

DEAF-BLIND STUDENT EARNS COLLEGE DEGREE

By our education editor

June 29, 1904

A 24-YEAR-OLD student in Massachusetts yesterday became one of the first deaf-blind people to earn a college degree. Helen Keller, who lost her sight and hearing as a result of a childhood illness, graduated from the prestigious Radcliffe women's college in Cambridge.

Her remarkable achievement follows the publication of her autobiography, *The Story of My Life*, which tells of how, with the help of her teacher and companion, Anne Sullivan, she learned to read, write, and speak.

Keller (on the left) dedicated the book to Alexander Graham Bell, “who has taught the deaf to speak and enabled the listening

ear to hear speech from the Atlantic to the Rockies.” She describes how Sullivan, who was born in Feeding Hills, Agawam, Massachusetts and has experienced periods of blindness herself, came to her after Bell recommended the

school that Sullivan had attended.

Sullivan's patient teaching helped Keller escape from the isolation of being unable to hear or see, which left her “at sea in a dense fog.”

When Sullivan first met Keller, she found a little girl trapped in her own dark, silent world. But a



breakthrough came when she ran cool water over one of Keller's hands, spelling out the word “w-a-t-e-r” on her other hand with her fingers. Keller later explained: “The mystery of language was revealed to me.”

Keller attended the Perkins School for the Blind—the same school that Sullivan had graduated from—and the Horace Mann School for the Deaf, where she learned to speak. Her first spoken sentence was: “It is warm.”

Her achievement follows Perkins' earlier success with Laura Bridgman, the first deaf and blind person to be given the “key of language.”

Alabama-born Keller says she will always be grateful for the support she received in Boston—the “City of Kind Hearts.”