

Brazil News



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Editorial

Anne Sullivan

There is no soil on earth more fertile than our imagination. We are able to imagine what it would be like to live in an igloo or in a sumptuous palace. We imagine the expression Queen Esther had on her face when she indignantly pointed her finger at the would-be exterminator of the Jews and cried out, "The adversary and enemy is this wicked Haman!"

We see someone who is blind and imagine what it would be like to have no sight. We imagine what it would be like to be hearing-impaired. Maybe we even attempt to imagine what it would be like to suddenly lose both our sight and hearing, to awaken one morning in a dark, silent world...

We call out, "Mom! MOM!"

Nothing happens. So we shout, at the top of our lungs, "**MOM! COME QUICK!**"

Now someone is in the room. This someone is feeling our forehead, apparently trying to see if we have a fever. Then there are more hands, comforting hands. Human presence causes us to calm down enough to where we can ask, "What's going on? I can't see! I can't hear anything! Am I sick, or something?"

Silence. Absolute silence. Total darkness.

Now someone is helping us hurriedly dress. Arms guide us out of the bedroom, down the hall and then into the kitchen (we know by the smell), then out the front door (we know by the cool air) and into the car. After a little while (it's hard to judge time when we can't see or hear), we stop. Helpful hands help us out of the car and guide us to another door. We go in... Immediately we recognize the smell. We are in the hospital. More hands. Strange hands. We ask questions non-stop. Silence. Total silence.

Then we have an idea. "If I ask a question and the answer is yes, tap my hand once; if it is no, tap my hand twice."

"Am I going to have to stay in the hospital?"

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One tap.

“How long?”

Silence. No one knows how to say “I don’t know” to someone who can’t see or hear.

Always there are comforting hands touching us. Mom’s hands, we’re sure of that.

After a while...maybe a day...a different hand takes our hand. She (the hand is too small to be a man’s hand) opens it. Then she begins moving her finger on our open hand. What is she doing? Repeatedly she makes the same sign. Suddenly you shout “A! Are you making the letter A?” A tap on the shoulder. Then many hands are patting you on the back.

Again the hand makes a sign on your hand. “B!” you shout. Then C, D, E... It takes a lot of concentration, but before too long, you have a crude means of communication.

“Why can’t I see or hear?” you ask.

W<>E<><>D<>O<>N<>T<><>K<>N<>O<>W.

“You don’t know? Will I soon get better?”

W<>E<><>D<>O<>N...

You interrupt. “You don’t know, is that it?”

A tap.

You break down and cry. You feel consoling hands holding you tight. Someone is making signs in your hand, but you are too upset to pay any attention. You sob yourself to sleep.

The day comes that you return home. Each day you become more proficient at sign reading. Often you manage to guess what the person has begun to spell. You say, “We’re getting company tonight?”

A quick tap.

So far so good. Your imagination can handle all this quite well. So let’s try another one, a bit more difficult.

You are traveling alone in a plane. Someplace, out over the middle of Africa, you see a flash of light in one of the turbines and hear a boom. You are tossed back and forth. Then everything becomes black and silent.

When you awaken, you are lying on a mat on the earth. Your body is sore, but otherwise you are okay...except for the fact that you can neither see nor hear. Since no one talks your language, or even knows how to read or write, it does no good to talk. Yet, this is where you will spend your next five years.

Can your imagination handle that one?

Helen Keller was born on June 27, 1880, in Tuscumbia, a small town in northern Alabama.

An especially bright child, at six months she was imitating sounds, and even words. She would say, “How d’ye.” One day she surprised everyone by saying, “Tea, tea, tea.” For 19 months, Helen was a happy, normal child. Then she was stricken by high fever that then was called “acute congestion of the stomach and brain.” The doctor believed she wouldn’t live, but after a number of days between life and death, one morning the fever left her just as suddenly as it had come, leaving her without hearing or sight.

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Even Helen's exceptional intelligence wasn't sufficient to prepare her for her new dark and silent world. "I got used to the silence and darkness that surrounded me and forgot that it had ever been different..." She has no recollection of what happened during the first months after her illness, except that she spent a lot of time on her mother's lap or clinging to her skirts as she went about her work.

Slowly a crude form of household communication evolved. A shake of the head meant no, a nod, yes. A pull meant come and a push, go. If Helen wanted bread, she would go through the motions of cutting and buttering bread. For ice cream she would imitate the cranking of a freezer. By the time she was five, she was helping with household chores, like folding clothes. She was able to separate her own and put them away.

Helen doesn't remember when she first realized that she was different from others. She began to notice that her mother and her friends didn't use signs to communicate. At times she would touch their lips as they talked, realizing this was a superior mode of communication. She would then move her own lips in an effort to communicate, but when nothing would happen, she would become very angry, kicking and screaming until she would collapse in weariness.

