

**Crétins and idiots : a short account of the progress of the institutions for their relief and cure.**

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A

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FOR

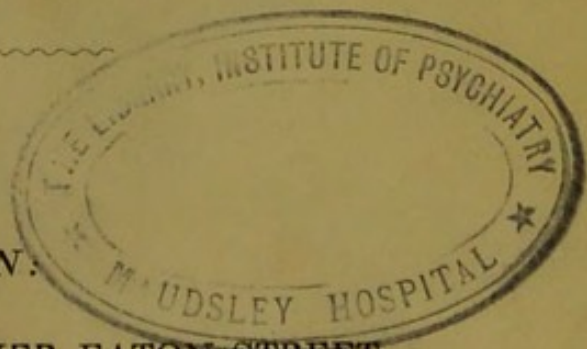
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LONDON:

W. A. WIGHTON, 17, LOWER EATON STREET,  
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[PRICE ONE SHILLING.]



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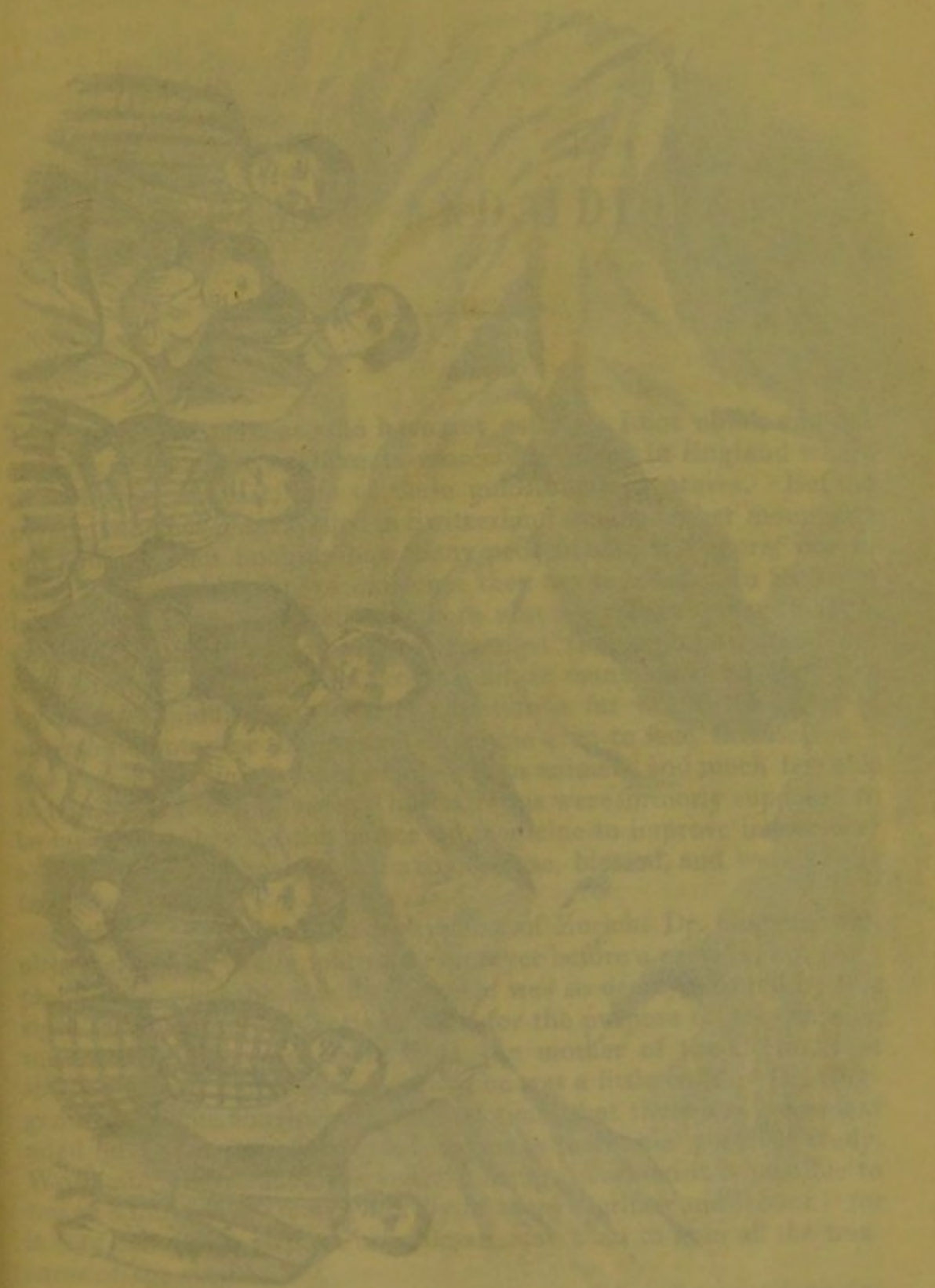


*F. Pappendorf*





*D. Guggenbühl*



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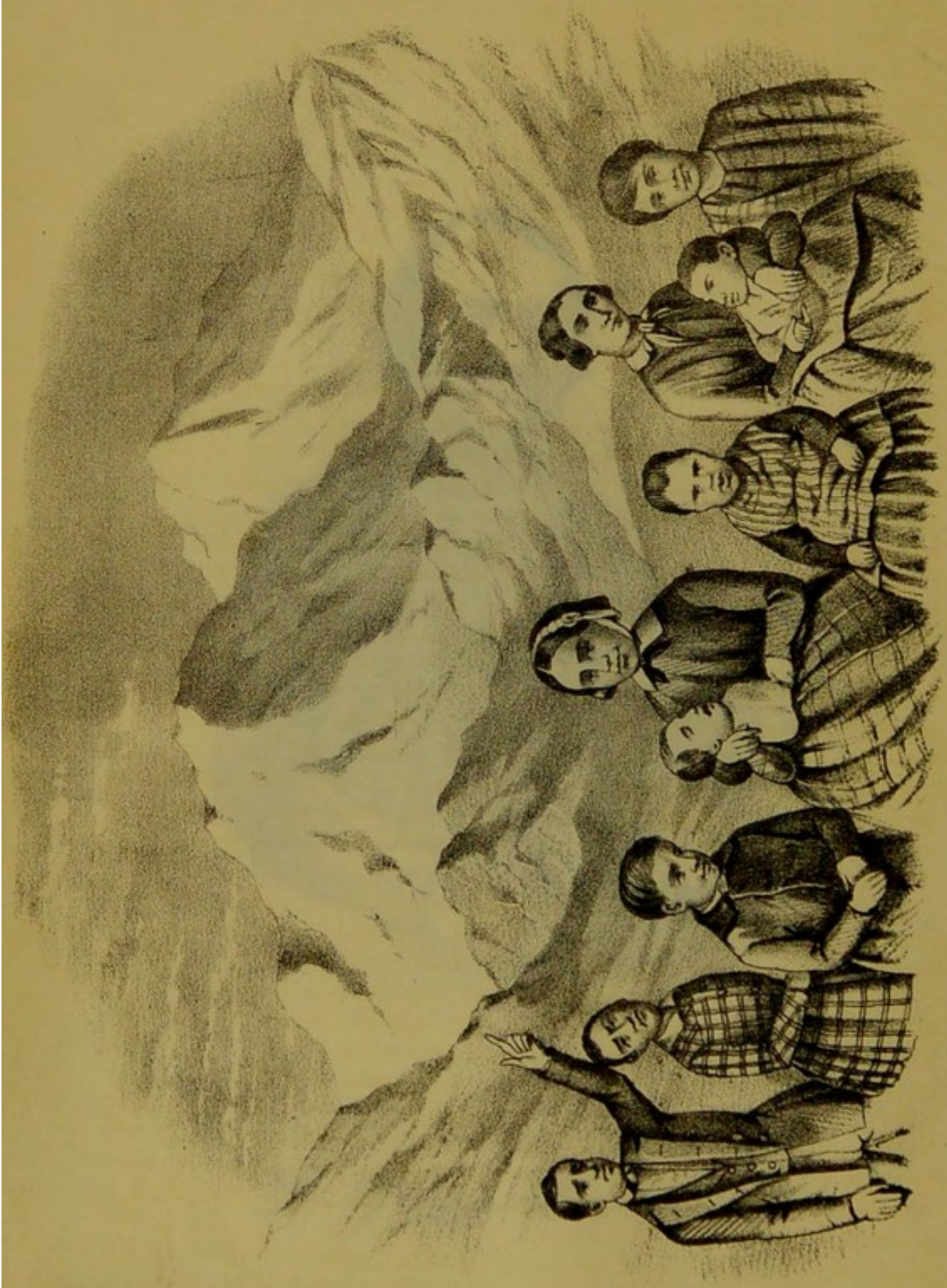
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## CRÉTINS AND IDIOTS.

