MARTINEAU, Harriet. 1843. “Deaf Mutes”. *Household Words* 9 (209), 25 de marzo: 134-138.

seemed to be most passionate, that of his wife most subdued and practical. It appeared to me as if the one thought she ought to be distressed, and the other thought she ought to be useful.

It was dreadful and degrading to see the sick man, too, screaming and writhing; for his screams were the screams of the dastard. He called aloud on the Aga to spare him. He was the pitiful thing which centuries of misrule has made the Greek rayah, and had no more awful fancy than that of undergoing corporal punishment when reason had left him.

I was glad to turn over this painful leaf of Greek life to open a brighter page. I was afterwards present at the anniversary of the Greek schools, one of which flourishes vigorously in Mitylene. The festival was presided over by an attaché of the British Embassy, who made a speech in modern Greek. The Ephora, masters, and all the pupils were present, and appeared to be as greatly pleased as I was.

DEAF MUTES.

WE live in a highly educational age. Although we have not yet got a system of national education, we are always talking about it, and we mean to have it, and no doubt shall have it some day. Whenever we get it, it will be in consequence of our having become freshly and deeply impressed with the importance and the duty of doing the best that can be done with and for every human being born into the world. We seem to have plenty of help in such a business, to judge by the number of books written, and always in course of publication, about the education of the young. But, it is remarkable, all these books consider children to be all alike; or so nearly so as to make general advice sufficient for all. These books conclude all children to have four limbs, and (according to the popular notion) five senses, and a straight spine, and a perfectly formed brain. Of the great multitude who are blind, deaf, deformed, lame, defective in intellect—who have, in short, some natural infirmity—we hear nothing, in an educational sense. We hear of charities for them; and education goes on in the asylums, where a good many are sent. But the asylums contain only a very small proportion indeed of the whole number in any country; and there are so many families who cannot send their infirm members to such places, or who do not choose to send them there, that it appears quite as necessary to treat of their education at home as to treat of home education at all, in distinction from that of school.

It is very possible that some readers may be amazed at such a thing being said about a class of people so very small. They may be like an old clergyman,—a very benevolent man, too,—who said, a few years since, that he had never known more than two deaf and dumb persons in all his life. Now we have a thing or two to say about this.

First, if the number of persons suffering under natural imperfection were the smallest ever imagined—if, for instance, there were only one in a hundred thousand persons who had any natural infirmity whatever, those very few cases ought to be carefully studied, and the means of education tried, in order to improve our knowledge of the human being, body and mind. We have gained what we know of the laws of health by the study of disease. It is the disorder of any organ of the body, or function of the mind, which discloses to us the true structure and action. In the same way we learn to understand the fully endowed human being by the study of the imperfect one. For this purpose, then,—not the highest, but still very important,—we ought to attend to the whole case of the blind, deaf and dumb, deformed, and deficient.

In the next place, though it is most necessary for the general good that the ordinary run of children should be trained, because they are to do the business of life, and be the parents of the next generation, yet it is a clear duty of humanity and of social justice to do the best that can be done for those whose lives and action can hardly spread beyond themselves. Here they are, in the midst of life at a great disadvantage. What can be clearer than that it is the business of their happier neighbours to make life as good and pleasant to them as it can be made? If it were a matter ever so difficult, it ought to be done. But it happens to be by far the easiest way. As a well-trained child gives far less trouble in the long run than a spoiled one, so does an imperfect being give infinitely less pain and anxiety if made rational, and morally disciplined, than if mismanaged, or left without management at all.

But, again, the number of these imperfect beings. Will any one guess how many deaf and dumb persons, for instance, there are in the kingdom? The benevolent old clergyman knew of two; and extreme was his astonishment when he was told how many there were. We have no very recent accounts; for that department of the Census Report of eighteen hundred and fifty-one is not out yet; but we know the proportion to the total population ten years before. One in sixteen hundred is the proportion in our own country. In Europe generally there is one deaf mute in fifteen hundred; and in the United States there is one in two thousand white persons, a smaller proportion among persons of colour, and only one in six thousand among the slaves. If the proportion remains what it was ten years since (and there is no reason to suppose it altered), we have in our own country about fourteen thousand deaf and dumb persons. Imagine these fourteen thousand persons collected as the population of a town, or as a crowd to see the soldiers march for embarkation, and it

will be seen that there are quite enough of this one class to make it a matter of importance in ten thousand of the homes of our country how these beings are treated and trained. And these, we must remember, are the deaf mutes alone; persons so deaf as to be altogether excluded from the world of sound. Very far greater is the number of persons partially deaf—able to speak, and to profit more or less by sound—but still subject to disadvantages, and moral danger, and suffering, which should make them the objects of very tender and studious care.

