An address on the education of idiots : delivered at the annual meeting held at the Guildhall, Exeter of the Western Counties Idiot Asylum, Starcross, near Exeter on January 26th 1883 / by George Pycroft.

AN ADDRESS

ON THE

EDUCATION OF IDIOTS,

DELIVERED AT THE

ANNUAL MEETING HELD AT THE GUILDHALL, EXETER,

OF

The Western Counties Idiot Asylum,

STARCROSS, NEAR EXETER,

On January 26th, 1883.

BY

GEORGE PYCROFT,

Surgeon of the Institution.

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Mr. Mayor, My Lords, Ladies, and Gentlemen,

I have been requested to supplement my brief and meagre report, by giving you an account of the history of the education of Idiots, and of the means by which it is brought about. It is not a very old story; it does not go back many years and it begins with something like a fairy tale.

It was in the year 1798 that three sportsmen went a shooting in a wood in the neighbourhood of Caume in the department of Avreynon in the south of France. They flushed game they little expected. Before them they saw a naked boy on his hands and knees seeking for acorns, and he on finding himself observed immediately tried to make his escape. They caught him however and bore off their "bag" to the neighbouring village.

Then and there there was great excitement, the wild boy had been reported before, and some believed the story and some did not. There is so much that is wonder-making in a wild man of the woods, that all the country side flocked to see him, and the news of his capture spread far and wide. The question soon arose "what to do with him"? In England we should have no difficulty about this, we should send him to the workhouse, but they manage things differently in France, and they put him with Mons. Bonaterre who was professor and head of the Central School of Natural History in the department of Avreynon.

Mons. Bonaterre has written a pamphlet on this "humain sauvage" and he described him as "unused to our food, and selecting and testing his aliments by the smell." Here is a curious fact worth dwelling on for a moment; in our Asylum at Starcross we occasionally have idiots who do the same, and the late Dr. Scott, of the Deaf and Dumb Asylum, shewed me a deaf and dumb male with rather low intelligence, who also did the like. "He was fond of lying flat on the ground, and when he drank he sank his chin in the water and took in the fluid as a cow or a horse does. There was no keeping any clothes upon him, he torn them all up, he walked on all fours, fought with his teeth and was always trying to escape; his intelligence was very small and he had not the faculty of speech, but he seemed

to be pleased when he was caressed." In fact he was apparently as much of an animal as a man. Bonaterre kept him a short time and then it entered into his mind that the wild boy might be better placed. He thought that "a phenomenon like this would furnish to philosophy and natural history important notions on the original constitution of man, and on the development of the primitive faculties; provided that the state of imbecility we have noticed in this child does not offer an obstacle to instruction," and he sent him to "that philosophical instructor who has accomplished so many prodigies in this class of teaching" Monsieur Sicard.

Now, this Mons. Sicard was the superintendent of a Deaf and Dumb Asylum at Paris, and Mons. Bonaterre hoped that he would have as much success with this "humain sauvage" as he had reached in the cases ordinarily confided to his care.

The news of this strange boy's arrival soon spread through Paris, and all the world flocked to see him, people talked about him, and he was the lion of the day. But Mons. Sicard soon got tired of the boy, as I dare say Mons. Bonaterre had been; he found him very troublesome, there was no keeping him from tearing up his clothes, annoying the other children and trying to escape. Indeed, one day he endangered his life by jumping out of window, so he first merely gave him the run of the place, as our misplaced idiots have in lunatic asylums at the present day, and then he determined to rid himself of his plague altogether.

This was in the days of the first French Republic, when there were philosophers who had new and strange opinions, and the case of this boy set them "a thinkynge," and the subject was brought before the French Academy.

Men who think for themselves do not all think alike, and there was a very lively discussion over the boy. Citizen Pinel, the same man who, synchronously with our Tuke in England, took the chains and fetters from the limbs of the poor maniacs in France and inaugurated a more humane treatment, this Citizen Pinel, I say, declared the boy was merely an idiot, while Citizen Itard, who was physician to the Deaf and Dumb School, was equally certain that the boy was an untutored savage, and he backed up his opinion by offering to take the boy into his institution and educate him. "You can't educate him," said Pinel, "because he is an idiot." "I will educate him," said Itard, "because he is not an idiot but a savage."