During her first years, Helen had a playmate, a girl her age named Martha, the daughter of the family cook. In spite of living in different worlds, they constantly played together. With her strong will, Helen mercilessly dominated her little friend. "I seldom had any difficulty in making her do just as I wished. It pleased me to domineer over her, and she generally submitted by my tyranny rather than risk a hand-to-hand encounter. I was strong, active, indifferent to consequences. I knew my own mind well enough and always had my own way, even if I had to fight tooth and nail for it."

Incredibly, one of Helen's favorite pastimes was to hunt for guinea fowl nests in the high grass. She would invite Martha to go with her. "When we were fortunate enough to find a nest I never allowed her to carry the eggs home, making her understand by emphatic signs that she might fall and break them."

Helen's frustration often caused her to become violent. During one of her tantrums, she upset her baby sister's cradle. Had her mother not appeared just then and caught the baby before striking the floor, the results could well have been tragic. "Thus it is when we walk in the valley of twofold solitude we know little of the tender affections that grow out of endearing words and actions and companionship. But afterward, when I was restored to my human heritage, [my sister] and I grew into each other's hearts."

As Helen grew older, the desire to communicate also grew. So did her frustration. "I felt as if invisible hands were holding me, and I made frantic efforts to free myself... After awhile the need of some means of communication became so urgent that these outbursts occurred daily, sometimes hourly."

An active mind like Helen's couldn't live in prison very long without self-destructing. Yet, who held the key to her prison?

Let us briefly review Helen's situation to understand the difficulty of helping her.

The speech she learned during the first 19 months of her life, she had lost. Thus she had no concept of words, and much less of what a word sounds like. Even if it would

become possible to spell words to her, how would she mentally catalog them with no value of sound? Would she be able to take her words—mere clumps of letters—and form intelligible sentences?

Indeed, how was she able to think without the use of words? Helen doesn't tell us, but at this point even a fertile imagination has difficulty in supplying answers.

Helen's rudimentary communication was limited to her own household and friend Martha. She had no idea how to interact with others, and even with her inner circle she often became violent.

For Helen, all communication had to come through touch. Even if a touch-mode of communication could be developed, only a handful of people would know how to use it. How would she communicate with the rest of the world?

Helen herself describes another problem. Those who are both deaf and blind “cannot distinguish the tone of the voice or, without assistance, go up and down the gamut of tones that give significance to words; nor can they watch the expression of the speaker's face, and a look is often the very soul of what one says.”

Helen's father sought the help of a Dr. Chisholm in Baltimore. After an examination, he explained there was nothing he could do for his little patient. He recommended a visit to Dr. Alexander Graham Bell, of Washington, who worked extensively with hearing and sight impaired people. “Child as I was, I at once felt the tenderness and sympathy which endeared Dr. Bell to so many hearts, as his wonderful achievements enlist their admiration. He held me on his knee... He understood my signs, and I knew it and loved him at once. But I did not dream that that interview would be the door through which I should pass from darkness into light, from isolation to friendship, companionship, knowledge, love.

Dr. Bell referred his patient to a Mr. Anagnos, the director of the Perkins Institution, in Boston. They immediately traveled to Boston and spoke to Mr. Anagnos, who promised to do his best to find a teacher for Helen. Several weeks later, which was the summer of 1886, a letter was received in which Mr. Anagnos graciously informed the Keller family that a teacher had been found. It wasn't until the following March that she was able to assume her duties.

“Thus I came up out of Egypt and stood before Sinai, and a power divine touched my spirit and gave it sight, so that I beheld many wonders. And from the sacred mountain I heard a voice which said, “Knowledge is love and light and vision.”

Enter Anne Sullivan.

“The most important day I remember in all my life is the one on which my teacher, Anne Mansfield Sullivan, came to me. I am filled with wonder when I consider the immeasurable contrasts between the two lives which it connects. It was the third of March, 1887, three months before I was seven years old...

“Have you ever been at sea in a dense fog, when it seemed as if a tangible white darkness shut you in, and the great ship, tense and anxious, groped her way toward the shore with plummet and sounding line, and you waited with beating heart for something to happen? I was like that ship before my education began, only I was without compass or sounding line, and had no way of knowing how near the harbor

was. ‘Light! Give me light!’ was the wordless cry of my soul, and the light of love shone on me in that very hour.

“I felt approaching footsteps. I stretched out my hand as I supposed to my mother. Some one took it, and I was caught up and held close in the arms of her who had come to reveal all things to me, and, more than all things else, to love me.”

