

SOPHIA GALLAUDET.

BY AMOS G. DRAPER, M.A., WASHINGTON.

On Sunday morning, the 13th of May, 1877, she who bore the name written above died of apoplexy, at Kendall Green, near Washington. She had passed the previous evening in animated conversation with her friends, manifesting all her wonted enjoyment of society, and apparently in vigorous health. But scarcely had she withdrawn to the retirement of her own room and knelt in grateful prayer, when the fatal stroke fell upon her. All her faculties were at once obscured. She never again made a sentient movement, and ere the dews of the next morning were exhaled her spirit passed quietly away.

On the following day her remains were borne by some of her most cherished young friends to the chapel of the Deaf-Mute College. After appropriate services there, they were conveyed to the scenes of her early life and labors at Hartford, Connecticut, attended by a numerous company of her descendants and friends from the various towns on the route. Funeral services were held at the Centre Congregational Church, of which she had been a member since her early womanhood. The pupils of the American Institution, and many citizens of Hartford who had known her in mature life, gathered about her bier with her children and relatives. Her body rests by the side of her husband's, amid the groves of Cedar Hill.

THE memory of the life which has thus vanished from earth will never willingly be allowed to die from the minds of those who were witnesses of its usefulness, honor, elevation, and beauty. Her fame is founded in the hearts of those who knew, and knowing, could but love her. In the influences which she has exerted upon great numbers of people, and in the traits bequeathed to her children, she has a monument far more enduring than any artificial record.

Yet, on account of the important relation which she sustained to the cause of deaf-mute education, and the services she rendered to the same, and not less for the rare nobility of her character, from which so many have drawn and may draw lessons of high encouragement, it is fitting that in these pages her life should be made the subject of faithful and affectionate memorial.

SOPHIA FOWLER was born near Guilford, Connecticut, March 20, 1798. Her parents belonged to the hardy, independent, pious, and active-minded race of farmers from whom have descended a great majority of the many distinguished sons and daughters of New England. Lying a short distance back from Long Island Sound, in a region of fertile hills and vales, abounding with towering elms and luxuriant wild roses, her home was equally well placed for health, for beauty, and for the business of its inmates.

It will require no small effort, even from those who are well acquainted with the afflictions of deaf-mutism, to realize the depth of anguish into which the parents

of this home were plunged when the knowledge was forced upon them painfully and slowly, yet inflexibly, that their girl-baby would be forever incapable of responding to their voices.

For it was a far more terrible misfortune then than now. Only in one way could it be alleviated. The parents might be comforted, and the babe grow up useful and happy, if they knew any means by which the intelligence of the little one could be evoked, and drawn into sympathy and communion with those of the faces which bent anxiously above it. But there was then no such knowledge, either among the friends of the child, or in the community at large. There was not a single school for the deaf in America, and only three in the world. Even the existence of these three was scarcely known on this side the Atlantic: while of the systems on which they were based, and of the methods they employed, there seems to have been no knowledge whatever in America in the year 1800.

It will not seem strange, therefore, that as the child grew the deficiencies of her intellectual acquirements, as compared with those of her young associates, became painfully evident. In all else, in mirthfulness of spirit, in vigor and physique, she was perfectly fitted to delight in their companionship. This she could do in certain games and amusements. But if they partook of an intellectual character, her pleasure vanished. Did the group, tired of play, subside to conversation upon the grassplot; was a book introduced; did the merry jest or sparkling story pass round the happy circle--she could but sit silent, troubled, gazing in mute wonderment upon the swiftly-moving lips, the responsive glances, eager to share, but unable even to comprehend what was to her an undefined, subtle enjoyment, no less mysterious than precious.

So she passed through childhood to young womanhood, with scarcely a glimpse at the ample page of knowledge. She received no mental instruction, save through the disconnected natural signs of her friends, which could hardly treat of more than the objects of vision.