Now, we will pause here for a moment and remember when and where we are. The scene is laid in the Academy of France, the time is at the beginning of this century, the speakers are

two of the most eminent savans of the day, and they and their hearers all agreed that it was impossible to educate an idiot.

Citizen Itard took the boy home with him. He wanted a wild untutored savage, and he thought he had got one; he wanted a virgin mind, one not only utterly untaught but free even from the heredity of education, to try experiments upon. If he could have got the statue that Pygmalion warmed into life, she would equally have served his turn, perhaps better, but as it was, he thought himself fortunate in his possession and he set to work. He was determined "to solve the metaphysical problem of determining what might be the degree of intelligence and the nature of the ideas in a lad, who, deprived from birth of all education, should have lived entirely separated from his kind." No doubt he wished to solve other problems, the existence of a moral sense, the question of the origin of language in imitative sounds and so on, and it is irresistibly comic to look back upon this philosopher attempting to solve abstruse problems by the aid of the brain of a born fool.

Itard endeavoured to awaken the youth's intelligence by carrying out the five following propositions :—

"1st. To endear him to social life by making it more congenial than the one he was now leading; above all, more like that he had recently quitted.

"2nd. To awaken his nervous sensibility by the most energetic stimulants, and at other times by quickening the affections of the soul.

"3rd. To extend the sphere of his ideas by creating new wants and multiplying his associations with surrounding beings.

"4th. To lead him to the use of speech by determining the exercise of imitation under the spur of necessity.

"5th. To exercise, during a certain time, the simple operations of his mind upon his physical wants; and, therefrom derive the application of the same to objects of instruction."

For four years Mons. Itard worked away at this poor lad, striving to the utmost—by all the philosophical and physiological means in his power—to awaken his intelligence, but in vain; at length, at the beginning of the fifth year, he could no longer disguise from himself that Citizen Pinel was right, that he had made a wrong diagnosis, that his interesting savage was merely an idiot after all. But he did not give in.

He now set to work on a different principle, one more suited to the education of imbeciles, and he determined to attempt—

1st. To develop the senses.

2nd. To develop the intellectual faculties.

3rd. To develop the affective functions.

In fact, he proceeded to educate the boy on the same principles that have ever been used since his time on the mental improvements of these helpless and hitherto hopeless beings.

At the end of the year Itard grew tired of his pupil. He had made a mistake in the eyes of all the savants of France, he had wasted his time and he had been sorely quizzed by his confrères, so he dismissed his pupil with the following anathema :—

"Unfortunate! since my pains are lost and my efforts fruitless, take yourself back to your forests and primitive tastes; or if your new wants make you dependent on society, suffer the penalty of being useless, and go to the madhouse at Bicêtre, there to die in wretchedness."

The curse flew high above the idiot's head and did him no harm, but to the vexed and foiled philosopher it was a relief, and no doubt did him a great deal of good.

But Itard had not failed. He had, to a considerable extent, improved the mental condition of the youth; he had, at first at all events without intending it, but latterly with the full knowledge of his task, *he had educated the first idiot.*

The boy was again taken before the French Academy, and this time there was no difference of opinion, they all agreed, and they agreed with the greatest astonishment, that Itard had succeeded—that the mental improvement of the boy was as decided as it was marvellous, and they reported :—

"The Academy cannot see without astonishment how Mons. Itard could succeed as far as he did; and thinks that to be just towards him, and to appreciate the real worth of his labours, the pupil ought to be compared only with himself; we should remember what he was when placed in the hands of this physician, see what he is now; and consider the distance separating his starting point from that which he has reached."

This remarkable case set the thinkers "a thinkynge." It was impossible to resist the feeling that the lowest class of beings were neither helpless nor hopeless, and that Itard had furnished the key to the difficulty. All this happened but a short time ago, only as far back as 1802.

For a time nothing further was done in the cause of the idiots. Indeed, nearly twenty years went by before a small private school for the education of idiots was opened at Berlin. In 1828, Mons. Ferrus organised an idiot school in the lunatic asylum at Bicêtre; afterwards, in 1831, Mons. Fabret established a school for female idiots in the Salpetrière, and in

1840 Messieurs Voisin and Leuret, physician to the Bicêtre, organised the idiot schools in that asylum, and in this admirable school the great Mons. Seguin, the first of all idiot instructors, learned and practised his profession. Here, in the Bicètre, he deeply and heartily studied the subject, and it was from the wards of this institution that he taught all the world the principles upon which idiot education should be carried out. Here he published his classical work on idiocy, a work which is still regarded as the leading authority on the subject, and from which all subsequent works are mostly pickings and stealings. Sixty years have passed by since that time, but idiots are everywhere still taught by the methods which Mons. Edouard Seguin pointed out.

