

**Seventh annual report of the New-York Asylum for Idiots : To the legislature of the State of New York for 1858 / New York State Asylum for Idiots.**

**Contributors**

New York State Asylum for Idiots.  
Titus, James H.  
Wilbur, H. B. 1820-1883.

**Publication/Creation**

Albany : C. Van Benthuyssen, 1858.

**Persistent URL**

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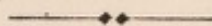
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Wellcome Collection  
183 Euston Road  
London NW1 2BE UK  
T +44 (0)20 7611 8722  
E [library@wellcomecollection.org](mailto:library@wellcomecollection.org)  
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SEVENTH  
ANNUAL REPORT  
OF THE  
NEW-YORK ASYLUM  
FOR  
**IDIOTS.**

To the Legislature of the State of New-York for 1858.



ALBANY:  
C. VAN BENTHUYSEN, PRINTER TO THE LEGISLATURE.  
1858.

SEVENTH

ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

NEW-YORK ASYLUM

FOR THE DEAF AND DUMB

TO THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF NEW-YORK FOR 1858.

ALBANY:  
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## TRUSTEES.

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JAMES H. TITUS,	FRANKLIN TOWNSEND,
HENRY N. POHLMAN,	FRED'K F. BACKUS,
ALLEN MUNROE,	HAMILTON WHITE,
HIRAM PUTNAM,	LYMAN CLARY.

*Ex-officio Trustees.*

JOHN A. KING,	HENRY R. SELDEN,
G. J. TUCKER,	SANDFORD E. CHURCH.

*Permanent Chairman.*

HENRY N. POHLMAN.

*Secretary.*

ALLEN MUNROE.

*Treasurer.*

HAMILTON WHITE.

*Executive Committee.*

HIRAM PUTNAM,	JAMES H. TITUS,
ALLEN MUNROE.	



STATE OF NEW YORK  
No. 34  
IN ASSEMBLY JAN. 27, 1888.

## OFFICERS.

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*Superintendent.*

HERVEY B. WILBUR, M.D.

*Matron.*

MRS. ELIZA F. MULFORD.

*Teachers.*

MISS S. P. YOUNG,

MISS LODEMA HUTCHINSON,

MISS ALVIRA WOOD,

MISS CHRISTINA ERLAND.

*Steward.*

R. FRISSELLE.



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# STATE OF NEW YORK.

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No. 33.

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IN ASSEMBLY JAN. 27, 1858.

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## SEVENTH ANNUAL REPORT

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

*To the Legislature of the State of New York :*

The subscribers, trustees of the State Idiot Asylum, as required by law, respectfully submit the following

### REPORT.

The annual report of the superintendent to the board, herewith annexed, will furnish the Legislature full and detailed statements of the domestic operations and results of the institution for the year.

The annual report of the treasurer to the board, also herewith annexed, will exhibit to the Legislature, in general items, the cash receipts and payments on account of the institution during its last fiscal year ; that is, from October 1st, 1856, to September 30th, 1857. By this report it will be seen that the total of receipts was \$33,908.42 ; and total of payments \$33,900.36 ; leaving balance in treasury of \$8.03. The extraordinary amounts for this fiscal year result from the failure of any appropriation, by the Legislature, for the previous year ; that is from October 1st, 1855, to September 30th, 1856 ; which failure brings the receipts and expenditures of two years into this account.

The trustees in their annual report submitted to the Legislature February 4th, 1857, (Assembly document No. 90) stated the balance still owing on account of new building and land, to be in the aggregate \$9,151.02 ; and also a debt on account of furni-



ture and current expense account, of \$5,203.93; which made the *total indebtedness* \$14,354.95.

In naming such amount as the total indebtedness at that period, an error occurred arising from the form in which the accounts were there stated; by which the note of \$5000 due at the Albany Bank, mentioned in another connection on the same page, was omitted.

The amount of that note, less balance then in the treasury, should have been added, and the account stated as follows, viz:

To individuals on account of buildings and land,	\$9,151 02
do do current expenses,..	5,203 93
do bank \$5000 (less balance \$2,653.10 in treasury,)	2,346 90
	<hr/>
Total indebtedness,.....	\$16,701 85
	<hr/> <hr/>

The Legislature by turning to the document above named, will notice that such in fact appeared as the total indebtedness, notwithstanding the inaccurate form of statement; and will further notice that the trustees made no suggestion relative to a provision for its payment, but simply stated the circumstances which had produced a deficiency in the current expense account, and thus contributed to increase the amount of debt. It was however expected that a special appropriation, sufficient for the payment of that indebtedness, would have been made by the Legislature, and the trustees in their communication with the appropriate committees, particularly and urgently pressed the importance of such appropriation. But in consequence of the want of funds in the State treasury, no additional amount to the \$13,000 given in the supply bill of the previous year, and rendered unavailable by the failure of that bill, was appropriated; and thus it will be seen that the institution has labored under the deficiency thus resulting, amounting, with the interest, to \$4,156.00 from that time to this.

