

Teaching the idiot : A lecture, delivered in St. Martin's Hall, London, August 4, 1854, in connection with the Educational Exhibition of the Society of Arts, Manufactures, and Commerce. / By the Rev. Edwin Sidney, M.A.

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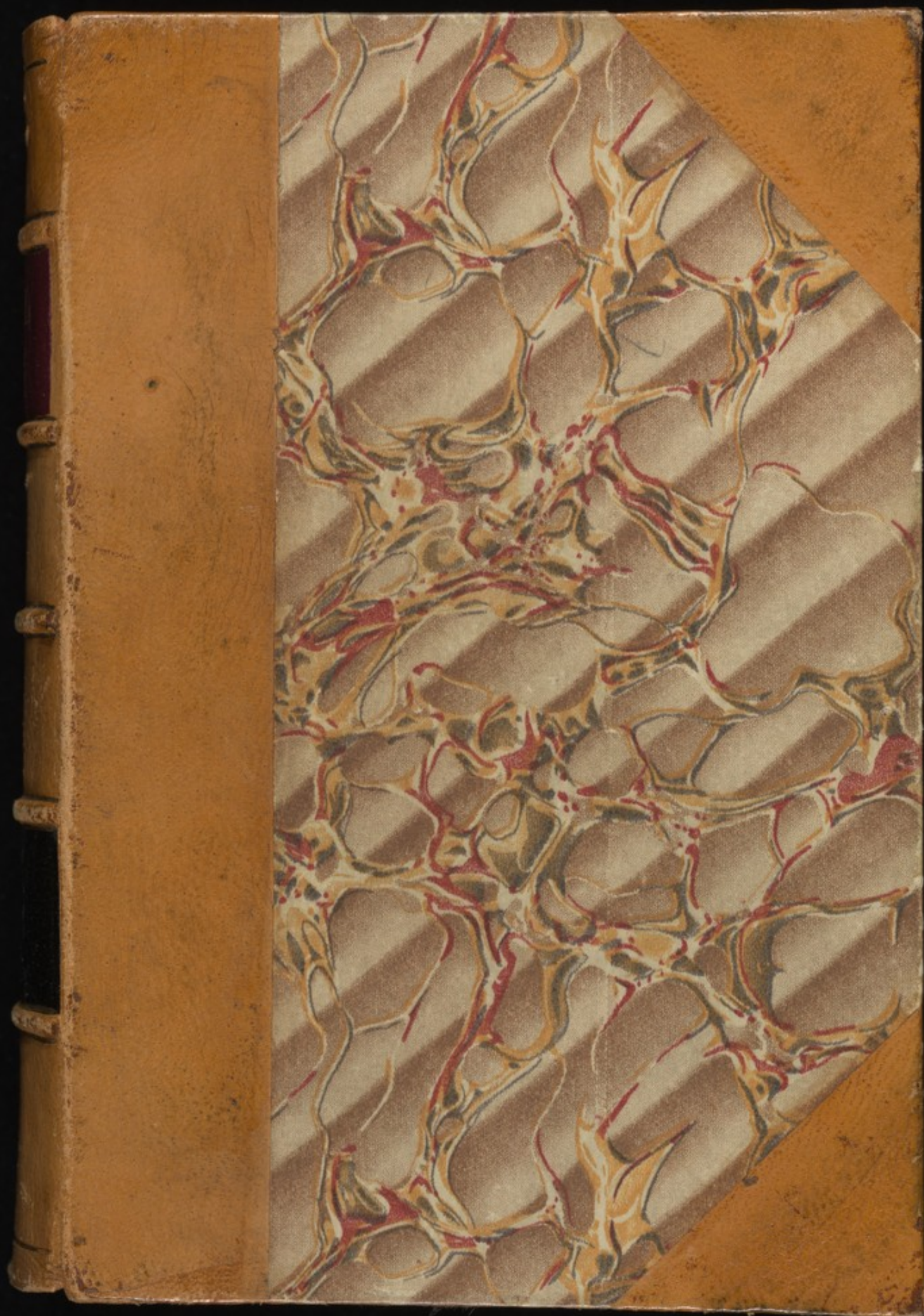
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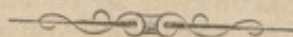
A Lecture,

*Delivered in St. Martin's Hall, London, August 4, 1854, in connection
with the Educational Exhibition of the Society of Arts,
Manufactures, and Commerce.*

BY

THE REV. EDWIN SIDNEY, M.A.

RECTOR OF CORNARD PARVA, SUFFOLK, AND CHAPLAIN TO THE
VISCOUNT HILL.



LONDON:
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BY J. H. HARRIS, M.D.

NEW YORK: PUBLISHED BY THE AUTHOR, 1871.

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THE training and teaching an idiot appeared till of late so perfectly hopeless, that the idea of its being possible was never entertained; but the experience of the present day has shown that there is no malady incident to human beings which is not capable of some compensation, remedy, or palliative. We can instruct the deaf, the speechless, and the blind, we can soothe and benefit the insane, and we can train and educate the Cretin and the idiot. The great success of Dr. Guggenbühl in freeing the Cretins, at the Abendberg, from the misery of their hideous condition, could not fail to excite to similar benevolent efforts for the benefit of idiots; and they have everywhere been rewarded by the most gratifying fruit of the toil and patience bestowed upon them. In France, in Germany, in America, and in this country, it is now clearly shown by several years of experience, that it is possible not only to relieve, but to improve and teach a large portion of these degraded and contemned brethren of the human family. The class of our fellow creatures to whose amelioration the methods I am about to describe have been directed, are such as have their understandings undeveloped, or developed only partially, and feebly, or who have lost them without becoming insane. It is a subject worthy, indeed, of being included in the list of this distinguished society, because it is now found, by active inquiry, that the numbers of human beings in this degraded bodily and mental condition are fearfully great, and therefore the highest science cannot be more beneficially employed than in casting its certain light upon a question of such importance as their rescue from it, or where that cannot be effected, the stoppage of the process of deterioration, which has never failed, while many are capable of a degree of bodily improvement and mental instruction which cannot be seen with-

out astonishment and pleasure. You will therefore give me your favourable attention while I endeavour to detail to you, in the brief compass of this lecture, the *principles, methods, and results* of those meritorious labours of which I have for some time been an occasional witness and advocate, and ever with an increasing conviction of their value, both as a Christian duty to these unfortunates of our species, and a study of the mysterious connection of organization and the manifestation of mind.

1. I used the expression *manifestation of mind*, because it is a leading principle of those who are concerned in the education of the idiot, that he does possess in every case a mind similar to men in a normal condition, but that its faculties are obscured or fettered by a defective bodily envelope. So new is the investigation of the subject of idiocy, that no correct definition of it has yet been agreed upon; but the variety of terms applied to it will be found to be nearly synonymous. The idiot is in truth *ἰδιος*, as the word implies, solitary, standing *alone*, with a mind so paralyzed by ill organism as to be unable to exhibit in the usual degree, intelligence, will, power, or moral feeling, yet having certain sensations and perceptions. The bodily frame is always in an abnormal condition of health, and without sufficient nervous stimulus to be expended on its various organs, the due share being applied to each one. There is no *standard* of idiocy, but generally, perception is superficial, thought vacant, fancy frivolous, and bearing eccentric. The grades are of many kinds,—from the imbecile who has speech and some intelligence, yet is unable to take care of himself or manage his own affairs, down to the driveller without power of utterance, will, care, knowledge, capacity, affection, or any proper action. All the varieties are but deviations from this climax of incapacity. “They are,” says Dr. Howe, “of all ages, from the child who is entering upon his dark and cheerless pilgrimage of life, without more thought of his relations with man, or his duty to God, than a young animal, up to the old man, who is closing his career without a knowledge of the joys and sorrows of the world which he leaves behind him, and without a thought about his lot in that before him.” No one who has not witnessed the various characteristics exhibited by a group, can imagine the extraordinary differences they manifest, all of which have to be considered as influencing the principles upon which the trainer must base his efforts. Some are vociferous, some are silent; there are the moping, the motionless, the restless, and the grinning; some are mild, affectionate, and obedient, while others are wildly influenced by dreadful passions and all kinds of evil propensities; some continually bite their fingers and suck their blood; others dribble; many howl, or loll out the tongue, or