Classes began the following morning when Miss Sullivan took Helen to her room and gave her a doll which the blind children from the Perkins Institution had sent to her. Then, taking Helens hand, she slowly spelled D<>O<>L<>L. “I was at once interested in this finger play and tried to imitate it. When I finally succeeded in making the letters correctly I was flushed with childish pleasure and pride. Running downstairs to my mother I held up my hand and made the letters for doll. I did not know that I was spelling a word or even that words existed; I was simply making my fingers go in monkey-like imitation. In the days that followed I learned to spell in this uncomprehending way a great many words, among them *pin, hat, cup* and a few verbs like *sit, stand* and *walk*. But my teacher had been with me several weeks before I understood that everything has a name.”

Helen tells of the time she and Miss Sullivan were on a walk, when they came across someone drawing water from a well. “My teacher placed my hand under the spout. As the cool stream gushed over one hand she spelled into the other the word *water*, first slowly, then rapidly. I stood still, my whole attention fixed upon the motions of her fingers. Suddenly I felt a misty consciousness as of something forgotten—a thrill of returning thought; and somehow the mystery of language was revealed to me. I knew then that “w-a-t-e-r” meant the wonderful cool something that was flowing over my hand. That living word awakened my soul, gave it light, hope, joy, set it free! There were barriers still, it is true, but barriers that could in time be swept away.

“I left the well house eager to learn. Everything had a name and each name gave birth to a new thought. As we returned to the house every object which I touched seemed to quiver with life. That was because I saw everything with the strange, new sight that had come to me.”

This new revelation had an unusual side effect. Until now Helen had vented her frustration in uncontrolled tantrums. After breaking some valued object or kicking a loved one in the shin, she would feel a strange smugness. But now, as she remembered a doll she had broken in a fit of anger, a new feeling invaded her being. “I felt my way to the hearth and picked up the pieces [of the broken doll]. I tried vainly to put them together. Then my eyes filled with tears; for I realized what I had done, and for the first time I felt repentance and sorrow.

“I learned a great many new words that day. I do not remember what they all were; but I do know that *mother, father, sister, teacher* were among them—words that were to make the world blossom for me, ‘like Aaron’s rod, with flowers.’ It would have been difficult to find a happier child than I was as I lay in my crib at the close of that eventful day and lived over the joys it had brought to me, and for the first time longed for a new day to come.”

Helen’s prodigious mind soon realized that simply knowing the name of objects was

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only the first step in her learning process. Now came the desire to understand concepts. One day while stringing beads, she made some obvious errors. Miss Sullivan saw her frustration, touched her forehead and “spelled with decided emphasis, ‘Think.’”

“In a flash I knew that the word was the name of the process that was going on in my head. This was my first conscious perception of an abstract idea.”

Helen did think, but not about the beads. She was remembering a question she had asked the day before: “What is love?”

Miss Sullivan told her: “You cannot touch the clouds, you know; but you feel the rain and know how glad the flowers and the thirsty earth are to have it after a hot day. You cannot touch love either; but you feel the sweetness that it pours into everything. Without love you would not be happy or want to play.”

Helen says, “The beautiful truth burst upon my mind—I felt that there were invisible lines stretched between my spirit and the spirits of others.”

With the patience of Job and incredible ingenuity, Miss Sullivan tutored her little charge.

“This process was continued for several years; for the deaf child does not learn in a month, or even in two or three years, the numberless idioms and expressions used in the simplest daily intercourse. The little hearing child learns these from constant repetition and imitation. The conversation he hears in his home stimulates his mind and suggests topics and calls forth the spontaneous expression of his own thoughts. This natural exchange of ideas is denied to the deaf child. My teacher, realizing this, determined to supply the kinds of stimulus I lacked. This she did by repeating to me as far as possible, verbatim, what she heard, and by showing me how I could take part in the conversation. But it was a long time before I ventured to take the initiative, and still longer before I could find something appropriate to say at the right time.”

Miss Sullivan taught Helen many of her lessons out in the woods. “All my early lessons have in them the breath of the woods—the fine resinous odor of pine needles, blended with the perfume of wild grapes. Seated in the gracious shade of a wild tulip tree, I learned to think that everything has a lesson and a suggestion... Indeed, everything that could hum, or buzz, or sing, or bloom, had a part in my education—noisy-throated frogs, katydids and crickets held in my hand until, forgetting their embarrassment, they trilled their reedy note, little downy chicken and wildflowers, the dogwood blossoms, meadow-violets and budding fruit trees. I felt the bursting cotton-bolls and fingered their soft fiber and fuzzy seeds; I felt the low sighing of the wind through the cornstalks, the silky rustling of the long leaves, and the indignant snort of my pony, as we caught him in the pasture and put the bit in his mouth—ah me! How well I remember the spicy, clovery smell of his breath!...

