

Remarks upon the education of deaf mutes : in defence of the doctrines of the second annual report of the Massachusetts Board of State Charities and in reply to the charges of the Rev. Collins Stone.

Contributors

Howe, S. G. 1801-1876.

Coupland, W. H.

Telford-Smith, Telford

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REMARKS

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UPON THE

EDUCATION OF DEAF MUTES:

IN

DEFENCE OF THE DOCTRINES

OF THE

SECOND ANNUAL REPORT OF THE MASSACHUSETTS

BOARD OF STATE CHARITIES,

AND IN

REPLY TO THE CHARGES OF THE REV. COLLINS STONE,

PRINCIPAL OF THE AMERICAN ASYLUM AT HARTFORD.

BOSTON:

WALKER, FULLER & CO., PUBLISHERS.

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P R E F A C E .

On reading the last Report of the Principal of the American Asylum for Mutes, it seemed to me that I ought to criticize it publicly, first, in the hope of promoting the true interest of deaf mutes, by calling attention to the subject of their education; second, in order to defend my colleagues of the Massachusetts Board of State Charities from some discreditable imputations; third, to set forth the real doctrines contained in their Second Report; and lastly, to exculpate myself from certain charges of inconsistency, and insinuations of selfish purposes.

I thought to do this in a newspaper article; but my interest in the subject, or my inability to condense the matter, made it impossible.

When the manuscript was finished, it was laid aside; and the purpose of publishing it half abandoned.

A recent event has confirmed my first purpose; but leaves not the time to recast the article. This must explain the tardiness of its appearance, and its being written in the third person.

SAMUEL G. HOWE.

Boston, October 21st, 1866.

REMARKS

UPON THE

EDUCATION OF DEAF MUTES.

The American Asylum, for the Education and Instruction of Deaf Mutes, at Hartford, is the oldest establishment of the kind in the United States, and the only one in New England. It has been of incalculable benefit to the deaf mutes of all the country. It enjoys, and it deserves public confidence and esteem. It enjoys moreover the monopoly of educating the public beneficiaries of all the New England States; a monopoly of which it seems to be very tenacious.

Its Annual Reports are widely circulated; and are considered as valuable and reliable. They are read and regarded as entirely sound by most persons interested in the education of deaf mutes.

The Institution is strictly conservative. Its Directors are men of high character, pure motives, and eminent gravity. Its system of instruction, adopted fifty years ago, is still adhered to, with few changes; and all proposals to modify it are stoutly resisted.

If pressed, they are repelled with sensitiveness, and sometimes with asperity; as though they were considered impertinent interference; and yet any citizen of Massachusetts, at least, has a right to press them, because about half the pupils of the school are beneficiaries of this State.

The late lamented Horace Mann, Secretary of the Massachusetts Board of Education, proposed a great modification of the system of instruction; and brought powerful arguments and stubborn facts to the support of his views. But he failed to effect any material change. The Asylum yielded a little for a time, under his vigorous attacks, but swung back to its old moorings; and, held fast by the anchor of conservatism, breasts the tide of progressive ideas which sweep by it.

In France, Dr. Blanchet, connected with the Imperial Institution for Deaf Mutes, has long been advocating still greater changes in the system of educating these unfortunates. His views are ingenious and plausible, and have found considerable favor.

The Minister of Public Instruction, in a very able Circular to the Prefects of all the Departments in France, recommended Dr. Blanchet's plan to their favorable notice several years ago.

Some Departments and Municipalities have voted money, and made arrangements for testing the practicability of the proposed plan. It has been

in operation in some parts of France and of Russia. It is radical in its nature, and points to a partial abandonment of central Institutions, and the instruction of mutes in their several towns.

This plan seems to us impractical in its full extent; but it certainly has very valuable features, and deserves notice and trial. We shall watch the experiment in France with great interest, and we wish Dr. Blanchet all the success which his zeal and enterprise merit.

Meantime, the Massachusetts Board of State Charities, part of whose duty it is to visit the Hartford school and look after the interests of the beneficiaries placed there by the State, suggested, in its Second Annual Report, some important changes in the system of instructing and educating our deaf mutes, which, if carried out, would result in their being educated at home instead of being sent to Connecticut.

This seems to alarm the Hartford school; and the Principal devotes almost the whole of his last Report to what purports to be an answer to the suggestions of the Board.

He seems fairly roused; but not so much to the importance of the principles in question, as of defending the practices of the Hartford school, and of preserving the patronage of Massachusetts. He has at least two qualifications, which, as Byron

says, always make a writer interesting, to wit, "wrath and partiality."

His zeal leads him, not only to overlook facts and reasonings, but, unconsciously perhaps, to be uncourteous to the Board, and disrespectful to the Chairman, upon whom he makes a personal attack. He seems to think that if he can convict him of inconsistency, and show that he is ignorant of the best manner of educating mutes, the matter will be put to rest. He therefore avoids discussion of principles, and his Report is mainly an *argumentum ad hominem*. As such, it would not call for a public reply, because the public do not care whether the Principal or the Chairman of the Board is right in his theories. But our people do desire to have our deaf mutes educated in the best manner; though do not often have the means of knowing much about it. The present, therefore, seems to be a good opportunity of drawing their attention to it; and, as most of them are rather attracted than repelled by the smack of a controversy, we shall yield to the temptation, and without following the example of the Principal, in regard to personalities, we shall assail his positions, and refute his statements, so far as propriety and respect for an opponent will permit. Out of such a discussion, conducted with the desire to elicit truth, ought to come, notwithstanding any scandal to the cause of public charity, but on the contrary, an advance of its best interests.

It will be necessary, however, first to consider some general principles which are apt to be forgotten in the organization of Institutions, and of methods for educating deaf mutes, and similar classes of defectives. We can at the same time show the grounds upon which the Massachusetts Board of State Charities placed its suggestions for a change in our present system, and which called forth the displeasure of the Principal.

The multitude of unfortunates into whose condition the Board was to inquire, and over which the law gives it general supervision, was divided into the Dependent class, the Destructive class, and the Criminal class.

The first comprised destitute orphans; abandoned children; vagrant and vicious children, and youth; the blind, the deaf and dumb; the insane, the idiots, the confirmed drunkards, State paupers, and the like; making nearly twenty thousand persons in Massachusetts alone.

The general principles to be followed in the care and direction of these unfortunates were thus set forth:—

1st. “That it is better to separate and diffuse the dependent classes than to congregate them.

2d. “That we ought to avail ourselves as much as possible of those remedial agencies which exist in society,—the family, social influences, industrial occupations, and the like.

3d. "That we should enlist not only the greatest possible amount of popular sympathy, but the greatest number of individuals and of families, in the care and treatment of the dependent.

4th. "That we should avail ourselves of responsible societies and organizations which aim to reform, support, or help any class of dependents, thus lessening the direct agency of the State, and enlarging that of the people themselves.

5th. "That we should build up public institutions only in the last resort.

6th. "That these should be kept as small as is consistent with wise economy, and arranged so as to turn the strength and faculties of the inmates to the best account.

7th. "That we should not retain the inmates any longer than is manifestly for their good, irrespective of their usefulness in the institution."

The three last propositions seem sound, but they are unwelcome to those who are wedded to public institutions, and who believe in the doctrine of teaching, improving, or supporting children and adults in masses.

The Board says:—

"Our people have rather a passion for institutions; but they have also a vague idea that great piles of brick and mortar are essential to their existence and potency. They want to see them at once, and in the concrete. Hence, we sometimes have follies of the people as well as of individuals—many stories high, too—and so strongly built, and richly endowed, that they cannot be got rid of easily."