THERE are few persons who have not seen an Idiot child, and felt sadness at the sight. There is scarcely a village in England where there is not, at least, one of these unfortunate créatures. But no person, who has not travelled in Switzerland or some other mountainous country, can imagine how many poor Idiots exist there, nor to what a lamentable state of existence they are reduced. In Switzerland they are called Crétins; there are several in every village, situated in the low, hot valleys, amongst the mountains, and not only Crétin children, but old people; for, in many instances, they live to be past middle age. Their condition is far worse than that of common Idiots, for they are often unable even to feed themselves—and are, in fact, much more helpless than animals, and much less able to take care of themselves. These Crétins were formerly supposed to be incurable—beyond the power of medicine to improve in any way—but they were considered, in some sense, blessed, and were kindly treated.

In the year 1839, a young physician of Zurich, Dr. Guggenbühl, observed a poor Crétin muttering a prayer before a crucifix, not comprehending what he was doing. He was so deeply affected by this sight that he entered a cottage near, for the purpose of ascertaining some particulars; and learnt from the mother of the Crétin, that she had taught him the prayer when he was a little child. Dr. Guggenbühl became convinced, from that time, that there was a dormant mind in Crétins, and resolved to make them his peculiar study. Writing to a friend, he observed, “a being, in whom it is possible to waken a thought of God, is worthy of every sacrifice and labour; for it is of more value to save one human soul, than to gain all the treasures of the world!”

In order to examine further into their condition, he went to reside for two years in the valley of Cleinthal, in the Canton Glarus, where Crétins abound. After some attempts to improve them, he was firmly convinced of the possibility of relief, if not of cure—and decided to



renounce all other medical practice, and devote his whole life and energy to the Crétins. He made known his intention to several scientific and patriotic men, who sanctioned the plan, and encouraged him to commence the arduous undertaking. M. Fellenberg, of Hofwyl, invited him to come and discuss the subject, as well as that of practical education in general, at his well-known establishment near Berne. "Your generous plan of founding an institution for the cure of Crétinism has interested me much; it is a work of love, which, on being accomplished, cannot fail to be blessed."

When the inhabitants of Cleinthal learnt the intended departure of their kind physician, there was a general lamentation,—the poor felt they were losing a true friend. "If," he said to them, "my destination were simply to practise medicine, I would not change my residence amongst you for a king's court; but God has assigned to me another career, and I must obey his call." He soon afterwards explained his intentions and ideas to the Society of Natural History, in a treatise called "Christianity and Humanity in regard to Crétinism, in Switzerland." The Society acknowledged the high importance of the subject, and regarded it as of the greatest interest to humanity.

On seeking an elevated spot on the Alps, suitable for the formation of an hospital, Dr. Guggenbühl was immediately led to decide on the peculiarly favourable portion of the Abendberg above Interlaken, where the celebrated agriculturist, Kasthofer, had already made valuable experiments in cultivation. For the prospect of ameliorating the condition of the unfortunate Crétins, M. Kasthofer cheerfully resigned his hill to Dr. Guggenbühl, who immediately purchased it. It was singularly adapted to the purpose—sheltered by mountains from cold winds, and affording in front a beautiful view of the mountain summits towards the west—and being 3000 feet above the level of the sea, was beyond the elevation at which Crétinism exists. We here meet with one of those remarkable instances, which prove how often noble and benevolent plans mutually aid each other. An official report, made by the Head of the Department of the canton of Berne, in the spring of 1842, declared that "concerning the locality, the Abendberg offers certainly, all that can be required for an establishment of this kind:" it would be impossible to find throughout the whole Alpine country a situation more favourable. In the midst of the chain of the High Alps, amidst the grand phenomena of nature, which even on the most insensible of men, cannot fail to make an impression. The Institution stands 3000 feet above the sea, overlooking one of the most beautiful valleys of Switzerland, between the lakes of Thun and Brientz, commanding a prospect of the loftiest mountains of the Oberland. It is well open to the sun, and the pure air of the Alps: the water flows through the calcareous rocks, and affords a perennial supply. Whilst the valley of Interlaken is enveloped in cloud and mist, the Abendberg is frequently bright in the rays of the sun—and when fever and sickness prevail in the valley, the Abendberg remains



free. The twelve children of the establishment, who were in a very degraded state, physically and intellectually, and who bore every sign of Crétinism, are already (1842,) in the way of amelioration, and some not far from cure. The experience of this short period of two years shows that the attempts of Dr. Guggenbühl have had a happy success towards the relief and cure of Crétinism, and afford the best hopes. We firmly believe, that in future years, these establishments will be considered as necessary as those for the blind and the deaf and dumb.

In September, 1842, Dr. William Twining, a young physician of London, visited Interlaken, and was then induced by some friends resident there to ascend the Abendberg. The following account of his visit is extracted from a little work,\* published by him the following year:—

“The ascent of the Abendberg is steep, but it presents no difficulties that need deter any traveller from visiting the Institution. The greater part of the way is through fir forests, which generally exclude all view, but occasionally allow delightful glimpses of the lakes of Thun and Brientz. Nearly at the summit of the mountain we came to an open space of grass land, and then saw the small chalêt, the scene of Dr. Guggenbühl’s benevolent labours. It is difficult to imagine a more lovely spot, or a view more exquisite than that which was displayed before us. The glorious chain of the snow mountains, the Eigher, Monch, and Jungfrau, are there seen in all their grandeur; whilst far beneath lie the lake of Brientz, and the green valley of Interlaken. On entering the humble chalêt, the scene was most impressive: our visit was unexpected, and we found Dr. Guggenbühl engaged in instructing his little patients. His fatherly smile, and the kind manner of his assistant were not lost even on these scarcely human beings—for several would look up with an expression of happiness. A more strange or more interesting school-room was never seen; to watch the familiar process by which we all unconsciously learn to speak in infancy, here adopted to teach children of any age under six, systematically and with effort, was a matter of deep interest. Here, indeed, was a task of real difficulty; as the organs, far from being ready and eager to receive impressions, were so dull that the strongest means were needed to make them act in any degree. Several of the children were ranged round a table, in chairs formed to support those who could not otherwise sit upright. In nearly all these were the evident signs of their fearful malady: and the dull, hopeless look of almost perfect idiotcy.

“On a bed on one side of the room lay one poor creature, who was too great a sufferer to be yet able to join in the instruction which the others were receiving. As this child, who was three years of age,

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\* Some Account of Crétinism, and the Institution for its Cure, on the Abendberg.—London, 1843.



exhibited Crétinism in its highest degree, a description of her state may not be inappropriate. She was wrapped in a cloth, so that her face only was visible. The lids of the eyes were constantly quivering, and the eyes rolling; the tongue large, and so swollen, that the saliva was running from her mouth, and all her limbs were moving convulsively. So dreadful a sight could scarcely be imagined—a human being, devoid not only of all which characterises a rational creature, but even a healthy brute animal—and yet even she is improving; so that the day will come, whether it be a year, or even two years distant, when she may know the blessings of health and knowledge.

“The ear is one of the first organs to be roused from its state of apathy or slumber; and this is effected by compressing the sound through a tube into the ear. The child is then taught to perform with its mouth the motion which is required to express the sound, and so to connect the sound itself with the mode of expressing it, which is by degrees attained; and thus it passes through the vowels. In order to bring other organs into play, the letters are carved out in wood, and they learn to connect these with the sounds, according as the organs of touch or sight are developed. Gradually, by this method, they form words, which they utter. When all this is well acquired, the common utensils, as knives, keys, forks, or spoons, are painted, and the instruments laid before them; and thus they learn not only to distinguish them, but to place them on their pictures. Sometimes when this process does not avail to fix the sight on an object, marks or letters are figured with phosphorus on the walls of the room, and then the instruction begins, in winter, after sunset, or in summer, in a darkened room. This method often proves effectual, when others fail. Smell and taste also need development, as many would swallow whatever was placed in the mouth, and would pay no attention to any odour. When the hour of instruction closed, then came that of amusement; and here the Doctor’s kind manner was equally conspicuous, whether the child was swinging, playing with a doll, or beating a drum, or sitting unconscious of all around it. Day and night, the sole thought of this zealous and benevolent man is the happiness and improvement of these poor creatures. In him they have at once a teacher and physician—well qualified by natural disposition and acquired attainments to act in both these characters.

“As this malady affects the body as well as the mind, Dr. Guggenbühl devotes all the earlier part of the time that the Crétin is in the establishment to strengthening the body, knowing how much the mind is dependent on it; the pure, invigorating air, judicious food, and baths or frictions to strengthen the limbs, soon induce an entire change in the whole being. As soon as the organs begin to assume the normal state, the development of the intellectual faculties commences, and here is the greatest difficulty, but still the most important part of the task. Two cases which I particularly observed will best illustrate the progress made.



