

Twenty-fourth annual report of the Trustees of the New York Asylum for Idiots of the State of New York : transmitted to the Legislature January 14, 1875 / New York State Asylum for Idiots.

Contributors

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TWENTY-FOURTH ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

TRUSTEES

OF THE

NEW YORK ASYLUM FOR IDIOTS

OF THE

STATE OF NEW YORK.

TRANSMITTED TO THE LEGISLATURE JANUARY 14, 1875.

ALBANY:

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1875.

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TRUSTEES.

JAMES H. TITUS,	FRANKLIN TOWNSEND,
ALLEN MUNROE,	LYMAN CLARY,
GEORGE F. COMSTOCK,	E. W. LEAVENWORTH,
FREDERICK D. HUNTINGTON,	LAKE I. TEFFT.

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WM. DORSHEIMER, *Lieutenant-Governor.*
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STEWARD:

BENJAMIN N. EASTMAN.

STATE OF NEW YORK.

No. 22.

IN ASSEMBLY,

January 14, 1875.

TWENTY-FOURTH ANNUAL REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES OF THE NEW YORK ASYLUM FOR IDIOTS.

To the Legislature of the State of New York:

Agreeably to the provisions of the act establishing this institution, the undersigned, trustees, respectfully submit this their twenty-fourth annual report.

The total cash receipts for the year ending September 30, 1874, as will be seen by the treasurer's report, herewith annexed, were as follows:

RECEIPTS.

Cash from state treasurer, annual appropriation.....	\$32,000 00
County treasurers for clothing state pupils.....	2 626 40
Individuals for board, instruction and clothing (pay pupils).....	0.559 95
Special appropriation for purchase of land.....	1,500 00
	<hr/>
	\$42,686 35

EXPENDITURES.

Provisions and household supplies.....	\$12,008 65
Salaries.....	6,563 38
Wages and labor.....	6,327 24

Fuel.....	\$813 39
Gas.....	922 38
Farm and garden.....	940 36
Stables, horses and cows.....	1,307 65
Furniture, furnishing articles and household linen.....	1,889 06
Clothing.....	3,638 80
Books, stationery and school apparatus.....	323 77
Discount.....	22 46
Drugs and medicines.....	170 25
Repairs and improvements.....	4,069 13
Postage.....	69 92
Printing.....	103 55
Water.....	450 00
Freight, express and telegraph.....	90 25
Traveling expenses of trustees.....	53 33
Traveling expenses of superintendent.....	62 01
Funeral expenses of pupils.....	92 00
Money to boys.....	11 95
Sending boys home.....	7 08
Sundries.....	7 81
Amount paid for purchase of land.....	1,500 00
October 1, 1873, overdraft at bank.....	1,017 11
October 1, 1874, cash in hands of Treasurer.....	151 81
Cash in hands of Superintendent.....	72 56
	<hr/>
	\$42,686 35
	<hr/>

From the above statement it will be seen that there was in the hands of the treasurer —

October 1st, 1874.....	\$151 81
In the hands of the superintendent.....	72 56
There were also due from the friends of pay pupils sums amounting in the aggregate to.....	1,681 16

Making the total cash assets of the asylum October 1, 1874, \$1,905 53

The liabilities of the asylum at the same date were as follows :

Salaries of officers and teachers for quarter ending September 30	\$1,582 50
Sundry bills for supplies	1,185 85
	<hr/>
	\$2,768 35
	<hr/>

The small excess of liabilities over the cash assets of the asylum (\$862.18) is compensated by supplies on hand, of a larger amount, available for use during the present year.

As the cost of support of the inmates of the asylum during the past year has been about the same as during the preceding year; namely: about two hundred dollars for each pupil, the trustees still continue of the opinion that the maintenance and instruction of the pupils for the next year can be met by an appropriation based upon the experience of the last two years.

It will be remembered that a special appropriation was asked for in the last annual report, for the purchase of a corner lot of some five acres, lying between the grounds of the asylum and the public road. The legislature of last year made the necessary appropriation, the money has been drawn and a complete title to the property named is now in the hands of the state authorities.

The mortality in the institution, notwithstanding the increased number of pupils, has been less than that of last year, as will be seen by the superintendent's report.

The institution continues to be somewhat embarrassed by having forced upon its charge others than those who are capable of being trained and instructed, which service was considered to be the special object for which it was established by the state. Besides the opportunity of performing this specific work is curtailed by the necessity of retaining in charge some who have arrived at an age, or at a stage of improvement, which would warrant their removal to some other institution of a more custodial character, if such an institution existed.

To such an asylum might be sent both the classes above referred to, without detriment to themselves and to the great relief of their present care-takers. The care of the more helpless and dependent of these classes would be in part relieved by the services of those rendered more capable by their previous training in our own institution.

