

Fourth annual report of the trustees of the New-York State Asylum for Idiots.

Contributors

New York State Asylum for Idiots.
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State of New-York.

No. 33.

IN ASSEMBLY, JAN. 23, 1855.

FOURTH ANNUAL REPORT

Of the Trustees of the New-York State Asylum for Idiots.

To the Hon. the Legislature of the State of New-York:

In conformity to the provisions of the law of July 10th, 1851, establishing an Asylum for Idiots, the undersigned, trustees of the said institution,

RESPECTFULLY REPORT :

In compliance with the suggestions of the Legislature at its last session, which authorized a sale of the site bought for the institution on the Troy road, and the purchase of another, if, in the judgment of the trustees it were deemed advisable, the board felt themselves bound to review their former action in relation to the location of the Asylum.

Accordingly, at a meeting convened in April last, a committee was appointed, consisting of Messrs. Pohlman, Townsend and Leavenworth, to examine the various locations which had been suggested as adapted to the purposes of the institution in the neighborhood of Albany. This committee, after a careful examination of the several localities, reported that they had been able to find no spot which combined so many advantages as the site which the board had already selected; and that the chief objections which had been urged against its occupation, might, in their

opinion, be obviated by the purchase of so much land as would give them an additional front of fifty feet.

At a meeting of the board, convened to consider the above report, a communication was received from several of the prominent citizens of Syracuse, offering to give to the trustees a site for the proposed Asylum near their city, of not less than ten acres; or, as an equivalent, the sum of seven thousand and five hundred dollars, for the purchase of a site. This proposition was accompanied by a report from a minority of the above committee setting forth, at length, reasons in favor of a change of location, and of building the Asylum at the city of Syracuse.

In view of said proposition, and of the reasons by which it was sustained, the trustees deemed it advisable to appoint a committee consisting of Messrs. Spencer, Cook and Titus, to visit Syracuse, and to examine the sites proposed for their acceptance. Accordingly, the above committee, with the exception of Mr. Spencer, who was prevented by ill health, accompanied by Dr. Wilbur, the superintendent, whose views in relation to the location of the Asylum were deemed of great value, visited Syracuse, and on their return, reported unanimously in favor of removing the institution to that city. After long and careful consideration, the board came to the same conclusion; for, after it had been decided by a vote of more than two-thirds that it was expedient to remove it from Albany, it was the opinion of the board that Syracuse was the most appropriate place. It is due to the Legislature, that the reasons which led to this conclusion should here be briefly given.

The trustees in their last report assigned several reasons why they regarded Albany as the most fitting location for the new Asylum building. Principal among these, and in a measure underlying all the others, was the supposed intent of the act of the Legislature which established the Asylum in 1851. But the legislation of last winter, and especially the rejection of an amendment which restricted the trustees in their selection of a site to the vicinity of Albany, put a different interpretation upon the original act, and left the board at liberty to locate the institution in its permanent form, (in distinction from its experimental existence) in some other portion of the State.

When the site near Albany was purchased, it was understood and agreed that mansions of a superior class would be erected in the immediate vicinity, and on a line with the proposed asylum, leaving a large open lawn between them and the Troy road. It was also expected that additional land could be procured in the rear at cheap rates. Both these expectations have been disappointed, and the great object of seclusion and privacy defeated. These circumstances furnished an irresistible argument for the removal of the institution.

The offer of a site of ten acres, or the payment of seven thousand five hundred dollars, by the citizens of Syracuse; the central location of the city, about midway between Albany and Buffalo, on the two great thoroughfares of the State—the Erie canal and the Central railroad—and the beauty of the surrounding country, strongly attracted the attention of the Board to that thriving city.

More attention to the subject also impressed them very forcibly with the conviction that the humane institutions which are supported by the State should not be concentrated at the capital, or at any other one spot in the State, but that as the funds which support them are drawn from, and belong to the people of the whole State, they should all be allowed to partake freely of their advantages, and in order to effect that object, they should be scattered throughout its entire borders.

For these and other reasons which might be adduced, the trustees have no doubt that the decision to which they arrived will be esteemed wise and just by your honorable body, as well as highly beneficial to the institution which has been entrusted to their charge.

Having come to the conclusion that the institution should be removed to Syracuse, and after the above named committee had reported on the merits of the various sites offered, having selected that one which seemed, all things considered, the most desirable, provided on still further examination it should prove to be so, a committee was appointed consisting of Dr. Pohlman, the Superintendent and the architect to visit Syracuse, re-examine the said

site, and if satisfied with it, locate the building upon it, and notify the parties making the overtures of their acceptance by the Board of Trustees.

This committee re-examined the grounds offered, and coincided with the board in favor of a lot composing part of the farm owned by General Leavenworth, about a mile from the centre of the city in a south westerly direction; because the price per acre was less than for any other land offered; because it had valuable improvements upon it in the form of a great number and variety of fruit trees; because it contained a fine grove highly desirable for the comfort and health of the pupils in the summer season; because it was nearer to the centre of the city than the only other location which seemed particularly desirable; because of its sheltered position, and its warm southern exposure, especially to be considered in locating a dwelling for children of feeble physical organization; besides it was convenient to the city, conspicuous from all the thoroughfares passing through it, and the view from the grounds was commanding in all directions, while the inmates of the asylum could be effectually secured from public observation.

The committee, however, felt that from the peculiar conformation of the ground, and the convenience of having ample space around the buildings, it was very desirable to have a larger quantity of land than was originally offered by the citizens of Syracuse, and therefore purchased eight additional acres, which involved an expense of \$2,800 over and above the \$7,500 contributed by them for this purpose.

As an act of justice to Mr. Leavenworth, his associates beg leave to remark that in the selection of this particular site he took no part—but was rather averse to the selection, as it involved the necessity of dividing, and in some measure of disfiguring his beautiful farm.

For a more particular description of the grounds, the Legislature are referred to the pamphlet containing an account of the laying of the corner-stone of the Asylum in September last.

The report of this committee having received the approval of the board, the Executive committee, consisting of Messrs. Spencer, Titus and Leavenworth, were directed to proceed to the erection of the building, as near as might be according to the plans and specifications which were drawn last year. But the change of location involved expenditures not contemplated in the original plan. On a more careful inquiry into the subject of warming the building, it was ascertained that six furnaces would be required instead of three; and it was evident that if they were all placed in the basement there would not be sufficient room for other indispensable purposes. It was therefore determined to construct a sub-cellar beneath the basement. A change, demanded by correct rules of architecture and good taste, has also been made in the exterior of the edifice. Quoin blocks have been introduced in the front and side angles of the building, at the moderate cost of about a thousand dollars, and add greatly to its apparent solidity and strength, as well as to its architectural beauty. Additional expense has also been incurred in constructing a hydraulic ram, boring for water, digging wells and making roads.

In all other respects the building has thus far been constructed according to the original plans and specifications, with such slight and unimportant variations as usually occur.

The corner-stone was laid, with appropriate solemnities, on the 8th of September last, and the walls are now completed, the building enclosed, and the whole work rapidly approaching its completion.

The following is a statement of the contracts already entered into, and also an estimate of the expense of completing the said building:

(B.)

	Estimate of last year.	Amount of present contract.	Excess over last year's estimate.
Contract for mason work, . . .	\$15,320 00	\$16,490 00	\$1,170 00
Contract for cut stone,	4,500 00	4,800 00	300 00
Contract for carpenter's work, . . .	19,396 00	19,850 00	454 00
Contract for ashlar,	1,000 00	1,500 00	500 00
Heating, &c.,	1,000 00	2,668 00	1,668 00
Plumbing,	1,350 00	1,350 00
Grading and fencing,	5,000 00	5,000 00
Casualties and contingencies, . . .	5,000 00	5,000 00
	\$52,566 00	\$56,658 00	\$4,092 00

Amount of estimate in last year's report,	\$52,566 00
Amount of excess over last year's estimate,	4,092 00
Contract for quoin blocks,	1,059 00
Excavation of sub-cellar,	1,238 00
Stone work of sub-cellar,	1,485 75
Extra excavations,	303 40
Extra brick work,	666 75
Laying stone work in cement,	84 38
Cost of grading and excavation for drain,	750 94
Brick work of drain,	264 90
Hydraulic ram and wells,	423 27
Mason bill of extra work,	103 35
Ventilation tubes and ventilators on roof,	1,000 00
Stone steps at outside doors,	573 00
Furrings of the outside walls,	325 20
Extra floors,	316 00
Chimney pieces and tablets,	265 00
Extra yellow pine floor,	75 00
Piazza on south end of building,	500 00
Gas pipes and fittings in the building,	1,000 00
Extra carpenter's work,	250 00

\$67,332 44

The increased expense beyond the estimates of last year, arises, in some degree, from the necessary changes above referred to, but mainly either from necessary work, not estimated last year, or from the increased expense of works which were estimated. Many of the items going to make this increase of expense, arise from work neither as yet done nor contracted for. Among them are the ventilators, the gas pipes, the stone steps, the piazza, &c., &c. But they are indispensable to the proper completion of the building. To omit them now, would but postpone the time of procuring them at a greatly increased expense.

While the trustees regret, that the estimate submitted last year should not have been found sufficient, especially after making, as they supposed, ample allowance for contingencies, yet they are not surprised at a different result. For it usually happens in the erection of buildings by private individuals, and in the construction of public works, that estimates fall short of the actual expense, independent of the changes, additions and improvements, which in the progress of the work are found indispensable. And it is a source of gratification to the board, that, with the exception of the addition of quoin blocks, which they are confident will command universal approval, and of the sub-cellar, which could not be dispensed with, they have made no material changes in the building enhancing its expense; nor have they expended a dollar which was not called for by the highest duty, which, in this matter, they owed to the State.

In making the contracts for the erection of the building, the trustees were careful to avoid any obligation to make payments beyond the appropriation; and inserted a stipulation, that those payments were to be made contingent upon appropriations by the Legislature. Still the security and permanence of the work required that it should not be left in an unfinished state, waiting for legislative action. Greater expense and serious injury to the work done, would have been the inevitable consequence. The contractors were willing to incur the hazard of an appropriation by the Legislature, rather than divide their work into detached and irregular portions. And as the trustees were bound to apply the funds on hand, their expenditure would necessarily involve

the whole expense of the building; so that, in fact, it became only a question of time, and not of amount, when this expense should be paid. The interest of the Institution also demanded the most speedy completion of the building, so as to accomodate the numerous applicants for admission, whom they were obliged to reject.

