

XV. IDIOTS AND INSTITUTIONS FOR THEIR TRAINING.

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It was not until the early part of the present century that the condition of the idiot began to attract the attention of the human. The celebrated surgeon and philosopher, Itard, at Paris, foiled in his attempt to demonstrate his sensational theory by the idiocy of his subject, the famous Savage of Aveyron, was led to consider the possibility of instructing a class hitherto considered hopeless. Being, however, advanced in years, and suffering from the disease which finally terminated his life, Itard felt that his plans must be committed to younger hands for execution; his choice fell upon Dr. Edward Seguin, a favorite pupil of his, and the subsequent history of this noble philanthropic movement has demonstrated the wisdom of that choice. Dr. Seguin possessed an inextinguishable love for his race, indomitable perseverance, a highly cultivated intellect, and a rare degree of executive talent. There were many difficulties to be surmounted, many obstacles to be overcome, ere the first step could be taken; but, before his youthful ardor and enthusiasm, doubts vanished, difficulties disappeared, the thick veil which had enshrouded the mind of the idiot was rent asunder, and these innocent but hapless creatures were rescued from the doom of a life of utter vacuity.

As in other works of philanthropy, so in this, other laborers were ready at once to enter into the harvest. To some of these, undoubtedly, belongs the praise of originating modes of instruction which subsequent experience has proved successful. Among the early pioneers in the cause of the idiot, the names of Belhomme, Ferrus, Falret, Voisin, and Vallee, are deserving of special honor, as having contributed, in various ways, to its success.

Though something had been accomplished in the way of instructing individual cases, it was not till 1838, that a school for idiots was established which could be regarded as successful. In 1842, a portion of the Bicetre, one of the great hospitals for the insane, was set apart for their instruction, and Dr. Seguin was appointed director. He remained in this position for a time; but, subsequently, established a private institution for idiots in Paris.

It was during this period that he prepared his work on Idiocy, "*Traitements moral, hygiène et Education des Idiots*;" a work which entitles its author to rank with the first professional minds of the day. In his definitions, his classification, his diagnosis, and, above all, in his plans for the treatment and instruction of idiots, he exhibits so thorough a mastery of his subject, such philosophical views, and such admirable tact, that his treatise is invaluable as a manual to all who may undertake similar labors. In consequence of the revolution of 1848, in France, Dr. Seguin came to this country, and is now connected with the Pennsylvania School for Idiots, at Germantown.

The success of Dr. Seguin and his co-laborers, at Paris, stimulated the philanthropic in other countries of Europe to attempt similar institutions. Of these, that established at Berlin, in 1842, under the direction of M. Saegert, has been most successful. Our reports of this Institution are not very late, but it is still, we believe, in a prosperous condition. M. Saegert seems to possess, in a very high degree, that genial temper so necessary for the successful training of this unfortunate class.

Contemporaneously with the organization of the school for idiots, at Berlin, the attention of the benevolent was called to a class of imbeciles, hitherto entirely neglected, but whose numbers seemed almost sufficient to paralyze effort in their behalf.

In Savoy, and the departments of Isère, of the High Alps, and the Low Alps in France, as well as in some of the other mountainous districts of Europe and Asia, especially in the narrow and precipitous valleys of these regions, a disease prevails, known as goitre. Its most marked feature is a prodigious enlargement of the glands of the throat, accompanied, in most cases, with general degeneration of the system. It is attributed by medical writers to impurity of air and imperfect ventilation, to want of sufficient light, the sun penetrating these valleys for not more than one or two hours of the day, to impure water, innutritious food, severe labor, and extreme poverty. The children of these persons are, of course, far more diseased than their parents, and are subject to a form of idiocy called Cretinism. Retaining usually the goitre, they also suffer from feeble and swollen limbs, distorted and deformed features, pale, bloodless and tumid skin, and almost entire helplessness. They form, indeed, the lowest grades of idiocy. The number of these poor wretches is almost incredible. In the four departments named above, with a population of 958,000, M. Niepce found, in 1850, 54,000 Cretins, or about five per cent. of the entire population. In several of the cantons, one-third of the whole population were Cretins; and, in some hamlets, as, for instance, in that of

Bozel, in the canton of the same name, out of 1,472 inhabitants, 1,011 were either affected with goitre or cretinism.