The trustees have repeatedly, in former reports, urged this important matter upon the consideration of the legislature. They now repeat the same, hoping that some action will be taken in accordance with their suggestion.

At the present time some fifteen of the smaller counties of the state have no pupils in the asylum. As the trustees desire that the benefits of the institution may be distributed as equitably as possible to all portions of the state, they would solicit applications for the admission of pupils from any parties who may know of the existence of children of deficient intellect in their respective neighborhood. A list of the counties unrepresented will be found in the appendix, together with the mode of obtaining admission to its benefits.

The appropriation necessary for the support of the institution for the next fiscal year will be at least \$36,000, as provision will have to be made for at least one hundred and eighty state pupils.

The trustees feel warranted in the expression of the opinion that the results of the working of the institution in the line of its original purpose have been successful. It has furnished a practical education to a large majority of those submitted to its care, and it has afforded immense relief to many afflicted families in all portions of the state.

They would also add that they have found at their periodical and occasional visits to the asylum, all the departments in proper order, and other evidences that the officers and teachers and the various subordinate assistants have been faithful to their charge.

In concluding this report the trustees would do injustice to their own personal feelings, as members of this board, if they failed to allude to the loss they have sustained in the death of the Rev. Henry N. Pohlman, so long associated with them, and who died only a week following their last annual meeting in Albany.

At the October meeting of the board appropriate resolutions were introduced and unanimously adopted. The same will be found at length in an appendix to the present report.

JAMES H. TITUS,
FRANKLIN TOWNSEND,
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Secretary of State.

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Sup't of Public Instruction.

NELSON K. HOPKINS,

Comptroller.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT.

To the Trustees of the New York Asylum for Idiots :

GENTLEMEN—I herewith submit a report of the affairs of the institution, over which I have the immediate charge, for the year ending September 30, 1874.

The whole number of pupils connected with the asylum during that period was 199. The average attendance for the year was 183. Of the whole number on the list, 166 were supported entirely from the state appropriation ; the remainder, 39, were paying pupils, either in full or in part of the actual cost of their maintenance and instruction.

The actual cost for board and instruction of each of the above average number of pupils in attendance, including all expenses, was \$203, or about \$4 a week.

Six deaths occurred during the year. Two of these were from consumption, one from epilepsy, one from congestion of the lungs, one from erysipelas, and the sixth from an accident. This accident, however, befell the pupil at the city and not on the premises of the institution.

The present number on our list of pupils is over 200 ; of whom 198 are actually present. Besides these several pupils have been accepted who have not yet entered. It is designed to admit the present school year 180 state pupils and 25 or 30 pay-pupils, or nearly the full capacity of the asylum.

During the past year, as in former years, many applications have been received for the admission of parties who were too old to be benefited by our methods of training and instruction. This prompts me to renew the suggestion, already repeated in prior reports to your board, that a proper custodial institution for idiots should be added to the number of existing state institutions. Two or three plans might be suggested for this purpose. It might be made a branch or department of the asylum for chronic insane at Willard, Seneca county, without materially interfering with the general plan and scope of that institution ; it might be made a distinct department of the present asylum for idiots, though for such custodial purposes a location in the country, where more land for farming purposes was available, would on some accounts be better ; or it might be established as a distinct institution in some central and favorable locality. In any event, the buildings could be like those last erected at Willard, plain, substantial, but of a very moderate cost.

The necessity of such an institution will not be questioned by this board. Our own establishment, now more than 20 years in operation, was designed exclusively for the purpose of educating idiots. It was based upon the idea that a certain portion of the idiots of the state were capable of being taught under a judicious system of training and instruction. The instruction given, in accordance with the declared intentions of the original board at the organization of the asylum, has been of the most practical kind. It has sought to make the pupils capable of some form of useful occupation, as well as to diminish their characteristic helplessness. To this end it was necessary that the pupils should be of a proper school-attending age; that they should be of such a condition of bodily health and such a degree of intelligence as to make this practicable. All the while, however, the effort has been embarrassed by the admission of pupils not coming within the scope of such precautions. To be sure, the by-laws of the asylum provided for the prompt dismissal of persons found on trial not to be improvable, but experience has shown that this was not always of easy accomplishment. The cases found to be unteachable were, as a rule, among the most helpless, troublesome or mischievous of their kind. They came from homes or public institutions of different kinds; sent because of the relief afforded by such transfer to the asylum, as well as from the expectation or hope that they might be radically improved by the means afforded here. This relief, often, from a very serious burden and care, after it was once felt and appreciated, would naturally make a reluctance to taking it up again by the return of their helpless and troublesome wards. Then, again, in almost every case some improvement was made, though falling short of that which was the real aim in the creation of the asylum. Furthermore, in some instances homes were broken up by the death of parents, or circumstances of widowhood and indigence combined made it seem almost an act of cruelty to add to such existing burdens the weightier one of the care and support of a child painfully dependent. Then it must be confessed that there are county institutions in this state where to remand a helpless child requires some courage on the part of the official whose duty it becomes.