In support of their principle the Board said:—

“The hideous evils growing out of the old system of keeping men in prisons, shut up without separation, and without occupation, are too well known to need mention here; but it is not enough considered that the chief evils arose, not from the men being especially vicious or criminal, but from the fact of their being congregated so closely together.

“Let us see how it affects the pauper class.

“Most of those belonging to the first division mentioned above, to wit, those in whom dependence is inherent, and, of course, permanent, are infirm mentally, morally, or physically, perhaps in all these respects. Neither can those in the other class be in a normal and vigorous condition, else they would not be dependent. There exists in them, indeed, the innate disposition or capacity for recovering the normal state, but as yet it is in abeyance. Now, out of unsound and abnormal conditions there must, of course, grow certain mental and moral tendencies, which, to say the least, are unwholesome. And it is a natural consequence, (though disregarded in practice,) that if an individual with these tendencies lives in close association with others like himself, all his peculiarities and tendencies are intensified by the intercourse. The greater the majority of unsound persons in his community, the greater the intensification of his abnormal tendencies. Each acts upon all; and the characteristics of class, or caste, are rapidly developed. Nothing is more contagious than evil.”

This principle is further illustrated by reference to *special classes* as of the deaf mutes, and of the blind,—

“The lack of an important sense not only prevents the entire and harmonious development of mind and character, but it tends to give morbid growth in certain directions, as a plant checked in its direct upward growth grows askew. It would be a waste of words to prove this, because a denial of it would be a denial of the importance of the great senses.

“The morbid tendencies, however, are not strong—certainly not irresistible—at least with the blind. They are educable, like all tendencies and dispositions, and by skilful management may be turned to advantage. Certainly, however, they ought to be lessened, not strengthened, by education. Now, they are lessened, and their morbid effects corrected in each individual by intimate intercourse with persons of sound and normal condition—that is, by general society; while *they are strengthened by associating closely and persistently with others having the like infirmity.*

“Guided by this principle, we should, in providing for the instruction and training of these persons, have the association among them as little as is possible, and counteract its tendencies by encouraging association and intimacy with common society. They should be kept together no more closely and no longer than is necessary for their special instruction; and there should be no attempts to build up permanent asylums for them, or to favor the establishment of communities composed wholly, or mainly, of persons subject to a common infirmity.

“Special educational influences, to counteract these special morbid tendencies, should begin with the beginning of life and continue to its end; and they should be more uniform and persistent with mutes than with blind.

“The constant object should be to fashion them into the likeness of common men by subjecting them to common

social influences, and to check the tendency to isolation and to intensification of the peculiarities which grow out of their infirmity.

“A consideration of the principles imperfectly set forth above, will show that when we gather mutes and blind into institutions for the purpose of instruction, we are in danger of sowing, with sound wheat, some tares that may bring forth evil fruit. The mere instruction may be excellent, but other parts of the education tend to isolate them from common social influences, and to intensify their peculiarities, and this is bad.”

These rather novel doctrines have attracted attention among thoughtful persons. They have been praised by high authorities; pronounced too radical by others; and have been assailed by a few who fear that the importance and usefulness of long established institutions, to which they themselves are honestly wedded for life, may be impaired if such doctrines should be accepted.

The Board, after carefully setting forth the principles upon which all methods of treating special classes should be based, went on to apply them to the case of the deaf mutes of Massachusetts.

The present method is to send these unfortunates, at the expense of the State, to Hartford, there to reside with many others of the same class, in a great asylum, and be kept closely together during the most impressible years of their lives, deprived almost entirely of family and social relations, except

with each other. They have not even the advantage of family relations with their teachers, who naturally show their preference for domestic life over asylum life, by dwelling in their own houses.

This arrangement, however saving of labor, and sparing of money, violates the principle so strenuously urged by the Board of Charities, that defective children should be associated together as *little* as is possible; and with ordinary persons as *much* as is possible.

The Board suggested that instead of this plan, the deaf mutes of Massachusetts (who are quite numerous enough to form one school as large as a school ought to be,) should be educated at home, that is, within the State. The plan did not contemplate an asylum, but simply one or more schools, to which mutes could go for instruction, as other children go to common schools; and during the rest of the time be subjected to the ordinary family and social influences,—not of a great deaf mute family, but of common life.

The plan certainly had many important features. The method proposed was in accordance with the principles set forth by the Board, the soundness of which has not been disproved. It avoided, as much as is possible, the acknowledged evils of congregating persons of common infirmity closely together. It involved no great expense. It was in the nature of an experiment; and could be abandoned with-

little loss, if it should fail. In fine, it seemed to present a happy mean between the old system of the Hartford school and the system urged by Blanchet, which begins to find so much favor in France and other European countries. It incorporated the admitted advantages, and avoided the acknowledged evils of each. But it also involved the loss to the Hartford asylum of almost one-half its pupils, who are maintained there by the State of Massachusetts. It is conceivable, therefore, that it should be opposed, both directly and indirectly.

Accordingly, the Principal of the American Asylum at Hartford, opposes it in his way, which is the indirect way. He devotes almost the whole of his last Report to this matter. First, he makes a false issue with the Report of the Board of Charities; second, he makes a personal attack upon the Chairman.

He raises a false issue, by devoting a large part of his Report to the subject of teaching mutes articulation, as if that had been urged by the Board. He sets forth forcibly and fully the advantages of the French method of instruction used with some modifications at Hartford, and the disadvantages of the German method used in the German, and many other European schools.

If there was room to go into the matter here, it could be shown, that, with the exception of a single sentence, which should be qualified, all that is urged

in the Report of the Board of Charities in favor of articulation, is sound, and cannot be gainsaid. We quote from pp. 51-55 of their Report:—

“The inherent differences between children who are blind or mute and ordinary children, are not so great as to form characteristics of a class, or to remove them from the effects of common educational influences. We are not, therefore, to modify these influences to suit their condition, but rather to modify their condition to suit them. We must, however, modify our method of *instruction* somewhat to suit the blind, and a great deal to suit the deaf mutes.

“It is not the purpose, now, to speak of special instruction, further than to say that, other things being equal, the method is best which approaches most closely the approved methods used with ordinary children.

“But in speaking of education in a more general sense, that is of the influences which are brought to bear upon the development of character, a few words may be appropriated upon the subject under consideration, to wit,—

“Intensification of Peculiarities Growing out of an Infirmary.”

“It is to be borne in mind always, that the infirmities which characterize these classes of mutes and blind do, in spite of certain compensations, entail certain undesirable consequences, which have unfavorable effects upon body and mind both.

“The lack of an important sense not only prevents the entire and harmonious development of mind and character but it tends to give morbid growth in certain directions, as a plant checked in its direct upward growth grows askew. It would be a waste of words to prove this, because it

denial of it would be a denial of the importance of the great senses.

“The morbid tendencies, however, are not strong—certainly not irresistible—at least with the blind. They are educable, like all tendencies and dispositions, and by skilful management may be turned to advantage. Certainly, however, they ought to be lessened, not strengthened, by education. Now, they are lessened, and their morbid effects corrected in each individual, by intimate intercourse with persons of sound and normal condition—that is, by general society; while *they are strengthened by associating closely and persistently with others having the like infirmity*. They, themselves, seem to have an instinctive perception of this, and the most delicate of them feel the morbid tendency which may segregate them from ordinary people, and put them in a special class. Some of them struggle against it in a touching manner, as the fabled nymph resisted metamorphosis into a lower form of life.