We must now shift our ground and travel southwards, and we shall find something going on among the mountains of Switzerland which will interest us intensely.

You have all heard of, and some of you have seen, those wretched, stunted, deformed Cretins, the idiots of the Alpine valleys. You have heard of their miserable state and of their frightening and disgusting travellers by their faces and the huge goitres which grow upon their necks. They are not found only in the Alps but in many a mountain range. In the Andes, the Pyrenees, the mountains of Chinese Tartary, of Sumatra, Java, in the Rocky Mountains, in Mexico, and even in a modified form, occasionally in the vales of Derbyshire.

Well, no one ever thought of the possibility of amending the low condition of those poor blighted creatures—there they were, there they always had been, and there they must remain—till a certain medical man, one Dr. Guggenbuhl, who was daily meeting them in his rounds, took to thinking about them; and one day he met a loathsome object more terrible than any he had seen. He stopped and gazed at him, and from that moment, said he, "my vocation was fixed." "These stricken individuals of our race (he wrote), these brethren beaten down, are they not more worthy of our efforts than those races of animals which men strive to bring to perfection? It is not in vain formulas, but in charitable efforts that we must feel that divine love which Jesus Christ has taught us."

Dr. Guggenbuhl took a house on the Abendberg, a mountain not far from Interlachen, and with the aid of subscriptions he established an asylum for Cretins. But Dr. Guggenbuhl had one great advantage over us, he could remove his patients from the exciting cause of their malady. We cannot. He removed his patients from the damp sunless valleys of the Alps and

placed them on the fair mountain-side, exposed to the sun and the breeze, and the change at once did them good. He effected very great improvement among his "miserables," and his fame spread through the civilised world. Among other persons whom his success interested and moved to good was Miss Caroline White of Bath. This excellent woman was a maiden lady of not large means, nor had she powerful friends to back her, but the reports that came from Switzerland of the success among the cretins was all enough for her, and she determined to try and see what she could do on a small scale. She took a moderate-sized house in Walcot Parade (I knew the place well in my young days, 'twas about as large as one of our houses on Southernhay); here she took in a few children to educate, or rather to try what she could do with them.

At the time that Miss White founded this institution, which has become historical, there was not a single idiot educational establishment in the British Isles. There were two private schools in Germany, one private in Saxony, and in Wurtemberg, three public institutions and one private in France, and the cause had just been taken up in the United States. There had been an article written upon idiocy by Dr. Poole, of Aberdeen, in the "Encyclopædia Edinensis," but this was all the literature upon the subject in the English language. It was not till the year following that the late Dr. Scott of the Deaf and Dumb Asylum, a good man not yet forgotten in Exeter, published his work on the education of idiots. Poor Scott was, in his early days, an enthusiast on the subject, and many a chat he and I have had together on the degree of improvement these children are capable of receiving. He lived "too little awhile," but he lived long enough to see his hopes carried out and to sit at the council table of our asylum as a member of the committee.

Well, ladies and gentlemen, Dr. W. R. Scott wrote the first book in the language on this subject, it was entitled "Remarks Theoretical and Practical on the Education of Idiots and Children of Weak Intellect," but this was not published till Miss White's little asylum had been a year in action

I have some recollection of the stories which were current in Bath of strange cases in the little home in Walcot Parade, and I last evening asked a lady at my house if she could remember the case of two blind and deaf and dumb girls who were educated there. "Oh, perfectly," said she, "I went to see them, they were eleven and twelve years of age, one never had seen, the other I think lost her sight from small pox in her infancy and had no recollection of light, and they were wonderfully instructed in that asylum."