“ M. S., when two years of age, was sent to the Institution in an incipient state of Crétinism. She was then not able to hold up her head, stand, or move her limbs. The face was of a livid, dirty, white colour, the tongue swollen, the muscles soft, and the skin wrinkled and dry; the head was also mis-shapen. During the summer months the fresh mountain air, appropriate food, and strengthening medicine, brought her to a conscious state. When the mother saw her, two months after her admission, she said that she should hardly have known her, so great was the improvement in her health. Her age, at the time of my visit, was three years and a half. A quarter of a year had been sufficient to bring her to such a condition of bodily vigour, that she was fit for instruction. She is now strong, able to walk, and feed herself, knows all the parts of the house, can say the letters, and several words of one syllable. As an instance of growing intelligence, she was told to take a spoon from amongst knives and forks, and place it on its corresponding picture; she put it the wrong end upwards, and on being told so, placed it right. Her bodily appearance is so much improved that no one would suppose, judging from that alone, that she had ever been a Crétin, so rosy are her cheeks, and so happy is her expression.

“ F. S. was six years old on admission to the Institution, an age at which the chances of cure are comparatively slight. The mother said that at his birth he had a very large head, and that his development proceeded very irregularly. When received into the establishment he could scarcely walk; he had an excessively dull look, and could not fix his eyes on any object; the tongue was so thick that he could not speak, and the only sound which he ever uttered was like the cry of an animal. His only occupation had hitherto been to watch a piece of wood in the convulsive quiverings of his fingers. It required a month's constant effort before his attention could be directed to any object. His age at this time was seven years, and great difference was perceptible between his present state and that at the time of his admission. His countenance is no longer unlike that of a well-developed child; he can feed himself, and plays on a drum, and speaks the vowels distinctly. Great too is the improvement in the bodily powers, as he can walk steadily, his general strength being much increased.”

After the interval of five years a Report was published of some successful cases, amongst which are the following:—

“ Marie Louise G., of Sion, in the Valais, was brought to the



Abendberg at the age of four years. Though born very small, she continued to grow well during the first two years; but, in the second summer her parents observed she was becoming weak, and by the autumn she could not walk or stand, and even ceased to speak. Her mother feared she would be a Crétin, and instead of considering such a child a peculiar blessing, as is generally the case in the Valais, she dreaded it as the greatest of evils, and brought her child to the Abendberg, to be cured, if possible. At first it was so painful to her to stand for a few minutes that it made her cry. She had fine, clear blue eyes and a pleasing expression of face, but the form of the head indicated signs of approaching Crétinism. The teeth were fewer than usual at her age, the muscles were powerless, and the body swollen. In this little girl the manner of development of Crétin children was remarkably apparent. It does not take place constantly or gradually, but is accomplished at different times, suddenly, or partially. The bodily development proceeded rather quickly; at the end of a year she was able to walk. Greater difficulties occurred in the mental progress. For some time all attempts at teaching caused her to cry: suddenly, as if by magic, the powers of speech were developed. She improved sufficiently to return home to her parents at Sion, where she attended the school with other children, and was soon amongst the most forward of her age."\*

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There are whole districts of Switzerland, as well as throughout the entire region of the Alps, which languish under the burden of an unfavourable soil and climate to such a degree, that the population is more or less afflicted with Crétinism. The boy F. belongs to one of those miserable families, in which every degree and form of the evil may be observed. He is the youngest of seven Crétin children. Very soon after his birth the head was observed to be unusually large; his body grew regularly, but the extremities of the limbs remained small and weak. He could not walk or speak till he was three years old. When he came to the Abendberg he was six, and had even then very little power of speech. He was shy, unsociable amongst his companions; nothing seemed to make any sensible impression upon him. Neither joy nor sorrow—pleasure nor pain—roused him, from his mechanical state of existence. No emotion appeared on his lead-coloured countenance; the muscles were powerless, the extremities incapable of performing their proper functions, and the head was extremely large. He remained silent during the lessons of the other children, was very inattentive, and took no interest in

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\* This little girl was brought before the meeting of Swiss Naturalists at Sion, in August, 1852. During the six years that have passed since she left the Abendberg, she has made continual progress in bodily and intellectual development, without undergoing the least relapse.



trying to learn. After a time the muscles acquired strength, and the face a fresher tint. Some signs of intellect appeared, as if waking out of a magnetic sleep. One day when the setting sun gilded the sky most brilliantly, the attention of all the children in the Institution was attracted to the splendid sight. Admiration and astonishment were visible in all of them; even little F. called out suddenly, "the sun!" The strong chain that bound the mind was broken; by means of speech he could now communicate with those around him. Yet the power of observation was still very limited; he could not distinguish between the parts of objects; for example, he did not know the fingers from the hand. Memory seemed wholly to be wanting; it required incredible patience in this first period of instruction. To instil knowledge by means of visible objects is the best method of awakening a dormant mind. After three months of exertion, the capacities of F. began to be developed, his knowledge of things increased, his mind gradually strengthened. An attempt was next made to teach him the method of reckoning in the head, to prepare the way for arithmetic by figures. It is a remarkable circumstance that Crétins show much aptitude for this branch of learning. He now began to advance in reading very satisfactorily; but, like most Crétins, made very slow progress with writing; for music he showed a decided inclination. After a time the efforts used were so successful that F. was enabled to surpass many of his healthy contemporaries in knowledge and capability of learning.

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"E was a little girl of only six months, when taken into the Institution of the Abendberg. For the first month of her life she appeared to be healthy, though weak. Then a distressing cough came on, which left her after a short time, but had caused a crisis in her development. The parents are healthy and well-formed. The state of the child was truly dreadful; the bodily organization was that of a stunted, withered skeleton, covered with a lived, wrinkled, cold skin. Where there were some traces of muscles, elasticity was wanting; the extremities were very small, the countenance deadly pale, the cheeks and forehead wrinkled, the eyes small and dark, and the whole expression of the face that of an old woman. In the spring, when fine weather adds to the favourable effect of the pure mountain air in the cure of these miserable children, she was brought to the Abendberg. The natural advantages of the situation were aided by the most careful medical treatment and diet. Although this poor creature had been gradually becoming more dwarf-like and deformed ever since her birth, she now advanced rapidly towards a perfect development. Three months worked a visible improvement; the muscles strengthened with her growth, the skin became



elastic, and attained the usual degree of warmth, the wrinkles of the face vanished, and the old-woman expression disappeared, and the pleasing traces of youth became apparent. In a short time E. was a restored creature, having undergone a perfect metamorphosis during the first spring. From a state of dormant inactivity she had entered on an existence of free and perfect development."

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The following case, in which the aim of the Institution to cure and educate Crétins for useful members of society was fully attained, was very remarkable. "The boy A. was born with every sign of the malady, he was three years old before he could either stand or speak. About this time he was brought to the Abendberg. Although not deficient in growth, and but little affected in bodily form, he was very weak in the use of his limbs; could not run quickly, and was so fearful and helpless in gymnastic exercises, that even the weakest of his companions surpassed him. Every exertion of the strength or muscles caused him to cry. A sad, gloomy melancholy had taken possession of his whole being, a smile was seldom seen on his countenance, and he often made most horrible grimaces. After some weeks residence on the Abendberg, he became more cheerful, sociable, and friendly with his companions, and moved about with more ease and activity. The gymnastic exercises, which at first made him cry, by degrees seemed to give him pleasure. Instead of the gloomy, reserved behaviour, he became joyous like other children, and by the end of a year mixed cheerfully with his associates. He took so much delight in learning, that after the daily lessons were over he occupied himself diligently alone. He learnt to read with expression, to write, to add, and to subtract, and he even acquired some knowledge of natural history. In these respects he was soon further advanced than many healthy children of his age who went to school. His mind developed itself most rapidly in acquiring some knowledge of the chief truths of religion. He was remarkably ready to assist in any little services, and in helping the weaker children; he also showed much love and gratitude to his teachers. Any duties entrusted to him he fulfilled with the most exact punctuality, and a sense of honour was very strong in him. Fully restored, both in body and mind, and capable of performing all the duties of life, he returned into the society of man."

