

## SCIENCE:

A WEEKLY NEWSPAPER OF ALL THE ARTS AND SCIENCES

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Attention is called to the "Wants" column. All are invited to use it in soliciting information or seeking new positions. The name and address of applicants should be given in full, so that answers will go direct to them. The "Exchange" column is likewise open.

MARRIAGE.<sup>1</sup>

It always gives me pleasure to respond to the invitation of the members of the Literary Society of Kendall Green, and it will always be my object in addressing you to choose subjects that will be of interest and importance to you in your future lives. You have come together here from every part of the United States to receive in the National College for Deaf-Mutes that higher education which you cannot obtain in the States from which you came.

In a very little while—it may be in one year, or two years, or more—you will separate from one another, and each go back singly to the places from which you came, to begin the battle of life. You will go out into the great world,—the world of hearing and speaking people, a world of people who cannot spell upon their fingers or make signs. Are you prepared for that change, and what is to be your position in that world?

I would have you all remember that you yourselves are a part of that great world of hearing and speaking people. You are not a race distinct and apart, and you must fulfil the duties of life, and make your way to honorable positions among hearing and speaking people.

Now, I have considered what subject I could bring to your attention to-night the consideration of which would be of assistance to you when you go out into the world; and there is no subject, I am sure, that lies closer to your hearts than the subject of marriage.

It is a very difficult thing for me to speak to you upon that subject, because I know that an idea has gone forth, and is very generally believed in by the deaf of this country, that I want to prevent you from marrying as you choose, and that I have tried to pass a law to interfere with your marriages. But, my friends, it is not true. I have never done such a thing, nor do I intend to; and before I speak upon this subject I want you distinctly to understand that I have no intention of interfering with your liberty of marriage. You can marry whom you choose, and I hope you will be happy. It is not for me to blame you for marrying to suit yourselves; for you all know that I myself, the son of a deaf mother, have married a deaf wife.

I think, however, that it is the duty of every good man and every good woman to remember that children follow marriage, and I am sure that there is no one among the deaf who desires to have his affliction handed down to his chil-

dren. You all know that I have devoted considerable study and thought to the subject of the inheritance of deafness, and if you will put away prejudice out of your minds, and take up my researches relating to the deaf, you will find something that may be of value to you all.

We all know that some of the deaf have deaf children,—not all, not even the majority, but some,—a comparatively small number. In the vast majority of cases there are no deaf offspring, but in the remaining cases the proportion of offspring born deaf is very large,—so large as to cause alarm to thoughtful minds. Will it not be of interest and importance to you to find out why these few have deaf offspring? It may not be of much importance to you to inquire whether by and by, in a hundred years or so, we may have a deaf variety of the human race. That is a matter of great interest to scientific men, but not of special value to you. What you want to know, and what you are interested in, is this: are you yourself liable to have deaf offspring? Now, one value in my researches that you will find is this: that you can gain information that may assure you that you may increase your liability to have deaf offspring or diminish it, according to the way in which you marry.

The Rev. W. W. Turner of Hartford was the first, I think, who showed that those who are born deaf have a greater liability to have deaf offspring than those who are not. He showed, that, where a person born deaf marries another person born deaf, in this case about one-third of the children are deaf. Mr. Job Williams, the present principal of the Hartford Institution, has still more recently examined the subject; and, in a letter published in *Science* a short time ago, he arrives at the same conclusion,—about one-third are born deaf. In 1888, Mr. Connor, the principal of the Georgia Institution, made an examination of the results of the marriages of his pupils, and his statistics are published in "Facts and Opinions relating to the Deaf." He also comes to the same conclusion,—about one-third are born deaf.

The following table will show you the exact figures:—

TABLE I.—Concerning the Offspring of Couples Both of Whom were born Deaf.

Authority. <sup>1</sup>	Total Number of Families.	Total Number of Children.	Number of Deaf Children.	Percentage of Children who are Deaf.	Number of Deaf Children to every 100 Families.
Turner (1868).....	24	57	17	29.8	70.8
Connor (1888).....	16	59	19	32.4	118.7
Williams (1891).....	52	151	48	31.8	92.3

It is obvious that persons born deaf run considerable risk of having deaf offspring if they marry persons who are also born deaf.

If we take all the marriages of congenitally deaf persons, without reference to whether they married deaf or hearing persons, we have five independent sets of statistics from which we may derive information regarding the effects upon the offspring. (1) My own researches indicate that where

<sup>1</sup> For Rev. W. W. Turner's results, see my Memoir, p. 20. For Mr. Connor's results, see Facts and Opinions relating to the Deaf, p. 61. For Mr. Job Williams's figures, see *Science*, vol. xvii. p. 76, published Feb. 6, 1891. Dr. Gillett, in *Science* (vol. xvii. p. 59, Jan. 30, 1891), says there were thirteen couples in the Illinois Institution in which both parties were born deaf. One of these couples had two hearing children and one deaf child. He does not state how many children were born to the other twelve couples, but says they could all hear.

<sup>1</sup> An address delivered to the members of the Literary Society of Kendall Green, Washington, D.C., March 6, 1891, by Alexander Graham Bell.