Since then, this has been increased by the unusual expenses incident to a new establishment, some changes in the heating apparatus, in the supply of water, in grading about the building, and in fencing; as also, an additional amount of furniture to accommodate the increased number of pupils, which swells the whole indebtedness up to the 1st October, 1857, after deducting the cash assets, to \$7,111.57.



The Superintendent estimates the supplies on hand, such as hay, oats, vegetables, family stores, clothing and sundries at \$1,000. It is shown above by the Treasurer's account, that the aggregate of cash receipts from all sources for this fiscal year has been \$33,908.42. This amount is accounted for by the Executive Committee, as follows, viz.:

## PAID ON ACCOUNT OF

Building, land, farm and grounds,.....	\$8,515 00
Furniture and furnishing articles,.....	1,969 06
Provisions and groceries,.....	5,502 60
Sundry household supplies,.....	538 38
Salaries to officers and teachers,.....	4,103 74
Wages to attendants and servants and farm labor,..	3,399 64
Clothing for children,.....	744 26
Farm, stable and stock,.....	609 63
Traveling expenses of trustees and supt.,.....	177 02
Water company,.....	154 00
Fuel and lights, .....	2,322 26
Stationery,.....	60 60
Medical attendance,.....	72 50
Syracuse Journal, for printing,.....	28 40
Advertising,.....	10 00
Undertaker's bill,.....	41 00
Taxes,.. ..	25 52
Freight and express,.....	50 37
Postage,.....	48 02
Telegraph,.....	3 92
Note discounted,.....	5,000 00
Interest on same,.....	196 22
Intellig'e office and exp's of servants from New-York	20 50
Barber, for hair cutting,.....	13 25
Sundries paid by steward,.....	302 53
	<hr/>
	\$33,908 42
	<hr/>

On an examination of the books of the institution from its commencement, October 1st, 1851, the Executive Committee report the following general results, relative to the entire fiscal concerns in charge of the Trustees from that date up to Oct. 1, 1857, viz:

Cash receipts from all sources, (of this amount there was received from pay pupils and coun- ties \$12,015.06,).....	\$158,922 23
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Cash payments on all accounts as follows :

Fitting up and fur'ing asylum at Alb'y,	\$6,891	00
Land, buil'gs and imp'm'ents at Syra'se,	80,073	81
Furnit'e, farm, stable and stock do	8,109	00
Current expenses for the six years,...	63,848	42
<hr/>		
Total cash payments,.....	158,922	23
Add existing debts, say,.....	7,500	00
<hr/>		
Showing total of expenses on all acc'ts for six years,	\$166,422	23
Deduct items of land, buildings, furniture, &c.,..	95,073	81
<hr/>		
Gives as exp's for mainten'e and clothing for 6 yrs.,	\$71,348	42
<hr/> <hr/>		

During the last fiscal year there has been expended as follows, viz.:

For articles of consumption, household supplies,	
farm, &c.,.....	\$10,971 16
For salaries and wages,.....	7,200 00
<hr/>	

Total expenses for the year's maintenance,.... \$18,171 16

Which amount, for 110 pupils, the number for the year, makes a per capita annual charge of \$165.55. In this connection the trustees will state as their conviction, based on past experience and upon the special results of each successive fiscal year, that it will be necessary to have \$160 appropriated by the Legislature for the annual support of each pupil in the Institution, when the number shall be 100 and upward; for a reduced number an increased per capita appropriation would be needed.

With the appropriation made by the last Legislature, for the erection of a laundry, the trustees have caused such building to be constructed and fitted with the appropriate apparatus; they have also constructed in the same building a bakery, with its proper conveniences; all which work has been completed at an expense within the appropriation of \$3,000.

From the above statement of the fiscal affairs of the institution it will be evident to the Legislature that a special appropriation of \$7,500 is needed to pay the debts existing at the expiration of the last fiscal year; and also an appropriation of (\$16,000,) sixteen thousand dollars to meet the current expenses of the next fiscal year.