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Weakness being the prominent character of the malady of Crétinism, the guiding principle of the treatment must be to strengthen



and arouse the system, and the first endeavour of an attempt to relieve a patient. The pure mountain air is peculiarly favourable from its strong electric properties, and produces a good effect on the general system. The activity of the body may be aroused by means of the skin; when the cold, torpid skin of the Crétin becomes revived and healthy, it is a clear indication of renewed vigour. To this end tepid baths, of water in which aromatic alpine plants have been boiled, are employed in the Institution of the Abendberg. Cold baths are injurious for the Crétins, as their extremely slow circulation prevents the due reaction. When the natural vigour is acquired, washing and friction with cold water is useful to strengthen the limbs; the rubbing of the skin with flannel, and some aromatic substance combined with spirits, is very efficacious, especially when done in the warm sunshine. Magnetic electricity carried through a tepid bath is also found to produce a good result on rickety Crétins, with weak spine or crooked limbs. It must however be used at first very slightly, and gradually with stronger power. The bodily strength is exercised in various ways; first by climbing up ladders backwards, then by raising weights on a measuring machine, by which the increase of the physical power is ascertained. The American baby-jumper is useful for those small children who are unable to walk alone. Besides these plans, exercises of all kinds are practised in the open air; and the cultivation of little gardens is a great pleasure and benefit to the more advanced Crétins, and a good preparation for their future life, when returned to their peasant homes. The medical treatment varies according to the different forms of the disease. Some are afflicted with eruptions of the skin, others much deranged in the nervous system. The summer season is devoted to the use of the fresh aromatic plants—Tussilago, Leontodon, &c., taken as infusion, and in baths. Iodine must be used with caution, lest in some cases it might increase the atrophy of the patient. Iodine, with steel, has often a beneficial effect, and a preparation of copper is an especial remedy in some spasmodic cases. Ether assists in arousing the torpor of the system; several kinds of Crétins have been rendered more lively and attentive to their lessons by the use of it. Wine is found to have a bad effect on the brain, and should only be taken in small doses, medicinally. For the latest experience and all scientific facts concerning Crétinism, the reader is referred to Dr. Guggenbühl's last publication.\*

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From the period of the foundation of the Institution of the Abendberg, several works were from time to time written or published on

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\* "Die Heilung und Verhütung des Cretinismus und ihre neuesten Fortschritte. Mittheilungen an die Schweizerische naturforschende Gesellschaft.—Dr. Guggenbühl. Bern, bei Huber & Co., 1853.



the subject, as may be seen by the list appended to this. In consequence of the interest excited in different countries, a sufficient sum of money was raised to erect a wooden building capable of receiving many patients and nurses, which in the first few years became too numerous for the original small chalet. At the meeting of the "British Association," at Cambridge, in 1845, Dr. Twining read a Paper on the subject, explaining the nature of the disease, and desiring the aid of scientific men, and especially of travellers, in discovering the number and varieties of Crétins in different countries. The Institution of the Abendberg was yearly visited by persons who went to Interlaken to admire the beautiful mountain scenery, as well as by others who made it the express object of a journey. Amongst these latter may be included the King of Wurtemberg, who inspected the Hospital, and finding the good success that attended the patient labours of the benevolent physician and founder, resolved to appoint a commission to examine into the proportion and condition of Crétins existing in the kingdom of Wurtemberg amongst the mountains of Suabia. The result of this inquiry proved the numbers to be much larger than was before known or believed. Three thousand of the poor creatures were discovered in a very degraded and pitiable state. In the year 1847, an old monastic building on the Mariaberg, not very far from Stuttgart, was devoted to the purpose of a Hospital for Crétins, and thus the good work began to extend in Germany. The Institution now contains upwards of fifty patients, the children being classed according to their condition or capacity for cure. It receives liberal aid from the Government, as well as from the King, and the Crown Princess, Olga, the noble patroness. A nearly similar establishment is under the care of Dr. Müller, at Winterbach, in the valley of the Rems. In that district Crétinism prevails to a fearful extent, more than two hundred Crétins being found in the few villages of those valleys.

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In the year 1851, a Priest of Bavaria chanced to meet with a short pamphlet published in German, at Basle, in the form of a "Letter addressed to Lord Ashley," by Dr. Guggenbühl, on the subject of Crétinism. He was so warmly interested in the cause that he made further inquiries concerning the Institution of the Abendberg. The consequence was a determination to attempt something for the poor Crétins of Bavaria. He applied to the Archbishop of Munich, and to the King; in a few months an old monastery at Muhldorf, on the river Inn, about forty miles from Munich, on the road to Vienna, was appointed for the purpose of receiving Crétins. A young physician was selected to superintend the establishment, and the benevolent priest went forth as a monk of old, to collect alms for the Institution. Thus



the great work of charity was commenced in the kingdom of Bavaria. The latest account mentions that fifteen Crétins are already received, and the house is about to be enlarged for the accommodation of fifty patients. The ancient monastery of Ecksberg, no longer required as a safe shelter for piety and learning, is now destined to the new labour of Christian love and duty; that of arousing the torpid and enfeebled frame, and kindling the spark of intelligence in the dormant mind of the poor Crétin; awakening his soul to the knowledge of a Heavenly Father and a merciful Saviour, and to be the dwelling of the Holy Spirit.

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In the mountainous districts of Austria, there are many Crétins; but no Institution exists yet for their reception. In all probability attention will soon be given to this subject in Vienna.

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Besides the spread of the Institutions for Crétins in Germany, there was also an awakening to the work in Piedmont. The King of Sardinia sent a physician to inspect the plans carried on in the Hospital of the Abendberg, and appointed an examination to be made of the state and number of Crétins in the valleys of Piedmont. Dr. Guggenbühl went also to Turin, and consulted with medical men in that city concerning the necessity of establishing an Institution for their relief and cure. At a late meeting of scientific persons it was resolved to pursue the study of the disease of Créatinism with all diligence, 7,000 cases of the worst form alone having been discovered in Piedmont. It is now also decided to establish an Hospice for Crétins near Aosta, under the care of members of the order of St. Maurice and St. Lazarus, to whom, during the middle ages, were entrusted the care of Lepers. Considerable funds are applied to this purpose, and many patients will be found in the hot valleys on the south of the Alps, where scarcely a family is free from Créatinism.

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Accounts of the new Institution on the Abendberg were now more widely dispersed; some American travellers who visited Switzerland were extremely surprised at the success of the benevolent undertaking. Dr. Howe, of Boston, was amongst the most observant, and found on the Oberland Alps an encouragement to his own zeal and talent in the cause of suffering humanity.

In the United States of America the idea of assisting poor Idiots



began to be aroused. Dr. Howe, who had already made very successful efforts in teaching those afflicted with imperfect senses, was appointed to the superintendence of a school for Idiots. His endeavours were most fully rewarded by the improvement of the poor children, and an increased interest began to spread throughout the States for their benefit. It was obvious that those admitted to an Institution expressly for their cure and instruction made greater progress than when mingled with other poor orphans in the common establishments for the poor and destitute. Two Reports have been published by Dr. Howe, giving very satisfactory accounts of the progress made in relieving and teaching the poor Idiot children of the United States.

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It is now time to trace the beginning and progress of the charitable work in England, where, hitherto, the poor Idiot child was left neglected and untaught.

In the year 1846, some ladies at Bath read the "Account of Cré-tinism, and the Institution for its Cure on the Abendberg," and became very desirous of attempting something for those poor Idiots of our own country, who, in many instances, appear more curable than Cré-tins. To these zealous persons is entirely due the first school for Idiots in this country. Miss White, having acquired a knowledge of the system practised on the Abendberg, devoted herself to the foundation of this new school. In April, a matron and four poor children were established in a house in Walcot Parade. Two of the girls were nearly fourteen years of age when admitted. They could not feed themselves, far less employ themselves in any way. By the unwearying care and attention of the matron, this apparent incapacity for exertion was, by the end of the year, in a great degree overcome, and on being examined by some friends who knew their state on first entering the Institution, the progress made was declared to be beyond their expectation.

At the close of the year 1848, the number of Idiot children in the school amounted to fifteen. A boy who was on admission extremely helpless in every way, and could do nothing, had learned to read and write, and the simple rules of arithmetic; and was so greatly advanced in general understanding, as to encourage much hope for his future life. All the children had not made the same progress, as was naturally to be expected, but improvement was manifest in each.

From this time the yearly Report has shown a progressive increase in the number of patients, and the benefits which, by continued care and perseverance on the part of the teachers, have become more evident to those who visit the school.



In 1851 the Institution was removed to Belvedere, a more airy and elevated situation, which was of considerable advantage to the health of the children. They are divided into three classes: the first paying £60 a-year, the second £30, and third £12. The whole number is at present twenty: ten years is the limited age at entrance. But the applications for admission become more numerous; and it is probable, that as the benefits to be derived from the system are more extensively known, it will be necessary to enlarge the establishment considerably. Increased funds, to enable the teachers to supply useful industrial work to those poor children, who might thus be made capable of maintaining themselves on returning home, is the object of their earnest desire.

In the year 1847, Dr. Guggenbühl visited England, and became acquainted with several physicians and other scientific men; inspected hospitals and various philanthropic institutions, to gain experience on some points, and to extend the knowledge of the peculiar work to which he had devoted himself, and wished to call the attention of others. The following year he again came to this country, and proceeded to Scotland. In Edinburgh he endeavoured to attract the interest of the benevolent to the subject. Dr. Coldstream was very ready to assist in gaining a favourable hearing, and a meeting was arranged in the Royal Institution, where much sympathy was shown, but no positive result obtained. Among the numerous and extensive charitable institutions of the northern metropolis, there is not one for the Idiot, although such unhappy cases occur frequently, and more especially in the Highlands and mountain districts.

