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Contributors

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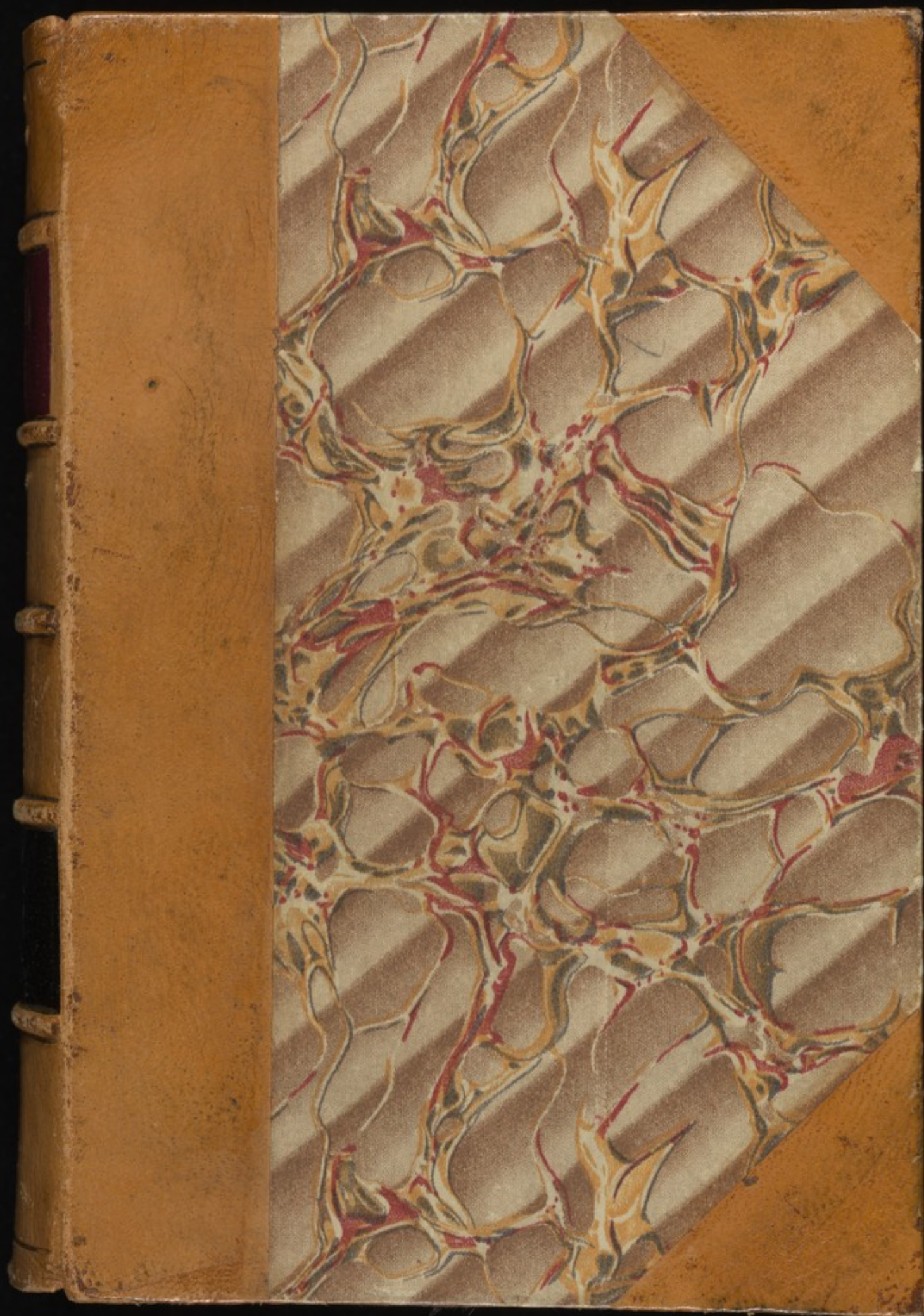
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THE TRAINING

OF

Idiotic and Feeble-Minded Children,

BY

CHEYNE BRADY, ESQ., M.R.I.A.,

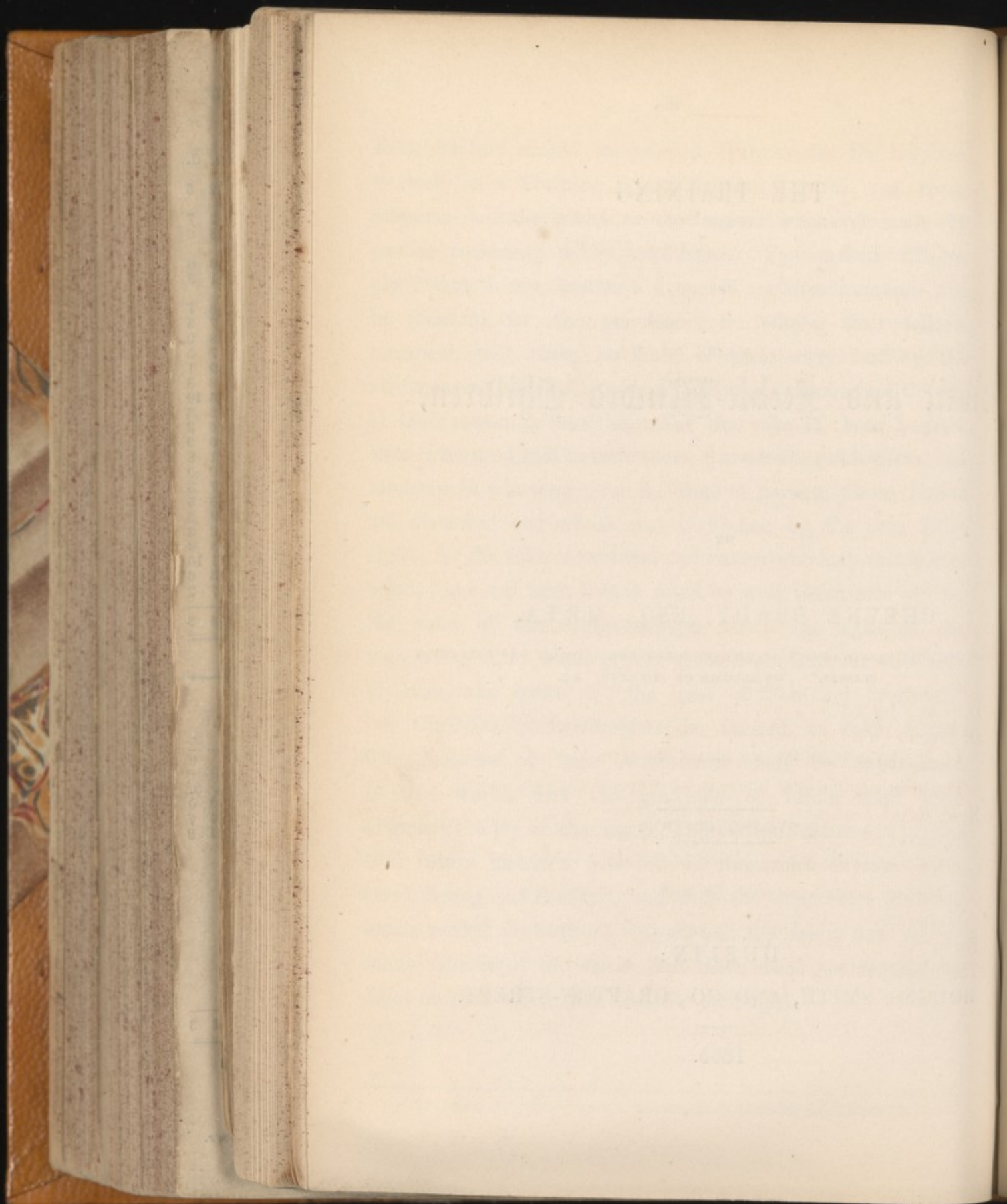
AUTHOR OF "THE PRACTICABILITY OF IMPROVING THE DWELLINGS OF THE LABOURING
CLASSES." "ON SCHOOLS OF INDUSTRY," &c.

