

THESIS.

Education

Subject, Sara Bridgman and Helen Keller

Name, Cora May Wagner.

Mind, mind, alone,

As light, and hope, and life, and power.

Without this one bright star in the firmament of their existences, what a dark and dreary world would this have been to Laura Bridgman and Helen Keller. With it, however, their lives became full of gladness and joy, and a blessing to all who knew them. Loving, gentle care and tact were all that were necessary to bring about this great change.

Laura D. Bridgman was born Dec. 21, 1829, in Hanover, N. H.

During her infancy she was very delicate, but at the age of eighteen months her health became very much improved, and, when two years old, she is described as being more active and intelligent than most



children. She had learned to speak a few words, and knew some of the letters of the alphabet. But her release from suffering was of short duration, for soon scarlet-fever entered the home, carried off two elder sisters, and left Laura with no communication with the outer world except touch.

In a very similar manner were two of the beautiful blessings, sight and hearing, which God has given his children, taken from another life—that of Helen Keller, who was born sixteen years ago in Tuscumbia, a little village in the northern part of Alabama.

She now see before us, two human beings, as impenetrable to light or sound as if built up in a marble case, with only a little white hand

beckoning to some good man for help, that an immortal soul might be awakened.

This help was not long, however in coming, and there came into the life of each of these children, a guardian angel - Dr. S. G. Howe to Laura Bridgman and Miss Annie Sullivan to Helen Keller. Now their faces are radiant with intelligence and pleasure, and from the mournful wreck which we first beheld, there have risen up gentle, tender, and grateful-hearted beings.

Now was used to the greatest advantage that sense which so many are liable to scarcely regard as a blessing, yet which many psychologists claim is the very greatest of the senses. Great it was, to those whose



Yes we shall now look into.

Sara Bridgman was taken to the Asylum for the Blind in Boston, but Helen Keller has been educated almost entirely at home.

We will follow Sara's early training, knowing that these lessons are typical of those given to all persons similarly afflicted.

Dr. Howe had printed in the raised letters used by the blind, the names of many common objects, such as knife, fork, spoon, key &c, and had pasted some of the labels on the corresponding objects. First they gave her the word "knife" on a slip of paper, and moved her fingers over it as the blind do in reading; then they gave her the knife and let her feel the label on it and helped

her to perceive the similarity of the two words. The same process was repeated with other articles but she derived from this lesson only the idea that some of the labels were like and others unlike. After several lessons, however, she became able to place the proper label on each article, thus showing that she had a correct idea of the word as a whole.

Then she learned the letters from metal type, and after two months was taught the manual alphabet.

It now became vastly easier to teach her new words and in about a year she had fair vocabulary.

Up to the age of twelve Laura had not the least idea of a Deity. She had, in her reading, met the word 'God' but it meant nothing to

her. Dr. Howe was very anxious that in some way she be brought to recognize this power. He awaited an opportunity and it soon came. The death of a little friend led her to ask questions and so skillfully did the good Doctor answer her, that soon the desire to please this kind heavenly father became the guiding-star of her life, which closed with a triumphant death May 24 1859.

What a beautiful life indeed! Even more, probably, do we admire Helen Keller, who, at present, is preparing to enter Harvard. Helen has been taught lip-reading so that by lightly placing her fingers on the lips of the speaker, she understands perfectly, and startles you by



answering in voice language.

Helen Keller has already succeeded in the establishment of several public libraries, besides being a help to all those about her.

When we realize the fact that the finger-tips were absolutely the only medium through which the brain could be reached we look on with awe.

Such extraordinary sensitiveness cannot be imagined by one who has only the usual sense of touch.

The finger-tips carry to these afflicted ones the message from the world in which they live, unseeing and unhearing.

Although deprived of all that makes life pleasant for us, these people are noted for a remarkable



buoyancy of character and gaiety of spirits.

"Ye who have eyes and see not, ears, and hear not - learn health, cheerfulness and mild contentment from the deaf and dumb and blind." These sightless, earless, and voiceless children may teach us many lessons it would be well for us to follow.

Oh, how thankful we should be for the beautiful gifts God has so bountifully bestowed upon us, and how we should aim to develop them to the greatest perfection of which they are capable.

← Bibliography forward 29 pages.

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