If there is reason to fear hereditary deafness, or if there is already a deaf child in the family, how anxiously the parents watch the new-born infant, and make all sorts of noises to ascertain whether it is startled by them or not! This is not quite so easily discoverable at first as inexperienced persons might suppose; for every considerable noise occasions vibration in solid bodies that stand in the way of it; and the sensitiveness of the deaf to vibration and concussion is excessive. There was a house, some years since (we hope it is not there now), a damp house, where two children out of three were born totally deaf. When the family left it, a young couple came in, and lived there till they had eight children, five of whom were deaf and dumb. What a dreadful watching it must have become at last, when the fate of two or three was known! Of course the parents must have been unaware of the cause of the mischief; and, not knowing that prevention lay within their own power, what a horrible visitation it must have seemed to them!

In the case of a deaf infant, the truth may be completely evident in a few months; though we have known a case of a child who was a year old before any discovery of his total deafness was made, and before, therefore, any medical opinion was obtained. There is no part of the human body about which we are so helpless as the ear. So very little is known of its interior structure, and it is so very easy to do mischief, that medical men do not much like to be consulted in cases of deafness; and the wisest of them say candidly that the cases are extremely rare in which they can do any good. These, the wisest of their class, can usually tell where the mischief resides, and whether there is any hope of benefit from medical or surgical skill. If not, as is most probable, the parents must next consider what is best to be done.

Almost everything depends on whether the deafness is partial or total. By total, we mean the popular sense of the expression—that the child cannot hear sounds well enough to learn to speak, and does not often hear any at all. As for that perfect deafness which is wholly insensible to all sounds under all circumstances, it is extremely rare. In an asylum of a hundred inmates, there may not be above two or three such; not above two or three, for instance, who cannot imagine what you mean by putting a musical snuff-box on their heads, which is about the best test there is. Where the apparatus of the ear is useless, the brain-organ may be right, and then the music may reach it through the skull. We have known an instance of a deaf person fainting under the delicious sensation of feeling the music perfectly, distinct and precise, and (as it appeared) quivering down the spine. Well, if the deafness be practically total, the case is clear so far as this: that the child must be brought up as if destined (as it really is) to a life with four senses instead of five. There are, in fact, as is now generally admitted by the learned, more than five senses; but, making the case as disadvantageous as possible, it amounts to this—that your child has a body and brain like other people's, with four limbs, and all his faculties, but with four senses instead of five. The question is, how to enable him to manage best with four senses instead of five.

It is clear that, as far as happiness is concerned, he will be far better off among those who are like himself, than in a world where he is on equal terms with nobody. A more forlorn creature than a deaf mute among people who cannot converse with him, does not exist. As soon as he gets into an institution where all are like himself, and can use the modes of communication established there, he becomes as merry as other people; and the difficulty is only how to bring him away when he can remain there no longer. The best educated deaf mutes mope, more or less, after coming out into the world; and not all the care of their families to use their language familiarly can compensate to them for the society of their comrades; for the simple reason that the companionship of mind is wanting. Inferior as the minds of deaf mutes must inevitably be, they are peculiar; and they can never be in full sympathy with the thoughts and feelings of better endowed people. There can be no doubt of the immense advantage of training in a deaf and dumb school, though there may be still a few persons who fancy that imperfect beings must thrive best among their superiors, and point to an instance here and there of a deaf mute who goes through life in an orderly way, busy and quiet, without ever having been specially trained. The truth of such cases is, that the imitative faculties of the child (always strong, from exercise, in the deaf mute) have enabled him to go through the external acts of life like other people, and to learn some art, probably, some mechanical business, by which he may get his bread. But there is no mind underneath in such a case. There is no *thought*, properly so called; nothing but perception of what is visible, and imitation of it. It will be found, too, that the temper is probably passionate, and certainly arrogant and selfish. There is no reason why it should be otherwise, seeing that the moral part of his

nature, his affections, his sentiments, and his conscience, in the deep sense of the term, have never been reached at all. It is easy to see how this must be, if we look at the case from an early stage.

