We always try first to place the applicant in his trade or in the trade which he has learned while he was in the institution for the deaf, and in most cases we succeed. We deviate from this rule only in lines such as printing, which are overcrowded.

We do not advertise and we do not read advertisements. We do not get work through the papers. Our work is personal service work. We go from establishment to establishment, from factory to factory, from shop to shop; we interview the employers, explain the work for the deaf, and find out whether they have any work which a deaf man can perform, and thereby earn his livelihood. We do not appeal to employers on the ground of charity. We contend that the deaf are able to perform work, just as good as that performed by a normal person, if given a chance. We contend further, that the deaf man does his work more conscientiously as a matter of fact, more steadily than those who hear, for his attention is not easily distracted.

We are simply interpreters for the deaf in the same sense as one would be an interpreter for men speaking a foreign tongue.

We bring the deaf employe together with his employer. We arrange the details of his work, so that there shall be no misunderstanding. We are always glad and ready to go and settle any difference or misunderstanding that may arise between the employer and his deaf employe and to act as mediators when a promotion, increase in salary or a change in the working hours is desired. In some cases, especially in those of lip-readers and articulators and those who can read and write fairly well, we find that the employer gets along very well with his employe, so that our services are very seldom needed.

Coming back to our employment bureau again. After the applicant has filled out his application, he is told to go out and look for work himself, thus inculcating in his mind the idea of self-support and self-care. If we find a position for him, we communicate with him. If he finds a position before we do, he communicates with us, and we cease our activities in his behalf. It was at first very difficult to accustom the deaf to write to us in such cases, or to keep us informed as to their progress after we secured positions for them. They simply were not used to it. We have made it a practice now to warn them repeatedly at every opportunity so that most of them now comply with our request and try to do their duty.

I consider that our success is due to the fact that we take a broad view of the deaf man. I personally admire them very much and think that, handicapped as they are, they are a brilliant set. Beginning with this point of view, I have taken pains to acquaint myself with them, and I have become intimate with many of them. I visit their homes as a friend, I dine with them, I attend their social gatherings, so that when a deaf man comes to our office as an applicant he meets me as his friend and not as the manager of a philanthropic society.

Our hardest work is with the delinquents, or those who are mentally defective. The deaf institutions either do not admit them into their schools or discharge them at an early date, so that these unfortunates are always in trouble. It is very hard to get apprenticeships for such people, because no

one can explain anything to them and because they cannot make themselves understood by their employer.

We are planning now to form a night class for such backward and adult immigrant deaf, and intend teaching them English, and if necessary to send them to a night trade school after they have acquired a sufficient knowledge of English to understand the teachers of such schools. I feel strongly that at least one institution ought to be open in every State, where such typical deaf mute pupils could go and where special care could be given to their instruction, both in academic as well as in manual and vocational training.

Though this society is composed of members belonging to the Jewish faith and the money comes exclusively from Jews, we do not discriminate if Christian applicants come to our office. We try our best for them just as we do for the Jewish deaf, for we feel that the Society exists primarily for the assistance of the deaf, rather than for helping Jews as such.

## SOCIAL

Wrong conclusion as to causes of deafness and a desire to decrease and check its growth led workers for the deaf to prevent their congregating, as is the case with the blind today. It was supposed that the children of the deaf would be deaf also, and every care was therefore taken by parents and relatives to keep the deaf young people apart.

Supporters of the oral method also thought that by keeping the deaf apart, and always in contact with hearing people, that the speaking and lip-reading capacity of the deaf could be increased. In the last few years the Society has succeeded in educating the parents and acquainting all those who are interested in the deaf with the true facts, namely: that only the children of parents who are both born deaf would be afflicted, whereas the offspring of the union of one born deaf and one who became deaf after birth would surely be normal.

Since then, special meetings and entertainments have been organized for them, and now the Jewish deaf of New York have the following organizations and meet as follows:

Those living in Harlem and the Bronx meet every Tuesday at the Y. M. H. A., 92d Street and Lexington Avenue.