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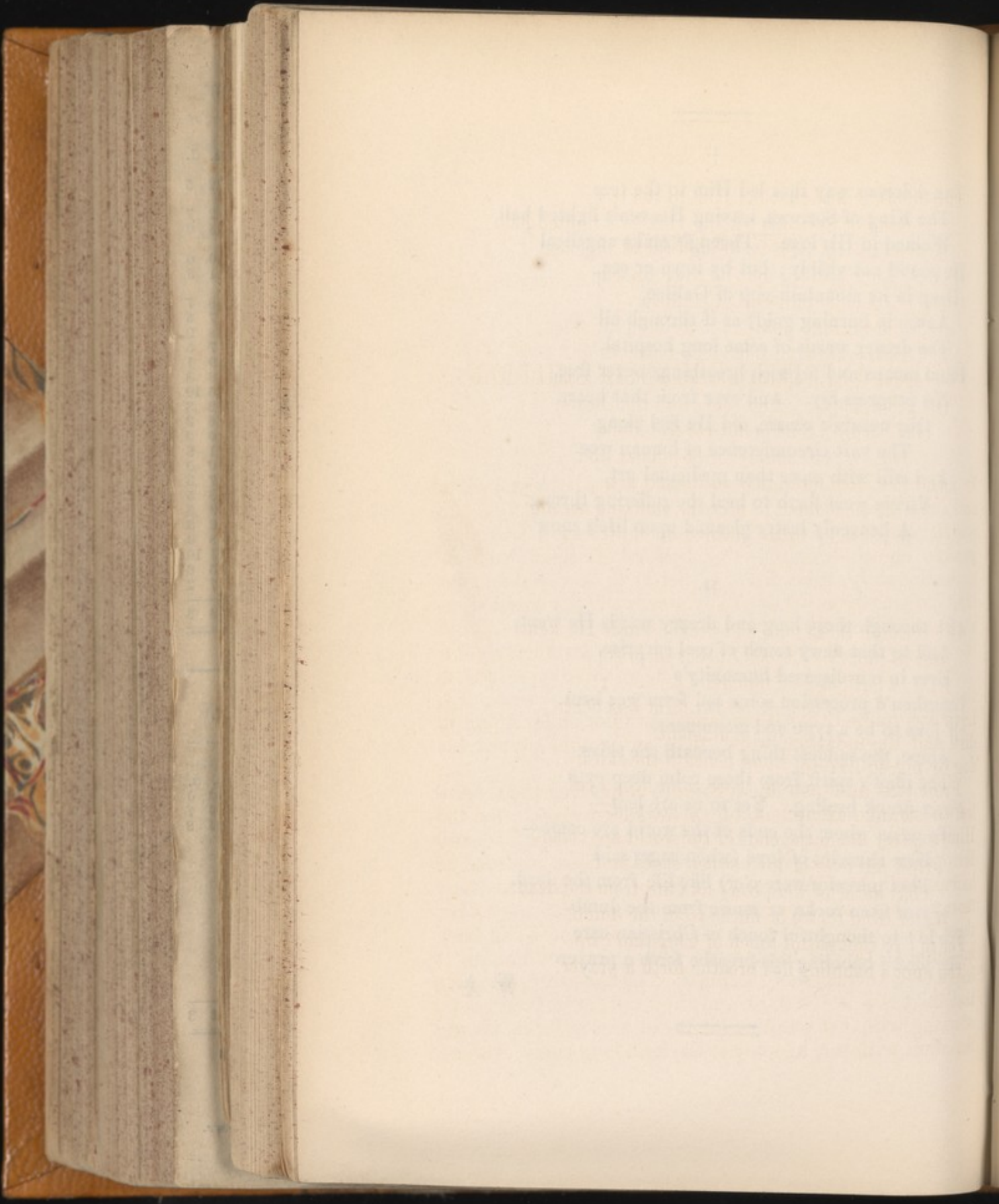
I.

THE dolorous way that led Him to the tree
The King of Sorrows, leaving Heaven's lighted hall,
Walked in His love. Through ranks angelical
He pass'd not visibly ; but by town or sea,
(Deep in its mountain-cup of Galilee,
Azure in burning gold) as if through all
The dreary wards of some long hospital,
From moans and feverish breathings never free,
His progress lay. And ever from that heart,
Our nature's centre, did He feel along
The vast circumference of human woe.
And still with more than medicinal art,
Virtue went forth to heal the suffering throng.
A heavenly lustre gleam'd upon life's snow.

II.

Ah! through those long and dreary wards He went,
And to that dewy touch of cool surprise,
Ever in our diseased humanity's
Lengthen'd procession some sad form was bent,
Of love to be a type and monument.
Alone, the saddest thing beneath the skies,
The idiot's spirit from those calm deep eyes
Never drank healing. Yet to us are lent—
To us on whom the ends of the world are come—
New miracles of love (when sages said
That miracles were o'er) like life from the dead,
Water from rocks, or music from the dumb.
For lo ! to thoughtful touch of Christian care
The idiot's babbling lips breathe forth a prayer.

W. A.



THE TRAINING

OF

IDIOTIC AND FEEBLE-MINDED CHILDREN.

It is not very long since we used to see boys and girls, and sometimes stunted men and women, running wild in our streets and villages in a state of idiocy. These repulsive objects were usually half-naked, their walk or crawl ungainly, their features distorted, with saliva running from their mouths. They were carefully avoided, as the continual worrying of the village urchins had soured their tempers and rendered them in some cases dangerous.

Then, again, on visiting the poor, we have from time to time seen a bundle of rags in a corner, and, on inquiry, have ascertained that it contained an idiot child, living in dirt and degradation, worse than one would permit his dog or pig to live in.

Prejudice and popular ignorance respecting them have led to strange treatment of this afflicted class. By the Hindoo they are superstitiously venerated, while by many Europeans these helpless creatures have been regarded as human beings without souls. Some poor parents fancy that, as their children cannot remember what they hear, their brain must be soft, and apply poultices of oak-bark in order to tan or harden the fibres; others, finding it impossible to make any impression on the mind, conclude that the brain is too hard, and they torture their unhappy offspring with hot poultices of bread and milk, or plaster the skull with tar, keeping it on for a long time. Others,

again, give mercury to act as a solder to close up the supposed crevices in the brain.

Such is the class of human beings, known as idiots, to which our attention is directed.

The utmost stretch of humanity has hitherto thrust them out of sight in our workhouses, where they are suffered to exist uncared for and untaught.

Christian philanthropy has at last reached and purposes to ameliorate them.

The idiot and the insane are usually classed together. There cannot be a greater mistake. Let us first clearly understand the difference. Mr. Locke describes madmen not as affected by want of quickness, activity, and motion in the intellectual faculties, whereby they are deprived of reason, like what he calls "naturals," but as suffering from the other extreme. He considers that, "having joined together some ideas very wrongly, they mistake them for truths, and err as men do who argue right from wrong principles." On the other hand, he regards idiots as "those who cannot distinguish, compare, and abstract," and points to the importance of an exact observation of their several ways of faltering, for discovering their state and its causes.

The distinction is clear and marked—the madman suffers from an unnatural development of brain: the idiot from an ill-developed brain. In the one the mind is not in proper balance; in the other it is not in proper power.

Imbecility generally arises from a want in the intellectual capacity, or in the memory, or in the moral sense, as compared with such in a healthy child; a want generally depending on a fault in the corporeal structure—not a flaw in the immortal soul; but a defect in the organization by which the soul acts—by which it receives and transmits its impressions of outward things.

This want varies, of course, in intensity from the lowest type of idiocy to the least degree of imbecility.

The number of these poor creatures is greater than is generally imagined. Except when the "natural" is left to run wild in the village, the existence in a family of an idiotic member is generally carefully concealed. Indeed it often occurs that the parents themselves do not realize

the sad truth of the imbecility of their offspring for some years; and touching cases are related of the anxious watchings of the parent for the first gleam of intelligence—for the dawn of reason in the beloved object—watchings doomed to be bitterly disappointed, when the dreadful truth is realized that the child is an idiot.

It is calculated that there are about 50,000 of these helpless creatures in the United Kingdom; they abound in the manufacturing districts of England. Scotland boasts the fewest number of idiots, their number being under 3,000; and in this respect, their character, as a long-headed and strong-headed people, is borne out.

In Ireland, according to the Census of 1861, there were about 7,000 imbeciles.

Our treatment of this class has been most blameworthy. We have made no provision whatever for the instruction of those who are improvable. With the exception of Swift's Hospital for lunatics and idiots, we have not even opened an asylum for the hopelessly incurable. Even the dumb animal has been treated with more consideration; for we have, very properly, societies for the prevention of cruelty to animals; and the sentimental philanthropy of an eccentric lady has founded a refuge in London for the reception of wandering dogs, while, until very recently, there was no asylum whatever for the imbecile.

But it is asked, what can be done for them? What are their capabilities of improvement?

We may admit at once that for the minds of the lowest type of idiocy little can be done. Many of these have no intelligence whatever, being ignorant of all self-control, filthy in habits, and unable to feed themselves, while some are afflicted with epileptic and other fits. Still, even for this class, would it not be a great boon to them and their parents that they should be provided with a comfortable home, and taught habits of cleanliness, and be kindly treated?