The attention of a young physician of Zurich, Dr. Guggenbuhl, was attracted to these unfortunates in 1839; and, after two or three years of experiment had demonstrated the possibility of improving their condition, he resolved to devote himself to their instruction. He accordingly purchased from the eminent agriculturist, Kasthofer, a tract of land, which he had already put under cultivation. It was situated on the Abendberg, above Interlachen, about four thousand feet above the level of the sea, and commanded a view of one of the finest landscapes in Switzerland. To this elevated and healthful location he brought as many cretin children as he had the means of instructing; and, with a philanthropic zeal and patience which none but those who have witnessed his labors can fully appreciate, he has toiled on, (till impaired health compelled him, some three years since, to entrust his cares, for a time, to other hands,) developing intellect where few would have suspected its existence, and carrying joy to many a household which had mourned over the hopeless idiocy of their children. This institution has been the parent of several others for the treatment of cretins on the continent of Europe, particularly in Wurtemberg, Bavaria, Sardinia, Prussia and Saxony.

Dr. Kern, formerly of Eisenach, established, at Leipsic, in 1846, a private institution for the education of idiots or feeble-minded youth. In 1855, a building was erected for this institution in the village of Gohlis, near Leipsic. Children are received without distinction of birth-place, religion, or sex, their friends or charitable persons paying the necessary charges.

The translation and publication of some reports of the school on the Abendberg by Dr. Twining, and Dr. Conolly's account of the labors of Dr. Seguin and his coadjutors, led to the establishment of a school for idiots at Bath, England, in 1846. Others were organized soon after at Brighton and Lancaster. In the autumn of 1847, an effort was made to establish an institution on a large scale, capable of accommodating the increasing numbers who sought for instruction. In this movement, Rev. Dr. Andrew Reed (whose visit to this country will be remembered with pleasure by many,) was the leader, and to his labors and those of Dr. John Conolly, whose life-long devotion to the cause of the insane have made him known wherever the English tongue is spoken, the success of the enterprise is mainly due. While making preparations for the erection of a magnificent hospital for idiots, the patrons of this institution deemed it desirable to commence, at once, the work of instruction, and accordingly, a school was com-

menced at the Park House, Highgate, (formerly a nobleman's residence,) on the 27th of April, 1848. This becoming full in less than two years, the committee accepted the liberal offer of Sir S. M. Peto, to devote Essex Hall, Colchester, to their service. This, also, was soon filled and a third building obtained. Meantime, the friends of the idiot were indefatigable in their efforts to procure funds for the erection of their new asylum. In June, 1853, the corner-stone of the new edifice, at Earlswood, near Reigate, Surrey, was laid by Prince Albert. It is intended to contain accommodations for 400 pupils, and is now nearly or quite completed. Its estimated cost is \$175,000, aside from the price of the estate, which contains about one hundred acres. It is intended to elevate Essex Hall into an independent asylum, on the completion of the edifice at Earlswood. Measures have also been recently adopted for the establishment of an Asylum for idiots in the vicinity of Edinburgh, and at several other points in the United Kingdoms.

The movement in this country appears to have been contemporaneous with that in England. On the 13th of January, 1846, Hon. F. F. Backus, of Rochester, New York, at that time a member of the Senate of that State, moved a reference of that portion of the State Census referring to idiots, to the committee on Medical Societies, of which he was chairman, and on the 15th of the same month read a report on the subject, prepared with great care, and embodying the results of inquiries made the previous Autumn, urging the necessity of an institution for idiots, in the State of New York, and narrating the success of similar institutions in Europe. On the 25th of March following, Dr. Backus reported a bill for the purchase of a site and the erection of suitable buildings, for an Asylum for Idiots. His bill passed the Senate, and was at first concurred in by the House, but subsequently rejected, on the ground that the party who were then in power had pledged themselves to retrenchment of the expenses of the State. A similar bill passed the Senate the succeeding year but was lost in the house.

On the 22nd of January, 1846, Hon. Horatio Byington, (in whose recent death Massachusetts has lost an eminent citizen, and humanity a benefactor,) offered a resolution in the Massachusetts House of Representatives, for the appointment of a commission to investigate the condition of idiots, in that State. Judge Byington's attention had been called to the subject, according to his own statement, by a letter from Dr. S. B. Woodward, the eminent philanthropist, with whom Dr. Backus had held correspondence previous to his own action, in the New York legislature.