For these reasons the number of custodial cases, or those not strictly capable of education, has become an accumulating one. It is not necessary to specify the modes in which this accumulation acts as an embarrassment.

As my report as superintendent is made a part of your annual report to the legislature, it may be well briefly to review the reasons that led to the establishment of this institution and its continued support; reasons that are still operative, though not necessarily within the observation of individual members of any legislative body.

As a preliminary, it may be well to define the prime characteristics of the condition known as idiocy, in its generic sense. Idiocy, then, is the want of a natural and harmonious development of the mental, active and moral powers and faculties of a human being, dependent upon some defect or infirmity of the nervous organization. It varies in degree, contingent upon the extent of nervous degeneracy, from a slight impairment of the mental faculties, imbecility, by insensible gradations and shades down to what is spoken of as complete idiocy. This maximum of imperfection and incapacity stops short only at a condition of nerve-degeneracy, inconsistent with the continuance of human life. Idiocy may exist with an apparent condition of bodily health, but is more commonly associated with obviously diseased physical states or some impairment of general physiological functions. There is a notable form of idiocy, described in works upon the subject, called cretinism. This is a low form of idiocy associated with extreme scrofulous degeneracy and great bodily deformity. It is most prevalent in the mountainous districts of Europe, and rarely seen in the United States. Idiocy is sometimes confounded with dementia. In fact, in our census table, demented persons are very commonly classed with idiots. Dementia, however, is, strictly speaking, a loss of mental powers and faculties once possessed, and occurs at a period of life later than childhood.

Various methods of classification in the case of idiots have been suggested, but these are either arbitrary or based upon pathological distinctions that are valueless for any practical purposes of classification. Of the first class, those based upon differences in mental capacity, it may be said, that they may have a special use or convenience in a certain class of writings upon the subject, if it is fully understood that they are entirely arbitrary and proposed and used only to mark general degrees of mental deficiency, that nevertheless run into each other by insensible gradations. Even the common distinction of imbecility and idiocy as indicating slight or profound impairment of the mental faculties is liable to misconstruction in some quarters. For the French works upon the subject, and even some English writers apply the term imbecility, without reference to degree, to a class of cases where the idiocy comes on about the age of puberty.

So, too, when idiocy is classified by known or probable pathological conditions underlying it, such distinctions are of little practical value in devising modes of obviating the resulting mental states or in predicting the results of such methods.

Take one of the latest of these classifications that has fallen under my eye. It is found in a paper read before the British Medico-

Psychological Association on the Classification and Prognosis of Idiocy. He divides idiocy into ten groups or classes:

1. Hydrocephalic idiocy.
2. Eclampsic idiocy.
3. Epileptic idiocy.
4. Paralytic idiocy.
5. Inflammatory idiocy.
6. Traumatic idiocy.
7. Microcephalic idiocy.
8. Congenital idiocy.
9. Cretinism.
10. Idiocy by deprivation — that is, by the loss of two or more of the senses.

With more than twenty-five years of observation of idiots and engaged during the whole period in the effort to ameliorate their condition, I am constrained to say, that I have seen almost every shade of mental deficiency in connection with each of these groups enumerated. But the essential thing in idiocy is the mental deficiency, no matter upon what physical cause depending. The two last groups have positive and easily detected characteristics, and so a clear significance. But examine for a moment the others. The eighth group or congenital may also include any one, or, in fact, almost all of the preceding. Of several of them it may be said, that they are not only not incompatible with certain others, but very commonly associated with them. In other words, many idiots could be properly ranked in two or more of the categories named.

Then as to the results of management and treatment or training and instruction, or as it is put, the prognosis, I see no guide in such a system of classification for determining this. The very basis of the classification is upon secondary pathological conditions, that in turn rest upon organic lesions, the nature and extent of which can only be a matter of surmise or inference.

A pathological classification may however be used to indicate the ordinary and immediate causes which produce idiocy. From such a study, it would be seen to occur first as a form of human degeneracy, the result of congenital or post-natal influences; or, secondly, as a consequence of accidental causes, that have interrupted or checked the laws of normal human growth.

Of the former, a majority may be classed as the result of hereditary neuroses in one or both families. That is to say, there may have been in the ancestral line insanity or idiocy, or some of the protean forms in which disease of the nervous system manifests itself. Not necessarily in the immediate progenitors, for physical traits, whether normal or abnormal, sometimes skip a generation or two, to appear again in

remoter descendants. Not necessarily in the same form of nervous defect or derangement, for with impaired function of the nervous system generally, accidental circumstances and influences may determine the precise mode of manifestation.