“Thus I learned from life itself. At the beginning I was only a little mass of possibilities. It was my teacher who unfolded and developed them. When she came, everything about me breathed of love and joy and was full of meaning. She has never since let pass an opportunity to point out the beauty that is in everything, nor has she ceased trying in thought and action and example to make my life sweet and useful.

“My teacher is so near to me that I scarcely think of myself apart from her. How much of my delight

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in all beautiful things is innate, and how much is due to her influence, I can never tell. I feel that her being is inseparable from my own, and that the footsteps of my life are in hers. All the best of me belongs to her—there is not a talent, or an aspiration or a joy in me that has not been awakened by her loving touch.” [Italics are mine.]

A special time in Helen’s life was a visit to the Perkins Institution for the Blind, “when I began to make friends with the little blind children. It delighted me inexpressibly to find that they knew the manual alphabet. What joy to talk with other children in my own language! Until then I had been like a foreigner speaking through an interpreter. . . . It took me some time to appreciate the fact that my new friends were blind. I knew I could not see; but it did not seem possible that all the eager, loving children who gathered round me and joined heartily in my frolics were also blind. . . . I was not prepared to find one child and another and yet another deprived of the same precious gift. But they were so happy and contented that I lost all sense of pain in the pleasure of their companionship.”

Helen’s education was by no means conventional. The world was her classroom. In Boston she visited Bunker Hill, which was her first lesson in history. The following day she went to Plymouth by steamboat, where she was able to feel the contours of the Plymouth Rock. Her fingers traced the embossed figures **1620**. Thus she learned and lived the story of the Pilgrims.

Helen’s first experience on the beach was memorable. Tumbled by a wave, she lost her balance “and everything seemed shut out from this strange, all-enveloping element—life, air, warmth and love. At last, however, the sea, as if weary of its new toy, threw me back on the shore, and in another instant I was clasped in my teacher’s arms. Oh, the comfort of the long, tender embrace! As soon as I had recovered from my panic sufficiently to say anything, I demanded: ‘Who put salt in the water?’ ”

Helen tells about spending time in a mountain resort, living in a cottage. “Many visitors came to Fern Quarry. In the evening, by the campfire, the men played cards and whiled away the hours in talk and sport. They told stories of their wonderful feats with fowl, fish and quadruped—how many wild ducks and turkeys they had shot, what ‘savage trout’ they had caught, and how they had bagged the craftiest foxes, outwitted the most clever ’possums and overtaken the fleetest deer, until I thought that surely the lion, the tiger, the bear and the rest of the wild tribe would not be able to stand before these wily hunters. ‘Tomorrow to the chase!’ was their good-night shout as the circle of merry friends broke up for the night. The men slept in the hall outside our door, and I could feel the deep breathing of the dogs and the hunters as they lay on their improvised beds.”

Carefully reread the above paragraph and ask yourself: How could a young girl, blind and deaf, know all that?

Helen learned to read, first conventional letters embossed on stiff paper, and then Braille. In 1980, Helen was told that Ragnhild Kaata, a Norwegian blind and deaf girl, had been taught to speak. This news set her on fire with eagerness. “I resolved that I would learn to speak. I would not rest satisfied until my teacher took me, for advice and assistance, to Miss Sarah Fuller, principal of the Horace Mann School. This lovely,

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sweet-natured lady offered to teach me herself, and we began the twenty-sixth of March, 1890.

“Miss Fuller’s method was this: she passed my hand lightly over her face, and let me feel the position of her tongue and lips when she made a sound. I was eager to imitate every motion and in an hour I had learned six elements of speech: M, P, A, S, T, I. Miss Fuller gave me eleven lessons in all. I shall never forget the surprise and delight I felt when I uttered my first connected sentence, ‘It is warm.’ True, they were broken and stammering syllables; but they were human speech. My soul, conscious of new strength, came out of bondage, and was reaching through those broken symbols of speech to all knowledge and all faith.

“No deaf child who has earnestly tried to speak the words which he has never heard—to come out of the prison of silence, where no tone of love, no song of bird, no strain of music ever pierces the stillness—can forget the thrill of surprise, the joy of discovery which came over him when he uttered his first word. Only such a one can appreciate the eagerness with which I talked to my toys, to stones, trees, birds and dumb animals, or the delight I felt when at my call Mildred ran to me or my dog obeyed my commands. It is an unspeakable boon to me to be able to speak in winged words that need no interpretation. As I talked, happy thoughts fluttered up out of my words that might perhaps have struggled in vain to escape my fingers [Italics are mine].