The resolution of Judge Byington passed both houses, and Dr. S.

G. Howe, so well known for his labors in behalf of the blind, Judge Byington and Gilman Kimball, Esq., were appointed Commissioners. Their reports were very full and able, and conclusively demonstrated the necessity of providing for the instruction of the unfortunate class whose condition they had investigated. For the purpose of testing the capacity of idiots for instruction, however, an experimental school was established at South Boston, under Dr. Howe's personal supervision. This resulted in the establishment, in 1851, of the "Massachusetts school for idiotic and feeble-minded youth," at South Boston, of which Dr. Howe has a general oversight.

It is not to be understood, however, that idiots had not been instructed, in this country, previous to the Autumn of 1848, the period when the experimental school, at South Boston, was organized. Indeed, there is reason to believe that their instruction had been attempted, with success here, prior to the first efforts in Europe. As early as 1818, an idiot girl was admitted into the American Asylum for the Deaf and Dumb, at Hartford, Conn., and remained under instruction till 1824. Others were received during nearly every subsequent year, and some of them made very considerable progress. In all, thirty-four idiots have been pupils at that institution, and the success which has followed the efforts for the instruction of several of the cases, of which we have a detailed narrative, would do no discredit to any Asylum for Idiots, either in Europe or this country.

In 1839, an idiot boy was received into the New York Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, and remained for three years, under the instruction of Prof. Morris, with very favorable results.

The same year, Dr. S. G. Howe commenced the instruction of an idiotic blind child, at the Perkins Institution for the Blind, in South Boston.

In July, 1848, Dr. H. B. Wilbur, of Barre, Mass., who had for several years taken a deep interest in the condition of idiots, opened a private institution for their instruction, which, both under his administration and that of his successor, Dr. Geo. Brown, has met with the most gratifying success.

Other gentlemen in Massachusetts devoted a large measure of zeal and energy to the promotion of this good work. Among these it may not be invidious to name Mr. George Sumner, whose eloquent letters from Europe, describing the school at Bicetre, rendered efficient aid to the incipient organization of the Massachusetts School for Idiots, and Dr. Edward Jarvis, whose valuable statistics on the subject of insanity and idiocy, recently published, have laid the country under obligation.

The Legislature of New York, though before any other in taking cognizance of the subject of idiocy, was more tardy in its action than that of Massachusetts, and it was not till 1851 that an experimental school was established at Albany, and Dr. Wilbur, who had already had three years experience in the instruction of imbeciles, at Barre, was elected its Superintendent. In 1854, the corner-stone of the State Asylum for Idiots, was laid at Syracuse, and in August, 1855, the school at Albany, already permanently established, was removed to the new edifice. The Asylum occupies a commanding site, to the southwest of the city of Syracuse, and while its architectural beauty renders it an ornament to the enterprising city whose liberality secured its location, and to the State whose munificence provided such ample accommodations for this hitherto neglected class, its internal arrangements are so admirable as to make it a desirable model for institutions of the kind.

With an edifice so well arranged, a superintendent in whom are combined, in a remarkable degree, those traits of character which mark the successful instructor, and a corps of teachers of extraordinary efficiency, it is not surprising that the results attained by the Asylum, even at this early period of its history, surpass those of any institution of the kind in this country or Europe.

Pennsylvania has also established a school for the training of idiots, at Germantown, now in its third year of successful progress under the care of Mr. J. B. Richards, who was connected with the Massachusetts experimental school during the first two or three years of its history. The recent accession of Dr. Seguin to the corps of instructors in this school, can not fail to increase, very greatly, its reputation.

During the past year, Connecticut and Kentucky have taken the first steps toward the establishment of similar institutions.

Having thus hastily sketched the history of this humanitarian movement, it remains for us to discuss the objects proposed in the treatment of Idiots, the means by which these objects are accomplished, and the results thus far attained in the most successful schools.