About this time an interesting paper on the Abendberg appeared in Chambers's Journal. Dr. Coldstream published also a work, called "The Alpine Retreat of the Abendberg," containing an excellent account of the establishment. The too long neglected branch of Christian love and charity was gradually extending itself in the hearts and sympathies of the benevolent British public, and before the end of the year 1847, the idea of forming an asylum for the Idiots of different classes, arose in the minds of a few persons in London. In deliberating whether to send an Idiot child to the Abendberg, the thought occurred of establishing an Institution in our own country. Thus from the first original foundation sprung forth another asylum, in the same manner as the school at Bath had commenced. Dr. Andrew Reed, of Hackney, gathered friends of the cause together, and with much zeal and activity, brought the work forward. Subscriptions were collected, and in October, 1847, Park House, Highgate, was made an "Asylum for Idiots," under the inspection of the benevolent and experienced Dr. Conolly, and other medical persons. Extreme pains and watching were necessary during the first two years, to bring order and method into such a school; but at the end of the year, very considerable improve-



ment was observable. The following extracts, from the first Report, in 1849, will satisfactorily prove the success of the efforts made in behalf of the poor Idiots.

“The first gathering of the idiotic family was a spectacle unique in itself, and sufficiently discouraging to the most resolved, and not to be forgotten in after time by any. It was a period of distraction, disorder, and noise of the most unnatural character. Some had defective sight; most had defective or no utterance; most were lame in limb and muscle; and all were of weak or perverted mind. Some had been spoiled, some neglected, and some unconscious and inert. Some were screaming at the top of the voice; some making constant and involuntary noises from nervous irritation; and some, terrified at scorn and ill-treatment, hid themselves in a corner, from the face of man, as from the face of an enemy. Within the year the change of scene was great—order, obedience to authority, improvement, and cheerful occupation prevailed; every hour had its duties, and the duties were steadily fulfilled. They are essentially not only an improving, but a happy family.”

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In April 1851, the Report contained some account of cases, which showed the progress which had been made during the time of being in the Asylum.

“A girl aged nine years: admitted January, 1850. She was very unruly: very active on her feet, but could not be induced to sit at table, or behave with propriety. She was dumb, dirty in her habits, and had no idea of dressing herself. The great difficulty was to feed her. When brought near the table, she would seize handfuls of food, or scatter it, or break anything within her reach. April, 1851: she is become more intelligent; will sit at table, feed herself, and behave as well as the rest. In obedience and cleanliness of habit she has remarkably improved. She goes into the school, will listen quietly to the music, and is even admitted to family prayers.”

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“A little girl aged three years; admitted June, 1850. This case remarkably illustrates the advantage of very early treatment. She was quite helpless, of dirty habits, could not even stand alone, and it seemed impossible to fix her attention. April, 1851: she has improved surprisingly; her health is better, her limbs stronger; she can walk alone, has become intelligent, notices what is going on, knows the persons around her, and is still making satisfactory progress.”



“ A little boy, aged four years, admitted February, 1850. He was like a wild child, most violent in temper, disobedient, and mischievous. He would kick, bite, or destroy anything; there was great difficulty in restraining him. April, 1851: he has become obedient, well-behaved, affectionate, and gentle to all around him. He can dress himself, and is fond of assisting his companions. His intellect has developed wonderfully; he is in the school, answers questions readily, can read short sentences, and write letters on a slate.”

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“ A boy, aged sixteen, admitted April, 1848. He resembled a child of four or five years; was restless in manner, and slovenly in habit. April, 1851: he has improved surprisingly; he is less nervous, understands what is said to him, and converses rationally. He can read and write tolerably, and is in all respects improving.”

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“ A boy aged fourteen; admitted January, 1850. He was paralyzed on the right side, but could feed and take care of himself. He had been taught to read and write a little, but was wilful, pugnacious, and greatly addicted to falsehood. April, 1851: he is improved in every respect; with the use of the left hand only, he can now write well, draw admirably, and generally fix his attention on his employment. Shampooing and gymnastics have greatly benefited the paralyzed side. Even with the right hand he can now grasp objects firmly: he has become truthful. At Christmas he was allowed to go home for a short time: a great change was visible, and his father looks forward to his being able to assist him in business.”

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“ A boy, aged eight, admitted July, 1848. He was very active, mischievous, obstinate, disobedient, violent, and disposed to injure others. His speech was very indistinct; he was much addicted to falsehood. April, 1851: he has now become obedient, tractable, and truthful; he has learned to read and write a little. His speech has greatly improved, and he is one of the best of the drilling pupils.”

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“A boy, aged thirteen, admitted May, 1848. He was very idiotic in his movements, and in the noises he made. He appeared dull and torpid. His friends had been unable to manage him. He was dirty in his habits, and seemed, involuntarily, disposed to injure others. April, 1851: he is more lively, and much more intelligent; he will answer questions readily. His habits are now cleanly, and the unnatural and idiotic sounds are never heard. He is very expert in the drilling class.”

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“A boy, aged ten, admitted December, 1849. He had been much indulged; was very obstinate and vicious in temper, and very sluggish in his movements. He spoke in a drawling tone, and merely repeated what was said to him. He could not read or write, but was able to dress and feed himself. He was stated to be epileptic. April, 1851: the fits have quite left him, owing, probably, to the attention paid to his diet. His intellect has much improved. He is in the singing class, and is learning to play the harmonicon. He can read, write, and draw, and moves with more spirit; he is remarkably obedient. His great delight is in gardening; he is, therefore, in the gardener's class, and improves mentally and physically.”

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“J. W., a boy of fourteen, admitted May, 1851. Could not read, write, or draw, or do anything; he was said to be beyond improvement, was very spirited, and ran away from home several times. April, 1853: for eighteen months all efforts appeared useless, and patience was almost exhausted, as he did not know a single letter. Now he knows most of the alphabet, writes in a copy-book, is obedient and tractable, and has made several pairs of shoes and slippers.”

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“A. A., a girl, aged ten; admitted May, 1850. Did not know her name; could say yes and no; could not write or imitate; could thread a needle, but was unable to use it, though she made efforts to do so. April, 1853: her speech has improved; she can be understood by those about her, knows the name of every one in the house, uses her needle well, is learning to make straw bonnets, and gives promise of being a good hand at it; she is also very useful in the house.”

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“ J. R., aged twenty-two; admitted November, 1850. Could neither read nor write, not knowing a letter. He was considered by his friends incapable of being taught anything; was constantly talking in a foolish manner; was obstinate, passionate, and self-willed. April, 1853: he can now read and write, speaks with propriety, is polite, obedient, and tractable; is very useful in the arrangements of the house, and is learning shoe-making.”

The number of applicants for admission at Park House, Highgate, soon proved the necessity of a larger establishment. It was not practicable to enlarge that house; but in 1850, owing to the generosity of S. M. Peto, Esq., Essex Hall, at Colchester, was placed at the disposal of the managers. Those patients who were admitted gratuitously, were accordingly removed to that spacious and commodious house; whilst those for whom payment was received were retained at Highgate. Indefatigable superintendents were selected for each establishment; and the numerous visitors who have inspected them, have testified to the unwearied kindness and care bestowed on the poor children. The result of such care affords the most encouraging hope for the future. The improvement has far exceeded the expectations of those who knew the difficulty of the undertaking. The daily instructions given in the school-room, the gymnasium, the workshops or the garden, have produced very striking effects, more or less, according to the condition of the pupil; yet all have benefited in the way most adapted to their capacities. Some who could not read, have learned to sew; others to make shoes; some find the greatest pleasure in tailors' work, and show their performances with much satisfaction and pride. One poor boy, who was too deaf to learn much in the school-room, has become an expert carpenter in the workshop, and is fitted to be a carpenter on a gentleman's estate.

To discover the occupation most suitable for each, is the great endeavour of the teachers; and the value of occupation is to the poor Idiot indescribable. Few of them, probably, have known this pleasure at home; but under judicious care and guidance, it is made the means of educating them, mentally and bodily. Some children, who had no habits of observation or order when first admitted, are now entrusted with the care of arranging the dinner-table, which they do with perfect regularity, and with extreme delight.

When the lessons in school are over, and the master bids the “table-boys” go to their duty, they go out with alacrity, each to their allotted task. Some of the older girls, who could not advance much in the school, are set to various portions of the household work: one stout girl who could do but little else, is very handy in



washing the plates and dishes after dinner. Various are the degrees of idiocy, and very different are the capacities and dispositions of the children—and so numerous are also the claimants for the benefits afforded in the Institutions, that it is now become indispensable to provide more extensive accommodation, and more power of classing and arranging the patients.

Probably no Institution for any charitable purpose has ever acquired friends and patrons so rapidly as the "Asylum for Idiots" has done; the work has prospered in a very remarkable manner. One of the last to be added to the list of benevolent Asylums, it has grown from a small beginning to a large establishment in a very few years; and has become a recognized work of love, in which all may unite. It is now earnestly desired to complete the plan, by erecting a spacious building on land purchased at Reigate, in a very healthy and favourable situation. Large funds will, however, be necessary, to accomplish the whole. But it is now acknowledged, that the poor Idiot has been too long neglected and overlooked, in the words of the last Report of the Idiot Asylum, "We have to redeem ourselves from this national dishonour. The last link in the golden chain of charity must be supplied. It must lay hold on the poor imbecile in his lowest estate, and recover him from degradation and abandonment, to his place and his rights in the one human family. The success already granted to our labours is our pledge for the future. Without a figure of speech, as our efforts reach their consummation, it shall be said, that the eye that had no useful sight doth see; that the tongue of the dumb is made to sing; that the lame do walk, and leap for joy; and that the soul, long imprisoned and sore vexed, is raised to liberty, to life, to the love of God! And our Father in heaven shall acknowledge the deed of mercy and of love to be good, very good."