The trustees regret that debt still continues to be a feature in their report; this however would not have been the case to its present extent, had the Legislature of last year made the appropriation then required and justly expected. In former reports the trustees have named the circumstances out of which the debt originated; which were, additions in the new buildings, supply of furniture, farm stock, fences, grading, additional supply of water as a protection against fire, defects in the first arrangement of the water works, introduction of gas, (for all which no special requisition had been made); and many other expenses not provided for in the original estimates, such as always occur in the erection of a new building on the establishment of a new institution. The continued existence of debt has prevented the executive committee from conducting the fiscal affairs of the institution on a *cash system* as provided for in the bye laws and pursued until the commencement of the new building, and has brought upon current expense account increased charges.

It is absolutely necessary that provision be made for the early payment of this debt, so that the trustees may be relieved from its embarrassment, and the institution from the evils which have continued to result from it. The buildings are now complete—the construction account closed, and if the required appropriations for the debt and maintenance shall be made by this Legislature, the trustees hope to be able to present their next annual report free from the appearance of debt.

The trustees have been thus particular in their statements, and have spoken thus frankly, because they are only the agents of the State to carry out its designs with reference to a charity strictly of a State character. As such they have aimed to manage it in the most judicious and economical manner, and to extend its benefits equitably to every portion of the State. They have been in a position to see the great need of such an institution, and its continued support, from their investigations of the subject, from the urgent applications for the admission of pupils, and from the character of results obtained since its establishment falling under their own observation. For some general remarks under this head we refer to the report of the superintendent, which we particularly commend to the consideration of the Legislature as an interesting and instructive essay upon the feasibility and importance of training and educating idiots. This report expresses no



more sanguine anticipations of the ultimate effects upon the inmates of the asylum and upon society than is warranted in the opinion of this board, by what has already been accomplished in its brief history.

It is in fact an institution against which no objection could reasonably be brought.

The deplorable condition of the class for which it is designed, if left without education is admitted on all hands. The practicability of educating them is also now generally regarded as demonstrated by those who have investigated the subject.

It cannot be said of it that it increases the evil designed to be alleviated ; but on the contrary it imparts more or less blessing even to the large class of idiots who are not directly exposed to its influence.

The duty of providing an appropriate education for all its children, independent of external circumstances or physical condition, has been recognized in this State by years of legislation ; and in many of the new States this principle has been incorporated with their organic law. It is very gratifying to be able to add, that the need of institutions similar to our own, is beginning to be felt in many of the States of the Union, and that a provision for the want has been already initiated in some of them.

In Massachusetts, the oldest State institution, is increasing in the number of its pupils and in public estimation. In Pennsylvania, the corner stone of a large edifice, to accommodate the increasing wants of their State institution, has just been laid, under the auspices of some of the most intelligent and philanthropic of her citizens.

In Ohio, a State institution has been opened within the past year, under very promising circumstances. Rhode Island has placed the idiots of the State upon the same footing, in respect to education, as the deaf mute and blind, by contributing to their support in charitable institutions of other States.

In Kentucky and Illinois preliminary measures have been taken for the establishment of similar institutions. At Barre, in Massachusetts, the private institution established by Dr. Wilbur, is entirely successful, under its present accomplished and efficient proprietor, Dr. George Brown. In New York city, James B.



Richards, formerly superintendent of the Pennsylvania school, has established a private institution, which it is hoped will receive the support due to his long and faithful devotion to the cause of idiots.

In all the prominent nations of Europe, the education of idiots is now recognized as entirely practicable—receiving government aid—commanding the services of learned and scientific men, and enlisting the active sympathy of the intelligent philanthropists of the age. In Germany, especially, the subject is receiving great attention, where we hear of some distinguished for their services in other branches of special education, abandoning their former occupation and adopting this new field of education, as a profession.

It may well be entertained as a matter of pride, that this new enterprise in benevolence should have so early in its history, enlisted the sympathies and been recognized among the duties incumbent on State governments, and to know that our State was among the first to respond to the dictates of duty in the establishment of such an institution; and may we not, without arrogance, boast of the success that has attended our efforts, and of the position enjoyed by the New-York State Asylum for idiots, in the estimation of all who are giving the cause their consideration.

The trustees beg leave to refer to the superintendent's notice of the officers and teachers of the Asylum, and take great pleasure in adding their testimony in commendation of their character and services.

Since the last meeting of this board, death has removed one of its original members—the late William L. Marcy. His public services and private worth have been the subject of general commemoration throughout the land. It only remains for us to speak of the valuable aid rendered by him to this institution in its infancy.