It may be well, as a preliminary step, to answer two or three questions which meet us at the threshold of our investigations. And first, what constitutes idiocy? "The type of an idiot," says Dr. Seguin, "is an individual who knows nothing, can do nothing, and wishes nothing; and every idiot approaches more or less to this maximum of incapacity." Of the many definitions which writers on this subject have essayed, no one appears entirely free from objection; and though we can hardly hope to escape falling into the same condemnation, we

are disposed to offer one which shall, at least, possess the merit of brevity. We should define idiocy, then, *as the result of an infirmity of the body which prevents, to a greater or less extent, the development of the physical, moral and intellectual powers.*

What is the proportion of idiots to the population? The data we yet possess do not seem to be sufficient to answer this question accurately, in regard to our own country, though approximations have been made towards a census of this class, in several States. In the mountainous districts of Europe the number of cretins, as already stated, is very great. In the Alpine districts they constitute from 5 to 10 per cent. of the population; in Great Britain, according to recent returns, there are over 50,000, a little more than one-half of one per cent.; in France, nearly or quite one-third of one per cent.; in this country, Connecticut has fully one-fifth of one per cent.; Massachusetts, according to Dr. Jarvis' late report, has about one-ninth of one per cent.; but this is undoubtedly far below the truth, for it is almost impossible to obtain, even with tolerable accuracy, the statistics of large cities; thus, in Dr. J.'s report, Boston, with 170,000 inhabitants, reports only 21 idiots, while Barnstable, with only 5,000, reports 25!

What are the causes of idiocy? Few questions are more difficult of full and satisfactory solution than this. We have already enumerated the alledged causes of cretinism, but we are satisfied that M. Niepce has not given sufficient prominence to one cause to which he refers incidentally, the *bad brandy*, ("mauvaise eau-de-vie,") which they drink in such quantities as to produce the most brutish intoxication.

In England and this country, intemperance on the part of one or both parents, is certainly the most prolific cause of fatuity, and when poverty, filth, recklessness, and intemperance are united, and the half starved inebriate, maddened with woe, drinks that he may forget his wretchedness, we have a combination of circumstances which can hardly fail to produce idiocy in his offspring.

There are cases, however, and the number is quite considerable, in which we must look for other causes than intemperance or extreme poverty. For some of these the inter-marriage of near relatives, for one or two generations, is a satisfactory reason; for others, hereditary tendency to insanity, to scrofula, or to consumption; in others still, indulgence in licentious habits, or the attempt to destroy the life of the unborn babe, a practice which is fearfully increasing in our country, must be assigned as the cause; ignorance, selfishness, and avarice, must be reckoned, also, among the sources of this fearful infirmity. It has often occurred that when one or both parents were so fully possessed with the greed of gain, that intellectual and moral culture

were wholly neglected, and in their furious pursuit of wealth they paused not for the rest of the Sabbath, thought not of the future, and heeded not the appeals of the poor, the sick, or the dying for sympathy or succor, their offspring have been idiots of the very lowest class.

In short, humiliating as the thought may be, we are driven to the conclusion that the vast amount of idiocy, in our world, is the direct result of violation of the physical and moral laws which govern our being; that oft times the sins of the fathers are thus visited upon their children; and that the parent, for the sake of a momentary gratification of his depraved appetite, inflicts upon his hapless offspring a life of utter vacuity.

We shall come to a better understanding of the objects to be attained in the treatment of idiocy, if we consider first the condition of the idiot before he has been instructed. When first brought to the Asylum, he is generally feeble, wanting in muscular development, often partially paralyzed, sluggish, and inactive; the circulation of the blood is very imperfect, especially in the extremities; there is a general unhealthy look; the nervous system is frequently deranged; the gait and voluntary movements generally awkward and irregular; he is usually addicted to slaving and automatic motion of the head, hands, lips, or tongue; the senses are undeveloped; the eye is perfectly formed, but the retina communicates to the brain no definite idea of form, color, or size; the ear is without defect, yet often the sweetest notes of music and the most hideous and discordant sounds pass alike unheeded; the organs of speech are as perfect as those of Webster or Clay, but he is either entirely dumb, or utters only guttural sounds which convey no idea to others; his appetite, tastes, and habits are more gross than those of most animals; he often exhibits the voracity of the wolf, and the uncleanness of the swine. His mind is as much degraded as his physical nature—only his instincts of hunger, thirst, fear, rage, and resistance have been developed. It is needless to add, that while in such a condition moral emotion is impossible. Such is the condition of very many of those who are brought to these institutions for training. It would be difficult to conceive of cases apparently more hopeless.