While, however, little can be accomplished for the worst cases of idiocy, it has now been demonstrated that many are capable of considerable improvement—to what extent will appear as we proceed with our story of a visit, paid in April last, to the great National Asylum at Earls-

wood, near Redhill, and of visits subsequently paid to the Larbert Asylum, near Falkirk, and the Baldovan Asylum, near Dundee, in Scotland.

But before conducting our readers through these institutions, it may be useful to give a short history of the various efforts which have hitherto been made to ameliorate the condition of the imbecile.

France appears to deserve the credit of the first educational experiments on idiocy. In the beginning of this century some attempts were made in Paris to do something for this class. Itard experimentalised on a single idiot. He was followed by Mr. Edward Seguin, who by his writings and his example enlisted the active co-operation of others. M. Ferrus, chief physician of the asylum of the Bicêtre, organized in 1828 a school for his fatuous patients, where they were taught habits of order and industry, and instructed in reading, writing, arithmetic, and gymnastics. Much skill and perseverance marked his efforts, and striking improvement was manifested in his pupils. He wrote a valuable work upon the subject; and after a visit of inspection, Dr. Conolly, of London, bore testimony to his success, stating that it was difficult to avoid falling into the language of enthusiasm on beholding such an apparent miracle. Dr. Voisin established another school in 1839, and Dr. Leuret and Mr. Vallée lent their powerful aid to the work.

In Great Britain public attention was early directed to this subject by Dr. Poole, of Aberdeen, who advocated the expediency of subjecting idiotic children to medical treatment and educational training. From his "Treatise on Education," which appeared in the *Encyclopædia Edinensis*, in 1819, and which was subsequently published in a separate volume, we make the following extract:—

"Where there are many manifest indications of imbecility it is recommended to have recourse to medical skill, for the purpose of putting into practice every means calculated to invigorate the constitution. Few persons, perhaps, are aware of the different effects produced on the state of both the intellectual and moral powers by peculiarities in diet and regimen. It is surely obvious, then,

that there is ground for employing medical advice in cases of general imbecility presented in early life ; and there cannot be a doubt that cases of this kind, which are allowed, by despair, to become confirmed and deteriorated might have been relieved by professional interference. In addition to the employment of medical aid, it is of the utmost consequence to proportion the mental exercise to the mental strength. This may be so little as to render every sort of study absolutely improper, and every employment of the senses, beyond a certain degree, injurious. In that the individual must be treated at first much as a plant, and that a sickly one, with simple nourishment and exposure to good air. The next step is that of mere animal life, as characterized by sensations and perceptions, which will require suitable exertion. The manifestation of the intellectual or moral powers is an advancement of a still more promising nature, and may be hailed as the basis of some moderate endeavours towards ordinary education."

Travellers in Switzerland are familiar with the poor 'cretin.' It is stated that in the Canton of the Valais one in twenty-five of the population is a cretin, in the Canton of Vaud one in twenty-seven. Their appearance is most loathsome, and is a sad drawback to the pleasure of a visit to their beautiful land. It has been well said, "If you wish to hear God's voice go to Niagara ; if you wish to see His hand go to Switzerland." But even to these the hand of charity has been extended ; and many travellers in that country have borne testimony to the devotedness of Dr. Guggenbühl, who established in 1839 an institution on the Abendberg, near Interlachen, for the cure of cretinism. The first published account of his efforts was written by the late Dr. William Twining.

But although foreign countries led the way in this important movement, England, as usual, soon outstripped them all, not only in the magnitude of her institutions, but also in the scientific knowledge brought to bear upon the subject.

The first attempt to train idiot children was on a very small scale, and was made by the Misses White, who

opened a small asylum at Bath in 1846. Commencing with but four pupils, the number reached fifteen by the end of 1848. This institution is now carried on at 35, Belvedere, Bath, and accommodates twenty-four pupils.

But the most important movement in favour of the idiot was originated by Mrs. Plumbe, who enlisted the sympathy of her minister, the late Rev. Dr. Andrew Reed, of Hackney, a well known philanthropist. He organized a committee, and established in 1848 an asylum for the imbecile in an old mansion at Highgate, called Park-house, large enough to accommodate seventy-five pupils.

In the first week the committee admitted twenty-seven children, partly by election and partly upon payment, and a motley group they must have presented. Some had defective sight, most had defective or no utterance, many were lame in limb or muscle, and all were of a weak and perverted mind. Many had been spoiled, others neglected, and not a few ill used. Some were clamorous and rebellious, some sullen and perverse, and some unconscious and inert. Several were screaming at the top of their voice, others making constant and involuntary noises from nervous irritation, and a few terrified at scorn and ill-treatment, hid themselves in a corner from the face of man as from the face of an enemy. Windows were smashed, wainscoting broken, boundaries defied, and the spirit of mischief and disobedience prevailed. It seemed as though nothing less than a prison would meet the wants of such a family. Many who witnessed the scene retired from it in disgust, and others in despair.

Nevertheless the experiment was successful. In their report of 1850, the managers were enabled to write thus:—

“It is their privilege to speak of efforts partially realized, and in some instances of a marked and delightful character. It has been their happiness to observe the eye that had no useful sight begin to see; the ear to relish sweet sounds; the tongue that was dumb to articulate the language of men, and the limb that was crippled or inert put forth to useful and active service. Bad habits have been overcome; power has been created for the care of the person; the body has been brought under

the control of the will, and both have become subject to a mild authority. The power of imitation has been fostered ; music and drawing are beginning to find a place in the school : reading, writing, and even figures, which are the severest test to the weak mind, are now claiming general attention. And above all the moral affections have been exercised, and the effects are found in the harmony of the family, and the greater readiness of the mind to recognise and worship an invisible and gracious Presence. There is now order, obedience to authority, classification, improvement, and cheerful occupation. Every hour has its duties, and these duties are steadily fulfilled. Windows are now safe, boundaries are observed without walls, and doors are safe without locks. The desire now is not to get away but to stay. They are essentially a happy family. And all this is secured without the aid of correction or coercion. The principle which rules in the house is love, charity, divine charity."

In 1850 Sir S. Morton Peto granted upon extremely liberal terms to the committee, as a supplementary institution, a large house near Colchester, called Essex Hall, which was calculated to accommodate 150 pupils. To this establishment two other houses were added, where forty-five inmates were received, making a total of 195 cases located at Colchester.

Essex Hall is a large building in the Italian style, situated near the Colchester Station of the Great Eastern Railway. It was originally a large railway hotel, and contains forty-six lofty apartments. It is surrounded by six acres of land, laid out in flower grounds, shrubberies, and gardens, affording ample space for healthful exercise. A separate building has been erected on the lawn, at a cost of £700, fitted for the accommodation of twenty of the more afflicted cases. In the grounds there is a gymnasium, and pheasant-house containing some gold and silver pheasants, the pupils taking especial pleasure in tending dumb animals.

The success of the undertaking and the manifest importance of amalgamating the families at Highgate and Colchester, for the purpose of concentrating effort, induced the

committee to undertake the foundation of a national asylum on an extended scale. The estate of Earlswood, near Redhill, on the Brighton Railway, being for sale by auction, was deemed an eligible site; but the Board were outbid by the late Judge Talfourd, who valued it highly from old associations. As soon, however, as the large-hearted Judge heard that the property was required for the idiot children, he generously relinquished his purchase in their favour. A large and magnificent structure has been erected on the estate at a cost approaching £30,000, the first stone having been laid in July, 1853, by the late Prince Consort, by whom also it was opened in 1855.