There is, perhaps, no other benevolent Institution which has prospered so rapidly from the beginning, which proves not only the goodness of the work, but the sense generally entertained of its real necessity. Sympathy for the poor helpless Idiot has been fully awakened; and none can visit them in the Institutions without a feeling of love and pity towards them. Their affectionate gratitude to the teachers, their evident pleasure at any fresh acquisition of knowledge, or power of employing themselves; their satisfaction on being able to join in religious duties, whether at church, or at prayers at home, or in singing hymns, all betoken a right feeling, and encourage that patient care and teaching, which, in due season, will surely reap the reward of benevolence; and behold the helpless and downcast, raised to a state of cheerful health and activity, and to some sense of the present and future life, to which they never could have attained in their own poor homes. The affliction of an Idiot child in a family, is shown by the great number of applicants, to be far more frequent than was at all known or supposed. As their number has surpassed expectation, so may their benefactors



likewise. May help come forth abundantly; and many cheerful givers gladly take part in this labour of love. We are but doing the work to which we are called by our blessed Master, in thus bringing the little ones to Him. Let us do it while they are yet young, before they become entirely wrapt in the darkness which besets them—before their bad habits are confirmed by years of neglect. Let us guide the lost into the heavenly fold, and teach them to know Him, who “delivereth the poor when he crieth, and him that hath no helper.”

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The following extracts, from a work published by a well-known traveller and author, J. G. Kohl, in Dresden, 1851, relate to the founder and Institution of the Abendberg:—

“Dr. Guggenbühl is already known to many, and deserves to be still more extensively known, from the excellence of his work, and the importance of the object to which he has devoted himself, and which can only be accomplished by means of aid from many benevolent persons. It is remarkable, that the reform or cure of any of the numerous evils to which human beings are liable, has been almost invariably begun by single individuals of great capacity and zeal. In all periods of time there have been evils, which all had long been aware of, which all lamented. It might have been supposed that citizens would have united their strength, that governments would have given their powerful help, to reform or extirpate such evils. But it has never happened thus. In one individual heart the idea must arise, and take root, and ripen into active resolution. In all reforms, whether great or small, this appears to be the process. Every city now considers an institution for the poor Blind, or Deaf and Dumb, to be essential; we should be surprised not to find them in every principal town. Yet how long was it before this became a recognised truth? At the close of the last century, the discoverer of the method of teaching the Blind, Deaf and Dumb, and the founder of Institutions for such purposes, underwent incredible struggles and difficulties.

“But it will be strange and lamentable, indeed, if in this time of benevolent exertion and care for the poor, when the deplorable malady of Crétinism has been brought forward for help and cure, the benefactor of the Crétin should fall a martyr to the work. In all the instruction and education, as well as bodily developement of the Crétin, extreme patience and repetition is required. When the entrance to the senses is once effected, when language is taught, then Natural History subjects are employed, to educate the mind. I saw some Crétins in the Institution who spoke quite distinctly, could read,



write, and could reckon sums ; who had acquired a knowledge of geography, as far as the names of several countries—their memory was so developed, and they could repeat little verses by heart. I listened with delight to the devotional exercises and pious hymns, which came from the lips of these poor, innocent creatures. Piety, confidence in an overruling Providence, are strong feelings with them, and prove that the heart and sensibility are, in general, existing, and form the central point of their whole mental state. In their homes in the valleys, in the midst of their rude companions, the poor Crétins are often inclined to sink into a still more apathetic and morbid condition—the spark of kindly feeling in their nature is extinguished—and thus it is the general idea, that they are by nature ill-disposed, and shy. On the Abendberg, where they are treated with constant love and kindness, and they are never witness to any rudeness of behaviour, where their companions are all of the same timid and quiet disposition, the poor children soon become sociable and friendly.

“ At the visit I made to them, I was rejoiced at the extraordinary peacefulness and joyousness that prevailed among the youthful colony, a striking evidence of the beneficial working of this first model Institution. A love of truth, a sense of the beautiful in nature, a love of associating with companions, are all developed in that establishment ; but in their native homes, all such good feelings are dormant, at least in the greater portion of them. In this well-arranged Institution, the poor Crétin learns to attain a consciousness of his sensitive feelings ; shame for any wrong action, makes his cheek pale, or causes a blush ; the senseless frame there acquires perception of anguish or joy in the heart ; pain brings forth tears ; the impression of having learned something new, rejoices him. The enchanting power of music, the rich colouring of the landscape, begin to move the soul of the once mindless, undeveloped Crétin.

“ This undeniable result of exertions to improve the Crétins, is undoubtedly beyond all praise. To have shown that it is possible to elevate them out of the depths to which they were inevitably sinking, to arrest the progress of the darkness which was enveloping them, and to lead them onwards to light and sense, and in many instances, to restore them to human society perfectly developed, is truly a noble work. All Christian teachers, all the spiritual followers of our holy religion, all true friends of humanity, who confess what a precious work it is to spread the light, and to save one human soul, will learn this result with joy, and value it rightly. The cause of Crétinism is not only an affair belonging merely to some remote Alpine valleys, it is a work affecting all the human race, which concerns all men more or less ; we should, therefore, all lay our hands to the work, with all the energy and aid we can afford. Let us all help to brighten and strengthen the flame of light and love, which has been kindled on the Abendberg, for the benighted of the children of men, that it may not fade or become extinguished, but grow into brighter



light and greater vigour, and so be multiplied in all lands, to relieve the misery of these suffering members of the human family."

The following are extracts from letters written by relations of the late Dr. Twining, who are all well able to judge of the progress of the work, having watched the Institution from its commencement :

" Interlaken, July 13th, 1852.

" I will now tell you of our delightful and satisfactory visit to the Abendberg, yesterday : we had a glorious day for the expedition, and thoroughly enjoyed it ; to me it was especially interesting to see what ten years has done,—far more than I had any idea of. We set off soon after seven, and ascended leisurely through the cool wood ; in about two hours and a half we reached the Institution, and saw the good Doctor in the midst of his children on the little terrace. The matron took us into a large Salle ; afterwards the Doctor took us over the whole building with a clergyman from Geneva, who had arrived the day before. The house is now beautiful : containing numerous large, spacious rooms, which can accommodate forty children. The school-room is above, with an organ, and pictures all round the walls. The deaconesses superintend the servants and children, and the chief deaconess is matron of the whole. It was very satisfactory to find everything so well arranged, and the progress of the Crétins is much beyond what I could have expected. There are three English children, two of them have English nurses, and they live by themselves, not mixing with the other children at all, but it is not intended to take any more on this plan, for it occasions a great deal of trouble, and the children do not get on so fast as when they live with the rest. We heard them sing, and learn many of their lessons, and then walked into the woods with eight or ten of the best of the Crétin children, who seemed to enjoy walking with us and getting us flowers. On returning to the house we heard some of them sing again, and pleased them by looking at their books for writing and drawing. The deaconesses are most pleasing women, chief y daughters of Protestant Pastors in the Swiss Church, so gentle and kind, and appearing perfectly happy in their work. Nothing can be more touching than the devotion of everybody there to the poor Crétins, and it is impossible to see happier or more cheerful countenances than all the attendants have. The work having prospered so marvellously in the first twelve years of its existence, gives great encouragement for further aid and benevolent assistance. It was indeed a true pleasure to witness the success of the labours of the good Dr. Guggenbühl.

" G. and E. R."



Interlaken September, 2nd, 1852.