“They seem to cling to ordinary persons, as if fearing segregation, and strive to conform themselves to their habits, manners, and even appearance. They wish to look, to act, to be, as much like others as is possible, and to be considered as belonging to ordinary society, and not to a special class.

“It is generally supposed that this feeling, especially in the blind, arises only from the fact that blindness and poverty are associated together, and that poverty calls forth contempt, lightened, in their case, by pity. But the feeling has a deeper source. It is very strong in those of delicate and sensitive natures, and it ought always to be respected and encouraged. Our principle in treating them should be that of separation and diffusion, not congregation. We are

to educate them for society of those who hear and who see ; and the earlier we begin the better.

“ We violate this principle when we gather them into institutions ; but we do so in view of certain advantages of instruction in common, which are not to be had in any other feasible method ; as we bear with an inferior common school rather than have none. A man of wealth might, indeed—and if he were wise, would—allow his mute or blind child to spend a certain time in a well-regulated institution for like children ; but it would be only a short one.

“ Guided by this principle we should, in providing for the instruction and training of these persons, have the association among them as little as is possible, and counteract its tendencies by encouraging association and intimacy with common society. They should be kept together no more closely and no longer than is necessary for their special instruction ; and there should be no attempts to build up permanent asylums for them, or to favor the establishment of communities composed wholly or mainly of persons subject to a common infirmity.

“ This is far more important with the mutes than with the blind, because of their speechlessness. Language, in its largest sense, is the most important instrument of thought, feeling, and emotion ; and especially of social intercourse. Blindness, in so far as it prevents knowledge of and participation in the rudimentary part of language, to wit, pantomime, or signs, gestures, and expression of features and face, tends to isolation : but the higher and far more important part of language, speech, is fully open to them. Then their sense of dependence strengthens their social desires ; increases their knowledge and command of speech, and makes that compensate very nearly, if not quite, for igno-

rance of other parts of language. The blind, if left to ordinary social influences, are in no danger of isolation. It is when we bring them together in considerable numbers that the tendency to segregation manifests itself; and this is rather from necessity than from choice, for the social cravings become more intense with them than with us.

“With mutes it is not so. Speech is essential for human development. Without it full social communion is impossible; since there can be no effectual substitute for it. The rudimentary and lower parts of language, or pantomime, is open to mutes; but the higher and finer part, that is, speech, is forever closed; and any substitute for it is, at best, imperfect. This begets a tendency to isolation; which not being so effectually checked during youth, as it is with the blind, by a sense of dependence, becomes more formidable. To be mute, therefore, implies tendency to isolation. The blind need little special instruction; the mutes a great deal.

“An attempt to consider different modes of instructing mutes would lead into a wide field of discussion; but it may be remarked that in the plenitude of arguments and disputes about the comparative merit of the various systems of sign language, it has not been enough considered that, by teaching a mute to articulate, we bring him to closer association with us by using our vernacular in our way, than by teaching him the finger language, which can never become our vernacular. The special method tends more to segregate him and his fellows from ordinary society. In the first case one party adheres to the natural and ordinary method of speech, and the other party strives to imitate it; in the second, both use a purely arbitrary and conventional method.

“The favorite motto of the adherents of the method of dactylology betrays this fault,—

‘*Lingua vicaria manus* ;’

for the very vicariousness is objectionable, and ought to be lessened as much as is possible.

“Without pretending to metaphysical precision, it may be said that by means of the senses we come into conscious relations with external nature—with men and things. Sensation and perception are the roots of knowledge. The wider the circle of sensuous relations, the more rapid the acquirement of knowledge. By action and reaction between our internal nature and external nature, character is developed. But in order that there may be harmonious and entire development of human character, there must be the ordinary organs of human sense : no more and no less.

“The result, then, of the lack of any one organ of sense must be twofold ; first, limitation of the circle of sensuous relations ; second, inharmonious development of character.

“In the education of the deaf mutes and of the blind we are to counteract the limitation by special instruction given through the remaining senses ; and we are to counteract the tendency to inharmonious development by special influences, both social and moral.

“Special educational influences, to counteract these special morbid tendencies, should begin with the beginning of life and continue to its end ; and they should be more uniform and persistent with mutes than with the blind.

“The constant object should be to fashion them into the likeness of common men by subjecting them to common social influences, and to check the tendency to isolation and to intensification of the peculiarities which grow out of their infirmity.

“A consideration of the principles imperfectly set forth above, will show that when we gather mutes and blind into institutions for the purpose of instruction, we are in danger of sowing, with sound wheat, some tares that may bring forth evil fruit. The mere instruction may be excellent, but other parts of the education tend to isolate them from common social influences, and to intensify their peculiarities, and this is bad.”

It will be seen that the Board does not commit itself to the system of articulation. Nay! the Report says expressly, (p. lviii.,) “that while some of the members believe that articulation should be taught, others, without pretending to decide upon the comparative merits of different systems of instruction, believe that many benefits would arise from having the wards of the State taught within her borders. They would, therefore, suggest a plan for *a change in our system of educating deaf mutes.*”

In this plan, the Board do not recommend that articulation should be taught.

This is the false issue which the Principal makes.

Next, he tries to divert attention from the reasoning of the Board, by attacking the Chairman, and disparaging the value of his opinion.

He singles him out by name; rudely insinuates that he is given to riding hobby horses, and to changing them frequently; and that moreover *he* might have some personal end to gratify; and saying for himself, with much complacency,—“*We are*

not specially sensitive in this matter, *we* have no hobbies to ride, and no *personal end whatever to gratify!*" (p. 38.)

Considering that the Report of the Board of Charities alluded to the Directors and officers of the Hartford Asylum very courteously; and admitted that the deaf mutes of Massachusetts "have received fair and kind treatment at their hands, and been taught by a corps of able and accomplished teachers;"* such language by one of those officers, sanctioned by those Directors, and printed in their Annual Report, appears uncourteous and strange, to say the least!

Again, considering that no one charged the Reverend Principal with being *sensitive*, or hobby horsical, his language certainly shows neither lack of sensitiveness nor abundance of Christian charity; but it does suggest the French proverb,—"*qui s'excuse s'accuse*;"—"who needlessly excuses himself, accuses himself."

And yet again, considering that the Reverend Principal is not sensitive, and declares (p. 29,) that the objections urged against the Hartford system have been repeatedly met, to the satisfaction of committees of the Massachusetts Legislature, it is strange he should say, "It may be proper to give them a passing notice:" stranger still, that this "passing notice" should occupy almost the whole of his Report.

* Report, p. 57.

He then proceeds, not to consider the arguments and considerations urged against the Hartford system, but to demolish them by lessening whatever weight they might derive from the character of the members of the Massachusetts Board of State Charities, in whose Report they are found.

That Board consists of seven members, six, at least, of whom are gentlemen of character, and some of them eminent scholars and teachers. They all sign the Report ; and all endorse the principles which it advocates, and the application of those principles to the education of mutes ; although they admit they are not all of them, competent to decide whether mutes should be taught articulation or not.

But the Principal regards them as mere men of straw, who signed what they did not understand or believe!

He says (p. 35,) with regard to the question of teaching articulation, "On the side of educating mutes by signs, we find every teacher in this country, and in the British Isles, with the exceptions above named, and several of these have spent nearly forty years in the work of practical instruction; on the side of teaching articulation, we find Dr. S. G. Howe!"

And so with all the arguments and considerations urged in the Report of the Board. It is, "Dr. Howe objects;" "Dr. Howe urges;" "Dr.