But if her mind remained largely undeveloped, not so her spirit. That could be reached in a measure, and, moreover, it was at work by itself. She early gave evidence of possessing those lovely and attractive traits which afterwards distinguished her. Unconsciously following the guidance of her own sense and the best models about her, she learned to discriminate between the false and the true, and grew up modest, kindly, conscientious, and cheerful even to gaiety. Of definite religious knowledge at this time she had little or none. It may almost be said to have been confined to a dim impression that there was a power *above* who looked down benignantly upon good actions, and frowningly upon bad.

During these calm years, also, was laid the foundation of that superb physical condition which attended her through life. In the regular and quiet performance of household duties, in all of which she became an adept, her frame acquired the vigor, grace, and elasticity which afterwards, under the softening influences of metropolitan life, gave her a rare personal comeliness, without ever losing their substantial qualities. Her hair was black; her eyes large, dark and inquiring. Her

features betokened a sanguine temperament, and her manner was vivacious and pleasing to a remarkable degree.

Such was Sophia Fowler in character and appearance as she stood at nineteen on the threshold of womanhood; happy in the performance of her daily home duties, scarcely ever having passed beyond the borders of her native town, unconscious of the widening paths that stretched before her, apparently destined to pursue without interruption the noiseless tenor of her sequestered way.

IN conversation she has often described her feelings when first informed that the boon of education was to be no longer denied her. From these descriptions a considerable insight into her previous intellectual life might be obtained; they were such as to leave no doubt that she had been from an early period most keenly alive to the deficiencies of her mental culture.

In the spring of 1817 her father learned that some gentlemen at Hartford were about to establish a school for the deaf. Soon after, hearing that these gentlemen were at New Haven, he went there in order to meet them, taking her with him. He told her by signs of his hope that they would be able to teach her to read, to write, to cypher--to acquire, she afterwards said it seemed to her, knowledge without end. She grew radiant with the prospect of satisfying the only craving of which her nature felt a need.

It was at this interview that she first saw Thomas H. Gallaudet. He was just entering upon that enterprise with which his name will be forever identified, and his memory forever blessed, not merely by those immediately benefited, and by their friends, but by every lover of humanity who may become acquainted with the story of his noble life and generous labors. Three years before, in 1814, at the age of twenty-seven, he was still, though displaying abundant talent, apparently without a fixed mission in life. At this time his attention and sympathy were arrested by the misfortune of a little deaf-mute daughter of a neighbor. This was Alice Cogswell. One day, as he observed her playing in his father's garden, he attempted to teach her the connection between an object and its name. His success encouraged him to further efforts. Wholly unexpected results came from those efforts. In making them his interest was so aroused, his feelings so enlisted, that there was no longer any doubt as to his mission. He resolved to devote his energies to the endeavor to place an education within the reach of the deaf-mutes of American. Having spent the interval in study and in a journey to Europe expressly to investigate the methods there pursued, he was now establishing that school at Hartford whose branches has since spread far and wide to all the borders of the nation, and made the blessings of education as free and almost as accessible to the deaf as to children endowed with all their senses.

Not long after the meeting at New Haven, Mr. Gallaudet visited the home of the Fowlers, and the same spring Sophia became a pupil in the Hartford School. Her name appears as the fifteenth in the order of those received at the opening, Alice Cogswell's being the first.

Of her progress as a pupil it is possible to judge only by her later development. Those who are familiar with the difficulties to be encountered will understand the fact that for a number of years her acquirements were confined to the common English branches. Owing to her zeal and vigor of mind, her advancement in these was rapid. In the spring of 1821, however, just at the period when a bright deaf-mute pupil may be expected to attain a fair degree of proficiency in the subjects indicated, her studies were interrupted in a manner quite unanticipated by all the parties concerned except one.

THIS interruption was occasioned by nothing less than a proposal of marriage from Mr. Gallaudet. It appears that for more than a year previous he had carefully concealed his feelings, out of regard for the young woman's position as a pupil; his bearing towards her, up to this time, was in no way distinguished from that which he observed towards the other female pupils under his charge.

The first sensations excited in the bosom of the young lady when she perceived his wishes give assurance of this. There is nothing to show that her previous feelings for him were other than those which would naturally flow forth towards an able, kind, and sympathetic instructor. In after life she said that her first feeling, when she comprehended his meaning, was one of almost unmixed surprise.