Now, ladies and gentlemen, I do not mean to say that these children were idiots, I only mean to say that they were blind and deaf and dumb, and I think there is very little difference between their case and that of an idiot. A blind and deaf mute is an idiot in the eye of the law, and there can be very small distinction between a brain which is not capable of receiving impressions and a brain to which impressions can never arrive, because the gates of knowledge are closed. Well, my informant told me that one child had her hair cut and she missed the usual length of her tresses, and she went up to the other child and felt hers with her hand, and evinced anger. When the hair-dresser attempted to finish his duties she resisted manfully. On another visit she found the children were for the first time dressed in frocks with long sleeves of which they were very proud and they went up to the visitors and showed their sleeves with evident signs of pleasure. When a visitor called the children would feel the visitor's dress, and if it were silk they knew it was a lady's and they bobbed a curtsey. Now, I don't mean to say they were taught this, because personal vanity and the bowing down to rich people comes of nature and not of education, but they were taught something better. They were taught to communicate with each other and with others by forming letters and symbols on the palm and fingers of their hands, and it was, my informant stated, most touching to see these girls talking to each other. Mr. Brock the clergyman used to visit frequently and teach them the simple truths of religion and I think a man must be very unimpressionable indeed if he can hear the tale of these two children, who though living, were in the land of silence and utter darkness, receiving from the good minister, through letters traced on the palms of their hands, the hope and the trust that it would not be always so with them, if he could hear this ower true tale I say without emotion.

Miss White has some years since gone to her rest, but she has left behind her a name which has become historical in the records of idiot instruction. She sowed seed which took root, and she lived to see it bear fruit in all parts of Great Britain, and when she died she left behind her a lesson, that it is in the power of anyone, even if wanting in means and powerful friends to back the efforts, even if that person be a lone woman, to effect a great good if only she bring earnestness into the work. The next asylum was founded at Park House, Highgate, on the 20th of April, 1848. A certain Miss Plumbe had read about the success of Monsieur Seguin at the Bicêtre, in Paris, and her

heart was touched, and she mentioned the subject to the philanthropic Dr. Reed. who had already founded three orphan asylums. She expected, of course, that the good doctor's heart would beat in unison with her's; but he was a Scotchman, cool and cautious, "Go out ma'am into the streets some fine morning, and see how many destitute idiots you can find." She went, and returned with a list of twenty-eight! I think she must have counted in a few fools among the number, for it does seem incredible that she could have met so many idiots. However that may be, the doctor's co-operation was secured. Mr. Gervis, the surgeon of Tiverton, Mr. Gay, the surgeon of London, Mr. Millard, so well known, Dr. Conolly, and others took the matter up warmly. Dr. Scott's pamphlet was circulated widely, there was a public dinner and speeches, and the upshot of it all was that Highgate House, with eighteen acres of ground, was taken, and the second idiot industrial asylum started.

In January, 1850, Essex Hall, Colchester, was opened as a branch of the original institution at Highgate; in July, 1853, the foundation-stone of the great National Asylum at Earlswood was laid by Albert the Good, and in 1864 our own asylum at Starcross was founded—not the first, but we may take the credit of its being the first *Pauper Asylum* in England.

It is quite unnecessary for me to say how and by whom this institution was started. You all know this well, indeed several of the founders are present. But I have brought you at last to our own county and I will now say a few words upon that most interesting subject, "How and by what means are these imbeciles educated?"

But first I beg to say that the Committee would be very glad if more persons would visit the asylum and see and judge for themselves. It is difficult to take a lively interest in a thing that you cannot really picture to yourself; it is very hard, you know, to love your brother whom you have not seen; and one brief visit would stamp the institution and its benefits more firmly in your mind than all the treatises that ever were written on the subject, and I venture to say that no man living—no reasonable man at all events, could spend half an hour at our asylum without becoming a warm friend to it for life.

I wish I were speaking to you on the spot instead of in this hall, but as this cannot be, I will ask you to pay a visit in imagination to the institution under my humble guidance.

We shall have time enough in the train to talk over certain cognate matters, and first of all I will do a little boasting, for it is thought a creditable thing to boast of one's country. I will

give you the list of the idiot institutions up to 1876, and I think you will find that we are at the head of the list :—

In north Germany there were 14 asylums, nine of which were private.

In Saxony there were 4, of which three were private.

In Bavaria there were 3, two of which were private.

In Wurtemberg 2, one private, one supported by Government.

In the smaller states there were 5, three of which were private.

In France 4, one of which was private.

In Netherlands 1 small asylum.

In Belgium 1.

In Austria 1.

In Switzerland about 6, three of which were private.

In Sweden 3, all public.

In Denmark 3 small institutions.