The object of training is to change this torpid, sluggish, inert condition, to health, vigor, and activity; to send the healthy red blood coursing through the veins and arteries; to overcome the automatic movements, and subject the nervous system to the control of the will; to substitute for the vacant gaze of the idiot, the intelligent, speaking eye, which recognizes the hues of beauty in the rainbow, and reads in the countenance of friendship, the look of reproof or the glance of

love; to accustom the inattentive ear to recognize the stern tones of rebuke, or the gentle accents of affection; to notice and enjoy the melodies of the songsters of the grove, or the more expressive songs warbled by human voices; to accustom those lips which have hitherto uttered only unmeaning and discordant sounds, to speak, if not with all the graces of oratory, at least with distinctness and fluency.

A further object of training is to overcome the filthy and degrading habits in which the idiot has hitherto indulged; to transform this gluttonous, beastly creature, into a man, capable of observing all the proprieties of life, no longer greedy, selfish, voracious, and quarrelsome, but temperate, quiet, courteous, and thoughtful of the interest of others; to rouse the hitherto dormant intellect, to induce mental activity, and stimulate thought and study; and above all, to awaken the consciousness of his responsibility to God, and of his duties toward his fellow man.

Do you say that the attainment of these objects is beyond the power of humanity? We answer that this result has been accomplished, and is now in the process of accomplishment, in every school for idiots in this country and Europe. It requires, indeed, patience, intelligence, and love, all in active exercise; but these qualities have not yet deserted our earth, and there yet live men and women whose names should be held in everlasting remembrance, for that moral heroism which has led them to devote the best years of their lives to the elevation of these, the lowest and humblest of our race.

The means adopted to accomplish such wonderful results are, of course, varied. Among these the apparatus of the gymnasium holds a high rank. By means of the ladders, swings, steps, dumb bells, &c., the muscular system is developed and invigorated; automatic movement overcome; the eye, the ear, and the muscles brought under the control of the will; concert of action and obedience to commands enforced; and the perceptions quickened and elevated.

The cultivation of the faculty of speech is a work of great difficulty, often requiring one or two years of patient labor before the enunciation of the first word. Instruction in this, as in every thing else where idiots are the pupils, must be of the most elementary character. It is necessary, for instance, in teaching the compound sounds, such as *ch*, *th*, *gr*, *br*, *cr*, to resolve them into their original elements, and teach the child each constituent, at first, separately, and afterwards in combination. The attention is attracted and the perceptive faculties cultivated by lessons in objects; form and size are taught by blocks of different sizes and forms, which the pupil is required to insert into corresponding cavities in a board; color by

wooden figures of the same form but of different hues. Practice in working with crewels, and picture lessons have also proved of great advantage.

Words are next taught, not letters, for a *word* can be associated with an object, in the mind of a pupil, while letters can not; next, the ideas of form and size, already acquired, are put in practice by writing and drawing; Geography is taught by outline maps, and the elementary principles of grammar by exercises dictated by the teacher.

The idea of number is, perhaps, the most difficult of acquisition for the idiot. Very few can count beyond three or four when brought to the Asylum. This incapacity is overcome by patient and repeated exercises, until, step by step, the mysteries of numeration, addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division have been unravelled. The process is slow and painful, but it is at last crowned with success.

In the development of the moral nature, great difficulties are encountered. The comprehension of an abstract idea is far beyond an idiot's capacity; his conception of goodness must be derived from the manifestation of it in his teachers and friends; of sin, from his own misconduct or that of others; hence, with him, love must be the key note of all progress, and under its genial influence, his stubborn and refractory nature will yield like wax before the fire; his vicious and hurtful propensities become subject to control; and learning to love "his brother whom he hath seen," he soon attains to some knowledge and love for "God whom he hath not seen," and his humble, childlike faith should put to the blush many, who with more exalted intellects are wandering in the mazes of unbelief.

Not far from one-fourth of all the idiots in any State or country, are susceptible of improvement by the treatment we have described. In the countries where cretinism prevails, pupils over seven years of age are not considered as capable of successful instruction, but in other countries idiots are received up to the age of fifteen or sixteen, and in the English schools up to twenty-five or thirty, even. There is, however, far less hope of material progress in adults than in children—and it is hardly desirable that those beyond fourteen or fifteen should be placed under instruction. Epilepsy, a not infrequent concomitant of idiocy, is a serious bar to improvement, and where severe, entirely precludes the idea of any considerable success.