The contractors have now earned several thousand dollars for labor and materials, and this amount is increasing every week. The whole sum will be required during the coming season, and should be paid. It is, therefore, in the highest degree important, that the appropriation for the completion of the work should be made at an early day.

As above stated, the whole cost of the grounds and improvements, exclusive of the \$7,500.00 paid by the citizens of Syracuse, together with the \$2,800.00 additional for the site and interest, will be, as estimated,..... \$70,332 44
Of this sum there has been appropriated by the State 30,000 00

Leaving to be provided for, in round numbers, \$40,000 00

It will be recollected that the law of last year authorised the board of trustees to go on in the erection of the building, "Provided, that the whole expense of said buildings and grounds shall not exceed the amount stated in the report of said trustees."

In compliance with this authority the trustees have, as has been shown, expended the appropriation of last year, and would now respectfully ask the Legislature at this session to fulfil the implied promise of a supply of the necessary funds to complete the building. Though the sum ultimately required to render the building complete in all its arrangements and surroundings, will exceed in a moderate degree the estimates of last year, it has not happened through any intention of the trustees. Those estimates were the common basis both of the recommendation of the trustees and the action of the Legislature.

If this excess of expenditures over the estimates of last year is unexpected to the members of the Legislature, it is equally so to

the trustees. Both of these parties could only reasonably act in view of the probabilities in the case. Neither, for example, could anticipate a contingency that occurred—the necessity for excavating the sub-cellar in a rock formation.

Our situation is a peculiar one, and in many respects different from that of any other of the charitable institutions supported by the State. They all have buildings sufficient to accommodate all applicants for admission from within the borders of the State. They all have been the recipients to a greater or less degree of private endowment, and have some corporate funds to fall back upon in any emergency. Ours is a State institution. It was founded by the State and is managed by the State. Every step, of any importance, taken by the Board of Trustees, has been referred to the Legislature for their sanction and taken only with their approval. The asylum is now occupying a building temporarily, that accommodates when crowded only fifty pupils. That number they have had for more than a year past, and there are now more than fifty applications for admission from all parts of the State pressing upon the attention of the officers of the asylum.

As a matter of charity, no one can dispute the equality of their claims upon the State's bounty when compared with that of any other class of her unfortunate children. As a matter of political economy, the moneys appropriated for their education will most assuredly result in the relief from the burden of their support at the public expense, in a greater degree than in the case of any other subjects of education in the State.

The thirty thousand dollars heretofore appropriated by the State has been expended as follows:

(C.)

Cash paid on account of Idiot Asylum.

John Bridgford, contractor for mason work, as per certificates of architect,	\$11,000 00	
John Bridgford, contractor, for cut stone as per certificates,	5,000 00	
James Christie, contractor for carpenter work,	4,000 00	
Samuel Hurst, for excavation,	1,979 44	
Norton & Bradley, for hydraulic ram and sinking wells,	423 27	
	<hr/>	\$22,402 71
S. Clarke for land on Troy road,	\$6,810 00	
Contingent expenses,	250 00	
W. L. Woollett, jr., for services as architect,	538 79	
	<hr/>	7,598 79
Total amount of expenditure,	\$30,001 50	<hr/> <hr/>

ALBANY, Dec. 13, 1854.

The following is an account of the current expenses of the institution during the last fiscal year, viz :

There has been expended during the year for provisions and supplies,	\$2,718 32
Meat and fish bills,	925 19
Furniture, &c.,	1,013 78
Fixtures, repairs and alteration of building,	598 79
Stable, stock, &c.,	1,012 45
Salaries, wages and labor,	4,198 20
Fuel and lights,	515 44
Stationery,	105 43
Carried forward,	<hr/> \$

Brought forward,.....	\$	
Postage,.....		16 75
Express charges,.....		11 28
Expenses in sending children home,.....		10 46
Rent,.....		325 00
Sundries,.....		147 62
		<hr/>
		\$11,598 71
		<hr/>

During the last fiscal year, ending October 1, 1854, the amount drawn from the State treasury for the current expenses of the Asylum was,.....	\$9,814 14
Received on account of pay pupils,.....	1,554 90
Contingent fund on hand Oct. 1, 1853,.....	298 39
	<hr/>
	\$11,667 43
Deduct balance of contingent fund on hand Oct. 1, 1854,.....	68 72
	<hr/>
	\$11,598 71
	<hr/>

The trustees are gratified to find the pupils of the institution steadily improving; and that the experience of the last year confirms their conviction of the complete success of the experiment. They respectfully and earnestly invite the members of the Legislature to visit the institution, and witness for themselves the extraordinary results of the discipline and training to which the pupils are subjected.

They also again avail themselves of the occasion to express their highest approbation of the devotion, ability, and science of the superintendent, Dr. Wilbur, and to commend his report, and the suggestions it contains, to the attention of the Legislature.

In conclusion, the trustees would remark, as in their former report:

“The destiny of a charity upon which the fate of so many helpless beings depends, and which has roused the attention and

excited the admiration of the humane and the intelligent throughout our whole country, now rests with the Legislature."

All of which is most respectfully submitted.

JOHN C. SPENCER,
HENRY N. POHLMAN,
JAS. H. TITUS,
FRANKLIN TOWNSEND,
F. F. BACKUS,

Trustees.

MYRON H. CLARK,
HENRY J. RAYMOND,
E. W. LEAVENWORTH,
Ex-officio Trustees.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT.

To the Trustees of the N. Y. Asylum for Idiots:

I herewith submit my fourth annual report as Superintendent of the N. Y. Asylum for Idiots.

The fifty pupils reported at the Asylum a year since, from the different judicial districts of the State, with a few changes, still continue with us. These changes have occurred for the following reasons.

One was removed because she was regarded by the Superintendent and her friends as having received all the education necessary for the fulfilment of her probable duties and relations in life. Three have been removed at the request of the Superintendent because confirmed epileptics. One was retained at home at the close of vacation, on account of feeble health, but with the expectation of returning next year. One is now in an Insane Asylum. Two have been removed by death.

Till the middle of the month of August last, we were blessed with the same remarkable exemption from sickness in our large family that we have been called upon gratefully to acknowledge in our former reports. About that time, owing as I now suppose, to some defect in the drainage of the building now occupied, several cases of typhus fever occurred. Though the epidemic was of a mild form, yet, as I have mentioned above, two of our pupils fell victims to it. There was in both of the cases that proved fatal, an apparent development of a pre-existing, though latent disease of the brain.

While much may be done by judicious management to prevent disease in such an institution as ours, whenever it does gain a

footing greater fatality may be anticipated than elsewhere, and with persons of a "sound mind in a sound body."

The teachers, attendants, and servants, are, with one or two exceptions, the same, whose fidelity and zeal I took occasion to notice in my last report. Their continuance with me to this time will sufficiently indicate my sense of the continued worth and proper manner of their services. The results of their perseverance and patience in the management and instruction of the pupils you have witnessed from time to time. I described those results in general terms last year, and I have nothing to add to that description, but that longer continued labors have been attended with still greater effects.

With the legislative appropriation for the last fiscal year, we were able to meet the current expenses of the Asylum, make considerable alterations in our present buildings for the accommodation of ten additional pupils, and add more than a thousand dollars to the capital of the institution, in the form of additions to our furniture, apparatus, stable stock, &c.

Our whole capital, as represented by furniture, &c., and which has cost us from the commencement some \$6,000 in the aggregate, has been purchased by funds allotted us for current expenses.

As this report, in connection with the report of the board of trustees, will be extensively distributed throughout the State, I will offer a simple statement of a few facts that will suffice, I think, to place the practicability of educating idiots correctly before the Legislature and the public.

But a few years ago, and the proposition to educate idiots was regarded as impracticable and visionary. Even in 1851, when by an act of the New-York Legislature, provision had been made for an experimental school for idiots, to continue two years, the gentlemen chosen by the Governor and Senate to have the general oversight of the institution, and carefully test the experiment the Legislature had authorised, entered upon the discharge of that duty "with caution, not to say doubt."

The experimental school has now been in operation for more than three years, in the vicinity of Albany—quite convenient for a proper supervision by the trustees, and quite accessible to the Legislature and the public. What has been the result?

The trustees of the asylum in their previous reports have declared, as the result of their observations, comparisons and deliberate convictions, that the experiment has entirely and fully succeeded. Three successive Legislatures have emphasized their approval of the objects and their faith in the success of the institution, by making appropriations for its continuance and extension and its establishment as a legitimate object of the State's bounty and support, without a dissenting voice. It is due to ourselves to add that their convictions and acts were not the result of any exhibitions of a few pupils before them, but from the fact that most of the members of the Legislature for the past three years actually visited the asylum and witnessed the practical operation of our system of training, management and instruction. In some cases they had personally known the condition of the pupils, when received at the asylum. Their witness, therefore, is not of sympathy merely but of intelligent convictions.

During the past summer there was a vacation of four weeks at the asylum, and all of our pupils who could conveniently be sent home visited their families and friends. The parents had thus an opportunity to judge for themselves of the progress in education made by their children during their residence at the asylum.

The additional testimony they furnish to the success of the institution lies in the different stand-point which they occupy and from which they view the whole subject. They only can know just what was the condition of the individual pupils when sent to the asylum. They only can fully appreciate the more subtle evidences of improvement in the pupils, as seen in difference of deportment and habits; in increased manifestations of observation or judgment; in the little details of every day life; in attention, or in disposition or propensities.

Their testimony, at the close of vacation, was uniformly in accordance with our hopes and wishes, that their children had developed and improved beyond their reasonable expectations.

To the results of that vacation upon the pupils themselves, I desire to call attention. It shows that the effects of education properly adapted and graduated to the physical, mental and moral constitution of the subjects of it, are as uniform and lasting as its general principles are universal in their application.