In vast Russia only 2 small institutions for 20, and 10 pupils respectively.

In the United States 11, ten of which public and supported by the States, and one private.

In Great Britain there were 13 public and one private, besides Caterham and Leavesdon for chronic harmless lunatics and imbeciles, and nearly all these are supported by voluntary contributions, so we may take a little credit to ourselves in not being behind the rest of the world.

I will now endeavour to give you as clearly as I can a description as to the means used to educate these poor idiots.

But first of all I must remind you that all but the very lowest class have some intellectual faculties, in many instances some of these faculties are perfect. It does not follow that because an idiot is deficient in the quantity or quality of his brain that he has no part of his brain in a healthy normal condition, and we must attack that part which is healthy and work upon what is there. Thus for instance some have musical talent.

We find in our asylum at Starcross no deficiency at all in musical taste and feeling. We think we have as many children with ear for music as you would find among an equal number of the same, putting of course the utterly unimproveable dull low class idiot out of the question. Our children learn to sing hymns easily, and two of them sang altos in the church music very correctly.

In the Salpêtrière there was a blind idiot, a poor cripple, who had so great musical talent, that Liszt and Meyerbeer paid her a visit. It is curious that a fine musical ear does not always go with mental power, and Southey in his "Doctor" humorously

refers to it by saying that "Providence has given to some men wisdom and understanding, and to others the art of playing on the fiddle," and, in this, music differs from the sister arts. Moreover we have a youth about 18 or 19 years of age, who is stone deaf and yet will sing in tune. I do not know positively if he has never heard, but I do know that he is deaf now and yet he picks up the tunes the other boys learn. It is difficult to get him to sing by asking, but if he is quite alone he will tune up immediately.

In Essex Hall there is a totally deaf mute who has been taught to talk on his fingers, and if you ask him to imitate the cries of animals such as sheep, oxen, donkeys, fowls, &c., he will do so.

I mention these cases for you to puzzle over, and when you have solved the difficult problem I hope you will communicate the solution to me.

Then again sometimes an idiot has great imitative powers; we have all heard of the boy at Earlswood who made a model in imitation of the Warrior Frigate, and there is on the table before us a fair pencil copy of another pencil drawing. It is but a copy, and copying is not art, it is simply imitation, and this power our boy has to a considerable extent. Sometimes the memory is perfect. We have a youth who can repeat all the hymns in Bickersteth hymnal three hundred in number; if you ask him any number, say the 5th, the 110 or 280th he will repeat the whole hymn immediately, or if you give him the opening line of the hymn he will give you the number. We have got beyond Bickersteth now—we must go with the times—we use "Hymns Ancient and Modern," and the boy is rapidly learning those. Dr. Forbes Winslow mentions a man who was a complete fool, yet could remember the day when every person had been buried in the parish for the last thirty-five years, with the name and age of the deceased and the mourners at the funeral. But out of the line of burials his mind was a blank, he had not one idea. A boy at Earlswood is reported to have great power of mental arithmetic, so you see we have often often something to work upon and we must do the best we can with the materials at our command. We must make the most of what is there; we must take up and concentrate the scattered ideas; we must strengthen by exercise the useful tracts of the brain, and employ what is serviceable to the best advantage.

And now I will let you into the secret and mystery of Idiot education and training:—

When a child is entered at our Asylum he is in the beginning brought before me, the Medical Officer.

I look him all over, test his mind and the state of his bodily health. I enter his description in a book which is called "The Case Book," which book is used to refer to in after time to compare the state the child arrives at, with that in which he was, when admitted. I put down whether he can speak, count, read, write, walk, dress himself, feed himself, whether he has the use of his hands, is mischievous, what his temper is, what the cause of his idiocy and so forth. He is then handed over to the Superintendent.

This gentleman takes a good look at him, "takes stock of him" as they vulgarly say, forms a rapid opinion in his mind whether the lad is a good boy of sweet temper and likely to be obedient, what his brain power may be, and forms a guess as to the hope of mental improvement, talks to him and tries him, tries him in fact in every way.

The first step in our plan of improvement is to get him into good health and bodily condition; to build him up, for we must get him physically improved before we can work upon him. We must nourish his body and his brain. The children are often brought to us in a low weak condition, thin, blear eyed, and suffering from skin eruptions, but all this is very soon amended and without much difficulty. The comfort, warmth, sanitary arrangements, wholesome, regular, and plentiful diet, kind and loving treatment, and above all the cheerful sight of other children soon give proof of the impression these good things have on the newly admitted, and in a very few weeks they become fat, sleek, and happy.