“But it must not be supposed that I could really talk in this short time. I had learned only the elements of speech. Miss Full and Miss Sullivan could understand me, but most people would not have understood one word in a hundred. Nor is it true that, after I had learned these elements, I did the rest of the work myself. But for Miss Sullivan’s genius, untiring perseverance and devotion, I could not have progressed as far as I have toward natural speech. In the first place, I labored night and day before I could be understood by even my most intimate friends; in the second place, I needed miss Sullivan’s assistance constantly in my efforts to articulate each sound clearly and to combine all sounds in a thousand ways. Even now she calls my attention every day to mispronounced words.

“All teachers of the deaf know what this means, and only they can at all appreciate the peculiar difficulties with which I had to contend. In reading my teacher’s lips I was wholly dependent on my fingers: I had to use the sense of touch in catching the vibrations of the throat, the movements of the mouth and the expression of the face; and often this sense was at fault. In such cases I was forced to repeat the words or sentences, sometimes for hours, until I felt the proper ring in my own voice. My work was practice, practice, practice. Discouragement and weariness cast me down frequently; but the next moment the thought that I should soon be at home and show my loved ones what I had accomplished, spurred me on, and I eagerly looked forward to their pleasure in my achievement.

“*‘My little sister will understand me now,’ was a thought stronger than all obstacles. I used to repeat ecstatically, ‘I am not dumb now.’ I could not be despondent while I anticipated the delight of talking to my mother and reading her responses from her lips [Italics are mine].* It astonished me to find how much easier it is to talk than to spell with the fingers, and I discarded the manual alphabet as a medium of communication on my part; But Miss Sullivan and a few

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friends still use it in speaking to me, for it is more convenient and more rapid than lip reading.

“Just here, perhaps, I had better explain our use of the manual alphabet, which seems to puzzle people who do not know us. One who reads or talks to me spells with his hand, using the single-hand alphabet generally employed by the deaf. I place my hand on the hand of the speaker so lightly as not to impede its movements. The position of the hand is as easy to feel as it is to see. I do not feel each letter any more than you see each letter separately when you read. Constant practice makes the fingers very flexible, and some of my friends spell rapidly—about as fast as an expert writes on a typewriter [which can be 80 or more words a minute]. The mere spelling is, of course, no more a conscious act than it is in writing.

“When I had made speech my own, I could not wait to go home. At last the happiest of happy moments arrived. I had made my homeward journey, talking constantly to Miss Sullivan, not for the sake of talking, but determined to improve to the last minute. Almost before I knew it, the train stopped at the Tusculumbia station, and there on the platform stood the whole family. My eyes fill with tears now as I think how my mother pressed me close to her, speechless and trembling with delight, taking in every syllable that I spoke, while little Mildred seized my free hand and kissed it and danced, and my father expressed his pride and affection in a big silence. It was as if Isaiah’s prophecy had been fulfilled in me, ‘The mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands!’ ” [Italics are mine.]

The events and accomplishments of Helen Keller which we have described thus far took place before she was 12 years old.

Helen traveled extensively. During her 13th year, she was present in Washington for President Cleveland’s inauguration; she visited the World’s Fair and visited Niagara Falls “and felt the air vibrate and the earth tremble.

“It seems strange to many people that I should be impressed by the wonders and beauties of Niagara. They are always asking: ‘What does this beauty or that music mean to you? You cannot see the waves rolling up the beach or hear their roar. What do they mean to you?’ In the most evident sense they mean everything. I can not fathom or define their meaning any more than I can fathom or define love or religion or goodness.”

At the Fair, Helen toured a model of the *Santa Maria*, Columbus’ flag ship. At the Cape of Good Hope exhibit, she learned how diamonds are extracted from the earth, how they are weighed, cut and polished. Dr. Alexander Graham Bell became her self-appointed guide. All this had a profound effect on Helen.

“All these experiences added a great many new terms to my vocabulary, and in the three weeks I spent at the Fair I took a long leap from the little child’s interest in fairy tales and toys to the appreciation of the real and the earnest in the workaday world.”

Helen learned German, French and Latin. In October of 1896, she entered the Cambridge School for Young Ladies, a preparatory school for Radcliffe. Her first year studies were English history, English literature, German, Latin, Latin composition and math. Once again our imagination bogs down as we think about a blind and deaf person attending college classes.

“Each day Miss Sullivan went to the classes with me and spelled into my hand with infinite patience all that the teachers said. In study hours she had to look up new words for me and read and reread notes and books I did not have in raised print. The tedium of that work is hard to conceive...Though everybody was kind and ready to help us, there was only one hand that could turn drudgery into pleasure.”

Then came the preliminary examinations for admission to Radcliffe. “The subjects I offered were Elementary and Advanced German, French, Latin, English, and Greek and Roman history, making nine hours in all. I passed in everything, and received ‘honors’ in German and English.”