mutter, or are sulky ; there will be also seen the dumb, the lame, the epileptic, and not one will be found to meet the necessities of nature normally. Their touch, their feeling, their prehension, their hearing, their perception, are all more or less faulty. Amongst them will be a portion blasted in the bud and gone, with no susceptibility of improvement ; they can only be kept from growing worse, and made in a degree comfortable. With such, education is out of the question, but great numbers, as we shall soon see, are not only improveable to an unexpected extent, but actually desire it, and well repay the assiduous pains bestowed upon them. It is also remarkable that, until trial has been made, no one can pronounce what idiots are capable of profiting by education. It can only be said that the cases which are generally the most hopeless, are those attended with paralysis, epilepsy, hemi-plegia, and chorea ; but due treatment has in some instances removed or ameliorated these impediments, the experience of which has tended to establish the principles of action. The true principles are also based upon observation of psychological symptoms. Idiots are perceived to have certain wants, tastes, appetites, inclinations, desires, repugnances, fears, and preferences, shown in some way or other peculiar to each individual, and indicating that though fettered, obscured, and disordered by a defective bodily organism, there still exist certain limited sensations, sentiments, and perceptions, which, if rectified, will tend also to rectify their manifestations and emancipate them from their circumscribed condition. If an idiot can distinguish his food, he has some perception ; if he shows a longing for things which please him, he has some internal and external sensations ; if he can choose between two objects offered him, he has some comparison and judgment ; if he yields to gentle persuasion and severity of manner, he has some understanding ; if he has any tastes, however limited, there is something occupying the mind. In all these the trainer sees capacities for improvements. His principle is, that these unfortunates not only are endowed with the animal instincts and propensities, but with the feeble germs of those better qualities which are superadded to our physical nature, and which never could occur in the best trained lower animal, even if its perceptive faculties were more acute than theirs. It has been found necessary also to note the degrees of idiotcy, and to include them in the threefold division of the *idiot proper*, the *fool*, and the *simpleton*, each of which requires a peculiar system of management. Each case exhibits its own miserable tangle of the mental reins, which, till unravelled, confuse instead of guiding. I have repeatedly heard Dr. Guggenbühl say, that he received the first impulse to his benevolent and successful efforts amongst the

Cretins, by seeing one of them, of the very lowest grade, kneel daily before the image of some saint, by the road-side. He inferred there must be mind in this poor creature, though he seemed in all other respects mindless, and following out this conviction, he arrived at his present high result. Many idiots have some powers up to the due standard; when one has been discovered, in any instance, it has proved to be the key of the mind. This principle is also established—that it does not follow, that because a human being is unequal to one set of operations, he is so to others. There is a case of an idiot who learned to draw cats with unrivalled skill, in every conceivable attitude, but in all other respects remained an imbecile. Distinctive specialities of the most curious kind are perpetually observable, and have to be noted. The teacher of the idiot has to be made aware that his office differs materially from that of the instructor of the dumb or the blind, where one sense can be substituted for another, inasmuch as here the senses and powers have themselves to be educated. After these have been duly developed, comes their application to the common actions of life—decency, proper habits, attitudes, dressing, eating and drinking, attention, acquirement of knowledge, occupations, handicraft, morals, social affection, and, above all, religion, with its duties and hopes. If the senses, mind, and powers are improved, the results corresponding to each, of activity and intelligence, will necessarily ensue. The task has been most arduous. When the inmates of Park House, the Idiot Asylum at Highgate, were gathered for the first night within its walls, the confusion was so appalling that some quitted the undertaking in despair; but those who persevered, have effected a change that I believe no one could witness without surprise and intense gratification: but I will—not to anticipate the successes to be hereafter described—now beg your kind attention to the methods which have led to them.

2. The first question was—how to begin? The answer was, *with the body*; for an ordinary boy, brought to his schoolmaster, has already his body broke in to the service of his will. Not so the idiot. It is evident that every salutary movement requires the exercise of will and attention, and thus the health of the mental powers is promoted. The plans adopted at the present moment, though very successful on the whole, must, I should premise, be regarded as tentative, since new ideas open before us continually. Every idiot has some bodily defect, and his senses are dormant more or less. He sees without perception, and hears without comprehension. A teacher, therefore, who understands his occupation, will endeavour to quicken the bodily frame by sensorial exercises, the mind by intellectual ones, and blend with them the regimen that will lead to a better health. The

pupil must be received kindly, and every effort made to gain confidence, and draw out attention. A helpless idiot is examined, and it is found that he does not even know that he has limbs. The first object, then, must be to make him sensible that he does possess them, and that he can use them if he tries. One person's time must be, for a while, devoted to a single case. When this person moves, the idiot must be, if possible, made to move in the same way, until he has imitated, by degrees, the common kinds of corporeal movements: and if he can speak, he must be made to name the different parts of the body. In some instances this achievement, where there is promise of amelioration, gives great delight. Only a short time since, I witnessed it in a little boy, who named his limbs and organs of sense with a joy depicted in his countenance as if he had made some great discovery; and to him it was so. When a knowledge of his own frame is thus acquired, and he regards orders and words of command obediently, and not before, he is put into some class of beginners. It is the business of the individual having the charge of such a class to cause those who constitute it to go through all sorts of bodily movements in combination, and it is often a very long time before any further progress can be made. As soon, however, as an idiot is tolerably advanced in this part of his training, he may be introduced into the family to meals, and on other occasions when the household assemble. In time command is gained over the habits which frequently render the pupil so repulsive, but this is only to be achieved by extreme care, vigilance, and the enforcement of a regularity of the strictest kind, by gentle but firm surveillance from morning to night. An idiot has seldom the slightest notion of dressing himself. Here again, at first, some attendant must constantly undertake the same individual. He must make his charge put on one thing right first, and until this is done, he must not proceed to the second; and what perseverance is needed in this particular duty, only those who have known it can conceive. The same may be said of teaching how to wash. After the simpler movements have been taught, recourse is had to gymnastics and drill. The gymnastic apparatus is very simple, from the inclined plane, over which the often-alarmed imbecile is led up and down till he can jump off, with ease, to horizontal ladders, balances, swings, leap-bars, and other contrivances. The difficulties in the way are threefold—where there is a defective muscular power, where there is no effort of will, and where there is some physical defect in the structure of the limbs. It is obvious that a different line must be adopted in each of these cases, and that the last would not afford subjects for a long time, if ever, for the exhibition of muscular energy and drill. Yet many idiots are now to be seen

daily, in the asylums at Highgate and Colchester, moving rapidly by the hands along a horizontal ladder with great glee, who a short time ago were as terrified at being led up a low inclined plane, as any of us, unused to such a position, would be at being conducted to the mast-head of a man-of-war, or round the edge of the outer wall of some lofty tower. To train the eye of an idiot, as well as the muscular system, is a matter of great difficulty. He may see the figure of his teacher in the mass, but it is most probable he does not perceive any part of his person, or its appendages in detail, unless some glittering object, as an eye-glass, a chain, or a seal, catch the eye. But he must be taught to notice, with perception and distinction, particular and minute objects. This is done by laying before him, on a table, a number of geometrical figures cut out of wood; and as the teacher takes up one, the learner is directed to take up a similar one. Another lesson is the holding up the fingers, one by one, and the pupil must hold up the same finger of the same hand. Imitation is a most effectual means of teaching, and is usually regarded under two points of view—*personal*, when referred to the learner's own acts and habits, *impersonal*, when in relation to his actions on substances without. An idiot who is at all capable of the former, mostly makes grimaces. It is obvious, till cured of these, and muscular repose is induced, little can be done, and more than a month has been known to be expended before this condition could be attained: till it is, no profitable exercises of imitation can commence. It is a useful method to take a series of weights, from fourteen pounds to half a pound, and make the pupils select a "large one," or "a small one," "a heavy one," or "a light one," a "solid," or a "hollow" one. When trained to larger objects, recourse may be had to more minute—as for example, cubes of the size of dice, painted different colours. Let the teacher select one, and the pupil one like it. When the teacher places it in any particular position, let the learner do the same. After a time the boy may be brought before a large black board, and the master may draw on it some animal, and notice the effect, and try if he knows one part from another. One of the most improved, and at this time really intelligent inmates of the Essex Hall Asylum, could not for a long time be made to know a dog's head from his tail; he is now an accomplished carpenter and glazier, and his drawings are beautiful. There are two of them now before you, and you will agree that they are deserving of this epithet. When this method has been tried, give the pupil a piece of chalk, and let the teacher make a mark with another, which he must induce him to try and imitate. Thus writing begins. When the large mark on the board is imitated tolerably, the pupil may have a slate, and