Subsequently the old asylum at Essex Hall was reopened as a local institution for the eastern counties, and continued under the zealous superintendence of Mr. W. Millard, who has recently published an interesting account* of this asylum, from which I make the following extracts, showing its present condition:—

“After the cases have been received from the July election, 1864, there will be ninety-nine pupils in the Eastern Counties Asylum; about one-third upon payment, and the remainder by the votes of subscribers. The health of the children has been on the whole remarkably good. By the contributions of a few friends, many of the pupils are favoured with an annual excursion to Walton-on-the-Naze, and the capable pupils are treated every year with a trip to the Crystal Palace. Live animals are kept as a source of enjoyment for the patients, and various modes of amusement are provided. During the summer cricketing is much enjoyed, and in the winter musical performances, magic lantern entertainments, and suitable readings are carried on with beneficial effect. The pupils are taught the manufacture of cocoa-nut fibre matting, tailoring, gardening, and household work. Dr. Duncan’s drill and speaking lessons are used with advantage, and the school exercises are adapted to the feeble capacities of the pupils. The matron and assistant master have been connected with

* “The Idiot and his Helpers: A brief History of the Essex Hall, Earlswood, and other Asylums for the Idiot and Imbecile.” By W. Millard. London: Simpkins. 1864. Price One Shilling.

the work for about fourteen years. Whilst happy in the work themselves, they naturally desire to promote the happiness of the inmates, and this is done so successfully, that though, by way of a change and to keep up relative ties, several of the pupils go home occasionally for a holiday, they almost, without exception, have an equal wish to return to the institution. One of the adult cases who is here upon payment, has often said, 'Break my heart to leave here.' Another, when asked how he is, replies 'Happy,' sometimes adding, 'Happy Essex Hall.' A young man who was useless at home, prone to violence when provoked, and who, when he first came, was thought to be insane, has been trained to habits of industry and good behaviour. At the end of two years he was allowed to see his friends, and whilst at home the clergyman wrote the following satisfactory letter:—'We all rejoice to see William very much improved. I cannot give him too high a character so far as his conduct here is concerned. William worked nine hours a day for the last four days by his father's side, and we hope that when he returns home he will be able to earn his living.' The youth continues to make progress, and though likely to be able to earn his livelihood, he will need the guidance of his friends as to spending it. Yet how great the boon conferred in the family by placing him at Essex Hall! He came idle and passionate, he has become industrious and well-behaved; and instead of being a burden and hindrance to his parents, he will return to be a help and to assist materially in earning money for their maintenance. The gratitude of the pupils is sometimes very touching, and their susceptibility to religious impressions is marked and striking. Upon one occasion, a boy, hearing the name of God mentioned, said, 'I like Him.' At another time he looked up at the moon, which was shining brightly, and said, 'How kind of God to hang out the moon to give us light; I'll tell him so when I get to heaven.' On a Sunday afternoon the attendant overheard the following conversation of the boys. One boy said, 'Will there be any beds in heaven?' Another gave the beautiful reply,—'No, Freddy, we shan't want to go to sleep there;' adding, 'we

shall have harps to play and crowns upon our heads.' The same lad having been told that God hears prayer, at once replied, 'Yes, and answers too.' He was heard one night praying by his bedside in the following beautiful manner:— 'Lord, bless my father and my mother, bless my sisters and my brothers, make my father's house a house of prayer: incline them to love and serve thee. I ask this for my Lord and Saviour's sake. Amen.' Some of the pupils attend church in the morning and in the afternoon, and a special service is held at home in the evening. At one of the Sabbath evening services, when the love of Jesus was referred to, one afflicted boy, who could neither speak nor walk, shouted out with such delight, that the proceedings were temporarily disturbed."

The first practical effort made for the imbecile in Scotland was set on foot by Sir John and Lady Jane Ogilvy, who erected, at their own expense, an asylum for the treatment of idiot and imbecile children, on their estate at Baldovan, near Dundee. It was opened in 1854, and has accommodation for forty patients. No children are admitted over thirteen years of age, and the most improvable are preferred. All the patients pay for their board and training sums varying from £13 10s. 0d. per annum each, according to age and accommodation required. The low charges made for most of the patients are insufficient to defray their cost; the deficit is made up by voluntary subscriptions. This asylum is under the supervision of the Board of Lunacy for Scotland.

The only other Scotch institution is the Asylum for Imbeciles at Larbert, near Falkirk, which owes its origin to the self-denying labours of Dr. and Mrs. David Brodie. It was first opened in the year 1855, in Gayfield-square, Edinburgh, where it was continued for four years, when it was removed to a more suitable house at Colinton Bank, in the suburbs of that city.

Subsequently the committee feued nine acres near the Larbert Station of the Scottish Central Railway, on which they commenced, in 1861, the erection of an institution calculated to accommodate 200 children.

The most recent movement in favour of the idiot is the

foundation of a Western Counties Asylum for idiots, under the auspices of the Earl of Devon. A house, with two acres of land, at Starcross, near Exeter, has been fitted up for the reception of twenty-one pupils, and will be shortly opened. Cases will be admitted by election and on payment.

In America the duty of educating imbecile children has been more fully recognised than in any other country. Throughout the United States, and especially in the New England States, not only is every child legally entitled to education, but even to the feeble-minded is conceded a right to suitable training. For example, in the preamble to the Act of the Legislature of Ohio, incorporating the Ohio State Asylum for the Education of Idiotic and Imbecile Youth, the arguments in their favour are thus forcibly and happily expressed:—"Whereas the State has recognised the education of its youth as a duty incumbent upon the State, and has provided for those who are not susceptible of improvement in common schools, modes of instruction adapted to their wants and capabilities; and whereas it appears, by the report of the Secretary of State, that there are a large number of idiotic youth resident within its borders, who are incapable of improvement in ordinary or private schools, who are a burden to their friends and to the community, objects of commiseration, degraded and helpless; and whereas experience has satisfactorily demonstrated that, under the system of instruction adopted in schools for idiots in other States, and in Europe, these youths may be elevated, their habits corrected, their health and morals greatly improved, and they be enabled to obtain their own support: now, therefore, in the discharge of the duty of the State to educate its weak and helpless children, as well as the gifted and the strong, and to elevate a hitherto neglected class: Be it enacted," &c.

When will the hard reasoning of our political economists be thus leavened with true wisdom?

The oldest establishment in the States is the Massachusetts School for Idiotic and Feeble-minded Youth, founded in the year 1847. It is gratuitously superintended by the distinguished philanthropist, Dr. Howe, of Boston, the widely-known instructor of Laura Bridgman. The State

Legislature grants annually 9,000 dollars to be devoted to teaching and training indigent idiotic children belonging to the commonwealth; and has also granted 25,000 dollars towards the purchase of ground and the erection of school buildings. There are now seventy pupils under training in this school.

The New York State Asylum for Idiots is located within a mile of the city of Syracuse, in the north-west part of the State. It has been in operation for thirteen years, and contains 135 pupils. About 80 acres of land are attached to the institution, upon which forty of the boys are employed. It is presided over by Dr. Wilbur, and is in most effective working order. In 1863 seven of the pupils completed the term of their education. Three of them entered on self-supporting engagements, and one was passed by the Regimental Surgeon as competent to serve as a Volunteer.

The Pennsylvania Training School for Feeble-minded Children was established in 1853. It is situated at Media, within twelve miles of Philadelphia. There are about 130 children in the school, but the buildings are designed to accommodate 150. The buildings are erected on the southern slope of a hill of considerable elevation, and command views of an extensive and varied landscape, on the moral effects of which Dr. Parrish, the Superintendent, lays very great weight. There is a farm of fifty acres, and ten acres of woodland, embosomed in which is a small cemetery, the resting-place of a few little slumberers.

The Legislatures of Connecticut, Rhode Island, New Jersey, Delaware, Kentucky, and Indiana have also made grants for the training of their feeble-minded poor.

It is highly creditable to our transatlantic brethren, that the unhappy contest in which they are engaged has not arrested the prosecution of this good work, nor has the bitter feeling of enmity of the North against the South crushed all charitable feelings. On the contrary, we learn from the report of the Pennsylvania Training School, that ten children from the southern states, left on their hands without the ordinary remittances for their maintenance, have been retained and nurtured with the usual care; and

in order that this should be done without embarrassment to other parts of the work, the physician, officers, and teachers voluntarily and cheerfully agreed to suspend the payment of one-half of their salaries until the Southern claims could be collected, and to take the risk of their collection.

In Germany, Bavaria, Denmark, and Prussia, the care of the imbecile has likewise been recognised as a public duty.

Such is a rapid summary of the various efforts already made on behalf of the idiot and imbecile.

I shall now proceed to give a more detailed description of the institutions I have inspected, commencing with the National Asylum at Earlswood, which I visited last spring, in company with Mr. Jonathan Pim and Surgeon Wharton, Medical Inspector of Lunatics under the Court of Chancery. Mr. Pim has for some time been interested in this subject, and is the author of a valuable paper "On the necessity of a State provision for the Education of the Deaf and Dumb, the Blind and the Imbecile," read before the Statistical and Social Inquiry Society of Dublin, in January last.

Earlswood is delightfully situated about a mile and a-half from the Redhill Station of the London and Brighton Railway, bordering on the grounds of the Philanthropic Society. On approaching the institution, we were surprised to see an extensive pile of building, handsomely ornamented, and bearing more the appearance of a palatial residence than an asylum. On first thoughts it may appear a mistake to erect so grand and imposing a structure for such a purpose; but, on reflection, the majority will, I think, come to the conclusion that beauty has its effects in the education of the imbecile, and that the additional cost of a handsome design over a plain one is well expended. Moreover, we found on inquiry that the cost of the structure per head was less than is usual for pauper lunatic asylums in England. The style is composite, between English and Italian, with a handsome central tower, and another on each wing. There is a gate-lodge at entrance, and a fine carriage drive to the building, which is immediately surrounded by beautifully laid out parterres.