Howe complains;" "Dr. Howe suggests." Dr. Howe is everywhere, the Board nowhere!

Having deprived the principles advanced in the Report of whatever moral support the names of the doctor's colleagues might give, he next tries to demolish whatever they might get from the name of the doctor alone.

He quotes some of his opinions, expressed many years ago, and shows that they differ from those put forth in the recent Report of the Board of Charities, and then remarks,—

"It is pleasant to notice, that as Dr. Howe's views with regard to the best arrangements for deaf mutes have not been entirely settled in the past, there is reason to hope he may come out right yet."

Amen! but he will never come out right, if he is afraid of inconsistency with former opinions; or clings to doctrines because he once professed belief in them. The doctor indeed says, in one of his Reports, that the result of many years' experience and observation, both of blind and of mutes, convince him that he made mistakes in organizing the Institution for the Blind, more than thirty years ago. There was then no school for the blind in the country, and he copied existing establishments, among others the asylum at Hartford, merely modifying it to meet the special condition of the blind.

He found, in a few years, that he had incorporated some fundamental errors in the plan of organization; and in his Twentieth Report he states, that having been called upon by a committee from another State to recommend a plan for an institution for the blind, he did recommend one differing in important points from the Perkins' Institution. He would have no "commons," no central boarding-house,—only a school-house. He would thus avoid the error of making them board, and lodge, and live so much together; because he finds that it encourages a spirit of caste, and intensifies the peculiarities growing out of their infirmity. He would have them associate with each other less, and with ordinary persons more, than is now done.

He would now follow out this idea in the proposed school for mutes in Massachusetts. He did, indeed, follow it out in establishing the workshop for the blind many years ago; and the most satisfactory results have been obtained.

There are some thirty blind persons who come together in the morning to learn trades, and to work at them on wages, and go away to their several boarding places in the neighborhood.

This establishment is under the general direction of the Institution; but the inmates (some of them young,) are not brought together except for instruction, or for work, and not even for work in large numbers; because the plan is to furnish work

at their several homes whenever it is possible. They are thus subjected to ordinary family and social influences, and are trained to live in and take part with ordinary society, and not trained to become members of a *special class* or *caste*. The establishment is successful; and blind persons who have been familiar with both modes of living,—asylum life and common life,—prefer the latter.

It would doubtless be so with mutes if the experiment were fairly tried; for all the reasons and considerations in favor of such a system apply with even more force to them than to the blind.

The first direct charge which the Principal brings against Dr. Howe is, that he makes "an offensive classification" of deaf mutes.

"We object to Dr. Howe's placing, as he does, the four hundred deaf mutes of Massachusetts among the dependent classes." (Rep. p. 29.) And again, (p. 30,) "This *offensive* classification pervades the whole Report," &c.

He would be blameworthy indeed who should, even by careless use of language, give just cause of offence to a class of unfortunates who need all our sympathy and kindness. But we shall show that by no fair construction of the Report can such a charge be sustained; and moreover, that if the language of the Directors of the Hartford school, and of the Principal himself, were construed as he

construes the language of the Board, then they and he are open to the charge of very "offensive classification."

So far from anything "offensive" to the mutes pervading the Report of the Board, they are spoken of not only respectfully, but with tender interest. Indeed, special care even is taken to combat the common opinion, (which is really offensive to the mutes,) that they form a special class, and must always do so; an opinion, by the way, which the Reports of asylums for deaf mutes, and even those of the Principal himself, often tend, inadvertently, to strengthen. The Board of Charities says, (p. 50,)

"It may be permitted, however, to draw a further illustration of the principle under consideration from some persons, (neither vicious nor criminal,) the similarity of whose defect or infirmity causes them to be classed together, such as the deaf mutes and the blind. It may not be improper, at the same time, to make some remarks and suggestions upon the mode of treating such of these classes as are at the charge of the State.

"It is common to regard deaf mutes and the blind as forming special classes, though speaking strictly no such classes exist in nature.

"They spring up sporadically among the people, from the existence of abnormal conditions of parentage, which produce a pretty equal average number of cases in every generation, among any given population.

"They abound more in some localities and some neighborhoods than in others; owing, probably, to ill-assorted marriages.

"The important points, however, are that these abnormal conditions of parentage are not inherent and essential ones; that some of them are cognizable; that with wider diffusion of popular knowledge more of them may be known; and that, by avoiding them, the consequences may cease, and these classes themselves gradually diminish and finally disappear.

"We have no deaf or blind domestic animals; and these generations of men *need not* be forever burdened with blind and deaf offspring."

The idea which pervades the Report is, that the deaf mutes and the blind, if left without special instruction and training, tend to fall into the class of dependents. If this gives just cause of offence, then must the Report of all the institutions for deaf mutes in the country be offensive; for they do constantly express the idea that deaf mutes must be a burden to their friends and to society, unless they receive special instruction.

Out of the abundance of such expression we select a few. The directors of the Hartford school say: "The translation indeed of one of the inferior orders of creation to the human species, would be only in a degree more wonderful than we have in several instances witnessed in our scholars." The Principal quotes this language approvingly, in his able paper, in the *American Annals*, (p. 3.)

Nay! he himself is especially open to the charge of what he calls "offensive classification."

Without meaning to be "offensive," he often speaks of them in a way which might give pain to sensitive persons. For instance, he says: "We do not believe that another human being can be found, *in savage or civilized society*, whose mind is so thoroughly imbruted with ignorance and so difficult to reach as that of many a deaf mute who has grown up to maturity in the darkness and neglect *consequent upon his misfortune!*" *

In many other places he speaks of them as entirely dependent upon society for salvation from a low and brutish life. He does not regard them as dependent in the sense in which ordinary children and youth are, but specially and necessarily dependent, owing to their natural infirmity; and shows that they can be lifted out of their ignorance and dependence only by special means and costly training.

Nay, more! He not only considers them as a dependent class, but he sometimes fairly puts them down in the dangerous class. He says, eloquently:

"It is the darkness and gloom of his mental condition that makes him an object of commiseration, and renders him, if uneducated, the *most pitiable of all God's creatures*. This darkness is as nearly total as can well exist in the midst of

* Thirty-Fifth Annual Report Ohio Institution for Deaf and Dumb, p. 9. Report of Rev. Collins Stone, Superintendent.

civilized and Christian society. His palsied ear shuts out from his soul, not only the 'melody of sweet sounds,' but also the most familiar facts of common life and experience.

"He knows nothing of the history of mankind, or of the globe on which he lives, or of the immensely important truths connected with his immortality.

"He is also excluded by his infirmity from intercourse with his fellow-men. He can neither make known to them his own wants, nor understand and conform to their wishes. But while in this uneducated state he is a very ignorant being, he is *by no means an innocuous one*. His animal nature is fully developed. His passions are fierce and strong, and he knows no reason for their restraint. Revenge, lust, jealousy, may have dominion over him, without the presence of any moral considerations to lead him to repress their promptings. He may thus easily become an uncomfortable and *dangerous member of society!*"

Now, if the classification of these unfortunates among the deserving but dependent members of society is "offensive," what must be that of the Reverend Principal, who puts them among the *dangerous members?*

But, in reality, neither meant any offence, and none ought to be taken. The criticism is not worthy of the Principal, whose actions speak louder than his words; whose devotion of his life to the education of mutes would prove him to be their friend, let his language be what it might; and though he has made more "offensive classifications" of them than the Board has done.