when the slate is fairly used, then he may have a book. The same mode may be adopted for reading and drawing. It is almost impossible to teach most idiots the alphabet in the usual way, but the following mode is very successful:—Let a word be chalked on the board, as for example *cat*, and draw the animal. Tell the names of the letters, repeating them, till remembered. To test the recollection, draw and write *rat*, to see if the *a* and *t* are known. In this way all the alphabet may be eventually mastered, on the principle of association. In one case, with which I am acquainted, every mode tried failed; but it was observed that the pupil had a great fondness for bowling. Pins were put up, with the letters carved upon them, and whenever he bowled one down, he was made to name the letter, and at length he mastered all the letters, and is now a fair reader.

Articles of food may be often made to serve the purpose of a speaking lesson, and also one of order. The idiot must sit in the right place, in the right way, and ask or make a motion for the thing he desires to have to eat, before it is given him. The master keeps a few little sweetmeats for the smaller children, and tries to induce them to ask for them properly, and make some token of acknowledgment on receiving one. Thus the slightest things are made subservient to the great object of training.

Domestic employment has a happy effect, not only on the useful training of the idiot, but on educating his mind. Learning certain trades helps the intellect extremely. One boy, considered hopeless in every way, and whom it was found impracticable by any mode tried to teach the alphabet, showed an aptitude for shoemaking—at which he is now a very good workman,—and learned it; and so helpful was this to his mind, that he afterwards acquired both reading and writing with comparative ease. When it is intended to teach an idiot a trade, he is first allowed to go into the shop, and for a long time all he does is to look at another who is working. He is generally left unemployed till he says he thinks he could do the same, and should like to try. Then he commences in earnest, and generally succeeds, pursuing it afterwards heartily.

In the speaking lessons, if the child can speak, he is shown figures of almost every object likely to please him, and the names are asked. When the defect is found, the principal effort is directed to the practice which tends to its correction. Sometimes a poor idiot cannot utter a sound. He is, in this case, made to try and imitate the movements of the mouth the teacher makes in giving utterance; and from simple sounds he advances by slow degrees to a word.

Lessons are given to many idiots, called finger-lessons. A

board is set before them, with carved figures let into it, fitting tight, and those who can, pull them out. They are also practised at lacing stays and boots, and with straps having buckles to fasten round themselves or others, as well as at tying shoes and buttoning clothes. It is curious to see a child, with a strap he knows is to be buckled, and yet he, perhaps, tries for days, and cannot do it; but this once accomplished, a great step is made.

It is the constant experience of all teachers of the idiot—and I have often heard Dr. Guggenbühl express the same of the Cretins,—that religion, and the simple facts and precepts of the sacred Scriptures, make the deepest impression; and that there is granted to them the beneficial compensation of a remarkable facility for understanding them. Indeed, as the poor imbecile advances, if these fail, there is little hope. The mind touched by them is most easily opened to other things.

No pupil of good promise is closely associated with those of bad, either in the dormitories, tables, or classes. The majority of cases have some power, and a tendency towards its exercise. This must be strengthened, and turned in time to other objects.

It is remarkable, that idiots mostly have a love and aptitude for music, which renders teaching them to sing, when sufficiently advanced, more easy than might be at first imagined; there are instances of quite young pupils, true idiots, who can catch and retain an air after hearing it once or twice.

The highest attainments hitherto reached by those who have been successfully conducted through the methods of training I have endeavoured briefly to describe, are capability of writing from dictation, lessons from objects, a fair knowledge of Scripture history, geography to a certain extent, a little grammar, music, general arithmetic, mental arithmetic, trades, and drawing. They are never kept too long at any one thing, and are constantly refreshed by all kinds of out-door exercises, pursuits, and amusements of which they are capable.

Every idiot must be taught obedience by great calmness and yet firmness in the teacher, and by no other means than words, gestures, and looks. Great judgment is needed in this respect, for it is not every person who could train an idiot; and the secret is, never to begin with a command which can be well refused. "He must," it has been well observed, "begin with negative orders, chiefly as not to go there, not to touch that, not to eat this, and by positive orders of which he can compel the execution, and afterwards proceed to those which demand a concurrence of the child's will." When a master has subordinated the idiot's will to his own, he is in a position to influence him to

act for himself. As soon as resistance to authority ceases, there constantly occurs some spontaneous wish for active and intelligent occupation. Great pains must be taken to make the more capable idiots sensible of the value of improvement, and it is wonderful how they appreciate it, and how anxious they seem for it. One of the most improved idiots I know, being one day called to the speaking lesson said, "Thank you, sir; speech what I want."

I am well aware that what I have here said can only convey a faint idea of the methods pursued, and it is impossible to do more within the limits by which I am necessarily circumscribed. I must proceed to describe, in a brief statement, the successes which have attended the exertions of the teachers of the idiot; and I certainly may say of those whom I have witnessed employed in this benevolent labour, that they possess a tact and a patience beyond any expectations previously formed. It is also surprising to see the consciousness of the idiots themselves in some instances, of their own feeble powers, mingled with a conviction that they shall ultimately improve. One boy, who noticed the evident exhaustion of his instructor as he repeated the same little lesson again and again, said to him, in a tone that was at once touching and amusing, "Wait a little, patience is a virtue;" and in this case patience has indeed been triumphant. Scarcely any conceivable mode has been left untried, and sometimes a strong impression seems to quicken the dormant power by an instantaneous force. Last Christmas a Cretin, up to that time speechless, was suddenly introduced to an illuminated room at the Abendberg, where there was a Christmas tree, and to Dr. Guggenbühl's extreme delight, exclaimed "*baum, baum.*" This vocal utterance was the first gleam of a light which, as he predicted, has gone on brightening ever since. The like result has followed from letters and figures traced with phosphorus on the wall of a darkened room. The same words have been said fifty times a day for a month, and caught at last. When an idiot has been taught to apply the right term to an object, he may learn its uses; if he has learnt to designate a knife, he may be brought to know that it cuts, and to say, "The knife cuts." What has been said, then, will convey to you some idea of the herculean task of training an idiot; but if I at once proceed to describe what many of them who have come under my own observation were, and what they are now, you will, I think, the more readily enter into the new and interesting subject, and rejoice with me in the assurance that what I called at the outset the feeble germs of their intellects, moral sentiments, social affections, and bodily faculties, have not been cherished in vain, and that there is proof of the possibility of

raising most of these pitiable brethren of the human family, who are not below the grade of simpleton, to a condition of improvement both in body and mind, of which no one in former times imagined they could be susceptible.