On the first organization of the board, he entered at once into the spirit of the charity. In connection with the late John C. Spencer, he visited the institutions already established in Massachusetts, and returned from such visitation convinced of the practicability of the object. Thenceforward till the removal of his residence to Washington, he was an active member of this board, serving on its executive committee, and omitting no oppor-



tunity to commend the design and aim of the institution, and to express his faith in its charitable mission. He kept alive, while at Washington, his interest in the enterprise, and continued until his death to extend to it his approbation and sympathy.

In conclusion, the trustees would suggest to the Legislature the propriety of appointing "the Superintendent of Public Instruction," an ex-officio member of the board.

JAMES H. TITUS,  
FRANKLIN TOWNSEND,  
HENRY N. POHLMAN,  
F. A. BACKUS,  
HIRAM PUTNAM,  
HAMILTON WHITE,  
ALLEN MUNROE,  
LYMAN CLARY,

*Trustees.*

JOHN A. KING,  
HENRY R. SELDEN,  
S. E. CHURCH,  
GIDEON J. TUCKER,

*Ex-officio Trustees.*

## TREASURER'S ACCOUNT.

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*N. Y. Asylum for Idiots in account with H. White, Treasurer.*

1856.		Dr.
October 1st,	To balance on hand in treasury,.....	\$2,547 55
	To cash from State Treasurer,.....	15,000 00
	“ “ “ “ .....	10,000 00
	To cash from county treasurers, for clothing State pupils,.....	765 00
	To cash from board, tuition and clo- thing of paying pupils, .....	2,595 87
	To cash from State Treasurer,.....	1,000 00
	“ “ “ “ .....	1,000 00
	“ “ “ “ .....	1,000 00
		<hr/> \$33,908 42 <hr/>
Cr.	By note paid at Albany, .....	\$5,196 22
	By cash paid on warrants of ex. com. and on building account,.....	8,515 00
	On account of furniture,.....	1,969 06
	“ “ “ supplies, &c.,.....	10,716 73
1857.	On account of salaries and wages,...	7,503 38
Sept'r 30th.	Balance on hand in treasury,.....	8 03
		<hr/> \$33,908 42 <hr/>





## REPORT OF THE SUPERINTENDENT.

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

Gentlemen—The undersigned would respectfully submit the following as his annual report as superintendent :

The number of pupils connected with the asylum a year since was soon increased to 112. Of these twenty were paying pupils, the remainder beneficiaries of the State. They were from the different judicial districts, in the following proportion :

From District No. 1 there were.....	14
“ “ “ 2 “ .....	12
“ “ “ 3 “ .....	12
“ “ “ 4 “ .....	11
“ “ “ 5 “ .....	12
“ “ “ 6 “ .....	12
“ “ “ 7 “ .....	9
“ “ “ 8 “ .....	10
Total, .....	92

A few changes have taken place by the removal of former pupils and the selection of new ones. Thus, since October 1st, 1856, there have been received of new pupils into the asylum,..... 31

Accepted by the ex. committee for the coming year, but not yet entered,..... 6

Total,..... 37

Of the former pupils sixteen have been removed and four have died.

It will be seen that the number of pupils for the coming year will be slightly increased.

Of the deaths one was accidental, two from tuberculous disease of the lungs, and one from epilepsy. Except in the fatal cases just mentioned, there has been an almost entire exemption from sickness in the institution for the past year.



There has been but little change in the family in charge of the Asylum. The same steward and matron continue to discharge their duties acceptably to the superintendent. Two of the teachers who were with us at the date of our last report, are now connected with the new institution for idiots at Columbus, in Ohio. Of those who remain with us I am constrained to say that they have continued to fulfil their duties to my entire satisfaction.

That a spirit of good will and kindness towards the pupils prevails throughout the establishment, I am sure no one can question who is familiar with its every day life. The air of cheerfulness and affectionate familiarity that prevails in the house and in the school room, and the readiness with which the pupils return to it after the annual vacation, evince thus much.