They returned to our care, in most cases, not only without having relapsed into their old habits of body and mind, but absolutely improved. The excitement of the journey home and back, the perception, fainter or stronger, as the case might be, of the family interest alive in their behalf, the efforts made to keep them up to our standard of management and discipline had produced this effect. Have we not in this fact a partial answer to that question, the last resort of those skeptical as to the practicability of educating idiots, when driven by the facts furnished by an hour's observation of the various exercises and achievements of our pupils to admit that their education is certainly *possible*? That question is—"Will not these pupils, when they have passed from under the peculiar management, instruction and discipline of the asylum, relapse into their former habits, lose all that they have acquired of mental developement, and forget the precepts of morality they may have received?"

The walls of the new building for the accommodation of the Asylum, are now completed. The roof is on, and everything ready for the continuance of the work, during the winter and spring. By the contracts with the mechanics, it is to be ready for occupation by the first of June next. With a reasonable allowance for delay in its completion, we may hope to occupy it at some period during the ensuing summer.

It is, you are aware, the same building described in the report of last year, with only such alterations in the arrangements and apparatus for heating and ventilation as will render it, it is anticipated, all that could be desired in those respects, so essential to the health and comfort of its inmates. In making these alterations, security against fire has been studiously aimed at. All the furnaces are in a fire-proof sub-cellar, that need be entered only by the fireman. All the hot air flues are carried within brick walls, and are not allowed to approach any of the wood-work.

A proper disposition of the gas-burners will supersede the necessity of the use of the ordinary lamps, adding to the security of the building.

There is a copious supply of water, from three independent sources, that will be elevated to large tanks in the attic, whence it is to be conveyed to all portions of the house. In each story provision will be made for attaching a hose in case of fire.

A large drain, passing under the whole length of the centre of the building, and also with a branch extending the whole distance in the rear of the institution, will secure a thorough drainage.

I have submitted the plans to the inspection of quite a number of gentlemen, superintendents of charitable institutions for educational purposes, and they have expressed favorable opinions of their fitness for the purpose for which they are intended.

Conveniences for bathing have not been lost sight of.

I have mentioned these matters pertaining to the building, because with my experience in the management of a public institution, they have a special interest, and because, in the preparation of the plans, and in the construction of the building thus far, I have had a watchful eye, that in the particulars I have enumerated the new asylum should be all that was desirable.

Anticipating, therefore, an early occupation of the new institution, I would call your attention to the necessity of applying for an enlarged annual appropriation for the current expenses of the asylum during the next fiscal year.

We have now more than fifty applications for admission to the Institution. Some are for those in indigent circumstances; some are for those whose parents or friends are able and willing to pay a portion of the expense of board and education; and others still are from families whose pecuniary means would enable them to pay a reasonable compensation for their management and instruction.

I would respectfully suggest to the board of trustees, an application to the Legislature for the passage of a law, embracing the main features of the present law for the education of the deaf and dumb. That law is designed to distribute the State's bounty equally over all portions of the State; to furnish a gratuitous education to the indigent; to require from those who can afford to pay it, the actual cost of the board and instruction; and to have a reduced and properly graduated scale of prices for those who are not strictly indigent, and yet not able to meet the full expense of maintenance and education. It also requires the various counties from which indigent pupils are sent to the Asylum, to provide them with suitable clothing.

It combines justice with charity, and dispenses it in a manner that should not wound the feelings of the most sensitive.

As the Asylum for Idiots, however, is exclusively a State institution, there would need to be this modification in the legislation proper to it. There should be no fixed sum per pupil allotted; but such an appropriation for the use of the Asylum might be granted as the Legislature may deem just and proper; and then as many pupils, from each judicial district, should be received and educated, as found practicable with the amount of the appropriation.

I would suggest for the first year the moderate sum of twelve thousand dollars.

When some such system of carefully dispensing and properly graduating the State's bounty to meet the wants of the idiots in the State, is adopted, I shall then look for a better understanding and appreciation on the part of those who avail themselves of it, of the true character of legislation for charitable purposes, upon the basis of an enlightened and liberal political economy. I trust it will then be understood that the State does not adopt these pupils to the release of the parents and families from parental and family obligations and interests; but only assumes temporarily, for educational purposes and because of their peculiar infirmities, the place of the parent, eventually to return them again, when the

ends of education in their case shall have been accomplished, to their natural protectors and guardians.

From my position, one remove nearer to the objects of our common sympathies and duties, I commend, gentlemen, my pupils again to your continued interest and efforts in their behalf.

Respectfully submitted,

H. B. WILBUR, *Superintendent.*

Albany, January 9, 1855.

APPENDIX No. 1.

DESCRIPTION OF THE GROUNDS AND BUILDING.

BY THE ARCHITECT.

The Grounds.

The grounds upon which the New-York Asylum for Idiots is to be erected are situated a little more than a mile from the centre of Syracuse, in a southwesterly direction. They include a territory of eighteen acres, and were purchased for the use of the asylum mainly through the liberality of the citizens of Syracuse.

The western and highest portion of the grounds is wood land. The remainder, descending with a fine slope to the southeast, terminates in a terrace of about four acres in extent, upon which the building is located.

This site is an elevated one, being sixty feet above the general level of the plain upon which the city of Syracuse is built, and fifty feet above the public road, which ascent is overcome in the approach to the building by an easy road, winding round the base of the terrace. This road is formed mainly by the rock excavated from the foundations of the building. The position affords a fine view of the city of Syracuse, Salina, Liverpool, Lake Onondaga, the Central and Binghamton railroads for some distance, and the village of Geddes.

The Supply of Water.

The present supply of water at the building is abundant, although a time of unprecedented drought. It consists of water

collected from various springs on the hillside, on the south line of lot, and is elevated to the site of the building by a hydraulic ram. The other and more abundant supply is from a well sunk in the rock, at the north end of the sub-cellar of the building; this was obtained by boring to a depth of twenty-two feet, and the supply bids fair to be inexhaustible. Other borings have been made upon the premises with like results. Water can be obtained from the public water works of Syracuse, if required.

Materials of the Building.

The external walls of the basement and sub-cellar are of limestone laid in cement; the basement faced with freestone ashlar; all the division walls are of brick; all the outer walls of the superstructure, sixteen inches thick; the hall walls up to the third story floor, sixteen inches in thickness, and from them up to the roof, twelve inches in thickness; those portions of the walls sustaining great weight, laid in cement; the outer walls are built solid, and will be furred, lathed and plastered. The plastering will be finished to grounds, and will be three coat work; that of the corridors will be "floated work;" all other parts, "hard finished." The floors of the principal parts of the building will be double, the upper floor of Georgia pine battens. Three flights of stairs, extending the whole height of the building, in addition to the private stairs to the superintendent's apartments. The main stairs in the centre of the building will be of iron, supported by brick walls on all sides. The roofs covered with tin; all vallies and gutters of copper. The cut stone used upon the building is from the quarries at Fulton, Oswego county.

Drains.

The drains are sixteen inches in diameter, built of hard brick and cement, and of a sufficient depth to take the water from the bottom of the sub-cellar. All the waste water will be conveyed to the main drain, which will discharge the same to the south line of lot, at a point where it can be no annoyance to the building.

Heating and Ventilation.

The heating will be done by six of Chilson's hot-air furnaces, placed in the sub-cellar excavated for that purpose in the rock;

all the hot-air pipes are made of tin, and built in the brick walls, in every case, and registers placed remote from wood work. The floors over the furnace rooms to be fire-proof. The ventilation of the apartments will be secured by ventiducts made of wood, and built in the walls, and made to terminate in the main ventilators on the roofs. The upward current in these ventiducts will be secured by a *gas* burner or steam pipe in each of the ventilators.

Lighting.

The whole of the building will be lighted with gas, and if made on the premises it will be in a detached building for that purpose.

Description of the Building.

The edifice designed to be occupied for the institution is exhibited in the accompanying view, as seen from the southeast. The building is one hundred and fifty-three feet front and rear; the ends or wings, seventy feet from front to rear; the central parts, fifty feet deep; the tower eighteen feet square, and carried to the height of seventy feet. In elevation, the wings embrace four stories, basement and sub-cellar—the central parts three stories, and the tower five stories. The central parts recede ten feet from the front of the wings, and eight feet from the face of the tower, forming recesses on each side of the same; like recesses obtain in the rear, or western elevation, of the building, the first and second stories of which are enclosed with glass, forming large piazzas in the rear of the school rooms and the principal dormitories of the second story, and made so as to form a part of those apartments, by the windows which extend to the floor.

The building is in the Italian style, with superstructure of pressed brick, painted and sanded in harmony with the brown freestone dressings, supported by a rusticated ashlar basement. All the external angles are enriched with quoin blocks, with beveled rustic on each. All the external windows and doors have dressings of stone, with string courses of the same materials. The fenestral decorations embrace quite a variety. Those of the principal story in front have pediment heads, supported by

moulded trusses. Three bayed windows in the front of wings. Those in the recessed parts of the second story have semicircular heads. Those of the third story, segment heads—all of freestone. Those on the ends of the building embrace various forms, all in harmony with those in the front. The principal entrance in front, at the base of the tower, is approached by a flight of twelve steps, eighteen feet in length, the platform of which will be covered with a rusticated portico. The entrance at the south end will be under a *porte cochere*; that at the north by steps of cut stone. The entire building will be surmounted by large projecting medallion cornices.

Description of Plans.

The sub-cellar contains a hall eight feet wide, extending the whole length of the building, with areas at each end, open at the top. This hall communicates with the six furnace rooms, each twelve feet square. These, with ample room for the storage of fuel, comprise all the apartments of the sub-cellar. This part of the building is so arranged that the heating can be by hot water or steam, if found desirable to introduce either of them at any future day. This story is nine feet high in the clear.

The basement is nine feet high in the clear, and comprises the kitchen and four dining rooms in the rear, washing, ironing and bathing rooms, servants' hall and house dining room, with cellars, store rooms and pantries, together with superintendent's dining room, &c. This part of the building is made accessible from the upper part by stairs at each end, and from without by the doors at the north and south ends of the building.

The principal story is fourteen feet high in the clear, and is arranged with corridor through the center of the building, eight feet in width, with stairs at each end for boys and girls respectively, and the main stairs in the center of the building. The rear is occupied by the north, south and center school rooms, all of which are made to communicate by folding doors; and these, again, are made accessible to the enclosed piazzas in the rear. The front on the south of the tower is occupied by the superintendent's parlor, study and private stairs, on the north of the

principal entrance, the reception room, office and teachers' sitting room. The north and south wings contain the day rooms, sitting rooms and nurseries for the children.