The intermarriage of near relatives is not an infrequent cause of idiocy, because it intensifies, in the offspring, the family defects and vices. Again, ill-health, any serious constitutional affection, or the intemperance of one or both parents at the time of conception, insufficient food, continued ill-health, depressing influences or any sudden shock to the mother during gestation may induce idiocy in the child. In the latter form of causation may be classed all injuries to the brain during infancy, whether the result of primary or secondary disease, or from strictly accidental causes. Thus, on the one hand, there may be the ill-effects of convulsions, epilepsy, hydrocephalus or any primary disease or inflammatory process; or the translation of eruptive or remote organic disease to the brain or central nervous masses. On the other hand, there may be injuries to the brain, in parturition, from instrumental interference or otherwise; from blows on the head or concussion in infancy; and, in rare instances, from fright.

The laws of hereditary transmission are but imperfectly understood by the wisest of our scientists, and still more imperfectly acted upon by ordinary persons in the formation or exercise of their social relations. But the roundabout way in which the violation of natural laws or any overstepping the natural limits of the exercise of the normal powers and faculties of the parent, acts to destroy or diminish the vitality of the offspring, may be learned by the study of even these last-named, or so-called accidental causes of idiocy. Thus, an excessive or protracted exercise of the mental faculties, to the exclusion of a proper amount of physical exercise, may result in a general and disproportionate increase in the size of the brain, the organ and instrument of mental action. Abnormal development or undue functional activity in any organ is commonly at the expense of other and correlated organs. Increase in the relative volume of the brain in the parents tells, perhaps, in the make-up of the offspring even in embryo, and then occur difficulties in the way of parturition, interfering with the natural course and progress of that function. Among the ascribed causes of insanity, as well as idiocy, of not infrequent occurrence, according to late professional writers, are injuries to the infant skull in the process of birth.

Finally, it may be mentioned that a premature ossification of the skull may prevent mental development, by checking or stopping cerebral growth. In many cases, however, the search for causation, with our present knowledge, is a blind one.

Idiocy has existed in all ages and in every known country. The relative number in any community will depend upon the physical and

social influences that lead toward or promote nerve-degeneracy. The ratio to the general population seems to be an increasing one. In the so-called civilized communities it is safe to estimate the number as at least one to every thousand in the population. General statistics would support this estimate, after excluding all cases of dementia in insane asylums, and not including many cases unrecognized as idiots on account of infancy. Special investigation pursued in this state, supplementary to the results obtained in taking the census, both by the state and United States authorities, would warrant the belief that this estimate is somewhat below the actual number.

Their status as subjects of law and objects of pity and charity had been recognized from time immemorial. The jurisprudence of all nations has been constrained to acknowledge their existence, for deficient as well as perverted mental and moral powers have constituted the point at issue in many questions in courts of justice in all times. The competency of principal or witness is to be settled on the one hand. On the other, the responsibility of alleged criminal acts is to be decided. And no small amount of crime is annually perpetrated by those whose measure of responsibility is a very limited one and who would have known better if they had but had a proper training. And many idiots, really the most susceptible of education of all their class, if left to grow up without proper instruction, or if aggregated with the vagrant classes, learn at least to be mischievous if not ready for the commission of petty crimes.

So too, the idiot under the most favorable circumstances of family and social relation has ever been an object of commiseration. Denied the privilege and joys of his fellows, in age and social condition, but worse than all, doomed to a life of inactivity of body and mind, the idiot, whatever the degree of the infirmity, naturally lapses into habits and modes of life disagreeable or disgusting, that in time diminish that sympathy and affection that is needed to make life endurable, or sinks into a condition but little above the animal, without the compensating pleasures of a mere animal life.

But in any community like that of our own commonwealth, the great mass of families being in moderate circumstances and many of them in indigence the case is even worse. From such families all cases of idiocy gravitate toward the county poor-house. Some, from very necessity, find their way there during the parents' lifetime. But more later on, for in the comparative weakness of the family tie, in this country, when the heads of the family die, the dependent members are often left to shift for themselves or to be cared for by the public provision for the helpless and incapable. If there are more than one such in a family, or if the case is one of extreme helplessness and trouble, in a relatively poor family, this fact may carry their kins-

folk into pauperism. Such has been their condition for centuries. Any known attempts to ameliorate their condition was reserved for quite recent times. In fact, systematic efforts for their improvement dates back only some forty years. There was a prior period of incubation, in which circumstances combined to direct attention to this class, to their peculiarities and their needs. Efforts to improve the condition of the insane, to educate deaf-mutes and the blind had been attended with great success.