3. In presenting you with the results of the exertions of the friends and teachers of idiots, I feel it right to repeat that there are still many who are capable of little more than physical improvement and comfort; but there are also many in whom a change has taken place which astonishes all who have seen it. I particularly allude to those two asylums of which that justly esteemed friend of the insane, Dr. Conolly, and their founder Dr. Reed, are the gratuitous secretaries, and to which the latter has devoted himself with a spirit of benevolence only equalled by the talent he has shown for his undertaking from the earliest moment he conceived the great idea. A mother comes in and asks to see her child. The child is immediately brought to her, and she looks earnestly, and asserts with emphasis, "This is not *my* child." "Look again," says the kind matron; she recognises her altered son or daughter, and bursts into tears. Before I make you acquainted with the peculiarities of these changes, I must mention a few of the characteristics of some of the patients. In Essex Hall, out of eighty-one boys now in a different condition, twenty-nine had never uttered an intelligible sound, and twenty-three were scarcely intelligible; forty were filthily degraded, sixty-four were disgusting at their meals, and seventy-two were nearly helpless in dressing themselves and in everything else. Only ten would willingly engage in any exercise or pastime. Out of one hundred and fourteen boys about sixteen are kept apart still, because they are subject to fits. All that can be done for them is to keep them clean and try to make them happy. Yet, of the remaining number, you may find any day on visiting the institution, between sixty and seventy reading more or less, about thirty writing in copy-books, and some of them admirably; more than thirty others write on slates, while sixteen or seventeen draw and copy with great accuracy the subjects supplied to them. There are at least fifty who receive gallery and collective lessons, and as many are practised daily in the speaking classes. Nine or ten actually write well from dictation. A great number, both of boys and girls, are in singing classes, and make, as you would infer from what I have before said, great progress. Quite a little regiment of them is drilled constantly, and the same at Park House, near Highgate, and I am positive that no one could follow them in their evolutions without amazement. More than sixty perform their own toilette in a morning neatly, and a greater number still come in to the prayers of the family, and conduct themselves with great

propriety, while some of them manifest religious feeling and most gratifying reverence. A considerable number go to church every Sunday, and not a few follow the services intelligently to a certain extent, and remember more than you would conceive possible of the text and sermon. The same miserable picture of the poor idiot girls, at their first entrance into the asylum, might be drawn, and the like manifestations of improvement detailed. Both at Essex Hall and Park House the subjects of the charitable solicitude of their managers were equally unpromising, and at both may be shown the great results I am endeavouring to set before you, and which ocular demonstration would convince you I do not exaggerate. There is besides, in the most advanced classes, a constantly improving tone, and symptoms of a prevailing influence inducing them to struggle with their infirmities that they may realize their own progress. It is very striking to see a circle of the pupils under examination in mental arithmetic, in which it is quite perceptible how hard they try to do their best. Nor will it fail to be regarded as a most pleasing fact, that, at Christmas last, twenty boys, whose friends once regarded them as doomed to ignorance and degradation, actually wrote letters home. If you enter either of the establishments I have named about twelve o'clock, you will see cheerful groups of males engaged in various games, but you may perhaps fail to be very much struck because of a prevalent eccentricity of manner, and the remaining stamp of idiocy still uneffaced. Let them be followed into their dining-room, when the bell rings a little before one o'clock, and mark the kindness with which the strong lead the feeble to their places. At a signal they all stand with the utmost quietude, waiting to sing the grace; and this done, in a manner which is really harmonious, they sit down and conduct themselves with perfect good order. Instead of seizing, as they did at first, the food as it passed along, they hand the plates to each other in the most pleasing way, not exhibiting a symptom of greediness or desire to be served out of turn. The same decorous spectacle presents itself in the girls' dining-room. You would scarcely believe that a large body of idiots were seated at table, such quiet and propriety of conduct mark the whole proceeding, and dinner terminates as it began; with the grace tunefully chanted. Some who were once, to all appearance, thoroughly incapable, lay the cloth, arrange the knives, forks, and plates, and take them away with all the ease and rapidity of practised waiters, and seldom mislay or lose a single article committed to their charge, while their efficient performance of these and other domestic duties renders fewer servants needful. After a certain interval at the conclusion of dinner, occupations are resumed. The gardeners, tailors, mat-

makers, basket-makers, rope-makers, shoe-makers, and others, all go cheerfully to work, and take a just pride in their respective handicrafts, and are delighted to be asked to show the visitor what they have done. The girls go to domestic employments, or to knitting, sewing, or fancy work, bonnet-making, and various classes are also formed for writing, speaking lessons, reading, geography, and other profitable instruction. Many pounds' worth of mats have been sold within the last year, and are found not only to be good in appearance but to wear extremely well. I have often passed the most improved through their various exercises, and have examined them in object lessons, the Scriptures, arithmetic, and geography, so I can testify to the great advances they have made. Only a week or two since I was accompanied by a clergyman, who questioned them in my presence in the simple outline of Scripture history, and the precepts of our Lord, and he expressed the greatest pleasure and surprise at the answers given, declaring he should have thought such proficiency impossible had he not witnessed it. Once a week, at Park House, Highgate, there is a sort of concert, at which several male and female pupils, arranged on different sides of a piano-forte, acquit themselves with great credit, and manifest the highest enjoyment. Some of the boys also play with accuracy and good expression on the harmonicon; and it is very amusing to hear them accompanied by an excellent performer on the violin the establishment fortunately numbers amongst the teachers. Visitors occasionally seem to doubt whether they are really amidst idiots, forgetting the many powers that are included in, and may be elicited from, those called by this forbidding name; for idiocy is as variable as the possible combinations in the actions of the unnumbered functions of the human brain.

I will endeavour further to illustrate my subject by the history of a few individuals. A boy was admitted in November, 1850, and brought the following character from his parents:—"He is turbulent, has no memory, is unteachable, but swears dreadfully." The character he bears at this moment is that he is "quiet, can read, teaches others, sings well, and never utters a bad word." Another, received as a pupil in the same year, was represented as not possessing the least power of imitation; but he has nevertheless learned to read, to write, to sing, and to net. A boy I am frequently in the habit of noticing was pronounced hopeless, could never be taught a letter even by his father, who was a schoolmaster, was always chattering the most repulsive rubbish, was obstinate, and very passionate and vicious, resisting with fury when first taken into the asylum. At this time he can read, speaks with propriety, is civil, kind, and generous, dividing with the young pupils any sweetmeats or

fruits that may be given him, is useful in the house, and a really superior shoemaker, finishing his work in a most creditable way. A youth who attracts the attention of every visitor from his graceful carriage and superior manners, could, when he came under tuition, neither read nor write, was unsociable, passionate, and obstinate, besides being deaf and nearly dumb, so that apparently he had not any sense of a single thing. He is now the fugleman of the drill, reads fairly, draws beautifully, sets copies for the writing lessons, is very attentive, has nice manners, has become an excellent carpenter, and has made a good model of a ship, can glaze the windows of the house, has improved in speech, takes the lead in all manly exercises, and, more still, I believe him to be sincerely and deeply religious. A powerful idiot, in bodily frame, came to one of the institutions as lately as May, 1853, and his age is eighteen. He proved to be altogether beyond the control of his afflicted mother, and in two instances had nearly succeeded in taking her life. Altogether he was given to mischief, and, if excited, would destroy whatever came in his way. It had been found, nevertheless, possible to teach him to read and write a little; but he would never work, and no reliance could be placed on anything he said. He has been frequently before me, and I can assure you, that though some degree of excitability still remains in his constitution, it is soon subdued by gentleness and firmness, and he is generally obedient and agreeably playful. He reads and writes well, and understands the elementary rules of arithmetic, showing also a surprising quickness in mental calculation. There is reason to believe he will soon draw accurately, and he is one of the best mat-makers, applying himself to this work with the most persevering industry. His mother visited him during the present year, and was perfectly startled, as well as moved to expressions of tearful joy, at the complete metamorphosis she witnessed in her son. It is not easy to imagine a more repulsive human being than the next to whom I shall advert. His head rolled distressingly, his barking was horrible, and he appeared senseless and indifferent. At the present time he is lively and happy, helps to clean the shoes, is musical, and what is more, can be depended on. Amongst the happy examples of great amelioration, there is a boy whose language was most imperfect in every thing but awful swearing; and he was also deceitful and would do nothing. He can repeat any sentence distinctly, never uses improper terms; he reads, writes, draws, and sings, is a fair tailor, and so truthful that he would not tell an untruth to conceal any fault. In May, 1851, a youth came in who was said to know nothing, and seemed without power to do anything; he ran away several times from home, and for eighteen months