Not all of Helen’s life was study.

“Nothing gives me greater pleasure than to take my friends out rowing when they visit me. Of course, I cannot guide the boat very well. Some one usually sits in the stern and manages the rudder while I row. Sometimes, however, I go rowing without the rudder. It is fun to try to steer by the scent of watergrasses and lilies, and of bushes that grow on the shore...”

“When a rainy days keeps me indoors, I amuse myself after the manner of other girls. I like to knit and crochet; I read in the happy-go-lucky way I love, here and there a line; or perhaps I play a game or two of checkers or chess with a friend. I have a special board on which I play these games. The squares are cut out, so that the men stand in them firmly. The black checkers are flat and the white ones curved on the top. Each checker has a hole in the middle in which a brass knob can be placed to distinguish the king from the commons. The chessmen are of two sizes, the white larger than the black, so that I have no trouble in following my opponent’s maneuvers by moving my hands lightly over the board after a play. The jar made by shifting the men from one hole to another tells me when it is my turn.”

Nor was her life as cloistered as we might believe.

“People who think all sensations reach us through the eye and the ear have expressed surprise that I should notice any difference, except possibly the absence of pavements, between walking in city streets and country roads. They forget that my whole body is alive to the conditions about me. The rumble and roar of the city smite the nerves of my face, and I feel the ceaseless tramp of an unseen multitude, and the dissonant tumult frets my spirit...”

“The hands of those I meet are dumbly eloquent to me. The touch of some hands is an impertinence. I have met people so empty of joy, that when I clasped their frosty finger tips, it seemed as if I were shaking hands with a northeast storm. Others there are whose hands have sunbeams in them, so that their grasp warms my heart. It may be only the clinging touch of a child’s hand; but there is as much potential sunshine in it for me as there is in a loving glance for others. A hearty handshake or a friendly letter gives me genuine pleasure.”

Helen graduated with honors from Radcliffe College in 1904. Her life is a series of interesting events. She personally knew the great poets of her day.

Yet, she could neither see nor hear.

Helen Keller ends her book saying that “thus it is that my friends have made the

story of my life. In a thousand ways they have turned my limitations into beautiful privileges, and enabled me to walk serene and happy in the shadow cast by me deprivation.”

The story of the blind man in John chapter 9 whom Jesus healed ends on a strange note. “And Jesus said, For judgment I am come into this world, *that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind.* And some of the Pharisees which were with him heard these words, and said unto him, Are we blind also? Jesus said unto them, *If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth.*”

To understand the meaning of these words, we must return to Genesis chapter 3, where the serpent tempts Eve with the forbidden fruit. She quotes the Creator: “God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.”

The tempter had a ready answer: “Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.”

These venomous words, uttered by the deceiver of deceivers, aren’t entirely devoid of truth. The implied message was: “God is being unjust with you; He has blinded your eyes so that you can’t see everything He sees. If you eat of the fruit of this tree, an additional dimension will be added to your life.”

Adam and Eve’s innocence and holiness was dependent upon this “blindness.” Just like we don’t encumber our children with our day-to-day problems, so God knew that knowledge of the power struggle in heaven and the resultant spiritual order of “good and evil” would change man’s status from “good” to “evil.”

In this sense, Adam and Eve were blind, and in this blindness there was innocence and happiness. This would lend meaning to Jesus’ words: “If ye were blind, ye should have no sin.” Paradoxically, while “blind,” Adam and Eve could see the Lord God as He came to the Garden in the cool of the day and communed with them, but once their eyes were opened, they could no longer see Him (although communion was restored as in faith and obedience they accepted His promise of a Redeemer).

“That they which see not might see.” Just as Adam and Eve’s blindness entitled them to see and commune with God, so Jesus came, gave His life and then said He must return to heaven so that His Spirit could have communion with the faithful, those whose spiritual eyes are closed to the rudiments of this world, thus restoring, as much as possible while in this flesh, the pristine communion in the Garden.

“And that they which see might be made blind,” they who voraciously eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and believe they are enlightened, these have their eyes closed by heavy scales of darkness which keep them from seeing or having communion with the Creator (even though many loudly and convincingly proclaim intimacy with Him).

The apostle Paul believed his spiritual vision was perfect, until struck with blindness. That is when he began to see.

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It has never been God's plan that the "blind" senselessly stumble around. There is no virtue in falling into a hole or wandering onto a busy expressway. Rather, God has great delight in opening the spiritual eyes of those who call upon His name and leading them on paths of righteousness. This He does through His Holy Spirit. "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."