Those living downtown meet every Monday, Thursday and Sunday at the Recreation Rooms, 186 Chrystie Street.

Those living in Brooklyn and Brownsville meet Sunday mornings at the Temple Shaare Zedek, Putnam Avenue, Brooklyn.

Various kinds of entertainments and games are arranged for these social meetings by special committees of the deaf, under the supervision of the Society, and the spirit of fellowship and brotherhood is stimulated.

## RELIGION

There are two congregations: the Hebrew Congregation of the Deaf, Manhattan and Brooklyn, respectively. The Manhattan Congregation has its services in the vestry-rooms of Temple Emanuel and the Brooklyn at Shaare Zedek, Friday evenings. The service consists of a short simple prayer, a hymn sung by artistic signs by a few young ladies who compose the choir, and a sermon on religious or current topics.

From a religious point of view, it is the most unique congregation in the country, because it has as members the children of orthodox, conservative, reformed and all other denominations of Judaism, and yet they all pray in harmony.

Up to June, 1913, Rev. Dr. Elzas was in charge of the religious work of the Society, being minister to both congregations and conducting religious classes at the deaf institutions. Since the severance of his connection with the Society, the work in the congregation is being conducted by layreaders, while the religious classes are being conducted by special teachers. There are five such classes. The Society contemplates having one who knows the sign language ordained as minister of the deaf.

In order to acquaint the deaf with the meaning of our religious customs, a *Seder* festival was organized this year. There was an attendance of 140 persons, and the *Seder* was conducted in the sign language. It was a revelation for many of the Jewish deaf who had been accustomed to see the service in their own homes without understanding its meaning or purpose. The Society now proposes to celebrate in like manner other Jewish festivals.

## PHILANTHROPIC

This branch of the work consists in giving advice and information, furnishing interpreters and co-operating with the different relief-giving agencies, and with courts, hospitals and government departments when the deaf are in trouble or otherwise need our services.

The Society has inaugurated a new policy, that of encouraging the deaf to ask for loans, instead of applying for charity, when they are in need. It has loaned \$75 without interest to three deaf applicants during the time between March 10th to April 15th. Future developments of this policy will, of course, depend upon the results of this experiment.

Another branch of this work consists in furnishing some of the deaf with tools or necessary implements for their trades, or else establish them in business at a small cost.

Still another branch is paying for the academic and industrial education of grown-up deaf immigrants, who on account of their age are barred from the institutions.

## SELF-SUPPORT WORK

This is the conclusion of our work. As soon as the deaf are able to earn their livelihood they are urged to organize or else join any of the existing fraternal societies or clubs which have for their object the furtherance of the self-support idea. These organizations are non-sectarian. Two of the most powerful of such organizations are the National Fraternal Society of the Deaf and the National Association of the Deaf.

The first one has the following features: Sick benefit, insurance (death and disability), medical care, social and mutual help. It thus creates and stimulates in them the idea of self-support and self-care and the spirit of brotherhood. While the National Association has no benefit features, it also tries to stimulate co-operation and brotherhood among the deaf, without discrimination on account of sex or creed.

## ENLARGING THE VOCATIONAL FIELD

The Society is just now experimenting with certain artistic and skilled trades, to which it is thought the deaf can be adapted. It has placed a deaf young man as a moving picture actor with a film producing

company of New York. In the few months of this experiment we have come to the conclusion that if a class is formed to train the deaf in this vocation, and if a normal person knowing the sign language can be trained to become a scenario manager, there is a chance for the deaf to become excellent actors. The reason for this is that speech is not required, and that to make signs and motions is natural to them and does not require any extra effort on their part.

Another of these experiments is the formation of a deaf-mutes' musical band. Sixteen young men with musical inclinations, who have a little hearing, have been organized and coached by a volunteer United States army music teacher. The result is very gratifying. They have already obtained a contract for six months to play at the Loew Theaters in New York.