To this summary of the statistics of the asylum for the past year it would be necessary to add nothing if the report of the superintendent went no farther than to the members of the board. But by a regulation of the board of trustees, it constitutes a portion of their periodical report to the Legislature; and this report is the basis of the prospective annual legislation. In the case of a comparatively new State institution, like our own, it is quite important that the public need in which it originated, and its general plan and purpose should be re-stated in each recurring report to the Legislature, that this body, changing its members annually, should have all needful information for intelligent action in reference to it. Furthermore, the more marked results of the institution are now but just beginning to be manifested, and as these develope and accumulate from year to year, they should be communicated to the same body. When this institution was founded, a little more than six years ago, there were probably three thousand idiots in the State of New-York; or not far from one to every thousand of its whole population. Wherever in civilized communities a rigid inquiry has been instituted, a similar proportion has been found to exist between the number of idiots and the whole number of inhabitants. As a class, none are more unfortunate, more comfortless, more helpless, or more degraded. Without efforts for their improvement, deterioration is the very law of their condition; and to such a deplorable fate, they had been surrendered by society during the whole period of modern civilization. Within a comparatively recent period, several institutions in Europe and half a dozen in this country, have been opened for the relief of this class, so long



neglected. All these institutions have been established, endowed and patronized upon the supposition, that idiots as a class, if taken at a proper age, and if not afflicted by positively incurable disease, are susceptible of education and improvement. Moreover that this education if wisely devised and judiciously applied, not only commends itself as a proper subject for public charity but as a wise measure of political economy. It was affirmed that idiots, (using that word in the generic sense, and including all shades of mental condition not susceptible of development under the ordinary circumstances of human development,) are human beings of imperfect physical organization to a greater or less degree; that they possess the germs of all human faculties, not expanding by reason of the physical infirmities or defects of organization; that wherever there exist the germs of intellect, of sensibility and of will, there is the possibility of culture; that this is practicable except in a class of cases already indicated; that this is the same in kind as the unfolding of the human intellect under the common methods of education though differing in degree; that if the system of education is made sufficiently practical, the mental development and discipline will be accompanied with greater self-control and greater capacities for usefulness. And furthermore, that the habits acquired in idiocy, can be so overcome as to relieve its most disagreeable features.

Such were the general principles that were the basis of the expectations of the originators of institutions for the education of idiots, wherever they were founded. What were the special aims and anticipations of those connected with this institution, and what the hopes they held out to the public, at the outset, may be seen from the following extracts from the first reports of this board to the Legislature:

“It is an establishment for the management and education of young idiots. It is an extension of the blessings of education of an appropriate character, to a class of persons of a teachable age, not deaf mutes or blind, whose faculties are not susceptible of development under the customary conditions and facilities of a common education.

“We do not propose to create or supply faculties absolutely wanting; nor to bring all grades of idiocy to the same standard of development or discipline; nor to make them all capable of sustaining, creditably, all the relations of a social and moral life; but rather to give to dormant faculties the greatest practicable development, and to apply those awakened faculties to a useful pur-



pose under the control of an aroused and disciplined will. At the basis of all our efforts lies the principle that the human attributes of intelligence, sensitivity and will are not absolutely wanting in an idiot, but dormant and undeveloped.

"I will venture to add, in speaking of the ultimate results, that the intrinsic usefulness, comfort and happiness of the subject of the special education is as much promoted in the case of the idiot as in that of the deaf mute or the blind; that the comfort and happiness of the friends is in still greater measure promoted by such education in the case of the idiot than in the subject of other kindred charities.

"With this confident assertion of the general ultimate and practical good results of a proper educational course for idiots, I am yet ready to admit the existence of exceptional cases which may be called incurable; I say incurable rather than insusceptible, because this incapacity for development resides not in any peculiarity of size or quality or even function in the brain, but is always, in my opinion, the result of disease, involving an actual disorganization of the nervous centres, the brain or spinal cord. Oftentimes this diseased condition cannot be predicated in a given case, and we are authorized to form such an opinion only after a faithful trial of suitable remedial and educational means. But the good results of such benevolent institutions as our own will not be confined to the idiots within their walls, as may be plainly seen in the history of all other public charitable institutions. They will affect favorably the condition of every idiot in the State."

The facts elicited by applying these principles practically have fully proved their correctness. Thus much we may affirm without going beyond the experience of our institution. The results attained in the older institutions both in Europe and this country, would afford still more conclusive evidences.

The results obtained in any institution like ours, are of two kinds. Viewing it simply as a school, we estimate its character by what may be regarded as immediate results, that is, the evidences of acquirements and of improvement, furnished by the pupil. Regarding our system of education as a system, we estimate its value by its bearing upon the future life of the individual subjected to it, and these effects are the ultimate results. By the practical tendencies of the proximate results, we judge of the ultimate.



The immediate results of the management and instruction adopted in our institution have been witnessed by a great number of persons; many of these had a direct personal interest in what they saw. The character of these results may be inferred from two—not to mention other—circumstances.