The second story is eleven feet high in the clear, the corridor same as that of the principal story. The front part between the tower and the south wing contains the superintendent's apartments. All the other parts of the south half of the building will be used for dormitories, &c., for girls. The north half of the building contains the dormitories, &c., for the boys—the teachers' apartments being in the front, on the north side of the tower. The rear dormitories communicate with the enclosed piazzas of the second story.

The third story is nine feet high in the clear, and is divided and subdivided similar to the second story. The access to the upper section of the tower is by an enclosed stairs from this floor. The room on this floor in the tower to be used as a museum. The fourth story is nine feet high in the clear, and is confined to the wings, which contain two dormitories each.

The upper section of the tower is furnished with a gallery from which point an extended view of the surrounding country may be obtained.

The gymnasium will be in a detached building, thirty-five feet by sixty feet, and approached by a covered way from the school-rooms.

Buildings for industrial occupations will be added, as circumstances may require.

ARTICLES DEPOSITED IN THE CORNER-STONE.

1st.—Reports of Dr. Backus to the Senate in 1846 and 1847, upon the education of idiots.

2d.—The report of the State Lunatic Asylum for 1846, recommending the establishment of an asylum for idiots.

3d.— Reports of the trustees of the New-York Idiot Asylum for 1852, '53, '54.

4th.—Legislative manual.

5th.—Syracuse city charter, &c., with a list of the present officers of the city government.

6th.—Copies of the Syracuse daily papers.

7th.—The names of the donors for the site of the Institution.

8th.—The programme of the proceedings of the day.

ORDER OF EXERCISES
ON
LAYING THE CORNER-STONE
OF THE
NEW YORK STATE ASYLUM FOR IDIOTS,
AT
Syracuse, September 8, 1854.

1. Music by the band.
2. Prayer by Rev. Dr. Pohlman, of Albany.
3. Hymn.
4. Laying of the Corner-Stone, and Address by Gov. Seymour.
5. Address by Dr. Wilbur, superintendent.
6. Hymn.
7. Address by Gov. Hunt.
8. Hymn.
9. Addresses by Dr. Seguin, of France, and other gentlemen.
10. Benediction, by Rev. Mr. Canfield.

LAYING OF THE CORNER-STONE.

The following account of this ceremony is substantially taken from the *Syracuse Daily Journal*, of Sept. 9th, 1854.

A large concourse of citizens and strangers assembled to witness the laying of the corner-stone of the State Idiot Asylum in this city, yesterday at 11 o'clock.

At an early hour carriages might have been seen wending their way in the direction which leads to the institution. The site is located about a mile from the central part of the city, and is situated on a beautiful eminence, about sixty feet above the level of the valley. The trustees of the institution, the mayor and common council of the city in a body, were present, together with several distinguished gentlemen from abroad.

The exercises on the ground were commenced with music by a band provided for the occasion.

In the absence of Dr. Pohlman, of Albany, who was detained by sickness, prayer was offered by Rev. William B. Ashley, of Syracuse.

The following hymn, altered by Rev. Samuel J. May, for the occasion, was then sung :

Far from us suppliants, God of grace,
Th' unfeeling heart remove :
O ! form in our obedient souls,
The image of thy love.

O, may our sympathizing breasts
The generous pleasure know
Kindly to share in others' joy,
And weep for others' woe.

Where the most helpless sons of grief
In low distress are laid,
Soft be our hearts their pains to feel,
And strong our hands to aid.

O, be the law of love fulfilled
In every act and thought ;
Each scornful feeling be removed,
Each selfish view forgot.

His Excellency, Gov. Seymour, who was to have laid the corner stone and made the opening address, being prevented by illness from attendance, that duty devolved upon his honor, the mayor of the city, Allen Monroe, Esq.

A metallic box, containing the articles enumerated on a previous page, was deposited in the cavity prepared for the purpose, and the stone was laid with appropriate remarks and the usual ceremonies.

Dr. Wilbur, superintendent of the institution, then made the following address :

“The history of the New-York Asylum for Idiots, for the accommodation of which this building is now to be erected, is contained in the annual reports that have been made to the Legislature by the board of trustees. I have, however, been requested to prepare a concise statement of the main facts in its history, to be read on this occasion.

“The first attempt, in this country, to found a State institution for idiots was made in New-York in the year 1846.* Only a week after the meeting of the Legislature, the Hon. Frederick F. Backus, of Rochester, then a member of the Senate, took the first steps to secure legislation in behalf of idiots. He moved that that portion of the last previous State census which related to the number and condition of idiots, be referred to the committee on medical societies.

“Shortly after, as chairman of that committee, he made a long and able report. It contained a statement of the probable number of idiots in the State. It alluded to the generally prevailing

* See Appendix, No. 2.

opinion that "any efforts for their improvement were of a perfectly hopeless character—an opinion so prevalent that even benevolent men, in search of objects of commiseration and charity, had passed them by;" it described their condition, thus neglected and forsaken, as 'having been almost turned adrift like cattle,' and of their being regarded 'as incapable of instruction as the brutes that perish.' But it then affirmed that these views, so long entertained were mistaken ones; that the idiot could be educated; that those who were now left by neglect under the control of their animal natures could be redeemed and rendered capable of speech, of self-control, of simple school studies, and of labor and various industrial occupations.

"In confirmation of these assertions it gave a brief history of the European schools for idiots; the proofs of the very favorable and practical results of those schools, as furnished by the testimony of scientific men of extensive reputation in Europe and America. It furnished the opinions of well known superintendents of insane asylums, that asylums for idiots were a want of the age, from the number, present condition and undoubted susceptibility of instruction of the class in question.

"During this same session, the late Dr. Brigham, in the annual report of the State Lunatic Asylum, dated November 30th, 1845, gave a synoptical statement of the number of insane and idiotic persons in the State. He reported the success of the European institutions for idiots, and ended by expressing the hope that New-York would sooner or later, provide an asylum for their especial improvement.

"After a proper interval Dr. Backus introduced a bill for the establishment of an asylum for idiots, which finally passed the Senate by a vote of 11 to 10. This bill found a ready champion in the Assembly in the person of Mr. Titus, and, though it was first concurred in, was finally rejected by a vote of 58 to 47—not because there was a want of conviction in the minds of the members of the necessity of such an institution in the State, but because the appropriation necessary for the requisite buildings was deemed incompatible with the resolutions of retrenchment in State expenditures adopted by the party then controlling the Legislature.

During the interval between the session of 1846 and the one succeeding, Dr. Backus pushed his labors with unwearied zeal. He collected additional testimony from various sources to be embodied in a second report which was made in the Senate February 16th, 1847. At his suggestion, also, memorials were prepared and presented to that body by the State Medical Society and other associations.

In 1847 a bill establishing an asylum for idiots and making an appropriation for the erection of a suitable building, passed the Senate by a vote of 17 to 7. This was finally lost in the House by the want of time at the close of the adjourned session.

“I have dwelt thus long upon the labors of Dr. Backus, because, though not successful in accomplishing the special legislation or immediate results which they were designed to accomplish, they were by no means fruitless. They prepared the way by a convincing array of facts and the warm expression of faith in the proposed enterprise, for the later and more successful attempts at legislation; and because the time for such acknowledgment seems not inappropriate when we witness the beginning of the realization of the hope he then earnestly expressed, that the measure he advocated would find favor with the legislature, ‘that the heart of many an afflicted parent within our borders might be gladdened with the thought that soon there should be an institution where he could safely place his poor stricken child, with the encouraging hope that he might in some measure be restored in mind, with acquired habits of cleanliness, industry, and a disposition to advance in knowledge and in some useful occupation, and become, although a weak and humble one, a constituent, social member of the human family around him.’

“To continue the history, I will mention that Gov. Fish recommended the subject to the consideration of the Legislature in both of his annual messages. But as there was no one in either branch of the Legislature who felt any particular interest in the subject, and who would continually urge it upon their attention, no action resulted from the recommendation. I will now notice briefly the history of the legislation to establish our asylum.

"In the first message of Gov. Hunt, the attention of the Legislature was again called to the subject, and the recommendation was renewed that an institution should be established for the benefit of this long-neglected class.

"Not resting with the mere mention of the subject in his message, he exerted himself personally to accomplish so desirable a purpose. He invited Dr. Howe, Superintendent of the Massachusetts Blind Asylum, under whose supervision an experimental school for idiots had been already established there, to visit Albany and give an exhibition of the results of training and teaching in the case of some of the pupils then under his charge.

"This had its desired effect. The sympathies of the members of both branches of the Legislature were warmly enlisted, and an act was passed at the adjourned session, establishing an asylum for idiots, with a sufficient appropriation for its existence for two years. Trustees were appointed by the Governor whose names were a sufficient guarantee that the experiment would be fairly tried, and whose opinions as to the result of the experiment would have a controlling influence upon the action of future Legislatures. Providentially a very excellent building for the temporary accommodation of the asylum was at once obtained, in the vicinity of Albany, and no delay was experienced in the reception of pupils.

"In less than a year from the first appropriation—at the session of 1852—the number of State pupils in the experimental school, was increased to 30.

"At the session of 1853, a still more decisive test of the confidence the new institution had inspired in the public mind, of the practicability of the work for which it was designed, was given. A bill was passed making an appropriation not only for its continuance in its present form, but for the erection of suitable buildings for its accommodation, thus placing it upon the same footing with the other State charitable institutions.

"Steps were immediately taken by the trustees to carry out the design of the Legislature. It was soon found, however, that

the provision made was not adequate to accomplish all that was deemed desirable in the matter of building and grounds, and they very wisely decided to defer all action beyond the purchase of a site, the preparation of plans for building, and conditional contracts based upon those plans, till the meeting of the next Legislature.

“The whole subject was fairly stated in the last annual report of the trustees to that body, and their consideration and action, as, in some sense, ex-officio guardians of the asylum, solicited. This candid reference of the question to their decision was very favorably received. An additional appropriation was granted with the privilege of building according to the plans submitted to them.

“Immediately on the adjournment of the last Legislature, a meeting of the trustees was held, when it was decided—in view of the fact that some exceptions had been taken to the site already purchased, and also of some feeling that had prevailed and been expressed in the Legislature, that the asylum should be located elsewhere than in Albany—it was decided to review the whole subject of location before commencing the new building.