The Principal next makes four several charges against Dr. Howe, in one paragraph, as follows:

First, that "a few years ago he advocated the plan of educating deaf mutes and blind children in one institution, on the ground that as the blind are intellectually superior, such a union would be especially for the advantage of deaf mutes." The Principal probably had been looking at the Twelfth Report of the Trustees of the Perkins' Institution for the Blind, without remarking that it stated that Dr. Howe had been in Europe most of the year, and did not write his usual Report. But, no matter; he stands by the Trustees' report, and still maintains that blind children are usually much superior to mutes in capacity for intellectual attainment, by reason of the gift of hearing, which is the mother of speech; and that it would, on this and on other accounts, be better for a mute child to be associated, *while learning the English language*, with a blind child, than with another mute child.

His position is not understood by the Principal. He has urged that certain advantages would accrue to deaf mutes by being associated with blind children, because they would be forced to spell their words upon their fingers, and to form distinct sentences, and thus to have *constant practice* in the English language.

Thinking persons know well that one of the greatest obstacles in the way of deaf mutes learning

our language is the strong tendency they have to use *pantomime*.

The attempt to make them use the English language in their intercourse with each other, is like trying to make our children speak French together. The little mutelings won't take pains to spell out the words when they can flash forth their meaning with a look or a gesture.

They won't make the letters t-a-i-l-o-r if they can touch their forehead, and imitate the swing of his arm; nor h-o-r-s-e if they can crook their forefingers by the side of their forehead to show his ears; nor h-o-r-s-e-m-a-n if they can set two fingers astride the other hand. They won't restrict themselves to the use of letters, and words, and sentences in their intercourse with their playmates *who can see*; but they would be forced to do so with playmates who are blind.

There is hardly a mute graduate of the Hartford school who can *spell* as well as Laura Bridgman does; and nothing gave her such marvellous accuracy, and such copious vocabulary, except the necessity of constantly practising the use of words which had been so painfully taught her.

It is almost a matter of certainty that she would not have been able to spell so well as she does if she had been merely deaf and mute. Like other mutes she would have been tempted by the facility of addressing signs to the eye to neglect that patient

and persistent practice which is necessary to make a good *speller*.

She could *see* no natural signs, and therefore, persons conversing with her were forced to spell their words; and her answers were necessarily made not by signs, but by letters and words.

The case was a new and anomalous one, and if the Doctor had regarded the "consistency" of his record, and followed the practice of the "schools," he would have declined to undertake the charge of a child who did not come within the rules.

The passages on which, probably, the Principal founds his first charge, merely set forth certain advantages of the kind of instruction which the blind mutes must have; and its applicability in a certain extent to the instruction of ordinary mutes.

The second charge is, that "he has since been understood to favor their education by a new system of dactylology of his own invention."

The Principal has been imposed upon by a pure invention of somebody. But should he allow himself to be imposed upon? Such a statement was worth publishing, or it was not. If it was, then the Principal should first have inquired if it were true; and a letter of inquiry would have brought the answer by return mail that it was untrue. If it was not worth publishing, then such a statement is unworthy a place in a Report professing to be a

reply to the Report of the Massachusetts Board of State Charities.

The third charge is, that "Dr. Howe once advocated removing mute children from home influences and associations at a much earlier period in life than most teachers think judicious."

This is true; but if the Principal had gone on and stated the whole truth, he would have made it appear that Dr. Howe's heretical views were finally adopted by the Directors of the American Asylum. As he has failed to go into the history of the matter, which is interesting in the history of deaf-mute education in Massachusetts, we will do so.

In the Twelfth Annual Report of the Institution for the Blind, for 1843, occurs the following:—

"A few words must be said with regard to the two deaf and dumb children who joined our school about a year since, at the early age of seven years. Being too young to be admitted into the Asylum for the deaf mutes at Hartford, they were placed by their parents under our direction, with the hope that they might, at least, gain a knowledge of language at an earlier period than has been usually the case with children in their condition.

"The success which has attended the plan of instructing Laura, by the finger language alone, has induced the instructor of these two deaf mutes to teach them only by the finger process, intentionally avoiding the use of the gesture language, taught at Institutions for the deaf and dumb. And, thus far, the plan, as in Laura's case, has been satisfactory.

“It is found these children not only learn to talk rapidly with the fingers, but are able to form a precise idea of a sentence expressed by the finger language, which cannot always be the case in the use of their natural, or gesture language; and in this important particular does the manual or finger language seems to be of greater value to the deaf mutes than the language of gesture.

“They have made considerable progress, not only in the acquisition of language, but also in writing, numerical calculations, and in a knowledge of objects which attract their notice.

“During the last session of our State Legislature, the Committee on Education, appointed by that body, consulted our Board on the subject of admitting the deaf and dumb to enjoy the privileges of our Institution. A consideration of this proposition was urged, and encouraged, by parents of deaf mute children, and also by educated deaf mutes, who were anxious to have the education of their unfortunate brethren commenced *at an earlier age than was permitted by the regulations of the American Asylum at Hartford*, and at a school nearer than that at Hartford.

“The trustees, acting under Dr. Howe’s advice, expressed a willingness to receive deaf mute pupils of tender years, on the same footing with the blind, believing that it would prove mutually beneficial to the two classes.”

The Report goes on to say,—

“The question, we understand, was discussed at some length by the committee, in the presence of a deputation from the Asylum at Hartford, who *protested against the proposed change, and it finally resulted in the arrangement that the regulations of that Asylum should be so altered as to*

authorize the admission of our State deaf mute beneficiaries at an earlier age than heretofore ! ”

It would appear from this record that most teachers, and doubtless the deputation from Hartford, disagreed with Dr. Howe's views. Nevertheless, in order to prevent the loss of any Massachusetts beneficiaries, they consented to make an “injudicious” arrangement.

At any rate, they so far adopted the plan advocated by Dr. Howe, as to change their conditions of admission, and admit pupils at what the Principal calls “*an earlier period of life than most teachers think judicious.*”

Dr. Howe had long before urged that deaf mute children should begin to learn the English language as early as possible; and in 1842 he received some young mutes into the Institution for the Blind, partly in order to see if they could not be taught advantageously at an earlier age than that fixed for admission to the Hartford asylum.

From the early days of that asylum down to 1841, their Reports state that candidates for admission must be *not under ten years of age nor over thirty*. In 1842 they say, “*State beneficiaries must be not under twelve nor over twenty-five; other applicants, between ten and thirty.*”

This was not only putting the minimum age too low, but making besides an odious distinction between State beneficiaries and private pupils. It

was about this time that Dr. Howe was chairman on the part of the Massachusetts House of Representatives, of the Committee on Public Charitable Institutions, and agitated this matter.

It appears also that the Directors of the asylum soon changed their views, and announced that they would receive pupils between the ages of eight and twenty-five, thus admitting State beneficiaries four years earlier than they had before done, and abolishing the odious distinction between them and private pupils.

Nor have they stopped here; for in a later Report, a committee of their Board says,—

“The opinion is beginning to be quite prevalent, that a longer time than six or eight years is requisite, thoroughly to educate deaf mutes; and that the legislatures of the States to which they belong should extend the term of their instruction. Indeed, there is good reason for believing that these legislatures will do this whenever the subject is fairly laid before them. In that case, the objection to receiving any pupils under ten which has hitherto been felt, would be removed, and the number of pupils actually in the asylum at any one time would be considerably increased, even if the annual admissions should be the same as heretofore. As we were the first to project and carry into effect the high class, by means of which a portion of our pupils are enabled to prosecute their studies much beyond the ordinary limit, we ought also TO SECURE TO THE AMERICAN ASYLUM THE CREDIT OF TAKING the first step in the opposite direction, and thus offer the advantages of instruction to such young

children as contemplate a thorough and extended course of training."