One of these is, that a small experimental school, started in Albany, at no great distance from the Capitol, and quite generally visited and thoroughly inspected by the members of successive Legislatures, has grown into a permanently established and recognized State Institution, provided with convenient buildings, and with a liberal annual appropriation. The other is, that a continually increasing number of persons have been found, from year to year, who are not only willing and anxious to avail themselves of the advantages of the institution, attended as this is with more or less of sacrifice of personal interest or feeling; but who, when their children have enjoyed its training and instruction for a season, express themselves as entirely satisfied with the improvement manifested in them.

These results impress even a casual visitor to the Asylum. Here are seen more than a hundred pupils, of every shade of defective intellect. They are arranged in classes for the purpose of instruction. To each class are applied a certain series of physical or mental exercises, adapted as far as possible to the particular mental condition of each class, or to the individual in each class. It matters not how low in point of intellect may be the subject of instruction, if a mental exercise can be contrived that will command his attention, or that is within his grasp of mind, that act of attention, that intellection develops and disciplines his mind for mental exercises one step higher. It is also observed that each series of physical or mental exercises passes, by a very gradual progression into the similar series next higher; and this is true through the whole scale, from simple muscular movements to dexterity, from simple sensation to abstract reasoning. Viewing these gradations, one can readily conceive of a pupil of suitable capacities as being led along through the whole course of instruction, from lowest to highest. In addition, it is noticed that the children manifest a degree of order and decorum in the school-room, that they are to a great extent free from disagreeable habits, and that they are neat and tidy in their appearance. From such a casual observation, false inferences are sometimes drawn. I need mention only a few of these. The first is an impression, sometimes carried away from the institution, that the



great majority of our pupils come to us, low down in the scale of idiocy, and that they are all gradually working their way up to the highest attainments of the school, thence to graduate, competent to take an equal position with their fellows of the same social condition and of ordinary natural endowments. Another is a too exalted idea of the school acquirements witnessed, resulting partly from a comparison of the highest class of exercises with the lowest, and also from overlooking the amount of labor and the variety of resources involved in obtaining such results. Again the ultimate objects of the system of education are overlooked in contemplating these elementary steps in the educational process. These lead to disappointments—disappointment to the enthusiast, who gives a ready adherence to a cause of public charity, without having comprehended its true scope, object and practical results, and through him to the public who come under his influence—disappointment to the friends or relatives of some of the pupils, who, misapprehending the relative position of their own children, to the other inmates of the establishment, or assuming some improper test or standard of improvement, look for too great acquirements.

But an attentive observer will notice that all the exercises have a practical bearing. He will perceive that the system of education, embracing this ascending chain of exercises, aims mainly at physical and mental development and discipline; at imparting the power and disposition in the individual to originate thought and action; at generating a will and giving it control over all the faculties and powers. It is (or is intended to be) a philosophical system of training and education designed for a class that cannot be reached by the means, appliances and incentives adopted in the ordinary methods of instruction. No mere exercises of the memory, no mere word-learning comes within its range. The knowledge it imparts is only a simple every day knowledge. It establishes the health, increases the strength and regulates the functions of the pupil. It educates his senses and links to sensation the appropriate perception. It leads him to observe the objects, by which he is surrounded and afterward the relations of those objects to each other and to himself. It induces him to exercise his judgment in little practical matters, to be able and willing to do for himself and rely upon himself, and make himself useful as far as he is able. To impart a capacity for usefulness and happiness is the highest practical end of instruction in this institution. And it has a double aim, determined in its application by the peculiar mental condition of the two classes of idiots,



(dividing them only in view of the ultimate results obtained); the highest to give a capacity for comparative usefulness and happiness; the other where this is not attainable, to carry along the efforts of instruction and the enforcement of correct habits till the pupil arrives at a point beyond the liability of relapsing into former mental incapacity and subserviency to improper habits. That this aim will be accomplished is to be inferred from the special educational steps I have enumerated rather than to be actually demonstrated by the experience of the institution and for these reasons. I ought rather to say that the proper economic results are only measurably to be looked for here. Two-thirds of our present number of pupils have been inmates of the institution less than two years. Many of them have entered physically so inert as to be incapable of any occupation; most without the power or willingness for continuous application of any kind; none with judgment sufficient to be trusted in the most simple labor without constant oversight.

The most intelligent of the number have usually, before coming to us, expended their mental power in evading any attempts to employ their faculties, or in acts of mischief. They had no confidence in their own ability to do anything. Nearly all (the age for the reception of pupils at the asylum is between seven and fourteen years) were of an age that precluded the introduction of any industrial occupation, demanding hard labor or labor of any kind for any length of time. It was, in short, the age for mental exercises to develop the mind conjoined with gymnastic exercises and boyish sports to strengthen the body and impart dexterity.