That the schools already established have been successful, in improving the condition of idiots, beyond what their most sanguine friends dared hope, is a fact admitting of no question; that they are not yet perfect, none will more readily acknowledge than those who have labored longest in them; further experience will undoubtedly add to

the resources of the teacher, and may render his labors less arduous, while it insures him a greater measure of success. What has already been accomplished may, perhaps, be more satisfactorily demonstrated by the narrative of a few cases, than by any other method.

The following case is from the report of the English Asylum for Idiots, at Highgate, for 1854:

"B. T., a boy aged 15 years. Admitted, Oct., 1852. Was the sport of all the boys of the village; was afraid of strangers; would not speak to any one, even to his friends; he appeared quite hopeless. April, 1854. He did not speak for four months after admission; was constantly moping; he has now found that he is with friends, and is gaining courage; can speak well; will repeat the creed, commandments, and church prayers accurately; is very attentive to the religious services at home, and is anxious to go to church every Sunday; can read and write well; and is a basket maker."

The following is from Dr. Guggenbuhl's report, for 1852:

"Marie was received into the Institution of the Abendberg, at the age of seven and a half years. She was in a state of atrophy; her skin was cold, hung loose like a sack, and was covered with an eruption; she could not walk; her joints were soft and unable to support her weight; she could not speak a word, but would make a howling noise for hours together; ate any thing that came in her way; destroyed all that could be broken, and gave no attention to any thing that passed before her; at times she would beat and even bite herself; during several months she never slept at night. After six months she was able to stand alone, and at the end of a year could walk very well; her voracious appetite is overcome, and she now eats properly; the nervous excitement is subdued; she is obedient and friendly; converses very well; plays with flowers and animals, calls them by name, and enjoys the blessing of sleep of which she had long been deprived."

Dr. Brown, the Superintendent of the Institution at Barre, Mass., gives the following case in his report for 1853:

"A young man of 18 years of age, who, from infancy, had been always peculiar and deficient in his mental manifestations, and was entirely dumb. From want of proper culture and direction of the vocal organs, he could make only the guttural sound of the Trachea; did not move the lips when attempting to utter sounds; was extremely filthy and brutish in his habits, disobedient and sluggish in the extreme.

His physical health was perfect, his muscles were largely and well developed. His perception was good, and he understood what was said to him but could not apply his knowledge; his hearing was perfect. Having been left unrestrained from childhood, and having

attained to an age when the evil habits he had acquired had become fixed, and his animal appetites being his only source of enjoyment, I received him with great reluctance, expecting that he would make very little improvement.

He has now been with me a little more than a year. It was nearly three months before I succeeded in inducing him to utter a correct vocal sound. I moulded his lips with my fingers; put blocks and rings of various sizes and shapes into his mouth; taught him general and special imitation; and finally succeeded in concentrating sufficient nervous energy on the muscles of the lips and vocal organs to enable him to master all the vowels, and by dint of perseverance, patience, and drilling, he finally acquired the ability to pronounce the consonants and many of their combinations. By a rigid course of discipline his filthy habits were overcome.

He now reads in Webb's First Reader, and is rapidly learning to speak the names of surrounding objects. His ideas of form, of color, and of numbers, are now very good, and he is acquiring a general knowledge of Geography, Arithmetic, and Natural Philosophy. He can write well from a copy, can draw very creditably and is apt at almost any kind of labor. No one would imagine that this well behaved young man, could have led such a mere animal life one year since. He will be capable, under proper superintendence, of being highly useful in any department of labor, and had he been under suitable training when young, he would have been, I think, entirely cured of all his deficiencies.

Dr. Howe, in his report for 1851, describes the following case:

"S. J. W., six years old when admitted in Oct., 1848. He was a pitiful sight to behold. He could not stand or even sit erect. He had no command of his limbs, not even so much as an infant of three months, for it can work its arms and kick its legs vigorously; this poor boy, however, could do neither, but lay almost like a jelly-fish, as though his body were a mass of flesh without any bones in it. He could not even chew solid food, but subsisted on milk, of which he drank large quantities. The utmost he could do, in the way of motion, was to prop up his head with one hand, and move the other feebly about. He seemed to hear, but his eyes were dull and his other senses quite inactive. He drivelled at the mouth, and his habits were, in all respects, like those of an infant. He was speechless, neither using nor understanding language, though he made several sounds which seemed to be a feeble imitation of words.