The building consists of two wings, one for boys, the other for girls. The number of pupils at present at Earlswood is 400, viz., 278 boys and 122 girls.

We entered a lofty and spacious hall, on the left of which is a small reception-room for visitors, where may be seen specimens of the work of the inmates—mats, fancy work, baskets, drawings—all on sale. These various articles demonstrate the marvellous improvement of which they are capable.

Dr. Down, the able and intelligent Superintendent, gave up nearly the whole of the day in order to show us the various departments of the institution, and explained with patience the different modes of teaching. What I saw and heard I shall now endeavour to narrate, and in my observations shall refer to the writings of the Rev. Edwin Sidney, by whose able exertions the cause of the idiot has been greatly furthered. He has on numerous occasions advocated their interests on the platform and in the press, and directed the attention of many distinguished philanthropists to their condition.

Doctor Down first conducted us to the dormitories, which are spacious, clean, and well ventilated, and remarkably free from the closeness so generally observable in public institutions. Twenty of the improved pupils assist in making the beds and keeping the rooms clean. Near the dormitories is the general wardrobe, a room surrounded by shelves, divided into compartments, each belonging to one pupil, in which the clothes are neatly arranged. There is no particular costume adopted. Pupils appointed to that duty, take the clothes in baskets labelled with the owners' names, to their respective bedrooms. All the clothes of both boys and girls are made in the house. In this the sewing-machine gives most effectual help.

The baths are white-tiled, and there is an abundance of hot and cold water all through the house. Under each bed is a basket, made by the pupils, for holding their clothes. The windows command expansive views, which conduce to the health and happiness of the inmates.

We were next pointed out the private rooms of the pay-patients.

There are three classes of pay-patients. The children of wealthy persons, who pay 150 guineas a-year for their board, attendance, and instruction. The children of the gentry, who can only afford 100 guineas a-year; and thirdly, children whose parents are in limited circumstances, and cannot give more than 50 guineas a-year.

Each one of the first class has a small sitting-room and bed-room, furnished with great neatness, and has the advantage of a special attendant to himself.

All the second class patients dine together, and every six of them have private bed-rooms; while the third class live altogether with the free admissions.

The dining-rooms of the pay-patients are comfortable, well-furnished apartments. The table is supplied with a neat china dinner service. They have also sideboards, equipped as is usual in the houses of the gentry, so that the patients may be taught to live as persons in their rank of life should do in their homes.

We were then conducted to the long corridors, from which the various apartments open. These passages are ornamented with beautiful engravings, presented by friends, and framed by the pupils themselves, with a few drawings, the work of another pupil. From the ceilings are suspended cages of canaries and other birds, and glass globes of gold and silver fish; the windows being ornamented with glass cases of ferns, refreshed with running water.

From the corridor we looked down upon the dining-hall: here we saw over 200 pupils seated at tables, the boys on one side, the girls on the other. On this our first sight of the idiots, we were greatly surprised to see them behaving with perfect propriety. Order reigned throughout. The tables were covered with neat white cloths, and each pupil had a knife and fork, and a mug. On a signal given they all rose, and grace was sung with decorum. The effect of the voices of so many imbeciles joining in this act of devotion was very impressive.

Immediately the dinner was wheeled in on tiers of shelves from a hot closet in the kitchen and quickly distributed. It had been previously served out on plates—meat, greens, and potatoes. In five minutes the whole

room was supplied, and the pupils were soon busily at work; but without any greediness or slovenly feeding. This sight alone evidenced the marvellous improvement which training had made in their habits. Most of those we now saw so well conducted at table knew not how to hold a knife and fork when they were admitted. Some had been in the habit of feeding themselves with their fingers, others of snatching and bolting their food like animals.

We were afterwards conducted to the kitchen, which adjoins the dining-hall. It is large and well provided with all culinary requisites. The cooks are assisted by several of the pupils, dressed as men-cooks with white aprons and linen hats, and who enjoy their employment and set about their duties with an amusing sense of their importance. These at their admission could not have been permitted near an open fire. One of them was engaged in mincing food for those who cannot masticate. He had charge of an ingenious apparatus which reduced the food to a state like that of potted meat. Another is called the historical cook, on account of his surprising memory for historical facts. He can repeat whole pages of history. We asked him several questions, nearly all of which he answered with marvellous accuracy. Amongst his replies he gave us an account of the Peloponnessian war, showing that he was intimately acquainted with its details. He mentioned its duration, date, and cause; the resources of the combatants; the gains and losses on either side; the temporary peace; the renewal of the war after the Spartan success, and the final defeat of the Athenians by Lysander.

The institution is provided with a splendid laundry, constructed on the most improved principles, and supplied with a 12-horse power engine, purchased at the International Exhibition, which performs its work most satisfactorily. Here we saw some of the lads turning the mangle with right good will. There are drying closets and ironing stoves, and every appliance for the rapid performance of washing, drying, and distribution of the clothes. Over 8,000 pieces of clothing necessary for the establishment pass through the laundry per week. A large tank, capa-

ble of holding 30,000 gallons, has been erected near the laundry to collect the rain-water from the roof of the asylum.

The workshops next engaged our attention. The first employments to which the children are put are picking cocoa nut fibre for mats, splitting rods for baskets, or preparing horse hair for mattresses. These teach them to sit quietly, to which they are naturally much disinclined. These employments also awaken their attention, and instruct them in voluntary motion; they learn to use their fingers, a first step in their education.

They are then taught in the mat shops to plait the cocoa fibre, and to make mats. In time they become adepts in making figured hearth-rugs and hall and door mats. Upwards of seventy boys are engaged as mat weavers and helpers. As they turn out of their shop more than is required for the use of the establishment, matting for corridors, or church and fancy mats may be had to order by purchasers, who can benefit the institution materially by favouring it with their orders.

One of the mat makers acts as postman to the institution, and is intrusted with the letter-bag, of which he is most proud.

Dr. Down explained to us, that according as each pupil shows a predilection for a trade, he is placed in the workshop; at first they are mere lookers-on, but after a time they say "I should like to try this," and thus they are led on.

We next visited the tailors' shop, and here we found above a dozen boys sitting crosslegged on a raised board, busy stitching away, under the superintendence of a master tailor, who cuts out and allots the work. We examined their work, and found it very creditable. All the clothes for the pupils, and the uniform for the attendants, are made in the tailors' shop. Mr. Sidney on one occasion found them in high glee over a humorous job. Mr. Punch had been brought in to have his nose and jacket repaired, preparatory to a grand performance. They set about his repairs in earnest, and soon put this capital figure of that distinguished personage into performing order. Here is also found one of the assistant cooks who had changed his

white dress, and is busy at his needle. Of this pupil it is recorded that his reception into the asylum has been a great boon to him. He is naturally amiable and gentle, though visibly imbecile, and is believed to be truly influenced by genuine piety. He has a knowledge of the Scriptures that is quite surprising, and a really enlightened appreciation of the simple truths of the gospel. The happy effects of this knowledge are marked in all he does. He is clearly one of the 'poor in spirit,' blessed indeed in his feeble condition, whose 'is the kingdom of heaven,' knowing his Saviour, and humbly obeying His precepts, and striving to follow His blessed example.

We passed on to the shoemaking department, of which the historical cook is a member. Here we saw thirteen boys at work, soleing, heeling, and repairing. They showed their work with much satisfaction, and were pleased with our commendation. All the shoemaking work of the institute is done here, and we were shown shelves of new and old boots and shoes in stock.

One amusing fellow delighted in getting hold of a newspaper, and pretending to read from it. He could not read a line, but had a faculty for inventing extraordinary accounts of imaginary events. He would make a capital "penny-a-liner." I do not recollect the comical stories he improvised for us; but remember his cunning expression after he had delivered his effusions.

In the basket-room, about a dozen of the boys were employed making plain and fancy baskets. All the ordinary baskets used in the house are made by them.

The carpenters' shop presented a busy scene. Sixteen lads were employed under a skilled artisan in making boxes. Most, if not all of the bedsteads and cupboards and ordinary furniture of the institution are made in this shop. Each of them had some article of his own manufacture to exhibit; and it was very touching to see the poor creatures showing the fruits of their labour, and to find them comforted and encouraged by our inspection, and by a few words of commendation.

The boys' school-rooms were deeply interesting, and it was marvellous to see the order kept among such unique

classes. No greater testimony can be given to the skill and patience of the teachers. Kindness is the talisman; anything approaching restraint or severity has been found to fail. When we remembered the harsh pedagogue with his cane for ever within reach, and called to mind the continual raps on the hands and knuckles which followed every miss, we wished that all teachers could see in this asylum the better effects of patient kindness.