When, to this, other and warmer feelings succeeded, she did not blind her to what she considered her lack of qualifications for such a great change of station. She pleaded her want of knowledge of the world; he averred that this would soon be remedied by travel and society. She lamented that her education was but just begun; he promised that it should be pursued, with himself for a guide and helper. Considering the character and relations of the suitor and the sought, it is not surprising that this period of hesitation did not long endure. They were married on the 29th of August, 1821, and went on a wedding journey to Saratoga.

WERE the lady unknown who was thus the means of inducing Mr. Gallaudet to alter his condition, it might be inferred that she certainly possessed uncommon attractions of person and spirit. He was then a mature man of thirty-three, an earnest Christian, of wide and varied culture, travelled, accomplished, high-minded, accustomed to move in refined society, and not likely, therefore, when he should wed, to sacrifice to caprice or passion the gratification of those faculties whose activity constituted the elevation of his life.

That he should find one who could so touch his sensibilities, in the very class which he sought to uplift, and so soon after the beginning of his labors in their behalf, must have given him peculiar delight. As it confirmed his opinions, privately and publicly expressed, concerning that class, so it redoubled his ardor to elevate them. It was at once and happily the choice of his heart, as well as the strongest sanction he could give to his belief that the members of that class needed only the light of education to enable them to share in the enjoyments of

civilization, bear the common social burdens, and participate in the cheer of Christian hopes.

Saratoga in 1821 did not possess the attractions which it now has for the masses who congregate there. Its visitors then went from a genuine desire to revive wearied powers. They accordingly made up in character what they lacked in numbers.

Of Mr. and Mrs. Gallaudet's wedding journey thither there remain many delightful reminiscences. For a long time afterwards, and even at this distance, their children occasionally meet with persons who then saw the couple for the first time. Such never fail to recur to the interest and admiration which the lady excited in the minds of all beholders. They cannot speak of her appearance without enthusiasm. This, perhaps, would have been so, even were her strange history unknown, for the personal charms which had characterized her as a girl, now unfolded and softened with that rare felicity which comes with ripening womanhood, made a sight from which few could turn away unmoved. She had the ample color, the open, generous eye, the rippling hair, and the graceful proportions which are blent in every ideal of a glorious woman. Though she was not of tall stature, her beauty was of an imposing type; a quality which was due partly to her perfect health, partly to the dignity of her countenance. These attractions were heightened by the setting of an agreeable manner. The characteristics that mark a lady were hers--the self-poise, quiet responsiveness, and far-sighted consideration for the feelings of others, which place companions at their ease.

But when, observing all this, people learned that she came from a class which, less than five years before, had been deemed hopelessly ignorant and inferior, is it surprising that for a time attention and remark were centred upon her, even amid parlors filled with celebrities? To know so much, and then to see her, if silent, not uninterested; composed, but not cold; glad, but not anxious, to please and to be pleased; answering not merely to the words, but to the aspects and manners and movements of those about her--and radiant withal, moving about in their midst.

"With the moon's beauty and the the moon's soft pace,"--

"'twas a picture for remembrance," such as indeed it became in the minds of those who were its witnesses. [Footnote: It is interesting to note that one of these spectators was the late David A. Hall, Esq., of Washington. From his repeated allusions in his old age to this meeting with Mrs. Gallaudet, there is little doubt that it formed an important link in the chain of events by which, nearly forty years afterward, she and her son were drawn to the management of the Columbia Institution, Mr. Hall being a member of its first Board of Directors, and voting for the appointment of Mrs. Gallaudet and her son.]

The society at Hartford at this period retained much of the exclusiveness of colonial days. It was certainly a great transition when the untaught deaf-mute girl

of five years before presented herself for an entrance to its circles. Everything was done to render the first steps agreeable to her. She was received not merely with kindness, but with honor. As to herself, she appears to have had no other sensations than that she was in her fitting place. Here, as at Saratoga, all accounts agree that from the first she took her position, and held it, with the ease and propriety of one to whom the observances of good society were habitual and had become natural.