after entrance appeared unimproveable. He now knows the alphabet, can write, makes shoes, and is obedient. A boy, received in December, 1850, was listless, inactive, unintelligible, solitary, filthy, gluttonous, and a liar. He has become active, is good at drill, sings well, writes from dictation, draws fairly, is clean, and his bad habits are quite gone. To show what may be done with the most hopeless cases, I may mention another boy, admitted January, 1850. He was violent, required constant watching, was destructive, lied, stole, could not dress, and knew no letters, but comprehended things said to him. At present he is mild, well-behaved though eccentric, can dress, reads, writes, plaits, drills well, and plays the harmonicon. There are many who could testify that I have not overdrawn any one of these examples; and the same instances of success have occurred amongst the girls, of which, with your permission, I will mention a few. One who came in October, 1849, was an actual hindrance when she tried to help, could not be left an instant, and was seemingly without an idea. She is now a real help, arranges things well, sweeps, dusts, and scrubs effectually, and begins to assume a cheerful, intelligent aspect. There are several others who were nearly similar in imbecility, and who have made equal progress. A girl was received November, 1851, who was unwieldily stout, was self-willed, given to abominable language, and screamed so loud that she was heard a quarter of a mile from the building, and behaved so ill, that they could not have her at the family prayers. She is improved in her figure, can walk and even run, assists in nursing the little patients, is affectionate, well-mannered, and tractable, has ceased to cry loudly, and is decorous at worship. A girl also entered November, 1851, who had never spoken, and was supposed to have no power of speech. She can now recite verses, is correct in language, and is perfect in articulation. Another who came under instruction in May, 1850, did not know her own name, and could only say *yes* or *no*, and seemed unable to perform any act except threading a needle, which she was without sense to use. Her speech is improved, but curiously enough, though I constantly ask her, she cannot tell me her own name, though she knows the names of all the inmates in the house. She is clever at making straw bonnets, and proves very useful in the daily domestic work. A girl who, on her reception in 1851, was inactive, spiteful, and sly, has become active and full of glee, runs about the place on any errand, makes the beds, and is very affectionate, but still retains a degree of eccentricity. I could go on enumerating many equally striking cases, but will allow myself only one more, that of a young female who entered July, 1850. She had been the source of extreme pain and anxiety to her parents, was troublesome,

dirty, mischievous, and a great pilferer and story-teller. She, however, knew a few letters, and could sew, but very badly. Now she reads, writes, and is good at her needle. She plaits, does bead-work, knits, is skilful at fancy-work, besides being improved in speech, and having become cleanly and trustworthy. In adverting to these improved pupils, I have more than once told you of the surprise of the parents who have visited their children, but I have reserved till the present moment the mention of one instance that is really, could it not be vouched for, almost incredible. A father and mother called at Essex Hall, only a short time ago, to see their son, and, at their own request, went into the room where he was employed with several other pupils. They both said he was not there, after what they regarded as a sufficient scrutiny; and when they discovered him, the father could only utter, in a voice choked with emotion, "My heart is full, I cannot tell you what I feel." He saw his son rescued from the dreadful slough of brutishness, made tidy, decent, industrious, and happy, and no wonder he was thus affected by the spectacle; and when to this is added, as is the case with some of these pitiable creatures, a knowledge of scriptural truth, of their Saviour, religious impression, hope of future felicity, and desire for prayer, the triumph of the philanthropist is complete.

The advancements made in the teaching of idiots, will not be without great practical use in teaching others, and bring to the mind many things of importance that have been overlooked. It will especially throw light on bodily training, as a valuable agent in eliciting the mental and moral powers, though it has too frequently been regarded merely as promotive of muscular strength and manual dexterity. Corporeal exercises in children need not be only idle amusements and useless pastimes—they may be made of more service, both for the intellect and the organism, than ill-considered tasks and injudicious lessons. The idiots I am acquainted with could not for a long time be taught to play cricket; but they have, some of them, now conquered that game, and have been invited to play in the grounds of kind gentlemen residing near the asylum, and have thus been brought into contact with intelligent people, have manifested gratitude and excellent conduct, and the consequent improvement in their tone and deportment is very great. Any frequent call upon volition and attention in bodily exertion, gives tone and vigour to the system, not only increasing the power of the muscles, but inducing sound sleep, which ministers to the improvement of the mind, and leading to the power of continuous attention, which requires mental effort, and cannot be completely given but as the mind itself improves.

This country, ever ready to adopt and encourage whatever is shown to be for the good of the human species, will soon see the training of the idiot carried out in a large model erection at Redhill, near Reigate, the foundation-stone of which was laid June 16, 1853, by your illustrious and enlightened president, His Royal Highness Prince Albert. The knowledge of the existence of thousands of hitherto ignored brethren of the human family, shut out from the world by this appalling malady, will awaken even a larger sympathy than now exists. The proofs that they are capable of being instructed will arouse the generous spirit of the nation, and they will be rescued from home confinement, and the companionship of the insane, and taught the profitable lessons now given to the favoured few in our idiot asylums. I could show you several idiots instructed in love to God, duty to man, and profitable acquirements, who were once chained up as if they had been wild beasts, till the same spirit which caused Dr. Conolly to bury the fetters of the lunatic, unlocked the bonds of the idiot, and taught the great truth by the results of patient training, that the preconceived sterility of any field for good is no barrier to the success of a labour of true benevolence. But the great difficulty will be to find teachers; not only teachers *trained*, but teachers *born*, full of the enthusiasm of a noble spirit, love for the objects of their care, zeal for their laborious work, patience which years of perseverance cannot quench, earnestness of manner, imperturbable temper, unbounded fertility of invention, and complete faith in the ultimate issue of their endeavours. This conviction will be assured by contemplating what has been already achieved; and which, in concluding, I can sum up in a few words. I can say of the idiots which have come under my own observation, that *all* are more or less improved in personal appearance, quietude, health, and contentment; *most* are improved in vigour, decency, self-control, perception, speech, knowledge of objects, and what is a very happy circumstance, have ceased from disgusting dribbling; *many* are improved in powers of all kinds—observation, manners, thoughts, habits, pursuits, and religion; *some* are so renovated that they may mingle with educated persons, and with a little superintendence may pass fairly through the world, and earn their own livelihood. I am thankful to have been permitted to address the present audience on this matter, and that your society has included the work of the reclaimed imbeciles in its instructive exhibition. A wise and beneficent Creator has not permitted the existence of human beings with veiled powers without some design for them and for us. The removal of this veil may be a part of our probation; and if it is the Creator's wisdom that there are idiots born, it has now been clearly manifested that it

will be our sin if those who are capable of being taught die in this condition. These successful attempts to awaken faculties hitherto dormant, and to restore lost minds to themselves and to God, are worthy of our nation, and are a fine example of the true practical genius of Christianity, while we see in the remarkable capability of the idiot for comprehending its simple precepts, and enjoying its promises, a confirmation of one of the most touching sayings of its divine author and teacher, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven;" and the reflection on it will tend to make poverty of spirit, and feebleness of body, appeal to our hearts, that we may help those thus afflicted, shorn of the wings of intelligence, crippled in power, and lagging far behind in the race of progress, to the best place we can give them in the present life, and the high consolation of the hopes of that which is to come.

THE ASYLUM FOR IDIOTS,
PARK HOUSE, HIGHGATE, AND ESSEX HALL, COLCHESTER.

Under the Patronage of Her Majesty the Queen.

ADDRESS.

