

**Hands showing the sign language alphabet. Line engraving, 1748.**

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# Dumb Speech or Language of the Fingers.





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*Published according to Act of Parliament, for J. Hanton at the Kings Arms, in St. Pauls Church-Yard London. 1748.*

## THE THIEFALLAN LANGUAGE.

I have had an intention for some time of commemorating to the World my acquaintance with this SCIENTIFIC thinking, that Languages do not stem from words, but both edified and edifiable to Leaders in the higher circles, but at the present moment, when the country is likely to be carried off its excessive faction, it perhaps may be more particularly, as well as generally necessary, to therefore do myself the honour to publish Lakes and Gentlemen, who may be desirous to acquire this more useful and comprehensive, that the attainment of it is by no means trifling, and by receiving their commands, will be much obliged, and particularly explained, by Ladies and Gentlemen, who are desirous to print.

G. HAYES.

Nov. 11, St. Clement's Church-yard, Strand,  
May 14, will wait on the Ladies if requested.

1795.

## THE DEAF AND DUMB TAUGHT TO SPEAK

Mr. T. S. WOODMAN begs to request his Friends and the Public, that a VACANCY remains in the Establishment for that unfortunate case of Paresis, situated at KILBURN, near London, where a transmission of his exertions, directed by scientific principles, and extended by successful experience, may be confidently relied on.—T. S. W. also undertakes the removal of INFERMITIES in SEVEN, whether the result of natural defect, or contracted by bad habit.—S. J. Finch will re-assume on Monday the 9th of January.

1814.

To the Proprietors of the **UNIVERSAL MAGAZINE.**

GENTLEMEN,  
*Your Readiness to oblige the Public, with every useful and entertaining Part of Knowledge, persuades me that you will condescend to them the inbred compendious, easy, and secret Method of dumb Speech: which is not made up of arbitrary and fanciful Signs and Characters, but will be found truly Grammatical, and very strictly restrained, within the Rules of Orthography, upon Nature's alphabet.*

DUMB SPEECH, is the Art of Converting by the Fingers ONLY,  
as well in the Dark as in the Light.

With a true Representation of the same, on a Copper-Plate.

Having been obliged (through an unfortunate impediment in my tongue) to converse by signs, or some such like methods, for almost twenty years, I have several times attempted to render the expression in *Dead Speech* more intelligible and less burthensome to the memory, as well as more expeditious.

For DECEMBER, 1748.

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ditious and copious, both in regard to the time in which a word or a sentiment may be expell'd; and also in regard to the significant letters of which our words are to be compos'd : and having at last finish'd my design, to the best of my capacity, and finding by experience that it answers all the great ends of such a speech, both in day-light and dark night, with greater convenience and understanding than any other invention of like sort, heretofore made public, I willingly present the world with it, to whose censure and approbation I readily submit.

This invention consisted of a *universal alphabet*, composed on the human hand, and may be learned in the space of half an hour; and extracted with so much readiness, when often practised, that you may be able to express your sentiments sooner this way, than the most skillful artist can write his words at length with pen and ink. And that this method may be more easily be used by all, I have adapted the alphabet, so as to make the tip of the thumb and four fingers represent the five vowels; and either to begin with *a* on the top of the thumb, or



And then the alphabet will run thus : The top of the thumb will be *a*, of the fore-finger *e*, of the middle finger *i*, of the ring-finger *o*, and of the little finger *u*. In which case the consonants may be thus expressed :

B, by the fore finger and thumb of the left-hand put together.

C, by the four fingers bent in towards the palm of the hand.

D, by the thumb and fore-finger of the left-hand joined by the fore-finger of the right-hand.

P<sub>2</sub> by the fore-finger of the right-hand laid on the back of the four fingers of the left-hand.

G<sub>2</sub> by the two files joined.

H, by drawing the fore finger of the right-hand quite along the middle of the left.

I *confess*, by touching the nail  
of the middle finger of the left-hand.

K. by drawing the fore-finger of the right-hand quite along the back of the left-hand.

1., by laying the fore-finger of the right-hand on the knuckles of the left.

M, by putting three fingers in the palm of the hand.

N<sub>2</sub> by putting two fingers in the same manner.

P, by putting the fore-finger of the right-hand between the fore and middle finger of the left.

Q. by turning the top of the fore finger of the left hand to the bottom of the thumb of the same hand.

R, by laying the fore-finger of the right-hand semicircularly in the palm of the left.

8, by encircling the thumb of the left hand with the fore finger of the right.

T, by touching the side of the left hand with the fore-finger of the right

V *confessant*, by touching the nail of the little finger of the left-hand.

W, by putting two fingers on the little finger of the left hand.

X, by laying the two fore-finger

Y, by touching the bottom of the hand long-ways with the fore-finger of the right hand.

Z<sub>2</sub> by making the figure of this letter in the palm of the hand.