The home which they built soon attracted a society of its own. It drew many visitors, among them men and women famous in art and science, in letters and politics, and, indeed, in almost every walk of life. Who can tell how much of the liberal spirit always manifested by the American public and its legislators towards the deaf and dumb is owing to the spectacle thus early presented, of a beautiful woman from that class entering society and presiding over her own household with equal sweetness and tact?

But though, in all save the ability to join freely in general conversation, Mrs. Gallaudet was thus fitted to adorn polite society, neither she nor her friends ever thought that her sphere lay therein. That was at home, in the bosom of her family. As a wife and mother she found at once her highest usefulness and her highest delight. There speedily grew around their fireside, at first in Asylum street and afterwards in Chapel street, a lovely and interesting circle of children. How well she instilled into their young minds those principles which made the strength and beauty of her own, let the love and respect and filial devotion of their after lives attest.

For many years this was her career, uneventful in its details, except to a mother's heart. Yet there was room in it for the exercise of many noble qualities. The family purse was never a long one, and to rear and educate so many in the society in which they were placed required the largest foresight in planning, as well as great skill and patience in execution. Mrs. Gallaudet bore these burdens cheerfully, even gladly, and no less successfully. Her children may have been straightened, but they were never pinched. Their appearance in society, if it did not point to the possession of wealth, was always respectable and suited their station.

The husband and wife were happy together during all these years. Their children grew up virtuous and vigorous. They saw their work become fruitful. While they were loved and honored for it by their own neighbors, it brought them also many grateful expressions from strangers in this and other lands.

Amid their manifold causes for thankfulness, there was but one regret. They sometimes spoke with concern of the fact that they were not able to carry forward those plans for the wife's education to which they had looked forward so delightedly in the days of their courtship. Her care of children, and his unwearied endeavors to assist the unfortunate of every class, thwarted many plans which they had laid for their own enjoyment. In social intercourse her knowledge of English became pure and idiomatic. She there acquired, also, a great fund of

general information. But her knowledge of books was still limited. She retained through life the feeling that she was a comparative stranger in the great world of letters.

It must not be inferred that therefore the mental intercourse of the husband and wife was mutually uninteresting. In the latter, the comparative lack of knowledge was accompanied by a corresponding eagerness to know. She was very appreciative. To whoever had anything to tell her she listened with such quiet but pleased attention, responsive to every word and look, that the talker himself grew more interested in his theme. Besides, there was the realm of beauty wherein she could wander, equally delighted with her husband, and that higher Christian life in which her aspirations were in nowise inferior to his. No wonder, then, that as the years went on, though he found himself sometimes compelled to notice the disparity of their intellectual acquirements, it never had the effect to lessen his love and honor for her, or his desire for her companionship.

BUT these happy years of home life drew to their close. Mr. Gallaudet's health was never robust, and in 1851 it had become seriously impaired by his devoted labors. He died on the 10th of September in that year, mourned everywhere by the good and great; by none more sincerely than by those whom, under God, he had delivered out of the bondage of ignorance, and dowered with an appreciation of this life and the hope of that which is to come.

It would have gone hard with Sophia Gallaudet, now left a widow with eight children, if, fortunately, they had not all been of an age to provide in a measure for their own wants. Her husband's estate was very small. He had never been one of those who heap up treasure unto themselves; and though the public, after its fashion, had been quick to recognize his great and disinterested deeds, its services of plate and eloquent resolutions could not buy bread and meat.

Her children, however, even the youngest, who was fourteen, were able to maintain themselves. She still kept a home for those who were not married; but when, one by one, they departed to enter upon their life-work, she began to feel very lonely. These were, perhaps, the saddest moments that ever fell to her lot. It seemed as if there was no more work for her to do; as if she could only fold her hands and wait.

When, therefore, another call came to her, she was ready and joyous to meet it. In 1857, her son Edward, then a youth of twenty, was summoned to take charge of the newly-founded Columbia Institution at Washington, and she became the head of its domestic department.

How important a factor in the American system of deaf-mute instruction this institution has become, through its collegiate department is known; the beautiful grounds and stately pile of buildings wherein it makes its home can be seen: but the world may never know what anxious thought, what strenuous labor, what lonely vigils, what funds of vitality have gone to the gathering and organization of these resources. If it does, if ever the history of this College is written, then it will

be known how much is due to Sophia Gallaudet for her lightening of these burdens.