If he is so fortunate as to be destined to good special school training, still he must spend his first years at home. Now, how is he to be taught anything? He can be taught, of course, to wash and dress himself, and behave properly at table; to imitate, in short, what he sees. But how can he get any real knowledge? He can draw, if shown how, what is before his eyes; and he can draw the letters of the alphabet, and words, as easily as anything else. But how is he to learn what letters and words mean? Some words, nouns signifying what he sees, he presently learns. The cat, papa's hat, the table, a spoon, and the like, he can soon join with the written word; and he may even get so far as to fit the word table to all tables, and the word spoon to all spoons. But how will you teach him the days of the week? It is no easy matter to make him attend to what a day is; for it is a sort of abstract idea; and when you come to separating the days by name, when to the child they are all alike; and when the separation ends at seven, and the same names then begin again, how can you make such a complicated affair understood by a child to whom you cannot explain it? Before he can get any true notion of it, he must have some idea of what *time* means; and how can you give him that? The only way of beginning is to use the external appearance of a day—Sunday, for instance,—as a starting point, and let constant repetition teach the rest. There are no church bells for him; but he sees papa at home that day; and that people are dressed differently from other days; and that they go out at a particular hour, in a grave sort of way; and that no sewing is done, and so on. The word *Sunday* is shown him, and he probably writes it every morning when he sees these appearances. The next day, he writes *Monday*, and is aware in his own mind that it comes next to Sunday. In course of time he knows all the seven; but it is only knowing names, after all. The thousand associations that cluster round the idea of a day do not exist for him whose mind has never really communicated with any other. What, then, can be done about such abstract ideas as truth, justice, or nine-tenths of the matters we talk about? Without agreeing with Aristotle, that the deaf and dumb are and must be altogether brutish, or with Condillac, that they have no memory or reasoning power, we have no doubt whatever, that the impossibility of ever giving them the ordinary access to abstractions renders them necessarily and always the lowest class of rational beings. Their case is infinitely worse than that of the born blind, on this ground:—the blind have to go without an immense deal of knowledge; but they are not precluded from thought as deaf mutes are. This view of the case may be surprising to some people, who are rather romantic, and who have not watched the life of any deaf and dumb person with an open mind. It was a sad misfortune to the class that the attempts—noble and most glorious attempts—to retrieve their condition, were first made when men's minds were in a highly metaphysical condition, and they saw everywhere whatever they looked for, and could believe whatever they imagined. Hence arose the popular notion—the very opposite of Aristotle's—that deaf mutes were a kind of sacredly-favoured class, cut off from vulgar associations, but endowed with an infinite soul, working purely in a kind of retreat from the world. The delusion was confirmed by the pretty poetical sort of things that the first pupils in the schools used to write, in pretty broken language. But, if the benevolent visionaries who repeated these things had lived five years with deaf mutes, seeing what was the arrogance and violence of their tempers, the childishness of their moods, and the astounding ignorance of the commonest things, and most necessary ideas, that now and then peeped out from amidst the flowers of their expression, the spectacle would have been a most bewildering one. Their whole notion of the case is, in fact, a wrong one. That interior power, supposed to be so active and blessed, has never been awakened, and the highest part of the human being is as if it did not exist. There have been a few cases of cure, of hearing being obtained, and, of course, language and mental training, after the best deaf-mute education had apparently succeeded. What those persons have told of the state of their minds—of their ideas of God, in particular—is too sad and too terrible to be cited here. It is enough to say that they had no ideas whatever on any abstract subjects till they were expressly communicated at school, and then they were at once so low and so wild, that they will not bear quotation. Yet, because the pupils use pretty similes, and write down pretty sentiments, they are supposed to mean what we should mean by the same similes and sentiments. The difference is tremendous: no less than this—that in their case there is the sign without the thing signified, and the sentimental phrase without the radical feeling under it. We must not grow too abstract. What we have said may be enough to show the depth of the misfortune that deaf mutes labour under. One fact in their case may be cited as an illustration of what we mean.