The utmost exercise of patience is needed, with constant kindness. The little ones are taught to put beads upon a wire—to arrange beads of different colours in some definite order, in twos, threes, or fours—to build up little blocks of wood, or put together pieces of different form.

Then there are special speaking lessons: the pupils go through movements with their lips, tongue-gymnastics follow, and various sounds are taught. Sometimes a commencement is made with labial sounds, and sometimes with vowel sounds; and they are taught the names of animals by means of small models held up before the class. In order to promote improvement in speech, a cabinet of objects has been provided, the utterance of the names of which includes all the sounds of the English language. For example, if the sounds are those of the letter *t*, the teacher first holds up a *top*, which the pupils are made to name collectively, then a *letter*, and lastly a *pot*. For *d* he shows a *dog*, a *ladder*, and an object coloured *red*.

As they improve they are advanced to finger lessons, reading, writing, and arithmetic. Writing from dictation is tried with more advanced pupils. They first spell out a sentence, and then write it on the board. They are taught numbers by means of painted cubes on wires. There are also writing and drawing rooms. By means of drill exercises, ease and rapidity of movement is taught, as well as ready obedience to the word of command, and attention to time and tune. Classes are formed for teaching the process of dressing, and the children are taught to get into their clothes, and are initiated into the intricacies of the button-hole and the perplexities of the knot and tie.

The increased experience of the medical superintendent has led him to introduce various expedients for eliciting

observation, and cultivating habits of order and usefulness. The use of objects, as a means of instruction, has been extensively introduced. Cabinets fitted up with specimens of natural curiosities have been found beneficial in strengthening the power of observation. Different coloured pieces of wood, which can be joined together and form geometrical figures and letters, are found attractive, and lessons are given, in the imitation-room, on the form, colour, taste, smell, size, weight, and use of the various objects. It is also intended to have a printing press, to teach the advanced class the art of printing.

The girls' department is quite distinct from the boys. They have a skilled governess, who seems peculiarly qualified for her post; and it is no easy one. We witnessed her mode of training a room full of little ones. It was done by imitation: whatever the teacher did was duly copied. They were exercised by various motions of the arms and hands, marching round the room, singing all the time, or repeating words after the mistress. Various devices are resorted to, to instruct them; first movable letter-boards, then lessons on sheets, and so on to books. They are particularly fond of stories, and their attention is readily awakened by them. Instruction in numbers is given by objects, ball-frames, black-boards, and slates. Their play-rooms are fitted up in every manner that can conduce to their enjoyment; and as they delight in the care of dumb animals, they have a large aviary of about fifty canaries, which they tend with great care. In the first-class girls' school-room, they are principally engaged in useful work, part of the time being allotted to the making of fancy articles for sale, of which some beautiful specimens may be seen in the reception-room. They love to show their work, and were much pleased with our commendation. On the walls are hung large maps on rollers, and the room is ornamented with stands of flowers and ferns.

The progress made by very young children has been most encouraging. It is very important that the training should commence at an early age. The poor generally postpone all efforts to have their idiot children trained until they are fourteen or fifteen years of age, when they

become mischievous or dangerous, and so cause them trouble and anxiety; they are then most difficult to improve; and their habits and example are injurious to the other children.

In one room we came across a class engaged in playing at shopkeeping. This combination of amusement and instruction is intended to teach them the value and use of money, so that on their return home they may be able to purchase little necessities for their parents. One pupil stood behind a counter and acted as salesman, while the others sat on benches before him, and in turn advanced to the counter and acted as customer. The shopman had a set of drawers filled with sugar, tea, rice, nuts, marbles, &c.; and the buyer had various coins. One boy advanced and asked for a pound of sugar, which the shopkeeper proceeded to weigh. He put some into the scales and the lookers on were asked if it was the right quantity. If it was not enough he put in more, and if too much he put back a spoonful. When the accurate measure was arrived at, the purchaser proceeded to make his payment, and with the help of the master's teaching, was enabled to understand the exact amount he had to pay for the pound of sugar. The master superintended the proceedings, and taught them the value of money and of the articles sold, and imparted to them some knowledge of weights and measures, and the practical application of number. The interest and attention which the poor idiots evinced in this occupation, and the marked advancement in their powers of observation elicited our wonder.

The doctor conducted us also to the nursery for young children, which then contained forty-two pupils; of these seven were unable to walk from paralysis or other causes, twelve could not feed themselves, thirty could not dress themselves, and the remaining twelve, though able to put on their clothes, could not fasten them on or attend to their own ablutions.

The asylum also comprehends sanatoriums for boys and girls, a large proportion of whom require their food to be minced, and feed themselves with spoons, and a few require to be fed. Some can only partially dress themselves, and many cannot assist themselves at all.

We also paid a visit to the infirmary, where we saw several patients in bed. The room was remarkably clean and well ventilated. Every care and consideration appeared to be taken of the sick ones; and for the use of the convalescent patients a raised platform was erected at each window, to enable them to sit and enjoy the scenery.

The doctor informed us that there was very little sickness in the asylum; owing, no doubt, to the good air, regularity of living, and the watchfulness of the superintendents.

Curious cases occur in sickness. One pupil had never been heard to speak a word till confined to bed by a painful disorder. He was thought by all to be completely dumb. While here he exclaimed to the astonishment of those present, "Why do I suffer thus?" He then spoke of his father and mother with affection. Strong impressions sometimes elicit speech from idiots regarded as dumb; here pain did it. Anger has been known to do this. A boy considered dumb had learned to write a little on a slate, and was proud of his copy. In his absence it was rubbed out, and on his return, to the amazement of those who believed him speechless, he frowned and exclaimed, "Who rubbed it out?"

In another apartment we saw the incurable cases, for whom little can be done save to treat them with kindness and keep them from harm. These are the most unpleasant objects, and should be kept in a separate asylum. We were shown some neat and easy carriages for cripples, and informed that the other pupils take pleasure in drawing them about the grounds.

After partaking of refreshment with the worthy doctor, we were conducted through the extensive grounds of the institution, which consist of 140 acres. Nearly thirty of the pupils were engaged in farming operations, dressed in farmers' frocks and thick buskins. Some had charge of the cattle, consisting of cows, sheep, and pigs. They enjoy the outdoor work greatly, and delight in attending on the animals of the farm. One poor idiot showed us the cow-sheds, where a fine stock of cows was housed. There is also an extensive kitchen-garden, covering nearly seven acres, which fully supplies the house; and some of the lads

were allowed to have small gardens for themselves. The garden and farm are a valuable addition to the institution, they offer varied employment adapted to different intellectual grades, and afford suitable occupation for those who are not equal for indoor work. Shrubs and trees have been planted for the purpose of shade, and paths of a diversified nature have been made round the estate, affording pleasant walks for the pupils within the boundaries of the institution. Garden-seats have been made and painted by the carpenters.

Earlswood, being on so extensive a scale, admits of a perfect system of classification. On the admission of a pupil, Dr. Down endeavours to ascertain his peculiarities. He notes accurately the physical condition of the patient and his mental capacity, and gradually observes his inclination to any particular pursuit. These particulars are generally ascertained while the pupil is passing through the probationary period. Here he is brought into some sort of order, taught the use of a knife, fork, and spoon, and corrected of his filthy habits of feeding. He is then put into a class under the care of a nurse, where the example of the other children helps him on.

Even the amusements of the pupils are classified. There is a series of play-rooms in which they are placed according to their mental capacity. In these rooms various quiet games are promoted; and there is a large room on the ground-floor, where football and nine-pins may be played in wet weather. In the grounds provision is made for cricket, skittles, and swings. A capital gymnasium is provided with all kinds of gymnastic appliances, by means of which boys who could not stand, balance themselves, or grasp anything, have been taught feats of agility, and now enjoy exercises from which at first they turned with alarm.

Music bears a prominent part in their training. Most idiots are affected by it. Even the very dullest in intellect may be aroused by the aid of music. At dinner they sing the grace, led by the master, and sometimes join in chanting a psalm and in singing a hymn, and it is surprising to hear idiots singing so well together. Several

patients have been taught to play on the concertina, fife, and drum, and a few on the piano; teaching them the value of notation is, however, beyond their capacity, and is too abstract for them to realize. The servants are all taught music, so that a very respectable band is formed, the drum being played by the artist-pupil, who is among the few idiots in the asylum who can count time or play from notes. In summer this band performs once a week on the terrace, and fêtes are held at which games of agility are practised, and processions of the pupils, rendered gay by flags and banners, perform evolutions to the sound of merry music. Balloons are occasionally sent up. Private theatricals are sometimes got up for their amusement, and "Punch and Judy" is an especial favourite. Mr. Sidney witnessed its performance on one occasion in the great hall, where he found 210 pupils, and *Punch* at the further end; the frame made by the carpenters, and painted by the artist-pupil. One of the attendants, concealed by the frame, was the performer, and did the whole most humorously. The delight of the spectators was intense; and I must confess that they realized amazingly the blows inflicted on poor *Judy* by her tyrannical husband; but far more did they applaud where *Judy* in return banged him till his skull rattled again."