This report was approved and adopted by the whole Board.

Dr. Howe urged the early instruction of mutes, upon the ground that it was *very important to them*; the Directors seem to have adopted it, first to prevent the loss of the beneficiaries of Massachusetts; next, "to secure to the American Asylum the credit of taking the first step," &c.

Surely, we may fairly quote here the language of the Principal respecting Dr. Howe, as more applicable to the Directors of his own institution, and say, "It is pleasant to notice that as the " Directors' "views with regard to the best arrangement for deaf mutes have not been settled in the past, there is reason to hope they may come out right yet."

The Principal charges, fourthly, that Dr. Howe "now takes the ground that deaf mutes should not be gathered into institutions at all."

We do not believe that the Principal would purposely misrepresent any one, and therefore do not understand how, with the Report before him, he could make such a statement!

That document [which the Principal treats as Dr. Howe's alone,] recommends a change in our system of educating the deaf mutes of Massachusetts,

and gives the outline of a plan for an institution. As this is an interesting matter to all humane people, and a very important one to deaf mutes, we will sketch this outline.

The Governor and Council shall appoint three commissioners for the education of deaf mutes, who shall act without salary, [or they may be members of the Board of Education.] The commissioners are to select the children who are to be the beneficiaries of the State.

This would certainly be an improvement on the present system, for it is well known that the Governor and Council cannot attend to this work as carefully as they would do, and as it ought to be done. They have neither time nor means for doing it thoroughly. Besides, it is a work for which persons should have some peculiar fitness. Some applicants are unfit for State beneficiaries, and are rejected after going to the asylum at the State's charge; some are not entirely deaf; some are idiotic; some partially blind or deranged. How can the Governor and Council examine a deaf mute child and ascertain these things? But more often the applicants are children of parents who have some means, and who ought to pay part, at least, of the cost, and so lessen the charge to the Commonwealth.

These commissioners, after selecting candidates, and deciding whether they should be taught wholly

or only partly at the expense of the State, may contract with any responsible society or organization of citizens of Massachusetts, who will undertake to instruct and train indigent deaf mutes belonging to the State, upon a plan of which the following is a vague outline. [It is understood that responsible parties are ready to form an organization, if the State should favor it.]

“The society to provide a suitable building for school-house, and, if necessary, a workshop, and to employ competent teachers.

“The commissioners to designate the beneficiaries, and to allow the society for each one a sum *not greater than* that now paid for beneficiaries at the Hartford school. Their warrant should be, not for five years, as is now the case, but from one year, and renewed, if, upon examination, the pupil proved worthy.

“The society to instruct and train these beneficiaries gratuitously in its school; to board the children of parents who do not live in the neighborhood of the school in respectable families, and pay ——— dollars and cents a week for at least forty weeks in a year.

“They shall, however, if possible, place but one mute in any one family, and never more than three.

“The commissioners should have power to require the parents of beneficiaries to pay a certain part—say one third or quarter—of the cost of the board of their children; and when they are manifestly unable to do so, then to require the towns where they have a settlement to pay a sum not exceeding one dollar in a week, for forty weeks in a year.

“The commissioners to have general supervision of the school, and of the welfare of such wards of the Commonwealth as live more than two miles from the school.

“The advantages of such a system would be many.

“1st. The care and oversight of these wards of the Commonwealth would fall where they really belong—upon our own citizens, a very large number of whom would come into constant relations with them.

“2d. The children would be taught within the State, and nearer to their homes ; and a large proportion of them might live at home.

“3d. The relations of family and neighborhood would not be interrupted so much, nor so long.

“The importance of this is very great in all cases, but especially so with those whose natural infirmity or peculiarity tends to isolate them.

“There are innumerable threads uniting us with society, and giving us the unspeakable advantages of home and of familiar neighborhood, many of which are broken in the case of these unfortunates ; and we should strive to strengthen, not to weaken, those that remain to them.

“4th. The disadvantages and evils arising out of congregation of great numbers of persons of like infirmity, would be lessened and counteracted.

“The Hartford school is already too large ; and it is continually growing. Living many years in such a congregation strengthens that tendency to isolation which grows out of the infirmity of mutism, and intensifies other morbid tendencies.

“By the new plan all these would be lessened, and the counteracting tendencies of common social life would be greatly increased.

“ The mutes would be together but five or six hours each day. During the rest of the time, instead of being subjected to the artificial restraint and influences of ‘asylum life,’ which, at best, can be only a poor imitation of family life and influences, they would be subjected to the average influences of social life ; which is the kind of life they are to live in future, and for which, during all the tender years of youth, they should be trained.

“ 5th. The whole establishment would be simplified. There would be no need of a great building, with halls, dormitories, kitchen, dining-room and the like ; but only a simple school-house, and perhaps a workshop. There would be no need of superintendent, matron or steward, with their corps of assistants ; no cooks, no domestics, and none of the cumbrous machinery of a great institution.

“ 6th. Part of the burden of supporting the child would fall where part of it (at least,) surely belongs, to wit : upon the parents, and upon the neighborhood, and not all upon the State. Moreover, besides lessening the cost and the responsibility which now fall upon the State, it would divide them among the people. The tendency of this would be to cause our mutes to be educated more nearly as our other children are. Every approach to this is very important to the mutes, because it tends to prevent their social isolation, and makes them to be regarded as members of society in full communion.

“ A regular course of intellectual instruction would be given in the school ; but advantage might be taken of neighboring workshops for teaching some, if not all, the pupils various handicrafts, as other youth are taught. This would give a wider range of choice than can be given in the asylum, where only a few trades are taught.

“Arrangements might be made by which children of farmers, who can be useful at home in summer, might come to the school in winter.

“Other advantages of such a change might be set forth, besides the consideration that in a new school we might have all the advantages of the long experience of the Hartford school. We might avoid some of the errors which result from its very organization; which cannot be cured in one generation; and which, perhaps, stand in the way of introducing new and improved systems of instruction.”

Now, if an establishment upon this plan is not an institution for deaf mutes, then what constitutes one? Is it eating in a common hall; sleeping in a common dormitory; being subjected to daily chapel devotions; taught a particular creed; and kept cooped up in one building and yard? Are these things essential to an institution? Then are not the German universities institutions; nor our country academies, nor our common schools, “institutions.”

Does not, then, this fourth sentence of the paragraph show, like the three preceding ones, that in his excessive desire to put Dr. Howe in the wrong, the Reverend Principal is led to misunderstand, and then to misstate his views?

The conclusion that he does is strengthened by the next paragraph, in which the Principal is led to state what is utterly at variance with known facts, and even with statements in his own Reports. He says, (p. 35):—

“ Dr. Howe objects that our school is too large, and that the cost is annually increasing. * * * The annual charge is now \$175. * * * The annual charge at the Institution for the Blind is \$200 per pupil, &c.”

This strange blending of truth and error gives the reader an entirely false impression. The annual charge at the Institution for the Blind is more than the Principal states it to be; but no matter—the *animus* of this sentence is clear; it gives the impression that the *cost* at the Hartford school is *only* \$175 a year! Who, that is not familiar with the financial condition of the Hartford asylum, could fail to conclude, from reading this statement, that it cost much less to support pupils there than at the Institution for the Blind, or at any similar institution in the whole land? Whereas, the actual *cost* is more than \$175; probably nearer \$275 than \$175 a year.