In large educational establishments for the deaf and dumb, it is found that a vast majority of the pupils who must have a vocation, wish to be artists. It is found that this will not do at all. Most of them can draw to a certain extent, and some with considerable skill; but as artists they fail utterly (though they themselves do not think so!) All the

really artistic qualities of mind are wanting in them. Where the power to represent is greatest, they still have nothing to represent but what is lowest and most obvious. It is like a blind poet attempting to describe a sunrise, or the aspect of the sea, or the desert. We know at once in his case, that there can be nothing in his description at once original and true. Deaf mutes can know no more of the deepest things in the human mind and life (as these deepest things are for social man, and are awakened only by human intercourse), than the blind man knows of golden and crimson clouds, and gleams upon the water, and the blaze and blackness of the desert.

Though we are naturally apt to overrate what education can do in the case of deaf mutes, it is not the less true that what is actually done for them in the best institutions is marvellous. It is not only that they are made happy,—that their habits are carefully formed,—their tempers controlled, and social qualities largely developed—but so much communication of minds with each other and with the external world is established that those who are aware of the difficulties of the case know not how sufficiently to admire. The pupils not only have a language of signs, but one of words, as copious as ours, however defective in the meanings conveyed; and the pupils now not only write this letter language and speak it with the fingers, but actually utter it with the organs of speech—not, of course, because they can hear themselves or anybody else but that they may the better comprehend the nature, and enjoy the uses of language. It is no uncommon thing now for advanced pupils to know what people say by the motion of their mouths, and to converse by speech, more or less odd and disagreeable, but intelligible. From these institutions they go forth fitted for various employments, and capable of various pleasures which they could never have become qualified for at home. As for their occupations, they make good copying clerks, accountants, wood-carvers, ordinary engravers, and the like: and the girls are admirable at dress-making and household arts. Their grand difficulty in life is a moral one. They have such a prodigious opinion of themselves and their order. Most other sufferers are depressed and humbled; but these are mightily exalted. From their asylum they look down on the outer world with great compassion for those who can hear and speak. It is rather difficult to make out the grounds of this compassion, although it is easy to see how the conceit must grow by the absence of collision and comparison with other minds. The parents of an existing member of Parliament (a fair speaker), were both deaf and dumb; and they made a great lamentation over each child as it was found to be able to hear. They were themselves so very happy, they said, and their poor children would, after all, be only like everybody else!

By this time the totally deaf child ought to be trained in a special school. If this is impossible, the parents and family should learn his language of natural gestures, and should teach him the finger speech. They can at least form his habits well, and, it is to be hoped, train him to govern his temper and passions. They cannot make him wise, intellectually or morally; but they may make him harmless, and happy to the extent of his small moral capability. It will require incessant vigilance, good sense, self-command, and self-sacrifice on the part of his guardians: but this much may be done.

For the same reason that the totally deaf should go to school, the partially deaf should remain at home; that is, should be least exposed to isolation and forlornness. The partially deaf have, it is true, no class to belong to; for there are all possible gradations of defective hearing, so that no special method of education will suit any number. The partially deaf child must stay at home, and be there enabled to make the best of a very terrible misfortune and grief. The misfortune is not for a moment to be compared to that of the deaf mute; but the grief is infinitely greater. The sufferer has no class to belong to. He is expected to be, and to learn, and to do like others without having the means. He has the inestimable advantage of the use of language, with all the mental, moral, and social benefits it involves: but he can learn by it only what is expressly communicated to himself. For him there is no public speaking or preaching—no learning in class, where minds stimulate each other—no general conversation, with the vast amount of knowledge and variety of ideas thence arising. It is a serious thing to him, though less important, that he loses a vast amount of the most ordinary pleasures, from the grandest music to the humblest and slightest natural sounds which fall pleasantly upon the sense.

But the mere privation is his smallest grievance. His life is rendered laborious by so chief a sense serving him so ill. He is apt to brood over painful and unamiable thoughts, so solitary and still as his life for the most part is. From being driven in upon himself, he is self-conscious, shy, and too generally irritable and suspicious. While these tendencies are universally recognised and pitied, it seems strange that parents should do so little as they do to save the infirm child from the effects of his infirmity. They are constantly surprised, when it is too late, at his not knowing all manner of things that he has never been told, and which everybody else learned by general conversation. They are amazed and pained at various faults and deficiencies that early care might have obviated. By care, we do not mean indulgence. No creature has more need of the self-control obtained from steady discipline at home,

than the deaf boy or man, girl or woman. The trial to temper and self-respect is as great as well can be, and it should be timely prepared for.