We now commence physical training.

We first teach them to walk. Some, of course, are able to do this as well as sane children, but very many are weak on their legs. shuffle and shamble over the ground and walk on their toes with bent knees. Well, we drill them to walk, and round and round the day room you may see them marching, not quite so well as Her Majesty's guards, but well enough.

We next teach them the use of their arms, by drill exercises of all kinds and by the use of dumb bells. The training of muscular power is of immense importance, you will easily understand that it is hopeless to attempt to teach a child who cannot extend his arms at will, clutch with his hands, or either stand or walk.

Having got so far, the teacher makes up his mind how he will proceed with the child's education. There can be no general rule in these cases, but the tutor must bring his tact and judgment to bear, and treat each child according to circumstances. Each idiot. in fact, is a study by himself.

Now commences the mechanical training.

We commence by teaching the boy to pump water, and at this very simple labour we keep him exercising his muscles and letting him into the great secret that one of the pleasures in this life is the pleasure of making oneself useful.

We next promote him to the garden roller, and under the eye of the gardener, in the pleasant air, and among the shrubs and flowers. you may see them playing at work cheerfully enough.

It is a proud day when the next promotion exalts the boy to the care and management of the wheelbarrow, with helping to fill it, and learning the first lessons in the art of gardening, collecting the weeds.

He is now really useful in the way of doing actual work, and next, if he can be trusted, he is put to chop wood, and then he rises to the responsible post of shoeblack to the Institution, and after that to knife-cleaning and doing all those offices about the house which belong to the male side of the Asylum.

All these employments tend to strengthen the boy's limbs, and we next, if it is needed, as it generally is, turn our attention to strengthening his fingers and teaching him the use of his hands.

It is surprising how deficient many imbeciles are in the use of those two important organs, the thumb and forefinger, and we teach them thus:—We put a heap of seeds of different colors and sizes before them and make them pick them out with the hitherto unused finger and thumb, and sort them into different smaller heaps, and then we give them dressing lessons.

We all know that a human being is the slowest of all animals to come to perfection, but the oddest part in all his life's history is the fact that it takes years to teach him to dress himself. There are few boys I believe, who can entirely dress themselves before they are eight or nine years old, and, of course, idiots are slower still, so we teach them thus:—We set them at a table and give them a waistcoat or shirt and practise them in the difficult art of buttoning and unbuttoning. Then we instruct them in feeding themselves decently, in the practise of a spoon and of the more difficult knife and fork

By this time the watchful teacher is able to form a very correct judgment of the boy's mental power, and if he sees the least prospect of improvement he leads him up to the first rong of the ladder of learning, "the alphabet."

I need not pursue his education further; it is henceforward as with sane boys, except that here there is no driving—all is

done by leading—no anger, all is done by love—for idiots must be treated gently and affectionately; they are delicate plants that will not bear a storm.

There are many other small matters which I will only just refer to. We teach them the clock by means of a pasteboard dial with moveable hands, and instruct them in form and color.

The girls are led upwards on much the same principle and plan, except that their work is housework, needlework, laying the table, laundry work, &c., and, if I may call it work, singing.

We also have shop lessons, one child sits at a table with weights and scales and sells to another child who buys and pays with real money, and they change about in this game, the buyer in turn becomes the seller, and so they learn the use of scales, the principle of sale, and to know something of the value of money.

The boys are at present instructed in the trades of sash cord making, tailoring, gardening, and field work, and very soon we hope to have shoemaking added to the list.