The Asylum has a fund given by the United States government for the *benefit of the mutes generally*, and the income of that, (and perhaps of other funds,) probably amounted last year to over \$15,000. The Trustees, as in duty bound, appropriate this, or part of it, to keeping down the charges.

They do not tell us how much; and the Report of the Treasurer is marvellously condensed.

That document, however, show that the expenses in 1865 were: for salaries \$18,649.40; insurance

and sundries, \$1,314.21; total, \$19,963.61. Other expenses by the Steward, (p. 44,) \$33,276.47; making in all \$53,240.08 as the cost in 1865. This sum, divided by 212, the average number of pupils, gives over \$250 a year for each. The printed accounts are obscure, and there is apparent discrepancy between the Steward and Treasurer,—so that the actual cost may be a little less; but certainly it is far greater than an unsuspecting reader would infer from the Report of the Principal; and probably nearer \$275 than \$175.

There is another proof, that the eagerness of the Principal to convict Dr. Howe of inconsistency, leads him to contradict his own Report. He says, (p. 38,) comparing the pupils of the Blind Asylum with his own,—

“It is comparatively difficult for blind children to travel in public conveyances. They are *exposed to constant danger*, and must always have an attendant. Deaf mutes, however, *travel safely to all parts of the country.*”

Here are several mistakes,—some excusable, some not. It is excusable that the Principal should not know that most of the pupils of the Institution of the Blind travel to and from home on the railroads, *without special attendants*, and safely, and that they are trained to do it. But it is not excusable that he should publish a statement concerning them without a little inquiry into its truth.

Still less is it excusable that he should make statements, contradictory to others in the Report of his own Institution. On page 72 of the very Report in which he states that deaf mutes travel to all parts of the country safely, we find the following, reprinted from former Reports:—

“On the day of the commencement of the *Vacation*, an officer of the Asylum will accompany such pupils as are to travel upon the railroads between Hartford and Boston, *taking care of them* and their baggage, on condition that their friends will make timely provision for their expenses on the way, and engage to meet and receive them immediately on the arrival of the early train at various points on the route previously agreed on, and at the station of the Boston and Worcester Railroad in Boston. A similar arrangement is made on the Connecticut River Railroads, as far as to White River Junction. No person will be sent from the Asylum to accompany the pupils on their return; but if their fare is paid and their trunks checked to Hartford, it will be safe to send them in charge of the conductor.”

A critic writing in the spirit of the Principal's Report might be tempted to say that, when it is desirable to make a point against Dr. Howe, “the deaf mutes travel safely to all parts of the country;” but, when it is desirable to attract pupils, the parents are assured “that an officer of the Asylum will travel with them and take care of them.”

But the charitable conclusion is, that in his haste and eagerness to make points against an opponent, the Principal overlooked what careful thought would have made him see, to wit: that blind people are less exposed to danger in travelling than deaf people. The former are made careful by their infirmity, and their hearing is made acute by practice; the latter are made careless, and they have no hearing at all. Again, a little reflection would have shown him, that one of the many advantages of hearing, over sight, as a guardian sense, arises from the fact that in the material world warnings of danger come mainly through the ear. This is, first, because, during half the time, darkness prevails over the world, and then the sentinel at the eye is off guard; but the one at the ear listens during all the waking hours; and, even when the body sleeps, is still half awake; for the ear shuts no lid, as the eye does. And second, because the eye receives no warning unless the rays of light strike nearly from the front, and therefore more than half the circle round us is unguarded. But the ear gathers in sounds not only from all around, but from above and below. Unless the rattlesnake be in the direct path, the eye sees him not, while the ear catches the first note of warning, come it from where it may. The thinnest substance stops light; but sound traverses thick walls. Besides, sight is more voluntary,—hearing

more involuntary; almost automatic indeed. Sights are shut out easily; sounds with difficulty. You can be blind at will; you cannot shut out all sound, even by stopping the ears.

But be the philosophy of the matter what it may, daily facts show that mutes and deaf persons are more exposed to the dangers of the present mode of travel, and suffer more from them, not only than blind persons, but than any class of people whatever. We constantly hear of persons being run over on the tracks; and in a large proportion of cases they are deaf persons.

If the Principal will consult the records of railroads he will find many cases of mutes and deaf persons being run over; but rarely one of a blind man being injured in that manner.

Nay! if he will look into the Reports of his own Institution he will find evidence not only of constant dread of danger from the rail cars, but accidents and deaths among the pupils, even while under the protecting and watchful care of the Asylum.

The Thirty-Ninth Annual Report says,—

“An accident occurred on the railroad to one of the pupils from Canada, in September last, which resulted in his death. While walking carelessly along on the ends of the ties, outside of the track, he was struck down by a passing train, and so severely injured that he survived less than an hour. This

is the first accident of the kind which has ever happened to one of our pupils ; and we trust with the warning given to them of the danger of a similar exposure, and the vigilance which will in future be exercised on the part of those who have the care of them, it will be the last. *Several educated deaf mutes* have, within a few years, been killed while walking on the track of railroads.

“The practice of thus exposing themselves to almost certain destruction cannot be too strongly reprobated, and their friends should enjoin upon them the importance of discontinuing it under all circumstances.”

But the trust and the hope were vain ; and vain were the warnings and precautions, for we read in the Fortieth Report, (p. 13,) as follows:—

“A severe, but not fatal accident, happened to one of our oldest pupils in July last, in consequence of incautiously walking on the railroad track near the city. The warning given in our last Report was unheeded, and the result was an injury, which will in a measure disable him for life.”

A still more shocking accident is related in the Forty-Second Report, (p. 8):—

“Two of the small boys, John Parker, from Massachusetts, and Benjamin Dawson, from New Hampshire, were killed by a train of cars as they were walking along the railroad track. The caution given them but a few hours before the accident was disregarded, and their intention of being on the track but for a few moments, till they could reach the crossing of a road, brought upon them this terrible

calamity. While we sympathize with the afflicted friends of these promising lads, and regret most sincerely their untimely end, we cannot think there has been any want of care or attention to the safety of the pupils in this particular, on the part of the officers of the Asylum to whom their immediate oversight is entrusted. No rule of the establishment has been more distinctly set forth, more frequently or more strictly enjoined, or more rigidly enforced, than that which forbids the pupils going upon the track of a railroad. Whenever an accident of the kind has happened to a deaf mute in any part of the country, the fact has been announced to them publicly, and they have been warned never to indulge in a practice so unwise and so dangerous. We trust that the lesson taught by this sad experience may never be forgotten by the pupils, and that it may prompt those who watch over them to still greater vigilance."

The records of other Institutions show that dreadful accidents have happened in consequence of the infirmity of the pupils. As a matter of curiosity, we have ascertained by the annual returns of all the Railroad Companies of Massachusetts, that the number of persons run over, and killed or injured by the cars, during the last fifteen years, is 701. This does not include passengers, nor persons connected with the trains, but only persons outside the train, crossing the road, or walking or lying upon the track. Of these, *one* is supposed to have been injured in consequence of blindness, *six* of insanity, and *seventeen* of deafness. Of course the supposed cause is not always the real one; but, assuredly, if

the real cause were ascertained, it would swell the number of accidents to the deaf, much more than to the blind; because the blindness is obvious, deafness is not. Everybody in the neighborhood knows who is blind, but not who is deaf. In the case of a stranger, even, the corpse of a blind man would reveal his infirmity; but deaf dead men tell no tales. But even if they could, it might be useless for our purpose, because if in the face of these reasons and facts, the Principal persists in saying, even to make a point against Dr. Howe, that "deaf mutes can travel safely to all parts of the country," he would not believe otherwise even though one rose from the dead.