In individual instances, where idiocy had been studied and some degree of improvement had been made, the facts had found their way to the public ear. Scientific curiosity had been awakened as to the nature of idiocy and the extent to which remedial means might be rationally applied. Civilized communities were thus made ripe for an extension of experimental measures of relief to the class of idiots.

By general consent, the name of Dr. Edward Seguin, of Paris, stands at the head of European specialists in the management and training of idiots. He organized a school for the purpose, in 1838. His intelligence, skill and zeal, together with a happy faculty of presenting his principles and methods of instruction and their results, attracted public attention. The public authorities of France and scientific bodies acknowledged the merits of his system. Visitors from many nations went to see the wonderful results. Thus were sown the seeds that have ripened into extended labors in the same direction in many lands.

Institutions have been established in many of the continental states of Europe. In Great Britain the growth and spread of institutions for idiots has been almost unexampled in the history of their benevolent institutions.

Beginning with a small school, founded by a few benevolent ladies in Bath, but a little more than 25 years ago, there are now eight establishments, public and private, in England; three in Scotland and one in Ireland.

More than a thousand idiots and imbeciles are now gathered in institutions designed for their management and instruction, supported either by their friends or by the liberality of wealthy and benevolent individuals. Royalty has lent its name in their behalf, both in England and in Holland.

Besides these establishments referred to, several large custodial institutions have grown up, where indigent and pauper cases of idiocy are properly cared for at the public expense. In Great Britain, therefore, the cause of the amelioration of the condition of idiots may be regarded as having been fairly adopted, both as a charity and a measure of public policy.

The experience of what is sometimes called the mother country may safely be studied, in this as in some other matters, if not followed in all respects.

In making a distinction between what I have called a charity and a policy, I have had in mind the two classes of institutions for idiots existing there. The reason for the distinction is this: the governmental policy in relation to what are generally classed as charitable institutions is quite different in the two nations, that are now the subject of comparison. While in this country educational measures for the indigent and dependent classes are recognized as a political duty, there such are left to the care of the wealthy and benevolent members of society. And so it happens, that in that country have grown up several large establishments for the education of idiots, supported exclusively by the annual contributions of noble and wealthy persons. As has been already stated, the growth of these institutions and their continued popularity has been almost unparalleled in the history of British benevolence. This has been going on for some 25 years or more.

Within the last few years a second class of institutions for idiots, in the main of a custodial character, have been opened. These are supported by the counties or municipalities as a measure of public policy. The influences that have led to this last step are two-fold.

In the first place, the experience of their educational establishments had shown that the state of idiocy, in many cases, was an improvable one, even when not of a nature to encourage very positive or continued educational means, to get them into the sunshine of a friendly spirit of care-taking stimulated some growth in the right direction. To keep them warm, to feed them well and clothe them decently inspired them with some disposition to help themselves as well as to do for others.

But a deeper reason has operated. In the care and treatment of the dependent classes, one of the principles, developed by modern social science, is that a proper classification is the first step. For by means of such classification the special needs of any particular class are thus rendered more obvious and more easily and economically met. Aggregated with the insane or with common paupers, or scattered in the homes of the indigent, the idiots of England were none the less burdensome to society than gathered (as is now going on) in special asylums for their care. In the one case, they lived expensively at the public charge. In the other, they were diminishing the productive industry of their care-takers, in a measure that told seriously upon the general productiveness of the nation.

In the United States, efforts at instruction in individual cases of idiocy or imbecility were undertaken as early as 1818. The first public efforts in their behalf were undertaken in our own legislature. In

the winter of 1846 the late Dr. Fred'k Backus, of Rochester, introduced a bill in the senate for the establishment of an asylum for idiots. As chairman of the committee of medical societies he had previously made an elaborate report, showing the probable number of idiots in the state, giving an account of the recently established schools in Europe and fortifying his own views by the opinions of well known superintendents of insane asylums, that asylums for idiots were a want of the age. He pursued his labor during two sessions, each year the bill passing the senate to be defeated in the assembly, not on its merits but through the concurrence of untoward circumstances. During the three following years the matter slumbered in the legislature, as there were no members who felt a special interest in it. In 1851 the subject was reopened; an exhibition of pupils of the Massachusetts school for idiots was given by Dr. S. G. Howe, of Boston, who, seeing a recommendation in the annual message of Gov. Hunt, to that end, kindly volunteered his services in the matter. This resulted in the establishment of the New York Asylum for Idiots.

The first school, however, actually opened was at Barre, Mass., in 1848. Only a few months later, an experimental school, under the patronage of the State of Massachusetts, was begun at Boston.

To this enterprise Dr. S. G. Howe, long identified with the education of the blind and other works of philanthropy, lent his name. Thence followed the establishment of institutions in other states, a list of which is here given.