We will now suppose we have arrived at Starcross, and we will proceed to view the building, but before entering the pleasant grounds I will tell you of a house in the neighbourhood that I knew well about twenty-five or thirty years ago. A gentleman lived there whom all the countryside respected. He was a highly educated intellectual man, with a kind and very impressible heart; his wife was a true motherly woman, and his children, all adults, lived in peace, harmony, and concord. You would not find a better specimen of an English home anywhere. But they had a skeleton in a cupboard, or something more terrible than a skeleton, an idiot boy in a room upstairs. The affection of the whole family to that poor speechless boy was very great, and they did what they could for him—they did all they knew, and with all their intelligence and all their love this all was *to keep him clean and feed him with a spoon.* And now, if you will come with me I will show you the difference. We will enter by the great gate, and passing through ornamental grounds very tastefully laid out, we arrive at the main entrance of the building itself. Here on nine days out of ten we should be met by a lady, whose name of course I cannot mention, who will greet us with such a beaming, good humoured smile, that you will feel at ease at once that nothing unkind can ever take place in an institution of which she is the matron. Before you pass through the next door most likely you will hear a violin

played by one of the attendants for the amusement of the children. On entering the long passage, if you are one of those desponding beings who think the former days better than these, and who look back regretfully to the good old times, one sight of this passage and one thought of the gloomy corridor of terrible Bethlem of a century ago will convert you at once to think more cheerfully of the present and more hopefully of the future. For here you will see the care and thought that has been expended to render this idiots' home bright and cheerful. Banners hanging from the walls, emblazoned shields with devices which would drive a Herald wild, arches of evergreen, plaster casts, and flowers. Passing through this into the great dining-hall you will see the windows surrounded by arches of holly, for Christmas time is not yet past, and at the end of this hall, on drawing back some sliding doors, you will see a communion table and small chancel, which is used on Sundays. On leaving this, and turning to the right the matron will introduce you into the girls' day-room, and if it be morning you will see the girls at work, some practising sewing and knitting, some learning their letters from an alphabet affixed to the wall, and some puzzling away at arithmetic, and at the corner of the table most likely you will see a poor child with head all awry trying for her very soul to do her best penmanship in a letter she is writing to her parents. On going upstairs you will meet children employed in housework, scrubbing the floors, &c., and on entering the long dormitory you will observe with pleasure that it is a complete picture gallery of bright chromo-lithographs, and that, although day time, every bed is occupied by a doll. The matron will tell you how many girls make the beds, lay the dinner table, and make themselves very useful in housework, and then she will take you to the laundry and show you the girls singing at that merriest of all work ironing clothes. On ascending again to the corridor we shall most likely meet Mr. Locke—I beg his pardon—he does not like his name brought forward, so I will say, the superintendent. Now the superintendent is a plain, straighforward man, who does not cook reports nor preach progress when there is no progress, and he will assure you that, with the exception of the very lowest order of idiots, everyone has made mental improvement since his admission. He will show you the lads at work—some at drill, some at their letters, others at arithmetic—he will show you the tailoring, sash-line making, gardening and all those useful arts what are really of more importance to the children than their book learning. But everywhere you go, wherever you look, there is one thing

that must strike you, namely, the general cheerfulness of the place and the happy faces of the children. You do not expect to find this, and it strikes you forcibly; you came with a sort of reluctance, thinking, or at all events feeling, you were coming to a sad abode of gloom, but you find everything bright and jocund.

Perhaps ladies and gentlemen you think I am laying too great a stress upon happiness. I know happiness is not the main point. People in a world which has six working days out of seven have something else to do besides being happy. But I think I have observed that men are happy in proportion to the quantity of brains they are endowed with, and the pains they take to make use of them. However this may be, each of you may decide for himself, but you must take the law from me as judge that it is entirely and absolutely true with regard to idiots.

Our Superintendent will tell you that the children are happy in proportion to their advancement; they come to him melancholy enough, but that as they are taught, as intelligence comes upon them they learn to smile and feel a smile. An asylum merely for maintaining and feeding idiots would be a horrible abode, I would not conduct you there; their vacant moody faces would haunt you in your dreams. But with us as mental improvement advances a cloud seems to be lifted up from the building and the rooms to lighten. Dr. Bucknill in a lecture on Idiocy, delivered at Birminghan, has strongly insisted upon this.

We make our children happy, as Itard educated the idiot, unintentionally. We make them happy by teaching them the use of their senses, by teaching them to speak, to hear, and to observe, we make them happy by enabling them to touch and to taste, to speak and to converse, by teaching them to sit, to stand, to walk and to play, by teaching them to love and to trust instead of to hate and to fear. We banish dull moroseness, and we bring them to feel that they belong to the bright human family instead of remaining isolated beings. We put it into their power to appreciate sympathy that great alleviator of human woes. To them education is an amusement, and all their work is play, and lastly we make them happy by giving them employment and enabling them to understand the pleasure of being useful.