Enough has been said to show that the charge of ignorance and error which the Principal attempts to fasten upon the Chairman of the Board of State Charities, is laid at the wrong door.

If this were all, it would not be worth saying in public. To aim at mere personal triumph would be unworthy the cause and the parties. But there are questions concerning the best modes of educating and instructing deaf mutes which are very important to that class of unfortunates, and which would deeply interest all intelligent and humane people if they could be brought forward and fairly discussed. It is the hope of causing them to be discussed which decides us to print what has been written above.

While earnest and enthusiastic men like Blanchet, in France, plead for the immediate modification of the old Central Institutions, such as those of Paris, London, and Hartford, and for teaching mutes in common schools; and while eminent and experienced, but conservative men, like the Abbé Carton, in Belgium, admit that the modification of the old system is only a question of time,—we of Massachusetts hold on to a system borrowed from the old world, nearly fifty years ago, by a legislative body not known to have been particularly enlightened upon the subject of deaf mute education.

This ought not to be; and our neglect of the matter is not creditable to the Commonwealth. The slightest examination would show that we have not only failed to improve materially our method of treating mutes, but have also failed to introduce into it the system and order which characterize other departments of the public service.

It would be a great mistake to say that the present method of selecting the beneficiaries of the State is a good one, for there is no real method about it; and even the existing loose and imperfect practice is left to officials who have not the time nor the means to conduct it properly.

See how it works. A mother has a child who cannot hear, and when he becomes eight or ten years old she concludes, sadly, that he never will

talk. She takes him to the common school, but the teacher sends him home, saying he cannot do anything with him—cannot teach him. By and by she learns that there is a school, somewhere, for such children; and if she will go to the State House she can find out all about it. There she is passed civilly from one official to another, until she reaches the gentlemanly clerk of the Secretary of State, who concludes the child ought to be sent to Hartford, and he passes her over to the gentlemanly clerk of the Governor, who kindly assists her in making out the necessary papers, which are signed without further examination. Neither of these gentlemen, however, has any means of knowing whether the applicant is a fit subject for the school, or not. The child must then wait perhaps one month, perhaps eleven months, until the time of the annual reception of pupils, and then be sent to Hartford; provided that, in the meantime, the parents do not change their purpose.

At Hartford, if the child is found to be a proper subject, he is well cared for, and put under the instruction of able and zealous teachers. But if, as sometimes happens, the mutism is the result of insanity, or of imbecility, or if the child is partially blind, or otherwise defective, or is too feeble in health, then he must be sent home again.

He has lost precious time; the poor parents have been sadly taxed for the cost of the journey; the

State has perhaps been taxed for his clothing; and all because it is nobody's business to see that only fit persons shall be selected as beneficiaries, and sent out of the State at public charge.

Again, it is clear that parents who can afford to pay part of the expenses of the child's education ought to do so. This would not only be just, but really beneficial to them and to their child. It would increase self-respect; attach more esteem to the advantages of education; promote punctuality of attendance; favor study at home, as preparatory for school; and be in many ways advantageous, besides being a saving of money to the State.

But it is now nobody's business to attend to this matter; consequently the pupils are, almost without exception, at the entire charge of the State for their board and instruction, and in some cases for their clothing also.

Again, the Commonwealth sends about a hundred pupils to the Connecticut school, but has adopted no method for ascertaining whether her wards are taught by a system well adapted to their wants, nor even whether they have the full benefit of the system, such as it is. There is no examination, deserving the name, by any official; and no means of knowing officially whether the wards of the Commonwealth have been well and properly treated, taught, and trained, during their five or six years' sojourn in another State.

The whole thing is taken upon faith. Now, we ourselves do not lack faith in the honesty and ability of those to whose care they are committed; but officials should walk by light, and not by faith.

We say there is nothing deserving the name of examination, for it would be a mistake to call the present practice by such a name. The Governor and Council, in their annual "progress" among State institutions, sometimes go out of our borders, and visit the asylum at Hartford. The practice is a good one, and certain good results follow; but surely nobody will pretend that there is, or can be, upon that occasion, anything like an examination. It is merely an exhibition to a highly intelligent and sympathetic audience.

Then, once in a year, the Legislature appoints a committee to look after public charitable institutions generally, and especially to see that they do not spend too much money. This committee makes a general inspection of all the charitable and penal institutions in the State; and once a year they visit the Connecticut asylum. They have reason to be pleased by what they witness; and they generally give the institution a complimentary notice in their report. It is well known, however, that members are not selected with a view to their ability or fitness for judging the merits of a system of instruction for mutes, and that their single flying visit is only a general inspection. It is not, and

cannot well be a thorough examination of the merits of the system of instruction and of its results. The reports of the Committee make no such pretensions. They are complimentary, of course, but very vague and general in their statements. Nevertheless, they are sometimes gravely quoted by the Directors of the Hartford asylum, as proofs that the friends of deaf mutes ought to be satisfied with the excellence of their system, and of its administration!

We assert with confidence that our Legislature acts without sufficient light and knowledge upon this subject. We assert, moreover, with sorrow, almost with shame, that whenever an attempt is made to bring about any change in the system of educating our mutes, it is put down by considerations not of wise economy but of mere money saving. The whole matter is in the hands of the Legislature, which are always full enough with other business.

Whenever there is any likelihood of any action looking to a removal of our beneficiaries from Connecticut, a delegation of pupils is sent from Hartford to exhibit their knowledge and acquirements. They make a strong appeal (not too strong,) to the sympathy of the Legislature. Then the Superintendent waits upon the Committee of Public Charitable Institutions, and exhibits his facts and figures. He makes a strong appeal (too

strong, alas!) to the pocket-nerve of the State. He shows that he can maintain our children, if we will send them abroad, cheaper than we can do it at home; and straightway the whole matter is left to sleep for the year.

Perhaps there is no need of any change, and no room for any improvement. Perhaps the great march of improvement in all other branches of instruction, affects not the method adopted at Hartford nearly half a century ago, and followed ever since, almost without change. Perhaps nothing can be borrowed for its improvement from the opposite system adopted in the excellent schools for mutes through the length and breadth of Germany,—the land of learned men and of able teachers. Perhaps Horace Mann was a dolt. Perhaps the Board of State Charities is all wrong in suggesting any changes in our present system of educating our mutes. But there should be no doubt about it. Either the Board of Education, or of State Charities, or some competent persons, should be specially charged to see,—

First, that *all* the unfortunate mutes in the Commonwealth shall not only have the opportunity of being educated, but be sought out and encouraged to avail themselves of it.

Second, that the present method shall be properly systematized and regulated, so that there shall

be strict accountability, real examinations, and positive knowledge about results.

Third, that any questions about change of the present method shall be decided upon broad and liberal grounds, and not by considerations of dollars and cents.

Such a committee, if clothed with authority, might procure such changes in the present method as would satisfy all the friends of the deaf mutes; or they might advise the adoption of a new one.

The Directors of the Connecticut asylum, which has done so much for the mutes of New England, ought not to object to any change which will promote the interests of those unfortunates, even if it should involve the loss of a monopoly which the asylum has so long enjoyed.

If Massachusetts should deem it best to establish a school of her own, she has mute children enough to fill it as full as a good school need to be; or perhaps ought to be. But even if there should be competition for the beneficiaries of other States, it would be animated only by generous emulation, not as to who would take pupils cheapest, but who would teach and train them best. Of such emulation, there surely would come good, and not evil.