“While this was pending, an overture was received from some of the citizens of Syracuse of a gift of a suitable location in the vicinity of that city.

“This proposal was finally accepted after an examination of the sites in the neighborhood of Syracuse by a committee of the trustees. A later and more thorough examination and comparison of the various sites that could be obtained, resulted in the selection of the spot upon which we have assembled to-day.

“The conditional contracts of last year have accordingly been perfected. A building of the same form and materials, to be built by the same mechanics, upon as favorable terms, and by the same architect, as the one proposed to be erected last year in Albany, is now here commenced.

“In this brief record of the history of our asylum, I can not forbear, in justice to my own feelings, and I know what I am about
[Assembly, No. 33.]

to say will meet with the approval of the members of the board of trustees, I can not forbear to express my sense of the great indebtedness of the institution for its present position, in point of usefulness and in public estimation, to the labors of one man, who, although prevented by a serious illness in a neighboring State from being present and participating in the ceremonies of this occasion is, I doubt not, yet present with us in spirit. I mean the Hon. John C. Spencer, who, as chairman of the executive committee of the board of trustees, has borne the greatest share of the labor necessary for the well-management and prosperity of the institution, who has ever been ready to sustain the courage and strengthen the hands of the superintendent by his constant sympathy and counsel, and who has been gracefully crowning the latter portion of a life of indefatigable intellectual exertions by an equally untiring devotion to the interests of this and kindred objects of charity and philanthropy."

Then followed a hymn adapted to the occasion by Rev. Mr. May :

Bright source of everlasting love,
To Thee our souls we raise,
And to Thy sovereign goodness rear
This monument of Praise.

Thy mercy gilds the path of life,
With every cheering ray,
And kindly checks the rising tear,
Or wipes that tear away.

What shall we render, bounteous Lord,
For all the grace we see ?
Each wise design, each generous deed,
Proceedeth, Lord, from Thee.

To Thee we owe the gracious plan
That bids these walls arise,
To Thee we look in earnest prayer,
To bless this enterprise.

Ex-Gov. Hunt was then introduced, and delivered the following address :

"The foundation of an establishment for the relief of human suffering and infirmity, is an event which never fails to fill the

generous mind with unalloyed satisfaction. This is especially true in regard to institutions intended to mitigate the deprivation of the senses and faculties which are necessary to the full enjoyment of intellectual life. Besides the inherent and direct blessings which flow from an enlightened system of public charity, we contemplate each new effort to alleviate the calamities of mankind, as an onward step in civilization and social happiness. The people of New-York, thus far in their historic career, have been honorably distinguished for the philanthropic spirit which has animated and guided their legislative policy. Even in the turbulence of party strife, when a calm spectator would conclude that the kindest sentiments of our nature were stifled by the violence of political controversy, the mild voice of humanity, speaking to the conscience in behalf of the unfortunate, has been heard and respected. The varied institutions of New-York, designed for the moral and intellectual advancement of her children, while regarded with a just State pride by her citizens, have been deemed worthy of imitation by many of our sister States, and our progress in some departments of social and political amelioration has elicited the highest encomiums from the statesmen and the philanthropists of Europe. Thus far our people have been actuated by a just estimate of the design and office of political institutions. They have recognized those high obligations which are inseparable from free government, constituting the only security for its permanence. The administration of justice, which in its broader sense may be said to include as well the making as the execution of laws to control mankind in their relations to society and to each other, is undoubtedly the primary and most essential function of government. The experience of all countries and of every age, attests the necessity for an agency competent to punish the guilty and to uphold the weak against the strong; and this necessity is justly regarded as the origin of the social compact. But the responsibilities of a State are not confined within these narrow limits. When the civil power has provided for the protection of person and property, by equal laws honestly administered, the fulfilment of this duty seems but to open the way for the performance of other duties of vital importance to the happiness of society. The estab-

lishment of justice and security, is the first care of an enlightened commonwealth ; but patriotism and wise statesmanship find new fields for exertion. They are exhibited in efforts for improving the physical advantages of the country, and elevating its moral condition. I will not dwell upon the manifold blessings which proceed from judicious legislation in favor of trade, intercourse, manufacturing arts, and the development of those varied resources which form the basis of our material prosperity. It is more appropriate, on an occasion like the present, to turn our view to that bright page of our history, which records the constant advance of the State in works of beneficence, intended for the diffusion of knowledge, virtue and religion. It is more pleasing to contemplate those noble triumphs of mercy and humanity, which shed abroad the pure light of science and morality, imparting wisdom to the simple, consolation to the afflicted, and proclaiming to all "peace on earth and good will towards men."

"Let us indulge a brief retrospect of the moral progress which illustrates the annals of New-York. We have created schools for the education of all our people, so that in future no child of poverty or adversity will have cause to plead ignorance as a defence for vice or crime. Our system of popular instruction establishes the fabric of republican liberty on the sure basis of public virtue and intelligence. Not satisfied with the adoption of general systems, which provide for the intellectual needs of the mass of the community, the humane spirit of our legislation has sought out for relief those special classes of our fellow beings, whom unkind fortune, or the mysterious decrees of an all wise Creator have separated, in some degree, from a participation in the common felicity. In every county a home has been provided for the destitute ; in our cities asylums have been reared for the needy orphan ; hospitals for the sick and infirm have been liberally endowed by the Legislature ; houses of refuge have been established for the training and reformation of youthful offenders, by which hundreds have been rescued from the evil influences which surrounded their childhood ; and even in the punishment of felons, we have strived to rouse them to a love of virtue, by the teachings of benevolence and religion. Our institutions for the insane, the blind, the deaf and dumb, stand conspicuous among

the best achievements of civilization and humanity. A candid observation of the philanthropic agencies, introduced or patronized by the State, seemed to justify an impression, that little or nothing was wanting to complete our system of public charities. It was generally assumed, that no field for the exercise of practical benevolence remained wholly unoccupied. The Legislature had evinced an effective sympathy for every form of suffering humanity, which was believed to come within the scope of legislative action. Yet there remained a class of unfortunates, the most wretched and helpless of our fellow beings, for whose relief no effort had been made, because all effort was deemed impracticable and hopeless.

“The idiot naturally excites feelings of compassion, saddened by the painful reflection, that his forlorn condition admits of no essential improvement. Though created in the human form, he appears at first to be destitute of all the moral and intellectual attributes, which distinguish man from “the brute that perisheth;” and in most cases this degradation is aggravated by a degree of physical incapacity, which renders him more impotent, in respect to his wants, than the lower grades of animals. The divine gift of reason, with which our Heavenly Father endowed the race of immortals whom he created in his own image, was formerly believed to be absolutely withheld from the ordinary subject of idiocy. His life was perceived to be a burden to himself and to others. Alike insensible to kindness or reproof, maternal affection was lavished in vain upon the idiot child. As advancing years increase his stature and strength, he is often an object of dread or disgust, and his repulsive presence becomes a source of daily humiliation and unavailing tears. Sorrowing parents and kindred contemplate his misery with agonizing despair. Can we consider it strange then, that, until a recent period, the idiotic should have been treated as victims of an inexorable destiny, doomed to a state of debasement, too profound to admit of amelioration.

“How difficult was it for many of us to be persuaded that their condition was susceptible of moral or mental improvement! With what emotions of gratitude and admiration ought we to regard the generous benefactors, who have rescued this class of beings

from their degradation, bringing them from darkness to light, and awakening into new existence, the living soul which seemed to be lost in interminable night.

“It was reserved for modern philanthropy to discover, that the idiot is not beyond the reach of benevolence, to demonstrate, by actual result, that he retains some latent germs of intellect, which may be developed by patient culture, and that a large portion of this class of sufferers may be subjected to healthful discipline, employed in useful labor and raised to a condition of comparative intelligence and comfort.

“Only a few years have elapsed since the first schools for the instruction and training of idiots were instituted in Europe. The success of the experiment in France soon induced other nations to follow their example. It has been truly said that to an eminent citizen of our own State belongs the high honor of being the first American legislator to advocate the claims of the idiot and initiate measures for his relief. Frederick F. Backus, then a member of the New-York Senate, was the first to bring forward a bill providing for the erection of a State asylum for that purpose.

“My own feelings, seconded by a sense of personal justice and a proper regard for the truth of history, prompt me to this public acknowledgment of his claims upon our gratitude; and I can not permit the occasion to pass without congratulating him on the success which now rewards his labors in this work of humanity. “Peace hath her victories”—and according to my estimate of worldly renown, the triumph which crowns his philanthropic efforts is more truly glorious than the victories by which countries have been desolated, and the happiness of mankind sacrificed upon the altar of national pride or personal ambition.

“In reviewing the progress of legislation on this interesting subject, we must award a prominent position to Massachusetts, always among the foremost in wise measures for elevating the condition of the human race. Almost simultaneous with the first movement of Dr. Backus in our Senate, the subject was brought before the Massachusetts Legislature, and commissioners were appointed to investigate the number and condition of idiots in

that State. The result of their investigations was presented in two annual reports of great value and interest. The facts and recommendations submitted by the commissioners induced the Legislature of Massachusetts, in 1848, to appropriate \$2,500 per annum for three years, to aid an experimental school for idiots, which was established at the Asylum for the Blind, in South Boston, under the superintendence of Dr. S. G. Howe, whose generous efforts in the cause, before and since that period, are deserving of our grateful acknowledgments. The success of the experimental school at South Boston was highly satisfactory; and in 1850 it was made a permanent institution, with a standing appropriation of \$5,000 per annum for its support. Thus it will be seen that while New-York is the first to erect a State establishment as an asylum for idiots, Massachusetts was the first to appropriate money to test their capacity for instruction. The delay in our own State was not the result of indifference; but may be attributed to the distrust and incredulity with which new systems, conflicting with settled opinions, are sometimes received. Although the subject was urged upon the attention of the Legislature from year to year, no definite action was reached until the special session of 1851, and it is but candid to confess that many of the members who finally consented to the experiment, expressed serious doubts of its success. The belief so generally entertained that a class of beings apparently destitute of the perceptive and reasoning faculties are incapable of practical improvement, was deeply rooted in many intelligent minds.

“The fact that so large a portion of the Legislature yielded adverse opinions, and united with cordiality in the measure finally adopted, is honorable to their patriotism and liberality. The act of 1851 was viewed as an experiment by many who voted for it, and it was deemed advisable that the means employed for testing it should be reduced to the most moderate scale.