The mode of treatment adopted was this: he was bathed daily in cold water; his limbs were rubbed; he was dragged about in the open air, in a little wagon, by the other boys; his muscles were exer-

cised; he was made to grasp with his hands, and gradually to raise himself up by them; he was held up and made to bear a little weight on his lower limbs; then a little more, until, at last, to his great delight, he was able to go about alone, by holding on the wall, or to one's finger; even to go up stairs, by clinging to the balusters. During the second year he has continued to improve. He is now decent in all his habits, and tidy in his appearance; his countenance is bright and pleasing; he can sit at the table and feed himself with knife and fork; and though he does not venture to go alone, his limbs not being quite strong enough, he can almost do it, and he walks about by holding on to one's finger; all his senses have improved greatly, and he is so changed, generally, that he could hardly be recognized as the same being who, two years ago, incapable of sitting at a desk, used to lie upon a mattress in the school-room."

Mr. James B. Richards, of Germantown, gives the following account of the remarkable improvement of a boy under his training.

"A case of congenital idiocy—one of the most hopeless and degraded creatures that could be found; presenting to the bodily eye extremely feeble claims to being called a human being. He had not learned to creep, nor had he even strength sufficient to roll himself upon the floor when laid upon it. Owing to a paralysis of the lower limbs, they were insensible to pain. Mastication was, with him entirely out of the question. His mother told me that she used to feed him almost exclusively on milk, purchasing for him, as she said, a gallon per day. Although five and a half years of age, he had not apparently any more knowledge of things, their names and uses, than a new born infant.

This being the lowest case that could be found, to test the feasibility of the plan to develop and educate idiotic and imbecile children, it was thought best to undertake his training, although it seemed more like a work of creation than of education. The most sanguine friends of the cause threw discouragements in the way. Yet by a patient and persevering system of well directed effort, he has been so far developed that, at the present time, he walks about the house or yard without any assistance; takes care of himself; attends to his own immediate wants; sits at the table with the family, and feeds himself as well as children ordinarily do; talks perfectly well, and is acquainted with the things around him. In short, *he has learned to read*, and does not differ in his habits from a boy four years of age, unless it be that he is more sluggish in his movements."

A recent visitor at the New York Asylum for Idiots, narrates the following cases:

"Nattie and Willie, now 11 and 12 years of age, were taken from the Idiot house on Randall's Island, by Dr. Wilbur, in Dec., 1851. Their appearance, as described by persons who saw them at that time, must have been painful and disgusting in the extreme. Both had been idiots from birth, both were partially paralyzed, and both entirely dumb, and not capable of understanding more than a dozen words. So hopeless was their condition that the physician at Randall's Island, who was absent when Dr. Wilbur selected them, on his return, wrote to Dr. W., expressing his regret at his selection, as he feared that it would only bring disgrace upon the effort to instruct idiots, to attempt the instruction of those who were so evidently beyond the reach of improvement.

Both now exhibit as much intelligence as ordinary children of their age. Neither speaks very fluently, in consequence of some paralysis still existing, but both are improving rapidly in this respect. Both write well on the blackboard. In thorough knowledge of Grammar and Geography, very few children, of their age, are their equals. In a very severe and protracted examination in Geography, embracing minute details in regard to the topography of most of the countries on the globe, and many particulars in regard to physical Geography, and drawing maps upon the blackboard, neither they nor the other members of a class of six or seven missed a single question. In Grammar, both supplied adjectives, nouns, verbs, or adverbs, to given verbs and nouns, with remarkable promptness and to an extent which would have severely tasked my vocabulary. In Arithmetic, both exhibited perfect familiarity with the ground rules, and Nattie gave at once, any and all multiples of numbers as high as 132, and added, multiplied, and divided fractions with great readiness.

In Bible History, they related, partly in pantomime, but in a most graphic way, any required Bible incident. The extremely amiable and affectionate manners of these two interesting children, and the intense activity of their newly developed intellects, render them particularly attractive to the visitor.

J. C., a girl of 15 years of age, has been under Dr. Wilbur's care a little more than four years. When received, she was mischievous and vicious, very nervous, and could not speak distinctly. She could not be left alone with other children, from a propensity to injure them. She knew some of her letters, but could not be taught to read or write by any ordinary methods.