CHARACTER.	Location.	Date of found'n.	Superintendent.	No. of Pupils.
1. Private institution...	Barre, Mass.....	1848	Dr. George Brown.....	22
2. State institution	So. Boston, Mass..	1848	Dr. S. G. Howe.....	120
3. State institution	Syracuse, N. Y....	1851	Dr. H. B. Wilbur....	198
4. State institution	Media, Pa.	1853	Dr. I. N. Keslin.....	223
5. State institution	Lakeville, Ct.....	1858	Dr. H. M. Knight.....	57
6. State institution	Columbus, Ohio...	1857	Dr. G. A. Dover.....	357
7. State institution	Frankfort, Ky....	1860	Dr. E. H. Black.....	99
8. State institution	Jacksonville, Ill..	1865	Dr. C. T. Wilbur.....	100
9. City institution	New York.....	1860	200
10. Private institution...	Fayville, Mass....	1870	Misses Knight & Green	5
Total under instruction.....				1,436

The history of systematic efforts to benefit idiots having thus been briefly given, attention may now be called to the form which such efforts have necessarily taken.

Whatever the accepted theory of the relation of body and mind, generally; whatever the nature of the supposed prevailing causes that may have produced that default of intelligence, or natural condition known as idiocy, for those who propose in any manner to remedy it, one thing is practically true, that is, it is the immediate result of a

defect or infirmity of the brain or other portions of the nervous system ; or, at least very intimately associated with such physical states.

As a defect, there may be want of size or want of brain capacity, from whatever cause arising ; a want of proper relation or connection between its elementary parts, or various abnormal modifications of its more intimate structure or organization.

As an infirmity, there may be default of normal functional activity in that organ or its subtile. This statement includes a variety of subtile conditions or influences, that may be suggested or inferred rather than demonstrated ; originating in the brain itself or derived from impairment of function of remote but correlated organs. Their nature is beyond our knowledge. This is a pathological state, that is thus described, and we are restricted in speculating about it, to the use of forms of expression (like abnormal), that are simply negative ; and that of activities, which are in turn merely subjects of speculation. For given a penetrating power in the microscope that should reveal the ultimate secret of cerebral organization (of which it now stops very far short) what then should we know of the subtile changes and movements, vaguely called molecular action, except the product of surmise or fancy. Something, doubtless, may be learned of the crude conditions that attend sleep ; but how the dormant faculties and powers of the animal kingdom are renewed while sleeping ; the daily succession of consciousness active and consciousness suspended — can thus be solved ?

Of the physical causes first named, that is, changes of structure, it will be seen that from the very nature of the case they cannot absolutely be removed. They have their origin and seat in congenital organic defect, or in abnormal organic conditions induced by disease, in a region and in tissues not susceptible of much modification by remedial measures. Absorption and regeneration are nature's processes for remedying such conditions, but these forces cannot be rendered active and operative under such circumstances.

Of the second class of influences, some degree of reformation, under favoring circumstances may be predicated. Thus hygienic and remedial may be undertaken, with a reasonable hope of success to establish a healthy functional activity of the nervous system and other bodily organs. If not at the outset, there comes a time when to bring the brain and the nerves of relation into exercise is indispensable. This is the work of education.

Rational efforts then for the amelioration of the condition of idiocy resolve themselves into measures of management, training and education.

In institutions for this purpose the same general features are everywhere seen. A gymnasium, to develop muscular power, dexterity and

a proper carriage, for idiots, as a class, are deficient in strength ; their muscles are not under the control of the will to that extent of individualizing the action of the various muscles that ordinary persons possess. Thence arises, in part, the uncertain and clownish gait, one of their marked characteristics. But the gymnasium has another use. It is the school for the first step in the development of the will. The natural order in the development of the will is first in the direction of the muscles, then over the senses in watching the movements or heeding the directions of the drill master. The experience thus gained of self-determination can then be applied to the mastery of other powers and faculties.

Next, a nursery, where the younger or lower grade of pupils are trained to habits of cleanliness, decency, order and self-care.

Lastly, a school-room, with a complete scale of exercises, from those applicable to the first dawns of sense-power and sense-perception up to the ordinary studies of an elementary school. The beginnings in the scheme of instruction are low down and of the simplest description, to meet the fact that in these pupils is wanting the activity of sense and the eager curiosity of normal childhood that to a certain extent educates itself. In other words, the little every-day knowledge unconsciously absorbed by the normal child must needs be with these a matter of positive instruction.