“Accordingly, the first appropriation was limited to \$6,000 per annum for two years. It may safely be affirmed that results so important and satisfactory have seldom been produced by so small an expenditure of the public resources. The experience of a single year was sufficient to dispel all doubt, and to awaken the

public mind to a just sense of duty towards the afflicted class whose claims have been too long neglected. The anticipations of the most ardent friends of the measure were fully realized if not surpassed. Convinced by demonstration of the success of the undertaking, each successive Legislature has evinced a readiness to make ample provision for the support of the Asylum, and to place it on a permanent footing, among the most favored of our charitable institutions.

“After the history which has just been given of the progress of the institution, I do not deem it necessary on this occasion to present a further statement on that subject, or to enlarge on the nature and advantages of the means of instruction which have been so effectually employed. Further information on these topics may be found in the annual reports of the trustees and the superintendent. The facts exhibited in these periodical statements are peculiarly gratifying. They are sufficient to carry conviction to all candid minds. I trust it will not be deemed inappropriate if I embrace this opportunity to express my appreciation of the disinterested zeal, fidelity and capacity with which the trustees have carried forward the work committed to their hands. They have discharged a difficult duty with a degree of energy alike worthy of praise and imitation. Their reward is expressed in that benignant precept of antiquity, “the more we live for others, the more we live for ourselves.”

“Governor Hunt said he felt some diffidence in expressing the obligations so eminently due to the superintendent of the Asylum for Idiots. It is always difficult to speak of a public benefactor in his own presence; and if he were now to give free utterance to the sentiments of gratitude inspired by his character and services, it might seem to transcend the limits which delicacy prescribes. On the other hand, if he omitted to allude to his usefulness in the sublime plan of benevolence to which he had dedicated the powers of his gifted mind, he would feel conscious that he had withheld a tribute which justice demands. More than this, it would be the suppression of a fact of important significance in connection with the history and prospect of the Institution. For a series of years Dr. Hervey B. Wilbur has made it

the chief object of his life to raise the imbecile from his degradation, and awaken him to a consciousness of his existence, as a moral and intellectual being. He was the founder of a school for the education of idiots, which he established at Barre, Massachusetts, in 1848. In conducting this establishment, his labors were attended with such remarkable success, and he gave such evidences of the peculiar capacity and aptitude which the service requires, that the trustees of our State Asylum, while arranging its organization, decided to invite him to take the superintendence of the Institution. Fortunately for the State, he yielded to the solicitation of the trustees, and accepted the appointment. The wisdom of their choice is attested by the favorable result of his efforts as exhibited in the onward progress of the school from its commencement in 1851, and in its present gratifying condition. In their last annual report, the trustees justly observe that the great success of the Institution is mainly owing to the remarkable qualifications and unremitted services of the superintendent.

“Without some experience no man can form an adequate idea of the difficulties to be encountered in the training and management of idiotic children. The task requires an unusual share of patience, perseverance, kindness, tact, and judgment. The means to be employed are widely different from the exercises in the ordinary educational system.

“Governor Hunt said it had been his intention to present some further views on the nature of the obstacles to be overcome and the benefits to be conferred by idiot education, but he was happily relieved from this part of his task by the presence of one far more competent to shed light upon the subject. He referred in terms of just acknowledgment to Dr. Seguin, the celebrated philanthropist and teacher, who first reduced the training of imbeciles to a system, in France.

“According to statistical returns, which, if not strictly accurate, are free from exaggeration, it is estimated that the whole number of idiots in this State is about 2,800, and of these, that about 700 are under fourteen, and capable of instruction. The importance of the subject will be more freely realized when we extend our

view, and consider the number in the United States. It is a moderate calculation to assume that the country contains 20,000 idiotic persons, of different degrees of imbecility. Of these about 5,000 must be suitable subjects for discipline and education. It remains for the American people, through their State Legislatures, to determine whether this large class of human beings shall be permitted to remain in their present degraded and painful condition. Or will they adopt prompt and effective measures to raise them to their true position in the scale of being? I trust the response to this appeal will be worthy of the national character for benevolence and humanity.

“The erection of this, the first State Asylum for Idiots, of which the foundation has now been laid, should be regarded, not as the consummation, but the commencement of a system to be prosecuted and extended by aiding or founding similar schools in other sections of the State, until all who need shall participate in the blessings of a generous public charity. We may also indulge in the hope that other States will esteem our example fit for imitation, until the wants of every portion of the Union shall have been fully supplied.

“The foundation of this Asylum is an event which will be hailed with joy by many sympathising hearts. It will carry hope and gladness to many homes from which cheerfulness had been banished by the presence of the idiot child. It will be cherished in grateful memories, as the generous offering of a great and free State upon the altar of our common humanity. To behold a government exerting its ample energies to relieve the afflicted and exalt the lowly, is a spectacle of a high moral sublimity. When the civil power is thus displayed in efforts to elevate and improve the condition of man, it bears an impress almost divine, and may be regarded without irreverence, as the instrument, if not the representative, of Deity.”

The following hymn was then sung :

O, spirit of the living God,
In all thy plenitude of grace,
Grant here thine aid to bring to light,
The most benighted of our race.

To those who teach, give hearts of love,
That they to life the dead may bring;
Give power and unction from above,
That here the dumb thy praise may sing.

May darkness here be turned to light—
Confusion into order changed;
Souls without strength, inspired with might,
And idiots with thy children ranged.

The Hon. E. W. Leavenworth, Secretary of State, then came forward and remarked that it gave him great pleasure to introduce to the assembly a gentleman, who as the pupil of Itard and Esquirol, had been early imbued with the combined principles of science and philanthropy—whose name and works, and devotion to the cause, were well known wherever anything was known of the education of idiots; and he would also add, to whom was universally conceded the merit of first developing and establishing the principles which lie at the foundation, and first systematizing the art upon which the education of idiots is based, and by which it is successfully conducted. This gentleman was Dr. Edward Seguin, of France. After the applause had subsided, that his presence had occasioned, and with an apology for his inability to do justice to his own feelings and to the subject, in a language, not his own, Dr. Seguin spoke as follows:

“God has scattered among us—rare as the possessors of genius—the idiot, the blind, the deaf mute, in order to bind the rich to the needy, the talented to the incapable, all men to each other, by a tie of indissoluble solidarity. The old bonds are dissolving; man is already unwilling to continue to contribute money or palaces for the support of indolent nobility; but he is every day more ready to build palaces and give annuities for the indigent or infirm—the chosen friends of our Lord Jesus.

“See that stone—the token of a new alliance between humanity and a class hitherto neglected—that, ladies and gentlemen, is your pride; it is the greatest joy of my life, for I, too, have labored for the poor idiot.

“Happy the city which has enriched itself by such a monument. Happy the man who has conquered this monument by his indomitable courage in instructing idiots. Happy those whom

I see around me who have sustained him in this charitable enterprise."

The Hon. A. B. Conger, an early friend and advocate of the institution in the State Senate, then addressed the audience in some eloquent remarks. It was his good fortune to be present, through the kindness of friends. He was there as a stranger. He eloquently discoursed upon the beauty of the scenery around him. He would be glad to catch, at a single glance, the whole surrounding country, which but a few years since was roamed over by the Indian, but now is cultivated by civilized man. He would if he had time, pay a tribute to western New-York. He spoke of the asylum of which the citizens had now assembled to lay the corner-stone. He would like to pay a tribute to a Webster, a Geddes, and a Forman, who first commenced the work of progress in this section of the country. The lowering of yonder lake, and placing this region in a condition to build large and prosperous cities, was a masterpiece. Yonder spires, and the presence of this audience, attest the truth of enterprise. Every section of the union was deeply interested in the prosperity of this institution. There were many homes afflicted in his own locality with idiots.

Hon. Christopher Morgan, ex-Secretary of State, was then introduced by Mr. Leavenworth. He said that he presumed that Gen. Leavenworth supposed all his predecessors must speak. He had visited Syracuse on several occasions, but none like the present. He had been here at conventions of all kinds, but this was the happiest convention he had ever attended. He spoke of the war in the east. England, France and Turkey were marshalling their allied forces to batter down the walls of Cronstadt and Sebastopol. The battle fields were to be Macadamized with the bones of slaughtered millions. But how different! The people of Syracuse had assembled to lay the corner-stone of an institution of benevolence. Was not this far better? He felt proud of his native State, because it was on account of such institutions that it merited the title of the Empire State. We live in a land favored above all others on earth. Every where you may see enterprise. Our canals and railroads are living monuments of civilization.

Idiots can be instructed mentally as well as physically. Complete this institution, and in a few years you may see the little boy and girl—children of misfortune—with their countenances beaming with intelligence. In conclusion he eloquently called upon our citizens to let no party strife retard their progress in erecting this institution, and invoked them to foster and cherish this act of benevolence, which was for the true, *bona fide know nothings*.

Rev. S. J. May, on being called upon, remarked :

“Twenty-five years ago, or more, in the early days of my ministry, I encountered, as every man who thinks at all must sooner or later encounter, the great problem of the existence of evil—the question, how the good God, the Heavenly Father, could permit his children of earth to be so tempted, tried, and afflicted as they are. I was unable to avoid this perplexing subject ; so I met it, as best I could, in full faith, that the wisdom and goodness of God will be justified in all his works, and in all his ways, whenever they shall be fully understood.

“I endeavored to lead my audience to see what, in almost every direction, was very apparent to myself, that evil is a means to some higher good ; never an end ; never permitted for its own sake, certainly not for the sake of vengeance.

“I was able easily to trace out the good effects of many evils ; to show how they had stimulated mankind to exertion and contrivance, physical and mental ; to tell of the discoveries, inventions and improvements that were the consequences. In particular, I dwelt upon the sad privations those individuals are subjected to who were born deaf or blind. The institution of the Asylum for the Deaf and Dumb, at Hartford, was then of recent date, and a school for the blind was said to have been opened in Paris. These institutions were then of great interest to the philanthropic ; and I found no difficulty in showing that the philosophy of the mind, and the science and art of education in general, have been much improved by the earnest and successful endeavors which benevolent persons had made to open communications with the minds

and hearts of persons deprived of one or more of the most important senses.