In winter, one evening in each week is given up to amusement, when shadow pantomime, the galanti show, "Punch and Judy," the magic lantern, the oxycalcium microscope, and the band of stringed instruments, by turns, entertain the patients.

At Christmas Dr. Down indulges them with a pantomimic concert, in which the attendants take the principal parts, but with the assistance of forty of the pupils. The costumes and scenes are executed in the house. The artist pupil paints the proscenium, and the woodwork is as well prepared in the carpenter's shop as in that of any cabinet-maker. Dr. Down writes the dialogues, and Mrs. Down designs the costumes and scenic arrangements. At the last of these charade performances, 310 pupils were present, and manifested extreme pleasure, and numbers of the neighbouring gentry attended the entertainment, and

expressed the utmost satisfaction at witnessing the delight experienced by the patients.

In order to enable the pupils to visit the Crystal Palace on the occasion of any special attraction, a savings-bank has been established for their pocket-money and presents.

The Doctor showed us a model of a man-of-war, made by an inmate. His talent for drawing was developed so considerably that some of his copies evinced great taste and ability. At the time of the Crimean war, he drew a battlefield, in which the Russians are made to run away, and only one Englishman is killed. This drawing he displayed with great zeal, exclaiming, "Russians run. One English dead—only one." Several of his drawings have been sold for a guinea each; and one of his copies of a picture by Landseer was submitted to the attention of the Queen, who was graciously pleased to accept of it, and to present him with two guineas for pocket-money. It has now a conspicuous place in the palace. He once saw the picture of a vessel on a pocket-handkerchief, and straightway set to work to construct the model of a ship; his first efforts were imperfect, but having obtained the secret of bending wood by steaming it, he constructed the marvellous ship now to be seen at Earlswood. When we saw him, he was planning a model of the *Great Eastern*, thirteen feet and a half long, but was much puzzled for space large enough to build it in. We also saw some of his drawings, which are so well executed that we were disposed to doubt his idiocy; however, on conversing with him, we found he was unmistakably a "natural."

We did not fail to observe that Dr. Down had gained the affection of the children. From a careful observation of the pupils we are enabled to testify that the law of kindness is the rule of the house. An expression of happiness was visible on the faces of the children. They appeared to be free from all fear, though they knew they must obey. The Doctor is a strict disciplinarian, and is evidently specially qualified for his duties, which are of the most arduous nature.

He has contributed a very interesting and instructive paper to the *Lancet*, on the condition of the mouth in

idiocy, the result of a careful examination of upwards of 200 cases, and has in preparation a treatise of a psychological and physiological nature, collected from his study of the mental and physical condition of the idiots of Earlswood, the largest imbecile population in the world.

As evening drew near, we were obliged to conclude our visit to this interesting and unique institution. Such another day we had never spent. It may be thought that we have exaggerated. Many who have heard the accounts of Earlswood with a credulous shake of the head, have tested their accuracy by personal inspection, and the invariable result has been to fill them with amazement and admiration, and to draw forth the exclamation—"The half was not told us." Let those who doubt, go and judge for themselves. The asylum is open daily to visitors.

The government of this Institution is vested in a board of management, appointed annually at a general meeting. All persons subscribing half-a-guinea a year, or five guineas at one time, are members, and have the right of voting at the elections. The pupils are admitted by the open election of the members.

During my last summer vacation, I took the opportunity of paying a visit to the Scotch asylums. That at Larbert, whose origin is stated at page 14, is situated on the Scottish Central Railway, within twenty minutes walk of the station.

The asylum consists of two picturesque houses, built in the Gothic style. It is intended that three similar buildings should be erected, with a large central kitchen, laundry, and other offices, so that the whole will consist of four wings and a central block. We were first shown into the drawing-room. Unfortunately, Dr. Brodie was absent from home. He had left a few days before on a tour on the continent, where he purposed to visit several asylums for the idiotic and insane; but we saw his excellent wife, Mrs. Brodie, who gave us many interesting details, and conducted us over the institution. She first showed us a photograph of a poor girl, who was born without ears, but was able to distinguish sounds slightly through her nose and mouth, and always manifested pleasure when she

heard bells ringing, which she could answer without being told to do so by her fellow-servants. She had been eight years in the asylum, and had become so improved as to be advanced to the post of housemaid, for which she receives wages, and to be intrusted with the care of Mrs. Brodie's apartments. It is a remarkable fact that many of these half-witted girls make better servants than some who have the full use of their understandings.

We were then taken over the completed wing, which is occupied chiefly by the election and reduced payment cases. In the school-room there were eight or nine boys and girls seated in charge of a nurse, the governess being absent, and were singing the hymn, "I want to be an angel." They seemed much pleased at seeing Mrs. Brodie, who spoke to them with great tenderness, and asked them to sing a verse of the hymn she had taught them the day before on the text, "Suffer little children," which they sang very nicely—Mrs. Brodie leading the hymn. Several of the children had a vacant senseless look, others showed much intelligence, but all had a strange unnatural expression of mouth. One poor girl had been born a healthy child, but was injured by a fall from a bed, and was now very helpless. All of the children seemed tractable and happy.

The dormitories are most comfortable, clean, and airy, containing from two to ten beds in each. There are several bath-rooms constructed on the newest plans. One called the spray bath, is formed by a number of perforated brass pipes, through which the water spurted like a shower all over the body. The house appliances are calculated to make the unfortunate inmates happy and contented.

A remarkable feature among these poor afflicted ones is, that kind treatment always results in overcoming the most obstinate and wayward, and in rendering them submissive and obedient. At the time of our visit the institution was in vacation, and the most intelligent of the pupils were absent at their homes; it is a pleasing tribute to the kind care and attention they receive, that they were reported as glad to return, and the friends of the children express much gratification at the improvement manifested even after a short period of training. Some write grateful letters of

thanks, others express a wish that their afflicted ones may be soon taken back, as they cannot make them as happy and comfortable at home as at "school."

We were next conducted over the central block, which contains Dr. Brodie's apartments, besides rooms furnished for the accommodation of patients of the higher classes, who pay for special apartments and attendants for their afflicted children. In the first room were two little boys, of about twelve years of age; they could neither walk nor talk, and seemed quite helpless, and were not able even to feed themselves. They had a nurse in constant attendance on them. In the next room was a most interesting little boy of nine years of age; he was recovering from a severe fit of epilepsy, to which he is liable every six weeks. He has quite a passion for books, though he can read but little. He was turning over the pages and examining the pictures, and constantly asking for more books. His photographic album was handed to him, and he could tell at once all the likenesses of the different members of his family; when he came to his own likeness, he said it was Georgy; but when asked where was the real Georgy, immediately he was puzzled, and could not answer. Mrs. Brodie asked him who had made him better; he replied, "Dr. Brodie." "But," said she, "who helped Dr. Brodie?" he answered, "Mr. Reid" (his tutor). Mrs. Brodie then explained to him that it was God, Dr. Brodie's Father and his Father. One little boy, who could not walk or speak, always delighted in anything bright. One evening as the sun was setting, like a ball of fire, Mrs. Brodie took it as a lesson, and pointing to the glorious object, told him that God was light, and was the maker of the sun. A gleam of new light flashed across his countenance, such as she had never seen before; and that night Mrs. Brodie repeated for him a short prayer before going to sleep, and since then nothing will induce him to go to sleep without his prayer to God. The subject of one of the pictures in the drawing-room is "Christ blessing little children." Mrs. Brodie told us that when this dear child was naughty she had only to bring him to look at this picture, and point out the bright kind face of Jesus, and the light shining on the faces of

the little ones, telling him that his face looked dark when naughty, and light and bright like Jesus when good.

We also visited the Baldovan Asylum, near Dundee. It is a pretty building, situate in pleasant fields, having been erected by Lady Jane Ogilvy, on her estate. The inscription round the entrance door is as follows—"God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise." On approaching the house we were accosted by one of the imbecile girls, who acts as servant. She shook hands with us, and seemed very friendly disposed. Mr. Douglass, the superintendent, conducted us through the house, which then contained twenty-six patients. Its internal arrangements are by no means so complete as at Larbert, and the dormitories were not so clean or well ventilated. In the school-room we found seven or eight boys and girls singing a hymn, accompanied by a small harmonium. One of the boys read tolerably, but all of them looked foolish and had a vacant stare.