The number of deaf people, and especially Jewish deaf, in New York and in the United States is not definitely known. The Society contemplates having a census taken at least in New York. If it proves to be as is generally thought, that their number reaches 5,000, then our work is only in its infancy, and we have ahead of us a vast field of activity.

## Better Babies

Mrs. Ann Steese Richardson, national chairman of the Department of Hygiene of the Congress of Mothers and Parent Teachers' Association, has published a book under the title of "Better Babies and Their Care." (Frederick A. Stokes Company, New York. 75 cents net.)

Mrs. Richardson directed the Better Babies Bureau of the *Woman's Home Companion*, as a result of which many Better Babies Contests were undertaken in various parts of the country. She has presented in very simple language rules for the care of young children. The information should be useful to social workers who come in contact with young mothers and who are interested in mothers' meetings and all that these involve. For those who work in Jewish neighborhoods, a Yiddish translation of some of the matter would, of course, be helpful, but, nevertheless, the volume in its English garb cannot but be helpful.

## PROCEEDINGS

## Eighth Biennial Session National Conference of Jewish Charities

Memphis, May 6-8, 1914

THURSDAY EVENING—Continued

Immigration and the Panama Canal  
—ContinuedIX—THE RACIAL CHARACTER OF THE  
IMMIGRANTS EXPECTED

For the first year it is hardly expected that Jewish immigration will be more than moderate. Always conservative in the matter of trying new fortunes, our people will await as a rule the outcome of the initial immigration necessarily looked upon as largely experimental and made up of nationalities more adventurous. But the success of these will have a powerful influence in stirring up a heavy tide of travel in the succeeding years, a tide of variegated humanity representing every section of European territory. Nor is there doubt as to the triumphant success of the bold Argonauts who will be first to steam through our Western gateways. The Italian and others from Southern Europe will surely thrive. Their low standard of living; their inherent adaptability to the climatic and other physical conditions of the country so similar to their own, and their outdoor occupations of fishing, boating, gardening, horticulture and viticulture, combined with tireless industry, thrift and rigid economy, give them an advantage over every other class of immigrants, thus arguing well for an ultimate vindication of their oft-repeated vaunt made only half in jest that California will yet become a Mediterranean province. These people, together with the Greeks, Slavonians, Servians, Bulgarians, Huns, Sicilians, Roumanians and other South-eastern Europeans, who already predominate among the labor gangs in our mines, forests and railroads, are content to toil thus for the best part of their lives at living wage without greater prospect than retirement in their declining years. Having in their native countries become inured in many instances to most appalling destitution, and in almost all cases to hard-

ship, sordid struggle and hopeless drudgery, they not unnaturally regard their lot here as a paradise in comparison. It is not uninteresting in this connection to refer to the report of the Immigration Commission in 1910, wherein appears the statement that \$90,000,000 taken in wage-earnings from the industries of this country are transported—should we say deported?—annually by one nationality of Southern Europeans among the immigrant class residing in this country, some of whom are naturalized citizens, but most of whom are not and never will be. A portion of this is for the support of dependent relatives, but the bulk is for accumulation and investment, pending the time not far distant in the mind of the unassimilated immigrant, when, with additional accumulations, he will remigrate from these hospitable shores and end his days in the sunny land of his ancestors. Comment thereon is superfluous.

X—DISADVANTAGES OF THE JEWISH  
IMMIGRANT

In striking contrast to these hardy sons of the blue Mediterranean, the Russian Jew—product of ten centuries of repression, disability and arrested development alike of mind and body; denied the right to practice handicrafts of any but the lowest sort, and chained down to petty tradesmanship in congested districts—while finding in these Western confines of the new world equal opportunity to become a hewer of wood and a drawer of water, has at the same time the shrinking consciousness of an inherent incapacity therefor and all the horror that goes with it. A contemplation of the hopelessness of such a future as his fellow-immigrant from Southern Europe gladly embraces is almost sufficient to induce suicide. "I will make of you a Kingdom of Priests and a holy people," said the God of his ancestors. This promise and the hope it has kindled in the soul of the dreamer of the ghetto have con-