But there was idiocy—idiocy so appalling in its appearance, so hopeless in its nature ; what could be the use of such an evil ? It were not enough to point to it, as a consequence of the violation of some of the essential laws of generation. If that were all, its end would be punishment. I ventured, therefore, to declare, with an emphasis enhanced somewhat, perhaps, by a lurking distrust of the prediction, that the time would come when access would be found to the idiotic brain, the light of intelligence admitted into its dark chambers, and the whole race be benefited by some new discovery of the nature of mind. It seemed to some of my hearers, more than to myself, a daring conjecture.

Two or three years afterwards I read in the newspapers a brief announcement of the fact, that a Dr. Seguin, of Paris, had succeeded in educating idiots. I flew to her who would be most likely to sympathise in my joy, shouting, ‘ Wife, my prophecy is fulfilled. Idiots have been educated.’

And lo ! here, to-day, on this platform, I behold the man, the very Dr. Seguin, who more than twenty years ago accomplished that which, until it had been done, it seemed absurd to expect. This excellent philanthropist has recently come to reside in a distant part of our country. Hearing of the occasion which has brought us all to this place to-day, he hied him hither, that he might witness with his own eyes the laying of the corner stone of the first buiding in this country ever dedicated from its foundation to *the instruction of idiots*. If Dr. Seguin is not yet sufficiently familiar with our language to make himself intelligible to you in a speech, I trust he will at least consent to stand up before you, that you may see the man to whom our common humanity owes so much.

He is a French gentleman. And here I must be allowed to pay a tribute of gratitude to that people to which, by birth, he belongs. It is due to them ; and I wish some one was now in my place who could do the subject ample justice. It is due from us

Most of us, probably, were educated to distrust the French—to esteem them lightly. Our teachers in this matter have been the English—the last people in the world who should be trusted to give us a true estimate of the achievements and character of the French. Whatever may be true of their volatility, it is certain that no people have been so ingeniously, as well as actively and patiently benevolent as the French.

“They were the first to attempt some improvements in *the discipline of prisons*. To them we owe the entire and most benignant change that has taken place in *the treatment of the insane*. It was a Frenchman who invented the methods by which *the deaf and dumb may be instructed* in all knowledge that does not come by hearing alone. A Frenchman, too, it was who contrived the instruments and pointed out the means by which the other senses may be made, in a great measure, to supply the want of sight. And to-day we have reason gratefully to acknowledge that Frenchmen were the first to descend into the lowest depth of human wretchedness. They were the first to conceive (and they persevered in their experiments until they proved) that even idiocy is a condition susceptible of improvement—that *idiots can be educated*. And here we have with us, in our very midst, the man—the Frenchman—to whom, under God, the subjects of this terrible malady; their relatives; the communities in which they were born, and our common humanity owe more, perhaps, than to any other individual. He is entitled to an expression of our respect and gratitude. Let the name of Edward Seguin never be forgotten.

“Here, too, we have the gentleman, selected by our Legislature because of his well known success and his eminent qualifications, to take charge of the novel and inestimable institution established upon this spot. In a few months, Dr. Wilbur, with his family, his assistants and pupils, will come to dwell in the edifice that is to be erected on these foundations. They are to become our fellow citizens. They are to be, in a great measure, committed by the State to our sympathy and co-operation. Fellow citizens of Syracuse, Onondaga county, central New-York! Let us to-day give them every assurance of a hearty welcome, and hereafter show

to the people of our great commonwealth, by our intelligent appreciation of the important work to be done within these walls, and our generous aid of those who shall be placed here to do it. Let us show that Syracuse was a well chosen location for the New York State Asylum for Idiots."

Mr. Titus, of New York, in introducing Dr. Backus to the assembly, made the following remarks :

Citizens of Syracuse :

"There is a name in the history of our state, which you will ever delight to honor—I allude to De Witt Clinton. His intelligence comprehended the extent of the rich resources deposited in central New-York, and apprehended the embarrassment which prevented the development of those resources. He saw that the failure on the part of nature to supply a ready navigation was the cause of that embarrassment. His genius devised—his resolution prosecuted—his energy brought into successful operation yonder *artificial river* as a remedy for the great *natural deficiency* ; and his name will forever stand identified with the prosperity and riches of your city.

"This day you are giving your encouragement and aid to an enterprise devised to remedy the *natural deficiency*, which, heretofore has operated as a controlling embarrassment in all efforts for the mental development of an unfortunate class of our population. This asylum for idiots is destined to be for its pitiable inmates an artificial channel for moral advancement, as beneficent and enriching as has been the Erie canal for your material prosperity. The munificence and sympathy which you have thus early manifested in behalf of the poor idiot is a warrant that, hereafter, this asylum will occupy in your charitable considerations a position corresponding with that of the canal in your business thoughts.

"There is a gentleman present whose name will always stand identified with this humane enterprise in our state as does the name of Clinton with the Erie canal—I allude to Frederick F. Backus. You have just heard in the truthful history of the institution by Dr. Wilbur, and in the eloquent address by Governor

Hunt, of his valuable and devoted exertions in the first *public* movement made in America, in the cause of the education of idiots. It is, therefore, needless for me to enlarge on that head; but I desire, from my own knowledge, to say that had the bill which Dr. Backus, by his great personal influence and devotion, carried through the Senate in 1846, been sustained in the house of Assembly by any member with equal personal influence and devotion, an asylum for idiots would have been established by the State of New York in that year. I am unwilling, citizens of Syracuse, that an individual standing thus prominent in the history of this noble charity should be among you on this interesting occasion without allowing you an opportunity of an acquaintance; I shall, therefore, take the liberty of disregarding his desire to remain unobserved, and of claiming the privilege to make him personally known by you."

Mr. Titus then introduced Dr. Backus to the assembly.

Dr. Backus excused himself from speaking on account of his health.

The benediction was then pronounced by the Rev. Mr. Canfield.

The following letters were received from gentlemen who were invited but were unable to attend on this occasion:

NEW-YORK, Sept. 6, 1854.

My Dear Sir—It would give me great pleasure to be at Syracuse on the occasion of laying the corner stone of the Asylum for Idiots, but it will not be in my power.

I remember, with much interest, the visit we paid to that institution, in its original location near Albany. I was then deeply impressed with the importance of the undertaking, and highly gratified with the success which seemed already to have crowned your efforts. No object more purely benevolent can engage the

attention of Christian men, and call, more generally, for the good wishes of the friends of humanity.

I trust it will continue to receive the fostering care of the Legislature.

I am, very truly, yours,

THOS. J. OAKLEY.

To Mr. JAMES H. TITUS.

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNORS OF THE ALMS HOUSE, }
 ROTUNDA, PARK, NEW-YORK, *Sept. 7, 1854.* }

JAMES H. TITUS, Esq.:

Dear Sir—Your note of invitation to Syracuse was not received in time to enable the Board of Governors to participate in the ceremonies to-morrow. I am sure, however, that I express the feeling of the Governors of the Alms House when I assure you of the deep interest they feel in the success of the State Asylum for Idiots. I assure you that I remember, with much satisfaction, the visit I made to your institution near Albany.

To one who has observed the condition of the idiot, left to the ordinary treatment of the poor house, it is most gratifying to witness the great advantages a strictly idiot institution has over the ordinary provision made for this unfortunate class.

I must not forget our two boys, Natty and Willie. You, I am sure, remember their condition while under our care at Randall's Island. To see them now under the tuition and care of your institution, almost in full possession of all the ordinary faculties of the mind, taught as ordinary children are, the benefits and comforts of habits of cleanliness and order,—and by means of special treatment and attention made participants in the enjoyments of life, as well as an appreciation of a happy future, calls from us a united expression of our confidence in the Asylum, which we trust will meet with the strongest sympathy and aid of legislators, as well as our citizens generally.

With great respect, your obedient servant,

S. DRAPER,

President.

LITTLE FALLS, Sept. 22, 1854.

Hon. JAMES H. TITUS, Saratoga Springs:

My Dear Sir—Your invitation to participate in the ceremonies on the occasion of laying the corner stone of the New-York Asylum for Idiots, came to my hands too late to enable me to attend with convenience, and I have not sooner acknowledged your courtesy for the reason that from the date of your letter I was at a loss where to address you.

It would have given me much gratification to be present on an occasion of such rare interest as that of founding the first edifice in the United States consecrated to this interesting charity.

The visit I made in 1852, upon your invitation, to the State School for Idiots at Albany, in company with several gentlemen of the Senate and Assembly, made an impression upon my memory which is often recalled with the freshness and particularity of an event of yesterday. The little *innocents* seemed so happy in possessing the first glimmerings of intellect and knowledge; the expedients resorted to by their teachers in order to excite the curiosity of a vacant mind—to awaken it to the effort of action—to induce attention and consecutive ideas—the progress effected by repeated and often renewed practice and patience of both teachers and pupils—the apparent pleasure which lighted up the vacant countenance of idiocy upon the mastery of a thought, or of connecting an idea with its consequent, resulting in the clear manifestation of a human intellect where none apparently existed before—carried one's thoughts back to the fountains of ideas, and produced in my mind emotions and feelings not to be forgotten. It seemed almost like the creation of a human soul. The progress which the pupils had made, step by step, and little by little, from blank idiocy to social humanity, and even to creditable attainments in numerals and in geographical locations, was full of hope and encouragement. I assure you that I regard this institution as a noble and most interesting charity, and I rejoice that its administration has fallen into the hands of men like yourself and Dr. Wilbur. He is entitled to great credit, not more, however, for the judicious skill of his discipline than for the untiring zeal and benevolence with which he pursues his purpose in bene-

fitting these unfortunate beings. Permit me to acknowledge to him, through you, his note of invitation of the same purport as yours, but not received by me until after the ceremony was past.

With thanks for your polite attention and kind remembrance, and with my best wishes for the success of the benevolent enterprise in which you are engaged,

I remain, dear sir, with sincere regard,

Yours, &c.,

ARPHAXED LOOMIS.

Albany, Sept. 6, 1854.

Hon. Franklin Townsend:

Dear Sir—I found your kind invitation on my return to town. It would give me great pleasure to join in celebrating this auspicious event, but my business prevents.