The Holy Spirit only gives "sight" to the blind. This sight is very much like the sight which Anne Sullivan gave to Helen Keller. Through the still, small touch of Anne's fingers, Helen was able to "see" the wonders of creation and know many people. But—and this is what this article is all about—Helen was able to "see" only while yielding herself to Anne's touch. Being both blind and deaf, Helen was never able to strike out on her own without Anne (or whoever happened to be taking her place). Let's do a rerun on what Helen says about Anne Sullivan:

"My teacher is so near to me that I scarcely think of myself apart from her. How much of my delight in all beautiful things is innate, and how much is due to her influence, I can never tell. I feel that her being is inseparable from my own, and that the footsteps of my life are in hers. All the best of me belongs to her—there is not a talent, or an aspiration or a joy in me that has not been awakened by her loving touch."

Without a doubt, Helen "saw" a great deal more through Anne's fingers than most people see with their natural eyes. But *always* she was dependent upon her teacher. It is in this way that the Holy Spirit will teach us all things and bring to our remembrance whatsoever He has said unto us.

Helen Keller could neither see nor hear. As a child this didn't keep her from being rude and overbearing with her little playmate, Martha. Yet, we can't help but believe that being blind and deaf spared her many temptations as she grew older, not because she was better than anyone else, but simply because she was shielded from many temptations.

It was God's plan that Adam and Eve be shielded from knowledge that He knew would be harmful to them. Likewise today, God wants to shield us from destructive knowledge. Or put differently, He wants us to be "blind." Yet, as we have said, He doesn't want us to be zombies, to go through life steeped in ignorance.

What He wants is that we place our sight and hearing on the altar and then permit that His Holy Spirit be our Anne Sullivan. We sing, *Take thou my hand and lead me*, and envision a father leading his small child by the hand. When God takes our hand and leads us, it is far more than this. His Holy Spirit writes into our hand all that we need to know for our safety and happiness during this life. What He doesn't tell us, we don't need to know.

*There is an unseen hand to me,
That leads thro' ways I cannot see;
While going thro' this world of woe,
This hand still leads me as I go.*

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*His hand has led thro' shadows drear,
And while it leads I have no fear;
I know 'twill lead me to that home,
Where sin or sorrow ne'er can come.*

*I'm trusting to the unseen hand,
That guides me thro' this weary land;
And some sweet day I'll reach that strand,
Still guided by the unseen hand.*

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A Story

by Mário de Moraes

Springtime

In the city of Rio de Janeiro, a famous publicity agent left his apartment in the Bairro Ipanema, walked through the Nossa Senhora da Paz square, where he caught a taxi to work. Each day he silently walked past a beggar who held out his hand, asking for a handout.

The publicity agent never stopped to speak to the beggar, and much less to give him a handout. So far as he was concerned, the beggar didn't exist.

Then one morning as he left his apartment, the publicity agent saw a beautiful sight. The sun was shining on the trees in such a way that the leaves had a golden hue. Never had he heard the birds sing more beautifully. The very air seemed different, purer...

Then it struck the publicity agent: It was springtime!

Slowly he walked across the square, absorbing the beauty of his surroundings. For some unknown reason, when he reached the blind beggar, he stopped.

On the beggar's chest there hung a cardboard sign that said: I'm Blind.

"You don't know me," the publicity agent began, "but it happens I come by here every day and I always see you here in this same place, asking for handouts. Would you mind if I wrote something on the back of that cardboard sign hanging on your chest?"

Even though he couldn't imagine what was going on, the blind man consented. With a marking pen, the publicity agent wrote on the back of the cardboard and then hung it on the blind man's neck again, with his writing facing out.

That evening when coming back from work, the publicity agent made a point of stopping to see the blind man. Drawing near, he saw a number of people standing around him. He waited until the crowd thinned out and then stepped up.

"Hi! I'm the person who spoke to you this morning and wrote on the back of your cardboard sign. How was your day?"

The blind man's face was illuminated in a smile. "I don't know what you wrote on

this piece of cardboard; all I know is that I had a wonderful day. Never before have I been treated as well as today, never have I received more handouts. I want to thank you for what you did... By the way, what did you write on this piece of cardboard?"

The man replied:

**It's springtime...
But I'm blind.**

This & That

Crops need sunlight, and we've had a real shortage during the last six weeks. With almost daily rains, humidity has gone sky-high, which makes an ideal situation for the Asian Rust. Those who planted really early were able to harvest their crops and get a second crop in. These are in good shape. Those who planted early enough to where their crops ripened during all this rain are being hard hit. I understand there are soybean farmers who are planting their second crop without harvesting the first. From what I have observed on the Colony, if the rains slack up now, which it appears they are, there should still be a fairly good harvest. Expenses are going to be high because of having to spray up to three times for the rust problem. But on the other hand, the price of soybeans is so high that the end profit should still be good. If it actually quits raining.