ENGLAND, our beloved country, is greatly distinguished amongst the nations by the Divine Providence. On her head there rest many crowns; but the fairest and the brightest is that of Charity! Her power in arms, her skill in arts, her discoveries in science, her boundless commerce and dominion, do neither distinguish nor glorify her so much as her benevolent Institutions. They should seem to be, like our oaks and our elms, indigenous to our Land. They are not the creatures of the State, but the nurslings of the people; and well have they been fostered.

Every form of evil by which humanity suffers has been searched out; and Ingenuity has been tasked to devise methods of cure or of mitigation. Defects of the eye, the ear, the tongue, the foot, have separate and skilful attention; the maimed, the sick, and the insane, are supplied with a house of refuge, and soothed by the kindness of Charity; and, as might be expected, where the voice of Religion is heard, the widow and the fatherless have been so fully and earnestly regarded, as that their affliction and mourning are turned into joy and praise.

Yet it must be admitted that there is one class, and that, in some respects, the lowest and the worst, which has been overlooked. WE HAVE DONE NOTHING FOR THE IDIOT! How is this? It cannot be that, feeling aright towards every other class of misery, our charity should fail here. It must be, that we have laboured under the appalling conviction that idiocy is without remedy, and therefore we have left it without help.

It is happy for the interests of humanity that this opinion is now exploded. The experiment has at length been made—

made by several persons—made in several countries,—France, Germany, and Switzerland,—and in all cases with success. It may now, therefore, be pronounced, not as an opinion, but as a fact—a delightful fact—THAT THE IDIOT MAY BE EDUCATED.

While this is now to be received as an ascertained and registered fact, it is especially true as applied to the earlier periods of life. There can be no doubt that the evil, in this case, as in that of insanity, is wholly physical. We cannot even conceive of mind, apart from the body, as either idiotic or insane. In itself it is neither; and it only becomes so from imperfect or distorted manifestations through a diseased or defective organization. If this is correct, it is evident that the EARLIER we attempt the recovery of the Idiot, the more hopeful. In fact, the young—the very young—are greatly susceptible of improvement. If they are regarded as hopeless, they will indeed become hopeless,—for the tendency of neglect is to fatuity; but if they are taken early, and are carefully trained and educated on the principle that *there is mind*, and that it only demands *physical manifestation*, much, in most cases, that is essential to life, if not all that is desirable, may be secured. For vacancy there may be sense; for frivolousness, a serious regard to the habits and duties of life; for a joyless and unconscious being, lower than the brutes that perish, a capacity for thought, for enjoyment, for religion, for an anticipated immortality!

It is not possible that these facts can be known and believed, and yet neglected. SOMETHING MUST BE DONE FOR THE IDIOT. In charity it must be done—in consistency it must be done—for very shame it must be done—unless we would allow other nations to outrun us in the noblest course of man—that of benevolence.

Yet it must not be concealed, that this service is especially one of great difficulty and self-denial. It requires skill as much as earnestness, and earnestness equally with skill. Of all the spheres of charity, it supplies the least aliment to vapid sentiment, and demands that it be fulfilled under a rigid and extraordinary sense of duty—the duty which man owes to man.

The purport of this appeal is to invite and concentrate effort on this object. It proposes to educate the Idiot, especially in the earlier periods of life. It proposes to do this by the strenuous application of the most skilful means, appropriate to the object before us, and worthy of the country in which we dwell. It proposes that the benefit of the first efforts shall supply relief chiefly to the *middle* and *poorer classes*; and, at the

same time, become a model and a motive for improvement in our pauper institutions. It will be, in the fullest sense, an effort of charity. It will help those who cannot help themselves; and it will proffer assistance to those who would otherwise be called to bear a burden that was intolerable.

Those who make this appeal do it with confidence—the confidence of those who have before challenged public benevolence, and not in vain. Can it be in vain now? It is for the poor, poor Idiot they plead!—for the Idiot, the lowest of all the objects of Christian sympathy,—for the Idiot, most needing charity, and for whom charity has done nothing. We ask that he may be elevated from existence to life—from animal being to manhood—from vacancy and unconsciousness to reason and reflection. We ask that his soul may be disimprisoned; that he may look forth from the body with meaning and intelligence on a world full of expression; that he may, as a fellow, discourse with his fellows; that he may cease to be a burden on society and become a blessing; that he may be qualified to know his Maker, and look beyond our present imperfect modes of being to perfected life in a glorious and everlasting future!

CONSTITUTION.

I. That the name of this Charity be, “THE ASYLUM FOR IDIOTS.”

II. That the design of this Charity be, not merely to take the Idiot and Imbecile under its care, but especially, by the skilful and earnest application of the best means in his education, to prepare him, as far as possible, for the duties and enjoyments of life.

III. That the proper object of this Institution be the Idiot, without regard to sex or place. That such persons as are destitute of means, shall be placed on the foundation, by the open election of the Subscribers; while such as have means, shall be supplied with the advantages of the Asylum on moderate payments, to be regulated by the Board of Direction, and independent of the elections.

IV. That the age be unlimited; and that the Board be understood to have a discretion over the cases applying for relief; but that, usually, the period of CHILDHOOD and INFANCY be preferred as most favourable; and that always those cases be

first regarded which are most likely to profit by the course of treatment and education to be adopted.

V. That the period of continuance shall not usually exceed five years; but that a discretion be allowed to the Board in special cases.

VI. That, before any case is deemed eligible, it shall be subject to careful inquiry and professional examination; and, on every such case, there shall be a reasonable expectation that it may profit by the means proposed to be employed for its benefit.

VII. That before any case is actually admitted to the Asylum, two or more respectable persons, approved by the Board, shall enter into an engagement to remove it from the Asylum, when required so to do.

VIII. That the elections do occur half-yearly, in April and October; and should the votes in any case be equal, the Chairman is to have a casting vote.

IX. That the number of children to be chosen be determined from time to time by the state of the finances.

X. That if at any time it shall be evident that the election of any case has been secured by false representations, such election shall be declared void.

XI. That in case of an applicant being unsuccessful at the first election, credit shall be given for the number of votes at that and the two next succeeding elections; but not beyond this time.

XII. That all persons subscribing half a guinea a year, or five guineas at one time, shall be Members, and have the right of voting at the elections, and on the general business.

XIII. That all persons subscribing one guinea a year, or ten guineas at one time, shall have two votes at the election of candidates.

XIV. That the right of voting at elections shall increase in the same proportion, and that all persons subscribing two guineas annually, or twenty guineas at one time, shall be Governors, and have the right of attending at the sittings of the Board.

XV. That all Ministers preaching in behalf of this Charity shall become Members for life.

XVI. That an Executor paying a legacy of one hundred pounds, shall be a Member for life; and that if it exceed that sum, all the Executors shall have the same privilege.

XVII. That there be a General Annual Meeting in the month of April, when a Report, domestic and financial, on the state of the Charity, shall be read, and the officers chosen.

XVIII. That no such Meeting shall be deemed duly authorized, unless publicly advertised, and notice given to the Members; and that no rule affecting the constitution can be altered or withdrawn without *special* announcement.

XIX. That the appointment of the Board, the Treasurer, and the Secretaries, rest with this meeting; and that these officers be chosen annually, and act gratuitously.

