

ORATOR: Gordon Berry, M.D.

ORATION: Experiences with Deafness

At the Memorial Hospital on March 12th the Worcester District Medical Society was treated to a most satisfying and illuminating oration by Dr. Berry. The selection of the subject was more than justified by the manifest interest of the audience as the orator so comprehensively covered it. One could sense the challenge of the subject and the clear answer of one pre-eminently qualified, as the author, out of his rich experience and personal understanding, shared with us the scientific and sympathetic approach to a major medical, social and economic problem.

He traced the early and recent history of deafness to the present and pointed out the complicated educational problem of the deaf child, who has lost his hearing before he has learned to talk, in contrast to the hard of hearing child who enjoys enough hearing to acquire normal speech and the means of intellectual development.

The greatness of the problem was illustrated by slides showing the statistical incidence, both national and local, of deafness and the improvement of these figures by early diagnosis of cases and proper therapy.

The medical treatment was masterfully outlined and a few well chosen cases used as illustrations. Then the orator painted a most understanding picture of the non-medical side of deafness: its economic aspects in children--the enormous price of retardation due to deafness which the community must bear; the psychological effect on children of their deafness which may be successfully adjusted and even be the means of unusual success; or else the unrecognized cause of unhappiness, complexes, neuroses and even crime.

Going to the adult, the incidence and importance of deafness as a factor in employment was discussed and the compensatory development of the other senses explained. A bright picture for the deaf in industry was painted for those who would train their other senses and develop their personality.

Dr. Berry next discussed the adjustments available for those otology cannot help. The importance and the success of lip-reading was revealed. One of the high-lights of the paper was the simplified picture of the mechanics of sound, mechanical hearing aids, their operation and effectiveness.

In the understanding of the social and psychological aspects of deafness in the adult, Dr. Berry revealed the insight and penetration of the psychologist, coupled with that gentle friendliness and sympathetic helpfulness so characteristic of a real big man devoted to a worthy cause. No abstract could in even a small way reveal the depths of feelings or the breadth of understanding of our orator as he shared with us his years of devotion to the cause so near and dear to him.

For those who were unfortunate enough to miss the masterpiece in its entirety and for those (and they are many) who desire to have printed copies of Dr. Berry's original "Nine Commandments for the Hard of Hearing" we herewith quote:

THE NINE COMMANDMENTS FOR THE HARD OF HEARING

I. Thou shalt frankly confess thy deafness to thyself and before thy fellow men. Let there be no deceit nor false pride.

II. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's hearing, but shalt rejoice that thou livest in an age when thy handicap can be made so small.

III. Early and again shalt thou consult thy Otologist and accept every scientific aid he can render.

IV. Eschew the quack and his devices. Easy and broad is the way to his door and many there be that find it.

V. Thou shalt join and work for a League for the Hard of Hearing where thou wilt receive encouragement and stimulation for thyself and wilt find happiness in serving thy brother.

VI. So love thy neighbour that thou do everything in thy power to help him when he would have speech with thee. To this end:

VII. Thou shalt study lip-reading in season and out of season.

VIII. Thou shalt secure and use the best earphone thou canst discover.

IX. Triumphantly shalt thou rise above thine infirmity, and so conduct thy life that the world has need of thee.