Moreover a new institution in a new field of education has the double mission of securing the greatest practical results and at the same time of making that impression upon the public mind as shall give faith in its object. Experience has shown that the great body of visitors at our asylum have been impressed more strongly by the exercises most resembling those in a common school. It is not to be wondered at then, that teachers not connected with the institution for a term of years should be unduly influenced by this circumstance, and should devote an undue proportion of time to exercises of strictly an intellectual character—that they should sometimes push the acquirements at the expense of mental discipline. From these circumstances, it has happened that with the best grade [of pupils, the efforts of in-



struction have been mainly directed not so much in the line of industrial occupation as in the elementary steps which should qualify the pupil for engaging in useful labor elsewhere. Still with a certain grade of pupils, the very best means of developing the mind is through simple acts of labor progressively requiring more and more of exercise of the judgment, and where this has been the case such measures have been adopted. Besides in the case of the older pupils and those who have been longest with us, we have occupied a portion of the day in teaching them to work. During the past summer a dozen or more of them have been actual producers. They have worked steadily the whole or the greater portion of the day; and their labor has been of no small value to the institution.

The girls have been employed in a variety of household occupations, and have accomplished a great amount of the family sewing. The boys have been employed in all the variety of farm and garden labor. Here they have manifested intelligence, attention, application, perseverance, a willingness to labor and a certain degree of pride in what they could accomplish. Another year the class of producers among our pupils will be greatly increased. For one can witness in a large number of the pupils those conditions that will ensure such a result. When they are assembled for any of the general exercises of the school, one may see that there has been a new physical life infused into them; there is more elasticity of movement, a better deportment, a greater quickness of perception, keener observation, more intelligence, more self-control and a comparative manliness. On a more intimate acquaintance with their condition the change that has been wrought in them seems a still more hopeful one. I desire to raise no undue expectations as to the effect of this institution in this particular direction. I desire to cherish none for myself. But I cannot hesitate to express frankly the conclusions derived from my own experience in the training of idiots.

There are now a few more than a hundred pupils in this Asylum. From a careful examination of the list, I anticipate that seventy per cent. of the number will acquire a capacity for useful occupation; for example in the case of the girls, ordinary household occupation, and in the case of the boys, simple farm labor. I suppose this attainable, in most cases, only under intelligent direction. In the case of the other thirty per cent, a proper education will result in rendering the subjects of it, during



the remainder of their lives, so much less a source of trouble, care and anxiety, and so past the danger of relapsing into former disagreeable and vicious habits, as to repay the labor spent upon them. But there is another class of cases in this, as in every similar institution, that will derive still greater benefits from their connection with it. There is a class of children who are in the early periods, of infirm or imperfect bodily organization. As a consequence, they are deficient in intellect; they are idiots, with all the absence of mental manifestations, and with the habits and tendencies of this state. During some of the critical periods of their childhood, or in the more radical change in the system from childhood to youth, the physical cause or infirmity underlying the idiocy is actually obviated or removed. But through the strength of confirmed habits, and from the fact that they are still surrounded with the same circumstances, they would continue in the same condition of mental inferiority. Exposed to the educational and elevating influences of a well regulated institution, the effects produced seem almost like regeneration. The individual entirely emerges from the condition of idiocy. The effect produced may be spoken of as a cure. These are spoken of sometimes, to prevent public misapprehension, as exceptional cases, but they constitute a class.

It is difficult to convey a just impression of what has been and what can be accomplished, in any language of a report, to one who has never visited such an institution. General statements will not suffice, and descriptions of particular cases only avail to a limited degree. Still I may bear this testimony, speaking in the name of those engaged directly in the duties of the institution, that though there may have been disappointment as to the result in individual cases, yet in the general result no such disappointment has been ever felt. Our faith in the practicability of the work has never wavered. We see the great body of those committed to our care, constantly rising in the scale of intelligence. We see in them an increasing resemblance to ordinary persons of their own age. We see in them an increased manifestation of observation, of judgment, of manliness, of self-control, and a sense of propriety, whenever from time to time they are brought into any common social relations.