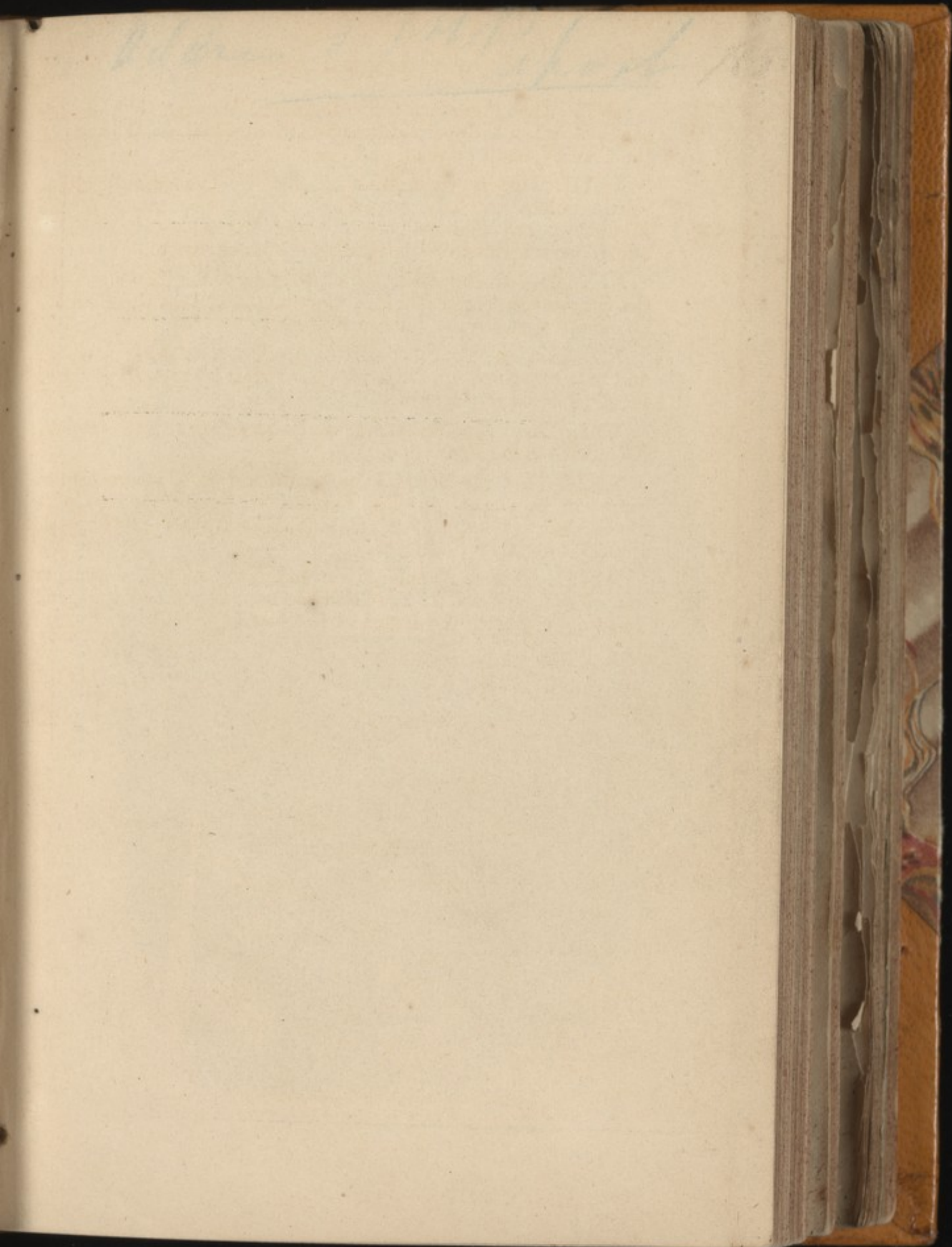
XX. That the Board consist of not less than thirty persons; and that two-thirds of those who have most frequently attended be eligible for re-election.

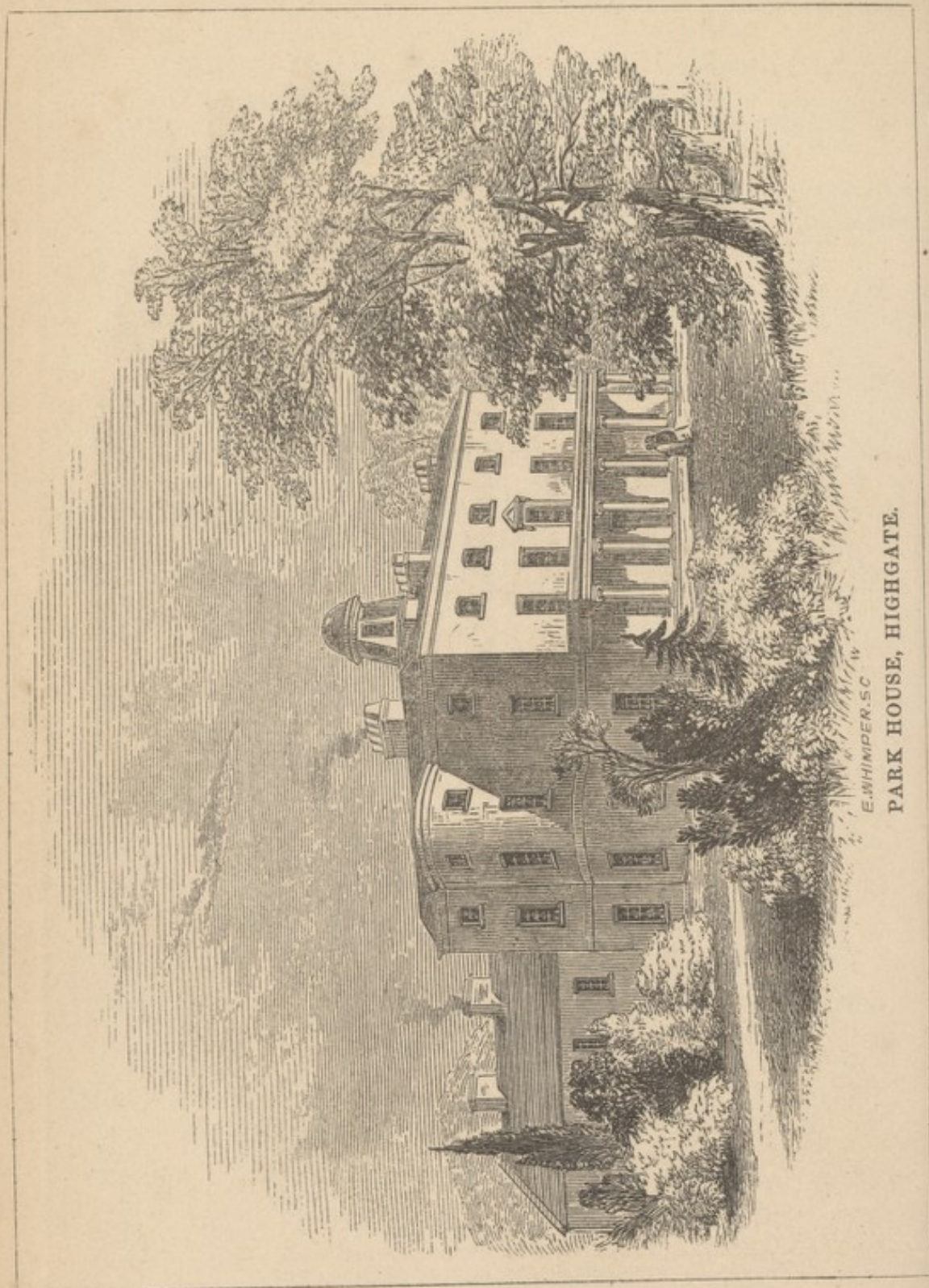
XXI. That the Treasurer and Secretaries are *ex-officio* Members of the Board.

XXII. That the Board have power, in case of emergency, to place an applicant on the foundation, subject to the next election; provided that they have security for its removal, should it not then be chosen.