The same principles of education are employed as in any other system of instruction. The special adaptations of these principles to meet the peculiar traits of this class of pupils are quite varied. The will of the teacher may be needed at the outset to supply the absence of spontaneousness on the part of the pupil. The beginnings of instruction will be at such a point in the series of exercises as the exigencies of each case demand ; the progress, by such gradual steps as are within the compass of the pupils intelligence. The acquisitions of each day, in the way of greater nerve force, increased subordination and self-control and awakened intelligence are applied to the practical matters of every-day life, in the household or elsewhere. The success of the efforts of instruction will depend largely upon the observance of two rules. The first, that the lessons given bear some relation to the every-day life and observation of the pupils, so that perceptions and ideas, stimulated by the teacher in the school-room, may arise and flow out spontaneously at the promptings of their surroundings when elsewhere. The second, that a proper and orderly succession of exercises is observed, and this order depending somewhat upon the individual peculiarities of the pupils.

The ultimate end of all these efforts is to establish good habits, to impart a capacity and a willingness for some form of useful occupation, to develop greater power of self-control and, if possible, to bring the pupil under the sway of moral obligation.

The experience of numerous institutions, now many years in operation, has established the fact that a large majority of idiots, of a school-attending age and condition, as it respects health, are susceptible of very great improvement and may attain the end proposed by their education in the manner and by the means thus briefly indicated. Ordinarily, the extent of teachableness in any case can be determined precisely only by experiment, as the actual physiological limitations of the mental growth can only thus be ascertained.

Of a certain class unimprovability may be predicted. For example, where the degeneracy is of a kind to be self-developing with the progress of age, and where the underlying pathological condition is one progressive in its nature. Again, where there is such a degree of deformity as to preclude the use of suitable means of training, etc. And finally, where there is an extreme nervous excitability, the natural termination of which is in some form of insanity.

It has already been mentioned that this incapacity for improvement in a certain class of cases of idiocy was recognized by the founders of our asylum, and they took pains to guard against the admission of such pupils in their by-laws. But their prudence was seen in another matter. They were careful not to cherish themselves nor to encourage in others any high-wrought expectations of extravagant results from the undertaking. In the very first report of your board to the legislature it was distinctly said: "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 some useful purpose under the control of an aroused and disciplined will."

And it will be observed that the phrase "greatest practicable development" was used as showing that it was not expected, in every case, nor probably in any case, that the possible or utmost limits of development would be reached, but such a point as might be attainable with a reasonable expenditure of the public money, and with a proper allowance for the shortcomings of those directly engaged in the work.

Nor can it be justly said that the pupils sent to this institution have been above the average, in point of intelligence, of the class from which they came.

Speech is regarded as one of the best tests of the degree of mental deficiency, by the most approved writers upon this subject. If by speech is meant the power of comprehending as well as using language, this opinion may be accepted.

Of the first pupils, 25 in number, with which the asylum opened, it was then recorded "that 12 could not speak a single word. Of these

12 who were speechless, 6 had no idea of language; could not comprehend a single word or command addressed to them. Of those who were not dumb, 3 say but a few words and those indistinctly; and still two others who did not speak till nine years of age and now but indistinctly and with a very limited number of words."

Of the 207 on our present list of pupils, 85 had never spoken a word before coming to the asylum.

In concluding this report I will add, that there are two virtues which I may venture to call institution virtues. The one consists in performing all the duties of the office or post in which one may be employed with fidelity, thoroughness and alacrity. The other is a kind of loyalty to the institution, which will not only lead the employees to speak well of it, but to devote themselves earnestly and cheerfully to the practice of those little economies that in the aggregate are a credit to any institution. The full possession of these virtues I am happy to ascribe to my chief assistants; and to all the others, a commendable degree.

H. B. WILBUR,
Superintendent.

SYRACUSE, *January 8, 1875.*

TREASURER'S REPORT.

ALLEN MUNROE, treasurer of the New York Asylum for Idiots, in account current with the state of New York, for cash received and expended for the general supplies and the salaries and wages of officers, teachers, attendants and servants of said asylum, during the year ending September 30, 1874:

1873.	<i>Dr.</i>	
Oct. 1.	To cash from state treasurer	\$8,000 00
Dec. 31.	To cash from state treasurer	8,000 00
1874.		
Mar. 31.	To cash from state treasurer	8,000 00
June 30.	To cash from state treasurer	8,000 00
	To cash from county treasurers for clothing state pupils.....	2,626 40
	To cash from pay pupils for board, tuition and clothing.....	6,559 95
	To cash from state treasurer, special appro- priation	1,500 00
		\$42,686 35

1873.	<i>Cr.</i>	
Oct. 1.	By overdraft.....	\$1,017 11
	By cash paid on warrants of executive com- mittee for quarter ending Dec. 31, 1873	8,967 79
1874.		
	By cash paid on warrants of executive com- mittee for quarter ending March 31, 1874 ..	8,088 01
	By cash paid on warrants of executive com- mittee for quarter ending June 30, 1874....	10,658 11
	By cash paid on warrants of executive com- mittee for quarter ending Sept. 30, 1874....	5,743 54
	By sundry bills paid by steward and contingent expenses.....	6,487 39

By cash paid for purchase of land.....	\$1,500 00
Balance in hands of treasurer.... .	151 81
By cash in hands of superintendent	72 56
	<hr/>
	\$42,686 35
	<hr/>

(Signed,)

ALLEN MUNROE,

Treasurer, etc.

