

CONCLUSION DEFINING THE AUTHOR'S ATTITUDE
TOWARDS THE DIFFERENT METHODS OF
INSTRUCTING THE DEAF.

You have asked me for "an authoritative statement" of my views relating to signs and the questions involved. You wish me in fact to place myself "in a clear and unequivocal position" so that all may understand exactly where I stand. In conclusion, then, I may say:

I believe in the use of natural actions and natural gestures, as hearing people employ them, not in any other way. I believe it to be a mistake to employ gestures in place of words; and natural pantomime, or sign-language of any sort, should not, I think, be used as a means of communication. I do not object to manual alphabets of any kind in the earlier stages of instruction.

I prefer the pure oral method to any other, but I would rather have a deaf child taught through De l'Epée signs than not educated at all. I think there are two classes of deaf persons who should certainly be taught by oral methods, the semi-deaf, and the semi-mute; and I think that all the semi-deaf should receive the benefits of auricular instruction.

In regard to the others I am not so sure. In their case I am not an advocate exclusively of the oral method alone, but look also with favor upon the manual alphabet method as developed in the Rochester school. In fact I advocate pure English methods whatever you do; and do not think it matters very much whether you begin with written language and end with speech; or begin with speech and end with written language; the final result, I think, will be substantially the same. I do not approve of continuing the manual alphabet method throughout the whole school life of the pupil, but look upon it only as a means to an end. The oral method should, I think, be used in the higher grades; and speech-reading be substituted for the manual alphabet after familiarity with