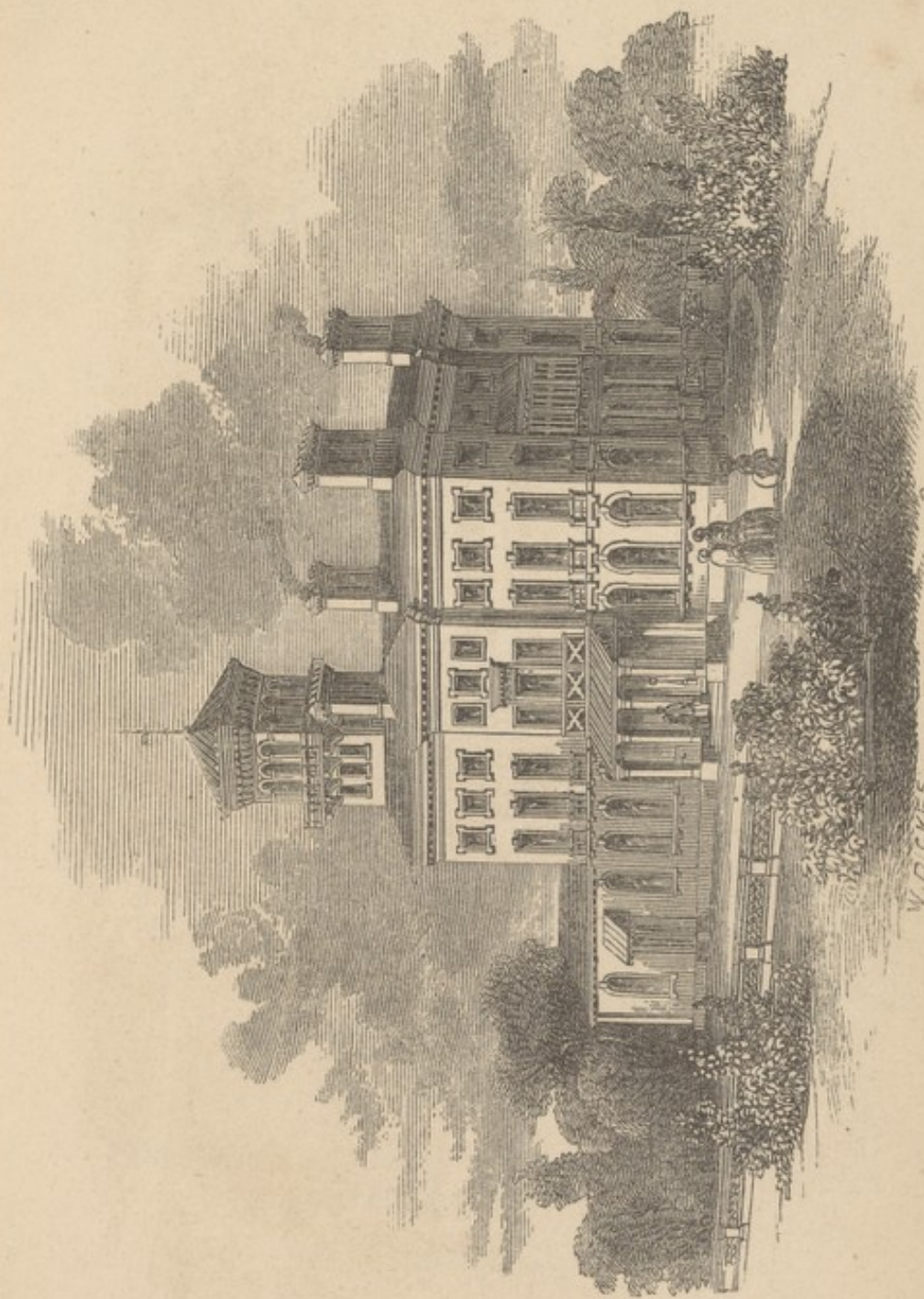
XXIII. That the appointment and dismissal of all servants and officers, not declared to be in the nomination of the General Meeting, rest with the Board of Direction.

Belgian ...

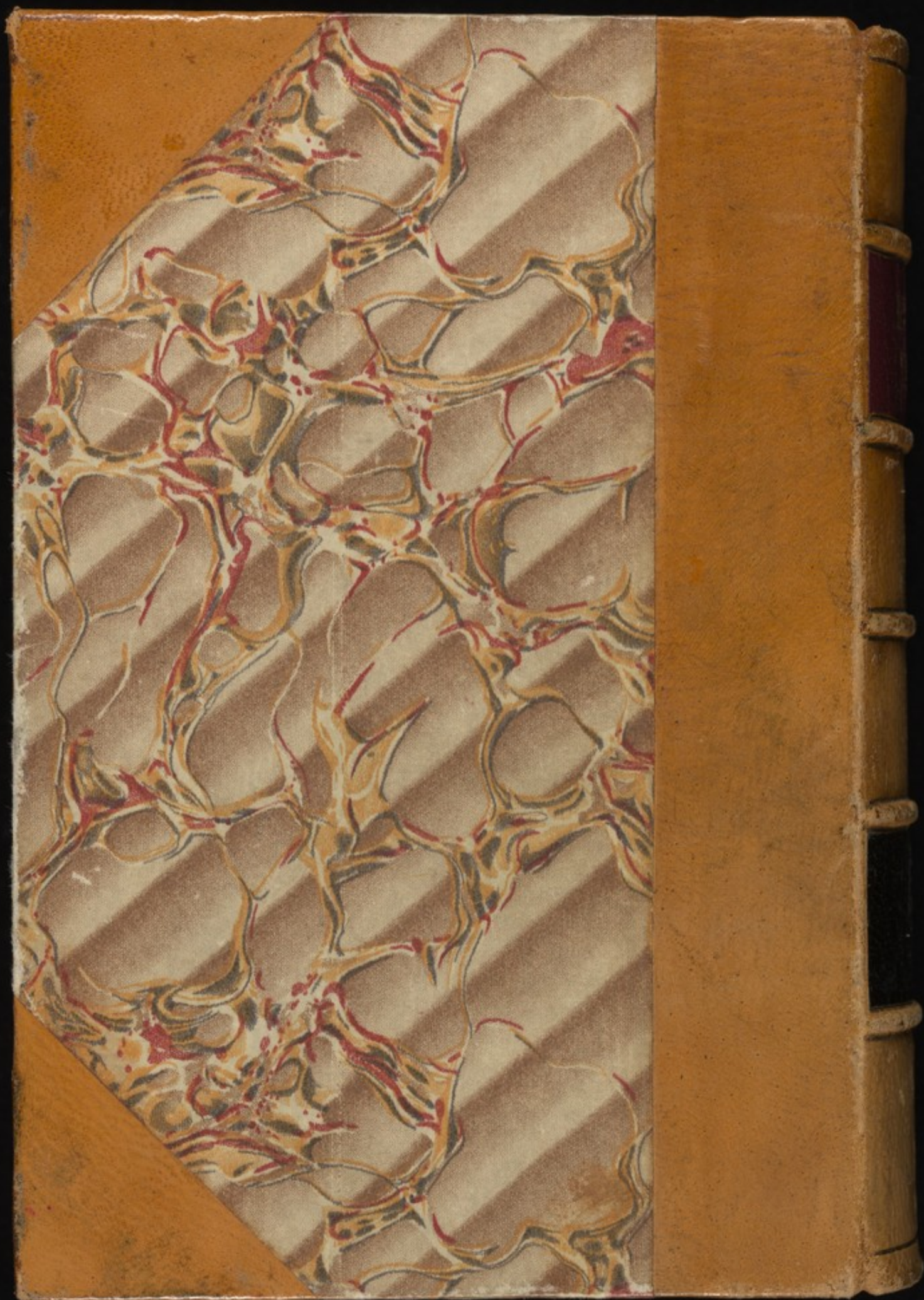




PARK HOUSE, HIGHGATE.



ESSEX HALL, COLCHESTER.



MEDICAL
TRACTS

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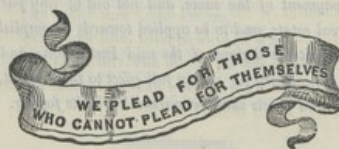


Table with financial data, including columns for amounts and a list of names (e.g., Mann, Taylor, Westall) under the heading 'Auditors'.

THE ASYLUM FOR IDIOTS.

INSTITUTED OCTOBER 27, 1847.

INCORPORATED BY ROYAL CHARTER, 1862.



ESTABLISHMENT:
EARLSWOOD, RED HILL, SURREY.
OFFICE—29, POULTRY, LONDON, E.C.
1865.



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