“ At seven o'clock I set off on foot for the Abendberg ; the morning was lovely, the sun shining through the trees, the grass glittering with dew, and here and there such lovely glimpses of the Lakes of Thun and Brienz. On entering the Salle of the Institution, and inscribing my name in the visitors' book, it was soon transmitted to Dr. Guggenbühl, who in a few minutes appeared with hands extended and face radiant with pleasure. We soon went up into the large school-room, where there were about twenty-eight of the poor Crétins preparing for gymnastic exercises and cheerful games. It was the Doctor's first interview with them that morning ; to see how they flocked around him, eager for a shake of the hand, or a pat on the head,—how he had a kindly greeting, a gentle inquiry, some endearing expression, for each in succession, was truly touching. Even one poor Idiot, whose combined afflictions of mental darkness and corporal infirmities, rendered his case all but hopeless of cure, and whose averted face shunned the compassionate looks with which the worthy Doctor strove to attract him, yielded at last so far as to put out his hands. Then they began their games, all hands round, bowing and curtseying to each other, some with real grace in their movements—two of the good deaconesses joining with them ; then some of them practised drawing up a leaden weight by a rope through a pulley ; others climbed up an inclined plane on their backs, a good exercise of the muscles of the arms ; others swung, and so on, till singing was proposed and joyfully prepared for. One of the Sisters opened an organ, the children all clustering round her, and several of them singing German and French hymns in very good time and tune. One little boy held me by both hands, and seemed to find relief for his poor, swollen head in pressing it against my side. They all seemed much pleased at my joining them in one or two of their hymns, and when Dr. Guggenbühl came back into the room, after having been called out, several of the poor creatures ran up to him, exclaiming, “ Ah ! Monsieur a chanté avec nous ! ” Then some were taken to the aromatic baths, others into the garden, where they shewed me their little plots. The sun was shining, and the boys inquired of the Doctor—“ Ah ! comme le tems fait beau, n'est ce pas que nous irons dans le forêt après diner ? ” “ Oui mes enfans, oui, nous allons jouer dans le forêt cet après midi. ” Afterwards we ascended again to the large room, now converted into a class-room, and there were two German classes under the patient teaching of two of the gentle Sisters ; one after another the pupils read to me verses of the Bible, and religious story books, showed me their writing on slates and in copybooks (creditable for any school), and one boy had done some sums quite correctly. On a relief Map of Europe they pointed out countries, capitals, cities, bays, seas, &c., with surprising accuracy, and named from some coloured drawings of groups of wild Alpine flowers, each flower successively—name and colour. One boy was seized with sudden



faintness—the Sister quietly rose, apparently quite prepared for any such interruption, and without the slightest disturbance took him up in her arms and carried him down stairs to the Doctor, speedily returning herself. One girl, about fourteen, with the distinct type of Crétinism, is the daughter of a man of rank in Piedmont, himself a Crétin, and this poor child is a countess. She was playing happily with the others, reads tolerably, and was learning geography. Her physical and mental condition are already much improved, and there is every prospect of her going back to her family in the course of a few years, cured and well instructed. The greater part of the children could speak, more or less, German and French. The leave taking was quite affecting; all shook hands with me, and wished me “bon voyage,” and two of the poor little creatures put up their faces to be kissed. The Doctor accompanied me to the verge of the forest, and so ended a most interesting visit to this singular spot and happy family.”

R. T.

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#### REPORT OF A FEW CASES IN THE AUTUMN OF 1852.

“Marie, a young girl of seven years and a half when she was received into the Institution of the Abendberg, was in a deep state of Crétinism. Her father is a man of distinguished learning, but suffers from nervous excitability and occasional hypochondriacal moods. Her mother was of extremely nervous temperament and weak health; she died soon after this child was born. From its birth the child was weak, developed slowly, remained thin, cried a great deal, never learnt to go alone, and could only speak a few words. In her third year she had the hooping-cough, which was the signal for a complete pause in her growth. The abode of the family was damp, imperfectly ventilated, and many goitres were to be seen. When Marie came to the Abendberg she was in a state of atrophy; her skin was cold, hung loose like a sack, and was covered with an eruption of spots. The joints were soft, the knees weak, the legs bent outwards: her head was large, yet in good symmetry, the circumference seventeen inches, the length twelve inches, the width nine. The height of her figure was thirty-four inches. Her mental state was equally imperfect; she could not speak a single word, but would make a howling noise for hours together; eat anything that came in her way, destroyed all that could be broken, and gave no attention to anything that passed before her. At times she would beat and even bite herself. During several months she never slept at night. The good effect of the pure, mountain air was very soon perceptible. She took a daily portion of strengthening, vegetable medicine, and was fed with nourishing diet, consisting chiefly of



meat and milk. Aromatic baths and friction in the sun afterwards were of considerable benefit. The improvement began to be manifested after the first three months, the muscles became developed, and therewith the physical strength. After six months she was able to stand alone, and at the end of a year could walk very well. The soft state of the joints is not yet entirely cured, but is at least, arrested; her voracious appetite is overcome, and she now eats properly. The nervous excitement comes on very seldom; she is become attentive and careful, and begins to play with other children. During the first year she spoke no articulate word, at the beginning of the second year she suddenly began to pronounce distinctly, and the first word was the name of an article of food which I sometimes brought to her. From that time she spoke daily new words; and what is very remarkable, she remembered some that she had heard spoken at home, but never since her residence on the Abendberg; these words seemed to have recurred again to her mind. She is now obedient and friendly, plays with flowers and animals, calls them by name, and enjoys the blessing of sleep, of which she had long been deprived."

"F. M. is the youngest boy of five Crétin children of various degrees, in the family; the parents are intelligent; the village where they reside is shaded, damp, and peculiarly disposed to produce Crétinism, which in fact does prevail in several families. The child F. M. had at his birth an irregularly shaped, large head, with small weak, undeveloped limbs; he did not grow like healthy children, and remained inattentive to what was passing around him: his head was generally hanging down. When he was received into the Institution, his extremely large and ill-shaped head formed a strange combination with the small, deformed body. He was only thirty-seven inches high, the circumference of the head was twenty inches, the length sixteen inches. The forehead was high, and the different parts of the head without symmetry. His body was thin and wasted, the complexion pale, the stomach large, his legs rickety. His power of walking was very feeble, his speech limited to a few words. His intellectual state was such that it required the teaching of several months ere he could distinguish the hand from the finger. He would try to avoid mingling with companions, shrinking away shily into a corner by himself. After the lapse of a year he began suddenly to speak, and to attend to what was passing, however, it required continual care to prevent his sinking again into the state of apathy. His bodily condition improved visibly under the regular course of attention given in the Institution. In the first two years he grew only half an inch, and the measurement of the head underwent no change. From this time the bodily growth went on more rapidly, and as the size of the head remained the same, the disproportion was no longer so perceptible. The memory, which had seemed to be



almost lost, now began to regain strength, by means of instruction in pictures, so that he could relate the number of inhabitants, the names of the different towns in Switzerland, the mountains, rivers, lakes, &c, without a mistake. He learned to read and to write, portions of Bible History, and other lessons. Still, his original torpid state would occasionally return, and he forgot even the names of letters for a time. This is a common fact with Crétins; and such periods of incapacity, which originate in the peculiar physiological state of Crétins, must in no degree deter us from endeavours to relieve and cure them. By means of constant care, the good effects of pure air, observation of Nature, and a gradual instruction in objects of Natural History, the attacks of torpidity and apathy diminished, and at last vanished entirely. He now speaks two languages perfectly, and is completely restored.

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“H. E. is a boy of a family in which mental infirmity is prevalent; he was nine years old when brought to the Abendberg. Four other children were healthy and well-grown, which is not unfrequent in Crétin families. The mother underwent much sorrow before H. was born. He was from birth very weak and undeveloped; learned to walk very late, spoke very imperfectly, and had all the bodily infirmity of Crétins. He was only thirty-four inches tall; his forehead was low, the back of the head high, the skin cold and loose. Owing to the death of his father, he was sent to the Orphan House at Basle, where they made some attempts to instruct him, but without the slightest success. His mind was a blank, when he arrived at the Abendberg. He was at the same time selfish, and much inclined to anger. The first efforts were to relieve his bodily evils, by medical means; and by the aid of various medical herbs, he was considerably benefitted. Afterwards more powerful medicines were given, and gymnastic exercises employed, to develop the bodily strength. When his health was improved, he showed a desire to learn, though at first, any endeavour to teach him caused him to cry. Suddenly he began, without assistance, to amuse himself with drawing animals, flowers, houses, and other objects, with so much skill, as to surprise every body. The pronunciation of the German language was very difficult to him; but he learned French very readily, and can read it well. He writes letters, knows the common names of plants and animals, sings hymns, and can rejoice in his Creator and Redeemer, who careth even for the soul of this humble Crétin child.”

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“M. S. is the child of healthy parents. For the first six months of her life she was healthy and grew as usual, and showed no trace of a Crétin state. But at that period all development ceased; the teeth did not appear, and even when four years old, only the front cutting teeth were come through. An extreme sensibility of the



nerves came on ; violent pains in the stomach, which allowed the poor child no rest at night ; all means tried failed to give relief ; her condition became worse yearly. When she was received at the Abendberg she was of a deadly pale countenance, livid and cold skin, frightful leanness of limbs, on which the skin hung loose ; her body sometimes swelled extremely ; her tongue was large, her nose flattened, eyes squinting ; quite dumb and deaf, incapable of moving. Notwithstanding a tolerably regular formation of the head, she was in the lowest rank of intelligence, and her bodily frame sunk in a miserable condition. The use of vegetable juices, the aromatic warm baths, friction in the sunshine afterwards, combined to produce so favourable a change, that after a lapse of eight months, her mother did not recognise her. The death-like complexion has given way to a fresh, healthy colour ; the neuralgic pains in the stomach have entirely ceased ; the temperature of the skin, the pulsation, the appetite, the physical powers, are all improved incredibly. She is become observant, sociable, and obedient, begins to walk, and gives hopes of a complete recovery from her fearfully degraded condition of mind and body."

