



DEVOTED TO TEMPERANCE, SCIENCE, EDUCATION, AND LITERATURE.

VOLUME XXIV. No. II.

MONTREAL & NEW YORK, MAY 31, 1889.

30 CTS. per An. Post-Paid.

THE TEACHER OF THE SILENT.

BY HELEN EVERTSON SMITH.

Many years ago there lived in the pretty little city of Hartford, Connecticut, the distinguished surgeon Dr. Mason Fitch Cogswell, who had a beautiful young daughter. Alice Cogswell was as playful, sweet, and bright as any other child, yet she never spoke, and when spoken to she did not hear nor understand. To her, all of life was silent. The voice of parents and playfellows, the sound even of her own laughter, were all unknown to her. The song of birds, the music of instruments, the roar and rush of falling water or of surf, the pattering of rain, the whistling of the wind, the deep roll of the thunder, were all as nothing to her. She could not conceive of their existence. She could ask no questions, she could make no requests, she could tell no thought or feeling of her heart. Those who were well acquainted with her of course knew by her gestures whether she was glad or sorry, hungry or thirsty, sleepy or wakeful, comfortable or uncomfortable; but she had no words to tell them what they could not see. She might wonder at the succession of day and night, she might watch the sinking sun or gaze at the pale moon and twinkling stars, but she could neither ask nor be told what they were; neither could she be made to understand whether an action was right or wrong, or why it was either, for she was deaf and dumb.

Next door to the family of Dr. Cogswell lived a family named Gallaudet, whose eldest son, Thomas, pitied the unfortunate little Alice with all his compassionate heart. One day it occurred to him that she



THOMAS HOPKINS GALLAUDET TEACHING THE DEAF-MUTE.

might be taught to read, and then what a world of happiness might be hers! He began by showing her the letters h—a—t, and soon made her understand that they expressed the hat which he held in his hand, and so by little and little he succeeded in teaching many things to the silent child; but this was not enough for him. From loving and pitying this one little "prisoner of silence," he was led to think of and pity all the other unfortunates who could neither hear nor speak, and at last he determined to devote his whole life to helping not only Alice, but as many others as he could.

About thirty years before Thomas H. Gallaudet had tried to teach poor little Alice Cogswell, a good French abbe named L'Epée, had also pitied those who were thus locked out from the knowledge which to the rest of us comes so easily that it seems to us we know it of ourselves; and he, and later on a pupil of his, another good abbe, named Sicard, had studied out a sign language by which deaf-mutes could learn to talk with others. Mr. Gallaudet had heard of these two good men, and of how much they had been able to teach by means of their finger alphabet, and so he went across the ocean to learn it. It was a long voyage in a sailing vessel, for there were no steamships then, and he was absent about fifteen months; but at last he came back, and on April 17, 1817, the first school on this continent for the instruction of deaf-mutes was opened in Hartford, Connecticut.

From this school, beginning with only seven pupils, have sprung many similar noble institutions in all parts of the land, wherein the deaf-

15789
 M. M. POZOR
 GALLON QUE
 AUBERT

FRENCH.