Here, again, she made the same impressions upon the hearts of men as when she was fresh and young. Members of Congress could not but bear away favorable opinions of an enterprise which promised to educate, even at intervals, such persons as they encountered in her. Her influence upon one of the most prominent men in American history, the Hon. Thaddeus Stevens--and it is but one of many such instances--will illustrate this. In 1864 he was leader of the House and chairman of the Committee on Appropriations. And that his judgment should be won in favor of the infant College was essential to its progress. Upon a visit to the Institution he met Mrs. Gallaudet. He seemed pleased and interested in her, returning to her side again and again with some bright saying. Little was thought of it at the time, but it was afterwards noticed that while he was ever a staunch friend of the College, he also never missed an opportunity of inquiring after her welfare--a personal interest he retained to the last. On the day before his death he sent her his portrait, with a message, written in his own hand, expressing the hope that he "would not be forgotten by her."

Still more important was the indirect aid which she brought to the undertaking. If she could not bear a constantly active part in the work, she stood beside the worker, sustaining him as only a strong and affectionate mother can--rejoicing in his successes, sympathizing in his defeats, and supporting him through all with her courageous spirit. Such a presence was more than a casual comfort; it was a living promise of final success.

After nine years of labor in this position its demands began to tell upon even her enduring frame, and in 1866 she surrendered it to younger hands.

WHEN Madame de Staël asked, "Who is the greatest woman in France?" Napoleon, thinking, no doubt, of his legions, bluntly replied, "She who has the greatest number of children." There may be higher standards, yet certainly the power not merely to bear, but also to transmit sterling qualities of mind and body to descendants, is not the least of human attributes. This power Mrs. Gallaudet possessed in an uncommon degree. Though her husband was always in delicate health, they became the parents of four sons and four daughters, all of whom lived to maturity, and all but one inherited her vigorous constitution. These were, in the order of their births, Thomas, Rector of St. Ann's Church for Deaf-Mutes, New York; Sophia, who married Captain Hunter of Georgia, and died in 1865; Peter Wallace, a prominent business man in Wall street, New York; Jane Hall, who died in 1853, while an instructor in the Rev. J.S.C. Abbott's seminary for young ladies, in New York; William Lewis, an inventor, now living in Elizabeth, New Jersey; Catherine Fowler, wife of Dr. Bern L. Budd of New York; Alice Cogswell, wife of Rev. H. Clay Trumbull, editor of the *Sunday-School Times*; Edward Miner, President of the National Deaf-Mute College at Washington. The descendants of these already number thirty-three, so that Mrs. Gallaudet lived to see forty-one of her direct descendants--eight children, thirty-two grandchildren, and one great-grandchild. All but nine of those were living at the time of her

death.

It will be seen that two of her children, the oldest and the youngest, have taken up the work to which their father consecrated his life, and of the beneficence of which they had such a shining example in the life of their mother, and it carried forward in most important and original directions. It is no part of the purpose of this writing to speak of their labors, which the present witnesses and the future will fitly commemorate. They could receive no higher praise than that they are worthy of such parents.

After the mother retired from her place at Washington, she dwelt by turns in the homes of her children, spending usually her summers at the North and her winters and springs at the former place. In all, she was the recipient of every care and attention that filial love could dictate. The sunniest room and the easiest chair were always for her. But she was not idle. Never so happy as when doing something for those about her, all her later days were filled with little loving deeds of kindness and consideration.

Coming thus to Kendall Green with each returning year, she became a part of its society. Here occurred many incidents that cheered her and kept up her interest in life.

One of these was the act of the Sunday-school of the Institution in adopting a converted little girl of Smyrna, in Asia Minor, to whom was given the name of Sophia Gallaudet, the school yearly defraying the expenses of her support and education in order that she may become fitted to instruct the deaf-mutes of that country.

Another was her interview with Dom Pedro of Brazil, which occurred in the spring of 1876. Each of them advanced in years, each still retained much of the precious dew of youth.

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