Truly yours,

T. R. BECK.

My Dear Sir—It would afford me an especial pleasure to comply with the obliging invitation of your circular and be present on the very interesting occasion of laying the corner-stone of “the first building erected in the United States for the education of idiots;” but I much regret to find that I must forego this pleasure on account of indispensable engagements at home.

Be assured, my dear sir, my heart is with you in your most praiseworthy benevolent enterprise, with my prayers that He who, although infinite in power and occupied in the great affairs of creating and governing worlds—in training and instructing *archangels*, and communing with the high and bright mature intelligences of the upper worlds, yet condescends to regard with tender care the *safety of sparrows*, the *feeding of lambs*, the *clothing of lilies*—and has taught us not “to despise *the day of small things*,” but in the progress of developments to observe “first the blade, then the ear, and *after that* the full corn in the ear”—that He may be with you to bless and establish you firmly in the foundation of your building and in the principles and meas-

ures of your institution, in developing and training physical, mental and moral powers which, though for the present incidentally weak and small, have, nevertheless, been created not in vain.

Let our motto be, in the words of Him who came "to seek and save that which was lost," "*Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost,*"—believing that from among these fragments there may be gathered some of "*the last*" which shall finally be found among "*the first.*"

Yours truly,

D. E. BARTLETT.

Family School for Little Deaf Mutes, }
Poughkeepsie, N. Y., Sept. 2, 1854. }

Albany, Sept. 7, 1854.

H. B. Wilbur, Esq.:

Dear Sir—Laying the corner-stone of an asylum for idiots is an event of no ordinary importance in the annals of our noble State, and it would be at once my pride and pleasure, as philanthropist and Christian, to be present and share in the interesting ceremonies connected with it. But my engagements will not permit me to leave home just now, and therefore, while I gratefully acknowledge the honor conferred by your invitation, I am obliged, reluctantly, to decline it. With assurances of esteem for yourself and associates,

I am, dear sir,

Yours truly,

H. MANDEVILLE.

Saratoga Springs, August 25, 1854.

My Dear Sir—I am very grateful to the trustees of the State Asylum for Idiots for the courtesy they show me by inviting me to attend the ceremony of laying the corner-stone of their edifice. My engagements here cover the day when that ceremony will take place, and if they shall prove flexible enough to allow of my absence from this place, I have absolute need of the time in attending to private cases long neglected. Nevertheless, I beg the trustees to be assured that I look upon the enterprise, in

which the State has engaged their services, as one of the noblest and purest of the many public charities for which she is so justly distinguished. I am, dear sir,

with great respect and esteem,

your friend and humble servant,

WILLIAM H. SEWARD.

The Honorable Elias W. Leavenworth, Secretary of State.

Boston, Sept. 5, 1854.

My Dear Sir—I regret that I can not be with you on the 8th. Public meetings have become one of the most powerful moral agencies of our day ; they are, however, so frequently perverted to selfish purposes, and so generally intended to advance mere material interests, that it would be refreshing indeed to attend yours which is to be simply and purely one of humanity. That is a beautiful form of charity which lightens the infirmity and lessens the suffering of those who can make no return except of gratitude ; but that is more beautiful which descends upon those who can never know the benefits they receive, or the benefactors who confer them.

The institution whose foundation stone is to be laid on Friday will be like a last link in a chain, it will complete the circle of the State's charities, which will then embrace every class whose infirmities call for public aid. It has long included the deaf mutes, the blind and the insane, and it is now to include the idiots, a class far, far more deplorably afflicted than either of the others.

The ceremony will be fleeting and soon forgotten ; the building itself will, in time, decay, but the institution will last while the State lasts ; for when the people once recognize the claim of any class of unfortunates, there is no fear of their ever repudiating the debt of charity. The bonds lie deep in the heart of humanity, as the foundation stone you now lay, lies deep in the bosom of the earth.

Faithfully yours,

S. G. HOWE.

PROVIDENCE, *Sept.* 11, 1854.

My Dear Sir—I thank you for your kind invitation to attend the ceremonies at Syracuse. I am, however, deprived of this pleasure for two very satisfactory reasons. First, I did not receive the invitation until this evening; and second, the occasion occurred on commencement week, when I must, by necessity, be at home. My interest is however no less in the noble charity which you so nobly superintend. I shall follow your future progress with increasing interest, and rejoice ever in your success.

I am, my dear sir, yours, very truly,

T. WAYLAND.

H. B. WILBUR, M. D.

APPENDIX No. 2.

I have thought it desirable to append a note, to substantiate the assertions made in one of the reports of our asylum, and repeated in this address, relative to the labors of Dr. Backus, as a different impression has been conveyed through some of the public journals, growing out of the fact that similar efforts were made in the Massachusetts Legislature during the session of 1846.

The points that I wish to establish are, 1st. That the attempts at legislation in behalf of idiots in New-York preceded the similar attempts in Massachusetts. 2d. That the impulse of Dr. Backus' labors for that object was absolutely felt in the succeeding Massachusetts legislation.

As to the former, I remark, that on the 13th of January, 1846, Dr. Backus moved a reference of that portion of the census relating to idiots to the committee on medical societies, of which he was chairman. The next day (January 15th) he read a long and able report, (Senate doc. No. 23) upon the subject, the materials for which had been collected before the commencement of the session. It argued the great necessity of an institution for idiots, from the large number and miserable condition of that class in the State of New-York ; from the opinion of those most likely to be familiar with the subject, of the probable good results of such an institution, and especially from the actual success of similar institutions in Europe.

After thus breaking ground upon the subject and calling the attention of the members to a cause so novel, on the 25th of March he introduced a bill making an appropriation for the purchase of a site and the erection of buildings for an asylum for

idiots. This was placing it at once upon the same footing with the other State charitable institutions. The further history of the legislation is given in the body of the address.

On the other hand, in Massachusetts, it was not till the 22d of January, 1816, that an order was adopted by the House, on the motion of Judge Byington, for the appointment of a committee to consider the expediency of appointing "commissioners on idiocy." On the 26th of March, Judge B., for the committee, reported a resolve for the appointment of such commissioners, and on the 15th of May they were appointed. That commission made a partial report in 1847, and a final one in 1848. Then, and not till then, was a bill introduced for the establishment of an experimental school for three years.

As to the latter point, that the impulse of Dr. Backus' labors was felt in the succeeding Massachusetts legislation, I submit. That on his election to the New-York Senate, he immediately commenced collecting the materials for a report upon this very subject. Among the individuals whom he consulted by letter, and whose opinions he thought would add weight to his statements and recommendation, was the late Dr. Woodward, of Massachusetts. His reply was embodied in that report. I give the following extract from it: "It is quite time for public provision to be made for them in this country, and the Empire State should and may easily set the example." Now this mode of expression would indicate that he had not then proposed to attempt the same thing, simultaneously in Massachusetts. But to those who had the pleasure of knowing him, it will be readily understood how a suggestion so philanthropic in its character would result in a prompt and hearty effort for the same object in a State with whose public charities he had always been identified.

I had it from the lips of Dr. Woodward that he was prompted to originate the movement in the Massachusetts Legislature by this correspondence with Dr. Backus.

That he did originate it there will be seen by an extract from a letter I have received from Judge Byington: "Dr. Woodward's

first suggestion to me, in relation to making an effort to improve the condition of idiots was by letter. I had occasion to write to him soon after I went to Boston, in January, 1846. In his reply to me (relating to another subject), he briefly called my attention to the subject. I immediately after introduced an order for the appointment of a committee, and one was appointed that resulted in the appointment of commissioners."

It should however be mentioned, as showing how in some measure this new form of charity, that had been so long needed, began to be felt as a want in the public mind in this country, that the attention of gentlemen connected with the previously existing charitable institutions, had been drawn to this subject to some extent and an impulse had from them been imparted to the community.

Thus in Massachusetts, for example, to quote from the report of Dr. S. G. Howe, on the "training and teaching of idiots," made in February, 1850, "There had been also several cases where blindness was accompanied with feebleness of intellect approaching to idiocy, and the degree of success which had crowned the effort to instruct the sufferers, gave a portion of the knowledge and faith necessary, to those who would have the management of the new experiment."

That these cases, thus alluded to, had not received a special education as idiots, is evident from the language of the same report on a previous page: "It may be well, in this first report, to put upon record a brief history of this interesting movement in behalf of a class of unfortunate creatures, who have hitherto been thought to be beyond the reach even of the most earnest hand of charity.

"In the winter of 1845-6 several gentlemen became interested in the sad condition of the idiots in the State, and, without any precise knowledge of what had been done for such persons elsewhere, or what could be done, determined that a fair trial should be made of the capacity of this unhappy class for improvement. The State had most readily and generously seconded the efforts

of humane men for the relief of the insane, the deaf mutes, and the blind, and made ample provision for their care and instruction. While, like a wise parent, she left all her other children to wholesome liberty and strengthening self control, she gathered these feeble ones under the wings of her motherly love, and nursed and nurtured them with unsparing pains and care. Nothing had been done for the most wretched and helpless of all—the idiots, but this was only because their case seemed hopeless.”

Those connected with the deaf and dumb asylums of the country had been especially awakened to the importance of the subject. They were not uncommonly receiving pupils of this character, because muteness is so common a symptom in idiocy. I am aware of only a few cases that were retained and partially educated even at these institutions.

A boy was received at the New York institution in 1839, and retained for the space of three years, under the instruction of professor Morris, with quite favorable results.

In the American Annals for the Deaf and Dumb, January, 1848, will be found an article by Professor Turner, in which two or three cases are described, that had been under instruction for longer or shorter periods, at the American Asylum at Hartford, Conn.

A brief account of some of the European schools was given also, in the reports of the American asylums, which are extensively distributed.

It only remains to append a list of the American institutions for the education of idiots, in the order in which they were opened.

A private institution at Barre, Massachusetts, that was established by Dr. H. Wilbur in July, 1848. This is now in successful operation, under the management of Dr. George Brown.

The Massachusetts Experimental School, at South Boston, commenced in October, 1848. Dr. S. G. Howe, Superintendent.

The New York State Asylum, at Albany, opened in October, 1851. Dr. H. Wilbur, superintendent.

A private institution opened in the winter of 1852, at Germantown, Penn., by Mr. J. B. Richards, who was connected with the Massachusetts State School, as instructor, from its commencement. This is now merged in the Pennsylvania State Institution, founded in 1853. Mr. J. B. Richards, superintendent.