The road situation is about the worst I have ever seen it in recent years. Highways have simply given out in central Brazil. With daily rains, it's almost impossible to fix the holes. By now there are so many holes that fixing holes is no longer a solution. The solution is to recap them, but with thousands of kilometers in bad shape, that takes a lot of money, and there is no money available. Rural roads, even on the Colony, are very bad. In fact, there have been times in which brethren have spent most of the night pulling trucks through the worst spots. The County is promising to do some work on the roads. If they do, that should help some. And yet, according to Perdigeão truck drivers, the Colony roads are some of the best around. For them these rains have been a nightmare.

During WW II, the Nazi party attempted to create cells in other countries. Since in southern Brazil there were Germans who maintained their culture and language, it was believed these would be fertile fields for the propagation of Hitlerism. However, when it was discovered that these Germans intermarried with Brazilians and worked in the fields with Negro workers, they were declared woefully unfit to be part of the special Aryan race—Hitler's "pure" race. Similarly, after the fall of the Iron Curtain, in an interview, the Russian responsible for implanting Communist cells in Brazil, tells how frustrating and impossible this task was. They would send their contacts large sums of money to be spent in propaganda. Upon returning to see how the money had been spent, they would find out it had been spent on women and real estate investments. Very little for the Communist cause. They soon realized that Brazil wasn't very fertile soil for Communism.

All of Emma Burns children were together for the first time in 36 years. Starting with the youngest, Tim lives several miles from Emma's place; Miriam, Mrs. Leo Dirks, lives on the new settlement in Tocantins; Mary, Mrs. Stanley Schultz, lives at the Rio Verdinho Congregation; Elizabeth, Mrs. Glenn Hibner, lives on the colony in Mato Grosso; Frank lives at Hesston, Kansas; Frieda, Mrs. Glenn Reimer, at Enderby, BC, John in Tennessee; and Faith about a mile from her mother's place. It was an especially happy reunion because with her hip replacement, Emma now gets around without a cane, whereas before she was confined to a wheelchair.

Dental work done here. Frank Burns and John & Dorothy Burns and Rosa Koehn took advantage of their time here to get their dental work done, for a fraction of what it would have cost in N America. It doesn't take very much work to get a free ticket out of the deal, especially if root canals or implants are involved.

Other visitors from N America, most of whom have lived here in the past: The Elias Stoltzfus family, the Jesse Loewen family, Rosa Koehn and granddaughter Lawanda Koehn, Marvin Yoder, the Stanley Holdeman family (who actually sort of live here yet).

New Tocantins settlement. Eldon & Bonnie Penner and son Isaac, Márcio & Wendy Ambrósio (son-in-law and daughter) have moved to the new settlement in Tocantins.

Another new settlement? Different ones have been looking at land in the distant state of Roraima. Brazil continues to be a land of opportunity for farmers wanting to purchase cheap land.

The town church continues to grow. Another four were baptized, one of them Moacir Rosa's nephew. Moacir came to the church quite a few years ago. Over the years, his wife; his six children; his brother and his five children; two sisters; a sister-in-law with her three children and a niece with her two children have come to the church, for a total of 31, including their spouses.

Emma Burns moved back to her house after living with us for four months after her hip surgery. She is glad to be back to her "bica" and wood stove. And we miss her.

Daniel & Anna Kramer spent a week visiting the Curitiba mission, where their children, Nelson & Ruth Unruh are stationed.

Stanley & Mary Schultz visited their children, Sérgio & Katrina Alves, who are stationed on the Acaraú mission.

Roseanne Yoder, daughter of Paul & Rachel Yoder, left for voluntary service at the child care home in Arizona.

Min. Arlo Hibner was to Iroquois, SD to help in revival work.

A few facts & figures: We had 622 mm—24.5 inches of rain in January and 407.5 mm—16 inches in February. The exchange continues to fluctuate from day to day, but is hanging in at 2.9 reals for one US dollar.

Reagan and the end of Communism. We have at different times mentioned the pivotal role Reagan played in the implosion of the Soviet Union. A soon to be published book tells how American intelligence discovered that the Soviet Union was stealing Western industrial technology. The solution, enthusiastically endorsed

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and authorized by Reagan, was to permit the leak to continue, but to contaminate the computer programs being stolen. Thus it was that one night the Siberian natural gas pipeline exploded. “The result was the most monumental non-nuclear explosion and fire ever seen from space,” according to the author. The interruption of the flow of natural gas to Western markets dried up the source of much needed foreign currency for a long period of time, hastening the financial collapse of the Soviet Union.