



DEAF-BLIND PIANIST

Helen May Martin, of Kansas. She hears no sound, but playing is her chief interest in life, and she gives concerts which are pronounced competent. She is known as the only deaf-blind person to take up a musical career. Her appreciation of music comes to her through the vibrations, and she has decided likes and dislikes, preferring the music of the masters. Beethoven and MacDowell are her favorites.

DISCOVERY of 50 more cases of people who live within the double barricade of darkness and silence now brings the record of individuals of Helen Keller's type in the United States and Canada up to 715. The rapidly growing list of the deaf-blind, who are found to be as a whole the most neglected class in the civilized world, is being made by Misses Corinne Rocheleau and Rebecca Mack, under the auspices of the Volta Bureau for the deaf.

While the 1920 census listed only 169 of the doubly handicapped individuals, it is now believed that there must be more than 2,000, including many aged whose sight and hearing have both failed.

Three Year Search

For three years, the two educators have traced down as many of the deaf-blind as they could find, in the first organized attempt to bring them to public attention, and to see what is being done, and what can practically be done to help them in their struggle to live as successful human beings. The first report of their investigation published this summer under the appealing title, "Those in the Dark Silence," has brought a steady correspondence revealing additional cases.

The educators emphasize that the achievements of carefully educated

Dwellers in Dark Silence

Neglected by Society

Sociology

Proper training may not transfer 2,000 American deaf-blind into accomplished Helen Kellers and Helen May Martins, but it will enable many to earn their livelihood and it will help all to enjoy life more.

deaf-blind persons, here and there, serve to show by contrast the greater misfortune of the rank and file of the deaf-blind, who get what little training they have haphazard. Helen Keller has become world famous by her conquest of life and has encouraged the handicapped everywhere to make the best of their assets. Helen May Martin, also deaf and blind, has become a competent concert pianist whose absorbing interest in life is her music, though she hears none of it.

Lack of Schools

But such achievements are not within the range of possibility for the average deaf-blind person with average, or sub-average, opportunities. Their friends and relatives realize that the senses of touch, vibration, taste, and smell are the deaf-blind person's links with the outer world. But often they do not know where to turn to get advice about developing the use of those senses, or how to find proper methods of teaching.

Schools for the blind generally refuse the deaf-blind as pupils because of their deafness, and schools for the deaf consider them too much of a problem because of their blindness. As a consequence, the report stated that today there are deaf-blind children who should be in school but who are instead mistakenly placed in asylums for the feeble-minded. If such children do find competent teachers or convince a school that they can "keep up" they are frequently turned loose after a few years, to be on their

own resources at home for life.

No class of students is more in need of follow-up work than these, and apparently none gets less, the educators concluded from their investigation. Yet the deaf-blind are in perpetual need of help and counsel.

National Institution Suggested

"They need to be kept abreast of what is being done in their interests, of the new books to read, of the new handicrafts put within their reach," the report added. "They need to be learning a little all the time to prevent the disintegration that comes from rust; and most of all they need to be delivered from the all-devouring dragon of loneliness."

The report advocates: "A national institution exclusively devoted to the general welfare of the blind-deaf; a sort of clearing house for help and advice to all those so handicapped."

It also recommends that a member of each state commission for the blind or some other official have the special duty of looking after the deaf-blind of the state, with the responsibility of keeping in touch with the facilities for education and training that the state affords. It is strongly urged that this state representative should visit the deaf-blind regularly. Even though a deaf-blind person is well cared for at home, there is a need for wider social contacts, particularly "understanding" contacts. The state representative should be able to offer a specialized friendship, as well as to give practical aid.

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