The first requisite is thorough confidence between the parents (the mother especially) and the child. The mother should steady his little mind, and enter into his feelings, good or bad, and win him to confide to her all his peculiar experience. Then she will know how to give him the knowledge that he cannot get for himself. She will patiently and privately teach him whatever will best obviate any needless peculiarity. She will correct his pronunciation—accustom him to regulate his voice—take pains to find out what way of speaking best suits his ear, so as to make him hear with the least noise and disturbance. She will find that he hears worse instead of better when people shout, or make faces; and better in proportion as people speak rationally, however much they may have to raise their voices; and her example will regulate other people's ways with him. She will take care that his nerves, always in such cases quite sensitive enough, are not heedlessly pained, and that his life, always irksome enough, is made as cheerful as good sense, courage, and family affection can make it.

Above all, it is her business to warn him in time against moroseness, the unreasonableness, and the suspicious temper that will inevitably poison his life if this timely care be not taken. She will help him against them. When she sees the suspicion spring up, she will root it out by instant explanation, and lead him after a time to see how, in suspecting, he always turns out to be wrong. It is not only possible but easy, when there is good sense, courage, and love in the parent, to turn the selfish and chafing temper into one of love, trust, and repose. It is impossible to compensate for such an imperfection; but its evils and pains may be reduced to something much less than is supposed by careless observers, or by those who stand too near, and love and grieve too much to rouse their own faculties to their proper duty. It is a painful truth, but it ought to be spoken—that the family treatment of personal infirmity in any member is usually bad. Between the inexperience and small power of reflection in some,—the lack of good sense in others—false tenderness here, and hardness, through reluctance to face the truth, there—the sufferer has too often but a poor chance. Among the whole order of these sufferers, none, after the idiotic or deficient, is so sure of failure, and misery if left to himself, as the deaf child. The blind, the lame, the deformed, have much to go through; but their intellectual development and moral growth and satisfaction do not depend, as in the case of the deaf, precisely upon that part of them which is defective.

Perhaps we may, on a future occasion, go further into the proof of this point, in considering those cases, as we have that of the deaf.

DEADLY LIVELY.

THERE are many ways of spending a pleasant holiday in Paris. Perhaps no city on the face of the earth offers so many ways. There are the barrières, where for a few sous, the excursionist may sip his little glass of something nice, and enjoy his quadrille; there are the *cafés chantants*, where more or less exquisite singing is accompanied by very vigorous violins, and where ladies in hat and feathers of the most formidable description beg you to contribute some sous to the money-box. There are the Tuileries and Luxembourg Gardens, the Musée, the Louvre, and reading-rooms, where Dumas, and Sue, and Sand may be enjoyed for ten centimes. All these attractions present themselves to the mind of the Parisian holiday maker. Then there is Versailles—not to mention St. Germains, and St. Cloud. Then the open-air concerts, and dancing-dogs, and Fantoccini, and Ombres Chinoises, and Polichinelli, of the Champs Elysées, are tempting. But all these are sports or pastimes adapted to the afternoon or evening, or confined to summer weather. Therefore, for early morning holiday amusement, the Parisian has no great variety of attractions. He cannot then play at dominoes or piquet; even billiards before noon are wearisome. Thus, to dispose of the morning, and at the same time to indulge that intense respect which the French feel for the dead — excursionists, in hundreds and thousands, flock every Sunday to the great metropolitan cemeteries. Once at least in each week for the first year the near relation of a deceased is expected to visit the new grave, to decorate it, and pray for the soul that is gone. This custom is one that even the sternest philosopher, looking upon death from a material and physiological point of view, cannot wholly contemplate without some sympathy—without seeing in it some wholesome feeling, some affecting tenderness.

Yet, let a stranger take the omnibus (if he can find room in it) at the Louvre which runs to the Barrière Blanche—note by the way the many fellow-passengers in mourning who will present themselves; and, arrived at his destination, let said stranger turn to the left, and follow the crowd on the way to the great cemetery of Montmartre, and he shall see curious sights—odd incidents of mingled grief and festivity—that will puzzle him. The scene, taken as a whole, is a very gay one. Here are hundreds of children romping; stalls devoted to the sale of sweetmeats; restaurants offering a formidable list of *plâts* at wonderfully low prices; and beer and spirit shops, which appear to come in for their fair share of public patronage. But, turning from the festive part of the scene, and directing his