Or, I would rather recommend the following alphabet, where the up o

the little finger signifies a, the ring

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Signs, the middle finger *i*, the fore-finger *e*, the thumb *a*, thus:



Under which order of the vowels, I direct the expressing of the consonants, thus:

B, by the thumb and fore-finger of the right-hand joined by the fore-finger of the left-hand.

C, by the laying the fore-finger of the right-hand semicircularly in the palm of the left.

D, by joining the two thumbs and two fore-fingers.

E, by crossing the wrist with the fore-finger.

G, by putting the two fists one upon another.

H, by drawing the fore-finger round the hill of the thumb.

K, by the fore-finger of the right-hand laid on the back of the four fingers of the left.

L, by the fore-finger of the right-hand laid within the fingers of the left.

M and N, by the same as in the former alphabet.

P, by the fore-finger of the right-hand put between the fore-finger and thumb of the left.

Q, by encompassing the fore-finger of the right-hand, with the fore-finger and thumb of the left.

R, by drawing the fore-finger of the right-hand quite along the middle of the left.

S, by joining the two little fingers cross-ways.

T, by laying the fore-finger of the right-hand, directly a cross the palm of the left.

V, confessed, by touching the thumb-nail.

W, by putting all the fingers over one another almost cross.

X, by crossing the knuckles.

Y, by putting the fore-finger and thumb of the right-hand to the side of the left.

Z, by making the letter on the palm of the hand.

All which is at one view exhibited by significative figures, placed in their alphabetical order, so impress them the forefinger upon the memory. (See the upper plate.)

The use of this method is not only to signify our intentions at a distance, and in the light; but in company, so as not to be perceived, and in the dark; for, whoever is master of either of these alphabets, need only lend his hand concealed under a hat, a table, or behind him, to one that is also versed therein, and he may soon discover his friend's mind, with all the secrecy imaginable, by feeling the same figures or letters made on, and about his hand, as he would have made on his own hand to express the same thoughts to his friend: because, by this way, the person to whom he speaks, apprehends as well in the dark by feeling, as if he saw the same actions in the light. Thus we may in the most private manner, even in the presence of the most jealous hearer, arrange a meeting or a visit, etc. counsel, give advice, forbid, encourage, &c. may, one of the two friends may look a third person earnestly in the face, as seeming intent on what discourse entertaineth the company, while he only minds what his friend and himself are mutually conversing about on each other's fingers.

Nor can any thing be contrived easier (when any person has this copy of the whole 26 figures here engraven before him) than to make such and such signs by his fingers at first sight (as, according to the rules prescribed) repre-

represent such and such letters as make up the word he would express.

This, I apprehend, is as easy to be performed, as it is for a skillful musician to play off a tune at sight; or, as it is for a boy to learn to make his letters, before he attempts to write words.

Nevertheless, let no one imagine they can arrive to perfection in this sort of conversation, till he can express the whole alphabet in its alphabetical order (without looking upon these instructions) as absolutely perfect, before he pretends to discourse; as a boy ought to learn to make his letters, before he attempts to write words.

And, to what has been said, it is necessary to add, that if you desire to affirm a thing, point to one eye; if to deny, point to the right; But if you would neither affirm nor deny, point one finger upon the eye, and another upon the nose; which signifies, *I do not know*, or the matter is to me indifferant. And, if you would express two letters together of the same sort, as double *e*, double *r*, double *f*, or any other, except those that are deciphered by more than the fore-finger of the right-hand, you may do it either by two fingers at once, or else at twice, as suits your fancy best. And note, The throwing out of the hand from the body, in way of discourse, always signifies *end*.

**EXAMPLES.**  
Suppose you was master of these alphabets, and would salute your acquaintance, that has learned the same, with a *God-morrow*, Sir!

You do it, by putting the two fists upon each other, which signifies — G.

By two fingers put upon the fore-finger of the left-hand, which is — e.

By two thumbs and two fingers joined, which is — a.

And put together, they compose the word — *Good*.

When the word is ended, point directly into the middle of the hand; and give the same notation at the end of every word.

Again, by three fingers in the middle of the hand, is signified — m.

By the top of the fore-finger, r.

By two fingers drawn along the middle of the hand — rr.

By the top of the fore-finger, s.

By fingers cross-ways over one another — ss.

i. e. *Morrow*.

Note, Then again point to the palm of the hand, to signify the word is ended.

Again proceed, and lay the two little fingers cross-ways for — s.

Touch the top of the middle finger for — i.

Draw along the inside of the left-hand for — r.

i. e. *Sir*.

Note, Then again point the finishing of the word in the palm of the hand; and these three notions carried in memory, will be your complement, *God-morrow, Sir!*

And after this manner all other words are as regularly composed as by pen and ink, or any other method.

Which, if it answers my good purpose to your readers, will be a satisfaction to, *Your obedient Reader,* Moves,

GI  
Yea  
K  
P  
er  
ma  
ng

H  
con  
such