APPENDIX.

EXTRACT FROM THE BY-LAWS OF THE ASYLUM.

"The design and objects 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 7 and 14, 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 consent 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 answers in writing to such questions as the superintendent and committee shall prescribe. They shall, moreover, if of sufficient ability, engage to pay such reasonable sum 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. But no idiots shall be received into the asylum without there shall have been first lodged with the superintendent thereof a request to that effect, under the hand of the person by whose direction he is sent, stating the age and place of nativity, if known, of the idiot, his christian and surname, the town or city and county in which they severally reside, the ability, or otherwise, of the idiot, his parents or guardians, to provide for his support, in whole or in part; and if in part only, what part and degree of relationship, or other circumstances or connection between him and the person requesting his admission;

which statement shall be verified in writing by the oath of two disinterested persons, residents of the same county with the idiot, acquainted with the facts and circumstances so stated, and certified to be credible by the county judge of the same county. And no idiot shall be received into said asylum unless the county judge of the county liable for his support shall certify that such idiot is an eligible and proper candidate for admission to said asylum as aforesaid.

"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 for the first six months, after which period the 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, except the case of a state pupil, to insure the removal of the pupil 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 more 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, stating age, sex, general health, and such other particulars as will enable the trustees to judge of the teachableness of the person for whom application is made, must be directed to the superintendent, Dr. H. B. Willbur."

It will be seen by reference to the foregoing, just what the mode of admission is. Application is first made to the superintendent of the asylum, furnishing such particulars of the condition of the person for whom application is made as will enable the executive committee to decide whether the party is a suitable subject for admission.

If the case come within the purpose of the institution, a blank form of application is at once sent, which, when filled up and returned to the superintendent, furnishes a statement of the name, residence, etc., of the party, and his or her pecuniary condition, or the pecuniary condition of his or her parents, verified by the affidavit of two persons

acquainted with the circumstances related in the statement, and confirmed by the certificate of the county judge.

On the return of this circular, if there is a vacancy from the judicial district in which the party resides, permission is at once given for his or her admission.

If no vacancy exists at the time, the parties interested are so notified, and the application is filed, the applicant to receive the benefit of the first vacancy, in turn.

It is provided in the by-laws that each pupil shall be taken on trial. The probationary period named is one month. The practice has been otherwise. The cases rejected on trial have usually been retained a much longer period; at all events, till it was certain they were not suitable subjects for improvement.

The grounds upon which pupils have been dismissed under the rule hitherto have been, first, serious ill health that seemed likely to terminate in a speedy death. In most of the cases included under this head, the wisdom of the decision requiring their removal has been verified by the fact that they died not many months afterward. Next, confirmed epilepsy. When this disease has been fully developed, the same reasons that suggested the article in the by-laws against the admission of epileptics would require their dismissal.

Again, true dementia, or a loss of mind resulting from organic lesion of the brain, as a consequence of some disease in infancy or childhood.

Again, cases of idiocy conjoined with insanity. In these, the very measures of management and instruction adopted in the case of idiocy, only excite and aggravate the peculiarities presented; and as there is no proper provision in this institution for confinement, seclusion or restraint, their dismissal is rendered unavoidable.

In a few cases only it could be said that all efforts to educate or radically improve, that the asylum afforded, had failed of their purpose.

EXTRACTS FROM THE MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE BOARD HELD OCTOBER 14, 1874.

On motion of Mr. Titus, the following resolutions were offered and passed unanimously:

WHEREAS, Since the last annual meeting of this Board, the Rev. Henry N. Pohlman, D.D., one of the oldest and most esteemed members, has departed this life, leaving vacant the office of chairman of the Board, which he had occupied for more than twenty years, with great efficiency and a uniform courtesy toward his associates; now,

therefore, we his survivors, in deep sorrow at his loss and a sincere respect for his memory, do

Resolve, That in the death of the Rev. Dr. Henry N. Pohlman, the institution has been deprived of one of its most faithful officers and its devoted friend; the Board a member always on duty to render aid and wise counsel in its deliberations; the church, in which for nearly a half century he was a prominent member, a faithful pastor, loving and devoted in the performance of all his duties, and at the same time, in opinion and deportment, charitable toward all other religious denominations; the state, a citizen discreet and active in the fulfillment of his civil duties, a friend of sound learning and the ready advocate of every work of charity and mercy.

Resolved, That the secretary of this Board do forward a copy of this their action to the members of the family of the late Dr. Pohlman.