The next room we entered was devoted to hopeless cases, of which there were eight or nine—most pitiable and wretched objects. It is a remarkable fact that some of the "pure idiots" are quite insensible to feeling or pain. A pin might be run into their flesh without their feeling it. Mr. Dickens alludes to the case of a former pupil at the asylum at Highgate, who thrust a buckle through his tongue, felt no pain or inconvenience, but was as vain of the ornament as a woman of Polynesia would be of a nose ring; but even in this state they are capable of some improvement. In the tailors'-room were five or six boys sitting crosslegged at work. One of them had nearly finished a pair of trowsers, remarkably neatly worked. He could not speak, but seemed much pleased at being commended. Others were merely making trial of their needles. One of them, on being asked if he could read, shook his head; but when asked if he liked to hear the Bible and to be told about Jesus, he smiled and looked pleased.

The superintendent then took us to his office, where he had two of his best pupils in to read to us, which they accomplished very tolerably.

The most noteworthy feature, in regard to this afflicted

class, and that one which, I confess, chiefly induces me to take an active interest in their improvement, is their susceptibility to religious impressions. All their teachers, not only in this country, but also in America, bear testimony to the fact that the simple truths of the Gospel find a ready response in their hearts. Does not this encourage us to spare no effort in training their minds, and bringing them within reach of divine truth?

The Rev. Edwin Sidney, whom we have before quoted, frequently alludes to this trait; and we quite concur with him in the opinion that the training of the idiot owes much of its success to keeping this constantly in view, and to the touching and simple lessons of the Gospel most anxiously imparted to those who are enabled to receive instruction, which they seem to remember with more interest than anything else. He narrates several anecdotes bearing on this subject, from which we select the following. One boy in passing through the corn fields when they were ripening was heard to say, "The fields stand so thick with corn that they laugh and sing;" and also, at the opening of a new year, remarked of his own accord, "I want this year to be holier and holier, and better and better; I want to give God all my heart, and all my love." Another little fellow whose gentleness and patience in sickness were indicated in every look, when asked what made him so comfortable, and in whom he trusted, replied quietly, but with evident emotion, "My Saviour." "What did he do for you?"—"Died for me," was his answer. "Why did he die for you?"—"For my sins, that I may go to heaven." All this was said with a simplicity of manner which it was a profitable lesson to witness, and showed what a gracious compensation God had given him for the defects of his bodily powers and mental abilities, and the illness which was wasting his feeble constitution.

At divine service the conduct of the improved idiots is exemplary; and they are reported to attend to it with apparent reverence and devotion, and even to remember and talk of what they hear.

Mr. Sidney, who has assisted more than once at the hour of prayer, testifies to their attention and decorum.

He says:—"The slightest undue attitude or gesture on the part of the younger children is voluntarily repressed by the others, who are further advanced, by a shake of the head, or a movement of the hand. In being questioned on the simple truths of the Gospel, their answers have often surprised me; and it is certain that under its influence lying idiots have become truthful, and pilferers honest, nor does the impression leave them when they quit the asylum."

The late Joseph John Gurney, of Norwich, published the following lines, as written by an idiot:—

"Could we with ink the ocean fill—
Were the whole earth of parchment made—
Were every single stick a quill,
And every man a scribe by trade—
To write the love of God above
Would drain the ocean dry;
Nor could the scroll contain the whole
If stretched from sky to sky."

In reply then to the question, what can be done for the idiot? we appeal to the foregoing accounts as satisfactory demonstration that

Bad habits have been corrected;
The senses have been educated;
To many who could not articulate, the faculty of speech has been imparted;
The muscular and physical powers have been improved.
Some have been trained to industrial pursuits, so as to be able to earn a livelihood;
The intellect has been developed;
The moral feelings have been aroused;
And, above all, the veil which bedimmed the soul has been rendered transparent, so that the light of truth has illuminated the darkened understanding of the poor idiot.

And if it cannot be gainsayed that the condition of the idiot and imbecile can be thus improved, is not our duty plain?

But what shall we answer for our past neglect? Verily we are guilty in this matter.

The future, however, is before us. Shall we not re-

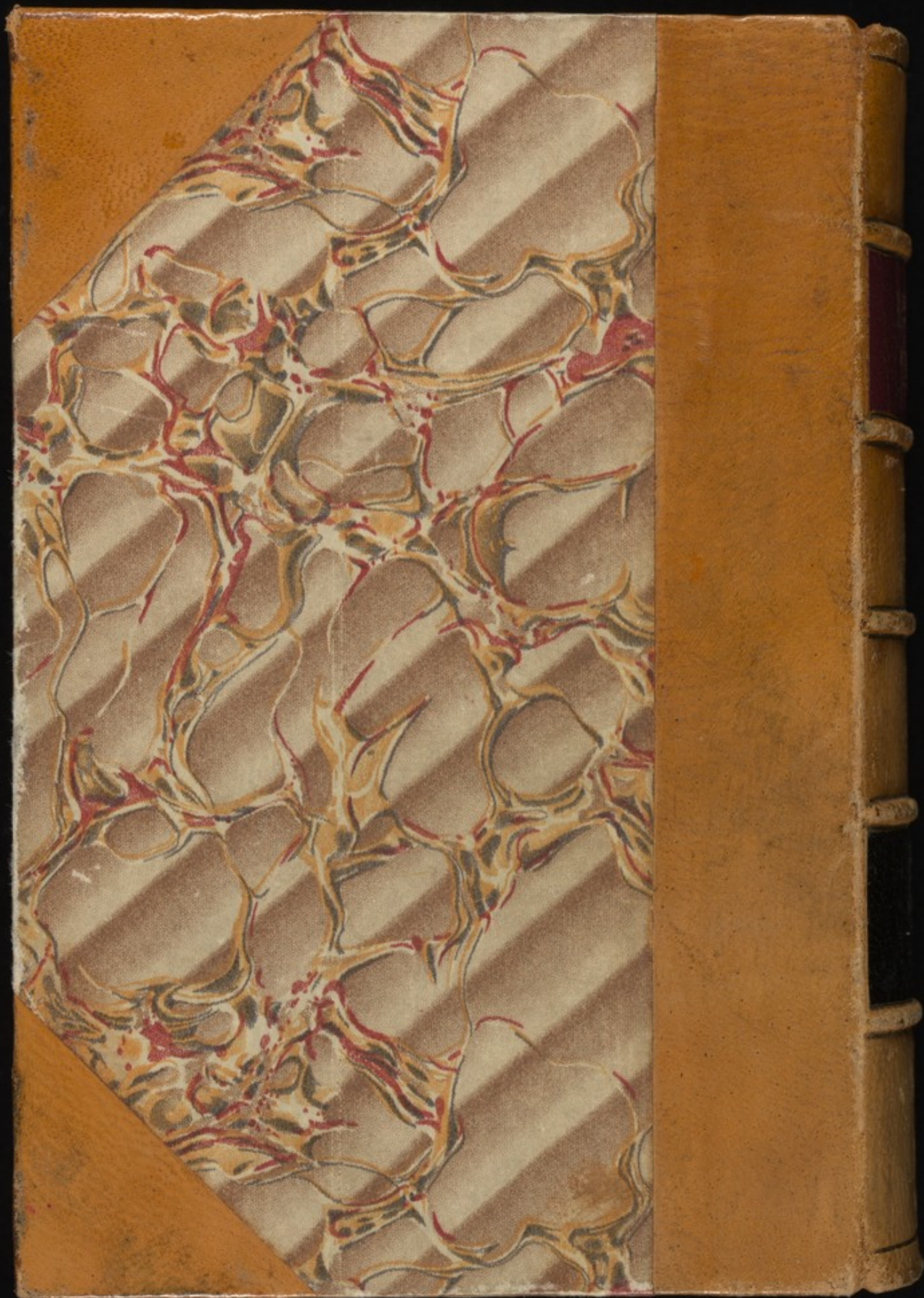
deem the time, and gird up our loins to make up for past deficiency by a strenuous effort on behalf of this neglected class?

There are three courses open for adoption :—

I. The foundation of a general institution for the reception of all degrees of idiocy, from the hopeless to the most improvable.

II. The opening of an asylum for the pure idiots, who are not susceptible of much improvement, but who can be housed, cared for, and cured of bad habits.

III. The establishment of a training school for the improvable cases, where, as in the asylums of which I have attempted a description, they may be trained to habits of usefulness, rendered able to earn a livelihood, and be taught the way of salvation.



MEDICAL
TRACTS

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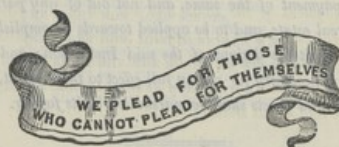
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THE
ASYLUM FOR IDIOTS.

INSTITUTED OCTOBER 27, 1847.

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