I venture to assert that no intelligent person, however sceptical he might be, at the outset, as to the possibility of educating idiots, who should witness the facts that have fallen under our observation would deny the value of the system in general, but would content himself (if doubting in any degree) to a mere re-



striction in the reception of pupils above some point in his own scale of the degrees of idiocy. We nevertheless feel that all the while we come far short of what we might accomplish, in almost every case, if we brought to the task higher qualifications and a larger experience. Much is yet to be learned as to the proper principles and best methods to be adopted in the management, training and instruction of this class.

The Superintendent has thus, in a very imperfect manner set forth the results of his own experience in the management of such an institution, and the expectations and hopes it has engendered in his own mind, and in concluding would crave for this charity that investigation and that sympathy that it deserves from the people of an enlightened State, and the continuation of those blessings from above that have seemed to attend the whole history of this institution.

H. B. WILBUR, *Supt.*

## APPENDIX A.

### *Extract from the Minutes of the Board.*

Mr. Titus offered the following resolutions relative to the death of William L. Marcy :

*Whereas*, Since the last meeting of this board, William L. Marcy has departed this life; by which event our State has lost one of its most prominent and useful citizens, and the nation one of its most sagacious counsellors and sincere patriots; and whereas, he was one of the first trustees of this institution, and gave this new enterprise of benevolence in its infancy, the countenance of his great name, and the aid of his wise council : Now, therefore, reverently submitting to this dispensation of the Great Disposer of all events, and gratefully cherishing the memory of William L. Marcy as one of their earliest associates, this board do resolve—

1st. That the life of William L. Marcy, as a citizen, a soldier, judge, legislator, and Governor of our State, and also as a national administration officer in war, and the nation's chief counsellor in peace, was a burning and shining light, imparting security and honor alike to our State and the nation.

2d. That this institution was particularly fortunate in having at the outset of the enterprise, William L. Marcy for one of its trustees; and that over and above the great advantages derived from his wise counsel and efficient services, it was an impressive moral to behold such a distinguished statesman descend from the high sphere of his lifelong ambition to the humble christian duty of co-operating in efforts for the relief of imbecile children.

3d. That this board deeply sympathise in the grief and affliction which this event has brought on the family of the deceased, and, as evidence of the same, and as a testimony of our respect for his memory, the chairman be requested to forward to the widow a copy of these resolutions.



## APPENDIX B.

The following extracts from the by-laws of the asylum will show its aims, and the condition upon which pupils are received :

“The design and object of the asylum, as established by the action of the Legislature, are not of a custodial character, but to furnish the means of education to that portion of the youth of the State, not provided for in any of its other educational institutions. Those only will, therefore, be received into the asylum who are of a proper school-attending age, and for such periods of time as shall in the estimation of the board of trustees, suffice to impart all the education practicable in each particular case, and in conformity with the regulations hereinafter specified.

“Children between the ages of seven and fourteen who are idiotic, or so deficient in intelligence as to be incapable of being educated at any ordinary school, and who *are not epileptic, insane or greatly deformed*, may be admitted by the superintendent, with the advice and counsel of the executive committee. Applications in behalf of others shall be referred to the action of the board of trustees.

“The parents or next friends of those in whose behalf applications are made for admission as pupils, shall make answer in writing to such questions as the superintendent may prescribe.

“They shall, moreover, if of sufficient ability, engage to pay such reasonable sums for the education and support of the pupils, and to furnish them with such proper clothing while in the institution as shall be stipulated by the superintendent, and they shall in all cases be bound to receive them back, when required, free of expense to the asylum.

“The State pupils in the asylum will be selected in equal numbers, as far as may be, from each judicial district, from those whose parents or guardians are unable to provide for their support therein.

“The State pupils will be expected to come to the asylum, provided with a supply of neat and substantial clothing adequate for the first six months ; after which period, their clothing will be furnished by the asylum at the expense of the respective counties of which they are residents, as in the case of the deaf and dumb, and the blind asylums of the State. A bond will be required in all cases to ensure the removal of the pupil, when required by the superintendent, free of expense to the institution.

“All pupils will be received upon trial for one month, at the end of which time, a report upon the case will be made to the parents or parties sending them.

“The education furnished by the institution will include not only the simpler elements of instruction usually taught in common schools, where that is practicable, but will embrace a course of training in the practical matters of every day life : the cultivation of habits of decency, propriety, self-management, and self-reliance, and the development and enlargement of a capacity for useful occupation.

“There shall be a vacation during the whole month of August, unless otherwise directed by the board, at which period all pupils must be removed from the asylum by the parents or guardians, if required by the superintendent.”

Applications for admission to the asylum must be made to the superintendent.

H. B. WILBUR, M. D.

*Syracuse, N. Y.*



