EDWARD MINER GALLAUDET

Edward Miner Gallaudet was born in Hartford, Connecticut, February 5, 1837. He was the son of Thomas Hopkins and Sophia Fowler Gallaudet. His father was the first Principal of the American School for the Deaf at Hartford and is honored as the founder of the education of the deaf in America; his mother was one of his father's earliest pupils. He inherited from his father a keen intellect, a rare gift of persuasion, and a philanthropic spirit; from his mother a vigorous constitution, personal comeliness, practical sagacity, and radiant vitality.

He was graduated from Trinity College at the age of nineteen and even before graduation began his life work as a teacher of the deaf in the Hartford School. His purpose, formed while still a student in college, was to establish an institution in which the deaf might have equal opportunities with hearing youth for receiving the higher education. How that purpose should be accomplished he did not know; the only way that then seemed feasible to him was to induce some philanthropic millionaire to endow the proposed college with the necessary means of support, and the desired millionaire did not appear.

Eighteen months after he began teaching at Hartford the opportunity came through an invitation to
establish a school for the deaf in Washington, D. C., for which an act of incorporation had been obtained from Congress. The invitation was only to take charge of a small local school without equipment and without endowment, but he instantly saw in it the possibility of the future realization of his cherished purpose. Seven years later the vision was no longer a dream. The college, afterwards named Gallaudet College in honor of his father, was established in 1864 through the granting by Congress to the Columbia Institution the power to confer collegiate degrees and he was elected its President. Liberal appropriations for its support were made and have been continued during the past fifty-three years, chiefly through Dr. Gallaudet's personal influence so long as he was its head. People sometimes wondered that he was so successful in obtaining appropriations from Congress. The secret lay in his strong personality. President Garfield, for several years a member of the committee on appropriations, once said, "Nobody comes before the committee who makes so favorable an impression upon it as Dr. Gallaudet." Beautiful buildings and grounds, generous support, and a hundred free scholarships, which are the equivalent of a large endowment, are the permanent result of his untiring labors.

Dr. Gallaudet was the leading advocate in America and throughout the world of the Combined System of educating the deaf. In 1867, when oralism had scarcely any friends among teachers of the deaf in this country, he strongly urged that instruction in speech and speech-reading should be given to all deaf children capable of profiting by it, and it was chiefly through his efforts that oral teaching was introduced into the older schools; but he maintained that no single method is suitable for all deaf children and that such method
should be chosen for each child as seems best adapted for his individual case. He believed also that the language of signs, the natural language of the deaf, should have a recognized and honorable place in every school.

In 1886, at the invitation of the British government, he appeared before the Royal Commission on the education of the deaf and his testimony in favor of the Combined System, published in the report of the commission, exerted a wide influence throughout the world. In 1912 the French Republic conferred upon him the Cross of Chevalier of the Legion of Honor "in recognition of his long and successful labors in the cause of the education of the deaf."

Dr. Gallaudet was the author of a "Popular Manual of International Law," used as a text-book in American colleges, and the "Life of Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet." He also contributed numerous articles to magazines and reviews, published many pamphlets, and delivered frequent addresses before learned and philanthropic societies in the United States and Europe upon the education of the deaf.

In 1895 Yale University conferred upon him the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws, largely in recognition of the value of his work on international law, above mentioned. He had received the same degree many years before from Trinity College and Doctor of Philosophy from Columbian (now George Washington) University.

On the incorporation of the Convention of American Instructors of the Deaf in 1895 he was elected its president and at every subsequent meeting down to the last held in Hartford in 1917 was unanimously re-elected.

During his long residence in Washington Dr. Gallaudet was prominent as a citizen. In governmental
affairs he was active in promoting civil-service reform; in educational matters, apart from his special work in Gallaudet College, as a trustee of George Washington University and Howard University; in religion as a trustee and elder in the Church of the Covenant and director and president of the Young Men's Christian Association; in literature and science as a member of the Literary Society, the Historical Society, the Philosophical Society, and other kindred organizations, in most of which he was honored with election to the highest offices. Among his intimate friends were the best men distinguished in political and social life.

In 1910, after fifty-four years of active service, Dr. Gallaudet retired from the presidency of the College and in 1911 he returned to Hartford to live. Soon after this change of residence he was elected a member of the Board of Directors of the American School for the Deaf. To the centennial celebration last July of the founding of this School, and the meetings of the Convention of American Instructors of the Deaf, the American Association of the Deaf, and the Alumni of Gallaudet College, held in connection with the celebration, he had long looked forward with joyful anticipation. The members of these bodies regarded him as their father and guide and hoped on this occasion to show their esteem and affection for him personally, as well as to commemorate the noble work of his father. It was a great disappointment both to him and them that, when the time for the celebration and other meetings came, he was unable, on account of failing strength, to take any active part in them. But he bore the disappointment with his usual serenity, contenting himself with sending and receiving loving messages. Every afternoon, moreover, his friends were permitted to call upon him at his residence and one day
he was able to go to the school grounds and, seated in
an automobile, exchange greetings with his old col-
lege students.

Passing his declining years in the place of his birth,
which he had always loved, still taking a keen interest
in public affairs, and especially in the education of the
deaf, he was cheerful and happy to the end. He suf-
fered no bodily pain and he could rejoice in the remem-
brance of a beneficent life, in the gratitude and affec-
tion of those for whose welfare he had labored, and
the good will and esteem of his fellow men,—"the past
unsighed for, and the future sure." His spirit quietly
passed away on Wednesday evening, September 26,
1917.

Dr. Gallaudet was twice married; first to Miss Jennie
Fessenden, of Hartford, and after her death to Miss
Susie Denison, of Royalton, Vermont. He leaves three
sons and three daughters: Miss Katharine F. Gallau-
det, of 128 Woodland Street, Hartford, Connecticut;
Mrs. William B. Clossen, of Newton, Massachusetts;
Denison and Edson F. Gallaudet, aeroplane manufac-
turers, of East Greenwich, Rhode Island; Rev.
Herbert D. Gallaudet, late of Bridgeport, Connecticut,
now a captain of artillery in the army of the United
States; and Mrs. John W. Edgerton of New Haven,
Connecticut.

E. A. F.