She now reads well, writes a handsome hand, is remarkably proficient in Geography and Grammar, and has made good progress in addition and subtraction. She sews very neatly, and is very capable

as an assistant in household matters. Her nervousness is no longer troublesome, her waywardness has entirely disappeared. In respect to moral training, she seems more advanced than most of the other pupils. She manifests a remarkable familiarity with Bible History, and with the events in the life of our Saviour. When requested to repeat the Lord's Prayer, she did so with a reverence, an impressiveness, and an evident understanding of its petitions, which exhibited in a very favorable light, her intelligence and thoughtfulness; and as I listened to this once vicious and wayward idiot, thus uttering, in our Saviour's own words, her petitions to the throne of heavenly grace, I was more deeply impressed than ever before, with the adaptation of that sublime prayer to every human want."

Such are the results attained in the very short period since these schools have been established. That all idiots will not make as great improvement as some of these, is undoubtedly true; but all of suitable age and health will improve, and that sufficiently to satisfy the most exacting.

Nor does the history of the past condition of this hapless class afford us any ground for hope that they can be materially elevated from their present condition, by any other means. Nearly, or quite, one-half of the whole number are tenants of our alms houses or houses of correction. Full one-half of the remainder are children of parents who are steeped to the lips in poverty; for these, whether in the alms house or out of it, there can be no improvement, except by removal from their present associations. Fed with improper or innutritious food, often allowed the use of intoxicating drinks, generally idle, often made the sport of thoughtless children and adults, without shame or sense of decency, filthy and degraded, they are pests in community, often exerting a depraving influence over the young, which no subsequent instruction can remove. Nor are the imbecile children of the wealthy generally benefited by their parents' wealth, if allowed to remain at home. The sluggish, inactive temperament, and gluttonous appetite, which are the greatest obstacles to success in their treatment at Asylums, are pampered and indulged at home,—and it often occurs that the worst pupils, in an Institution for Idiots, are the children of the rich. In the present condition of society we see no alternative. These helpless and degraded fellow creatures are on our hands, and we must provide for their instruction and improvement; if we can remove, in part, the blighting, withering results of violated physical laws, let us do so; for they are the victims, not the offenders.

There is, indeed, a great work for the philanthropist and moral reformer to accomplish, to remove the causes of idiocy, insanity, pau-

perism, and crime. God has granted to our day and generation, a clearer insight into the sources whence spring these gigantic evils, than to our fathers, and he has imposed upon us a corresponding obligation to use our best endeavors for their removal. Every arrival from Europe brings hither a host of the lower classes of European Society, often ignorant, degraded, and vicious. These, if suffered to congregate in our large cities, taint the whole community, as with a moral pestilence. They must be scattered over the vast prairies of the west, where profitable labor is possible, where their influence will not be felt, and where, with the prospects of a life of comfort before them, they may become good citizens.

The evils of intemperance must be stayed; we care not whether it be accomplished by a prohibitory law or by any other effective means; but the middle and higher classes owe it to themselves as well as to the suffering poor, to stop the swelling tide of human woe which this vice daily produces; to accomplish this it is not sufficient to close the dram shops,—the use of alcoholic drinks must be abandoned at the tables of the rich, as well as in the hovels of the poor.

A great reform is also needed in the homes of the poor. Model lodging houses and tenements must be erected, not in low, dank, miasmatic localities, but in healthy situations, where light and ventilation, frequent bathing, economy in warmth and cooking, and the privacy of home can be attained; the renting of cellars as tenements and the occupation of tenant houses, such as our public prints have recently exposed, must be prohibited under the severest penalties. Measures must also be adopted for the instruction of the masses, not only in those physiological laws which appertain to their health and well being, but in those branches of intellectual culture which will improve their social condition, and those questions of morals and religion which concern their eternal welfare.

We are firm believers in “the good time coming;” we are satisfied that the race is making progress, that as an eminent statesman has well said, “the frightful number of those unfortunates, whose ranks encumber the march of humanity,—the insane, the idiots, the blind, the deaf, the drunkards, the criminals, the paupers will dwindle away, as the light of knowledge makes clear the laws which govern our existence.” But in the words of the same eloquent writer, “in the meantime, let none of them be lost; let none of them be uncared for; but, whenever the signal is given of a man in distress, no matter how deformed, how vicious, how loathsome, even, he may be, let it be regarded as a call to help a brother.”

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