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" C. B. and Ph. B., two sisters, were both brought to the Abendberg in a fearful state of Crétinism, unable to walk, talk or fix their attention on anything, and were almost always in a restless agitation ; the cure of both children was effected, and they returned home able to learn in the school like their healthy, intelligent companions. At the meeting of Swiss Naturalists, at Sion, August, 1852, they appeared, and afforded a satisfactory proof of the result of the care bestowed on the Crétin patients of the Abendberg, as well as of the fact that no relapse occurs, even when returned to their native valleys."

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The Institution of the Abendberg has been the model and guide for all similar establishments. The benevolent founder has bravely persevered through many difficulties, and the success is now fully evident, and he has the satisfaction of seeing his work become a means of blessing spreading throughout Europe. Some of the distinguished, learned, and scientific Societies of Germany and France have acknowledged their sense of his merits, by sending him their diploma. But the Swiss are slow to recognise the benefactors of their country. It is remarkable that patriotism should be a strong feeling in the mind of the Swiss, and yet that the true benevolent patriot has seldom met with the due reward of his exertions. Neither Haller, nor Pestalozzi, nor Fellenberg, met with the encouragement which they deserved, nor were their merits acknowledged in their lifetime. Nearly all the charitable Institutions of the country were



founded and endowed with lands in the middle ages ; in these days it is a labour of extreme difficulty to establish, by private exertion, a permanent Institution for the benefit of the poor. But surely this noble endeavour to extirpate the dreadful malady of Crétinism from the country ought to receive cordial support from each Canton, and the future existence of the Institution be secured. Owing to the height of the situation, the labour of carrying up all such provisions as are not produced on the mountain is very great and expensive. There have been several English and Scotch Children in the Institution, who have derived benefit there, when all other means had failed to give relief. May the liberal contributions of the generous aid in the extension and permanent existence of the first model Institution which has led the way to so many others, and proved the possibility of relief, and even of cure, of the formerly neglected Crétin and Idiot. On the death of the late Dr. William Twining, in November, 1848, the miserable Crétins of Switzerland, as well as the poor Idiots of England, lost a zealous friend and benefactor. Others have arisen to fill the void, and to aid in the great work of extending relief towards the afflicted children in all countries. May the cause spread far and wide, and excite that general sympathy which it so truly deserves. The result of twelve years labour and experience has proved that one third of these poor Crétins have been perfectly restored : and in no case has a relapse occurred. The rest have been considerably improved in body and mind. With increased knowledge derived from careful study, it is to be hoped that still more successful results will be obtained. It has been clearly ascertained that an elevated situation is essential : and other discoveries have been made, all tending to aid in the means of relief and cure. The contributions of the generous and wealthy are alone wanting to extend the benefit to greater numbers of the afflicted and poor. It is impossible even for the rich to provide advantages for an Idiot child in their own home, equal to those afforded by a well regulated Institution. In a private family every care may be bestowed, and the imbecile child have a separate room and especial attendant ; but solitude is unfavourable for the development of an imperfectly organised child ; cheerfulness and intercourse with its fellow creatures is essential to the happiness of every human creature, whether high or low in the scale of intellect or position in the world. Many persons have a dread of sending an Idiot child into an Institution amongst others of various degrees of imbecility. It is, however, now satisfactorily proved that the poor children, almost without exception, imitate the good habits, rather than the bad ways of their companions. It is very remarkable how quickly they obtain some perception of the difference between good and bad behaviour. A few months residence in the Institutions of Park House or Essex Hall suffices to teach good manners ; and those who have already learnt how to behave with propriety at meals, are distressed at the rudeness of the new comers, quite unconscious that they were themselves equally rude and dis-



agreeable only a short time before. The visitors to Park House cannot fail to perceive the good effect of the instruction bestowed on the children in classes, particularly in singing. And when the music is changed to a dancing tune, how briskly the poor boys stand up to dance, till at last even the dull, quiet ones, who stood gazing only, are induced to join their more joyous companions, and partake of the general enjoyment. Since then private families can seldom afford equal advantages to these poor children, it becomes a pressing need of the time to increase the number of Institutions. It ought also to be considered that they are most efficient when not too large. Each child of weak capacity requires much attention and care in the due development of the spark of intellect, and it can only be done by gentleness and loving-kindness; therefore each portion of an Institution should, in some measure, resemble a domestic and affectionate family. Dr. Guggenbühl, who has had most experience on the subject, considers the division of the children into classes, each superintended by a matron, as most desirable. His plan for the Abendberg is to erect a series of separate houses, in each of which may be from thirty to fifty Crétins, with a due proportion of deaconesses. He has now made several journeys throughout England, discovering many Idiots, and even true Crétins, in villages in the Northern as well as South-Western counties. His earnest desire is that each large county should have an Asylum or School for Idiots, arranged in separate houses forming one Institution. In the manufacturing districts, especially, numerous Idiots exist, and asylums are more particularly wanted, the mothers being so much engaged at work in the factories.

In Scotland there are also many fatuous children, but at present no Institution is opened for them. An example of individual benevolence towards this suffering class is about to be given by the Right Honourable Lady Jane Ogilvy, who is establishing an Asylum for Imbecile Children at Baldovan, Forfarshire.

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In conclusion, a few extracts from a speech made by the Rev. Edwin Sidney, at a meeting held at Ipswich, November 3rd, 1852, will prove the increasing interest and true character of the sympathy felt for the Idiots of this country:—

“ It has pleased God, who has made different orders of creatures, to place his chief earthly one in different degrees of responsibility. The lack of responsibility in the Idiot only increases ours, and the cure of the defective is one part of the moral probation of those to whom senses, intellect, influence, and means have been more largely supplied. These conditions of humanity are doubtless parts of a great design, infinitely wise, however unfathomable. In truth, our concern is not so much with God's ultimate designs, as with the question of present duties. We learn moral duties as the genius



of Christianity expands, unfolding to us continually fresh methods of alleviating, upon Gospel principles, the maladies of our fallen race. Of all the pitiable objects to which our Christian efforts can be directed, there is not one more in unison with the precepts of the Saviour than the attempts which are made to restore to its higher condition the ruined tenement of an Idiot's frame, which has obscured but cannot extinguish the immortal soul, and thus to transform a being ignorant, frivolous, debased, and ungovernable, into a tractable human being, with the prospect of present happiness, and the hopes of a better world."

Donations for the Institutions of the Abendberg, and in England, are received at MESSRS. TWINING, Bankers, 215, Strand, London.

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### LIST OF WORKS ON THE SUBJECT OF CRÉTINISM AND IDIOTCY.

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Europe's first Colony for the Cure of Crétinism; Dr. Guggenbühl, Jena, 1840.

On extensive Crétinism, and the Institution for its Cure on the Abendberg. Bern, 1840.

Lecture on Crétinism and the possibility of its Cure, at the meeting of German Naturalists and Physicians; Dr. Buek. Brunswick, 1842.

Crétinism, a Monograph; Dr. Otto Thieme. Weimar, 1842.

The Institution for Crétin Children on the Abendberg; Dr. Rosch. Stuttgart, 1842.

The Institution for Cretin Children, founded by Dr. Guggenbühl, on the Abendberg, near Interlaken; Dr. Herkenrath. Amsterdam, 1842.

Dissertation on Crétinism; Dr. Berthold Beaupré. Fribourg, 1843.

Some Account of Crétinism, and the Institution for its Cure on the Abendberg; Dr. William Twining. London, 1843.

The Children of the Abendberg; Countess Ida von Hahn Hahn. Berlin, 1843.



Sketches of the extent of Crétinism in the Canton Aargau. Michaelis, 1843.

New Researches on Crétinism; Dr. Maffei and Dr. Rosch, Erlangen, 1844.

First Report on the Abendberg; Dr. Guggenbühl. Fribourg, 1844.

Extracts from the Report on the Abendberg; Dr. W. Twining. London, 1845.

Several Treatises on Crétinism, in the Swiss Society of Naturalists and Physicians. 1840-1845.

Essay on Crétinism; Dr. Edward Wells. London, 1845.

The Institution for Lunatics, and their Cure, in France and Germany; with the Institutions for Crétins, on the Abendberg, in Switzerland; Dr. Vizanick. Vienna, 1845.

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Memoir on Goitre and Crétinism. Paris, 1850.

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Treatise on Goitre and Crétinism; with Statistics of the Crétins and Goitres in the Valley of the Isere; Dr. Niepce.

Report made before the Meeting of the Natural History Society, at Glarus, by Dr. Guggenbühl. 1851.

A Periodical Paper on Crétinism, and the Institutions for its Cure, edited by Dr. Rosch. Stuttgart, 1852.

The Prevention and Cure of Crétinism; and the progress of the Work. Report made to the Swiss Society of Naturalists; Dr. Guggenbühl, Huber & Co., Bern, 1853.