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ON THE EDUCATION OF THE IMBECILE.

BY DORA GREENWELL.

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AND EDITED FOR THE
ROYAL ALBERT IDIOT ASYLUM, LANCASTER.

‘To help where no one helps, to try to effect improvement where no one attempts it ; to espouse the cause of Humanity wherever it lies imprisoned, languishing in body or in spirit, *in things of earthly or of eternal life*, this is Christianity.—Wherever these good deeds flourish, Christ will find them and gather them into his bosom.’—*Herder.*

STRAHAN AND CO., PUBLISHERS,

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1869.



'He shall be favourable to the simple and needy, and shall preserve the souls of the poor. He shall deliver their souls from falsehood and wrong: and dear shall their blood be in his sight.'—Ps. LXXII. 13, 14.



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ON THE EDUCATION OF THE IMBECILE.*

IN every human being, be he the mightiest or the meanest among the family of Adam, there exists a vast dimly lighted region of unknown extent and unascertained resources; a world of which we as yet know too little even to define its boundaries, and of which we can only say, in vague and general language, that it lies between mind and body, between soul and sense. It is a realm thick sown with subtle affinities, thick peopled with analogy, hint, and suggestion, some of them of obscure, and some of fearful import. Far off there is a murmur as of the ocean, and we hear far inland the rush and roar of a mighty cataract; dark untracked woods are around us, and through them the river of life flows down. But who has tracked that river to its unknown source? Who through marsh and jungle, and waste of whirling burning sand, has won his way to the centre of this mysterious realm, and there ascended some height of vantage commanding it from sea to sea?

* 1. See The Treatment of Idiocy by the Physiological Method. By E. SEGUIN. 2. Traitement Morale, Hygiène, et Education des Idiots. Par E. SEGUIN. 3. Maladies de l'Esprit. Par E. ESQUIROL. Revue des Deux Mondes. 4. De l'Idiotie chez les Enfants. Par FÉLIX VOISIN. 5. Des Principes qui doivent présider à l'Éducation des Idiots. Par M. DELASIAUVE. 6. A Manual on the Classification, Training, and Education of the Feeble-minded, Imbecile, and Idiotic. By DUNCAN & MILLARD. 7. Reports of the American Asylums for the Imbecile. 8. Idiot Asylums. Edinburgh Review, 1865. 9. Reports of Public Meetings held in aid of the Royal Albert Asylum for Idiots and Imbeciles of the Northern Counties, Lancaster.

All that we as yet know of our own nature tends to awaken surmises as vague and wild as were those of Cortez when he gazed

‘Silent upon a peak of Darien,’

and yet if we wish to know anything of man as he really is, if we would desire, amid the complications of an incomplete and struggling existence, to be truly useful and helpful to our fellow-creatures, we must learn not to turn aside from Humanity under its more strange and conflicting aspects. We must be content to grow as familiar with its every chamber as we might be with the rooms of some old memory-haunted house where we have played in childhood, and dreamed away the golden hours of youth. And in this ‘our breathing house not made with hands,’ we shall doubtless find not only fair parlours looking upon summer gardens, but many dark closets, many long drearily-echoing corridors, many passages that end in nothing. We shall come suddenly upon windows that open upon heaven itself, and find that here also, as in the vision of the Pilgrim, is a gateway ‘that leadeth unto hell.’

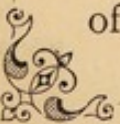
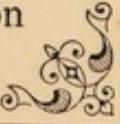
This region has in ages less enlightened than our own been almost given up to the charlatan and the fanatic, and even in our own days we have seen fantastic tricks played within it both by the mesmerist and the revivalist, and known things done that were enough to make the angels weep. But surely the time has come when all fact has grown too valuable to the true thinker to be ignored or passed over because it happens to be inconvenient and hard to fit in to some already established system. Man’s complex nature encloses within it many facts, startling,

hard to classify, or to bring under a general law, and some of these we must be content to accept and to acquiesce in, to receive them as self-asserting facts, and to let them lie quietly alongside of others that seem to oppose and contradict them. We believe that physiology, approached in this spirit, is the true antidote to materialism, and that the more we learn of the soul's dependence upon the body, the more we recognise its actual, if not entire subjugation to the organism it has to work through, the more thoroughly we shall believe in the soul's distinct existence, and separate power and freedom. When we have learnt all that is at present known about brain and cell, and nerve and tissue, we shall find that we have extended, and not in any degree exhausted, the study of the rational, affectionate man. Nay, we shall find him rather grown than lessened in our eyes by researches that some may deem too curious. To say that such an instinct or emotion belongs to the animal part of our nature is thought to convey a certain sense of disparagement ; but what if we can prove that the range of feelings we are so accustomed to classify are connected as intimately with the highest as they are with the lowest region of our nature,—what if we can establish by the very light which the late researches on imbecility cast, that the slightest warp in our physical organization is fatal to general human development, and that the perfect animal is needed to make the perfect man ? If the foot or the hand be faulty the soul suffers, if a muscle withers the whole life endures a blight. From all that we at present know of man, it appears that the soul can as little assert itself without the body, as the body can exist without the soul. Nor

is there between these two wedded mates any such disparity of native rank and lineage as a proud and ignorant spiritualism has been pleased to place. Each is originally beautiful, originally noble ; each is 'created free, although born in chains ;' each is fallen and perverted from its clear original ideal ; each seems capable of utter, even final degradation ; each contains within it the hints and rudiments of ultimate perfection, while in each lie wrapped the seeds of death and ruin. It is not in vain that spiritual and natural life and death, moral and physical well-being and decay, are so full of affinities, that we can scarcely speak of one without making use of some term that seems more properly to belong to the other. The springs of life, *of all life*, lie close together, they may be tracked up to the same remote and hidden source, more hard to find than that of Nile or Niger, that 'well-spring of life' which remains the secret of God himself—they lead down to one unfathomable sea. Physiology reveals so many marvels, so extends our views of the capabilities of man ; it shows us, both in his body and mind, such vast reserves of power, such sheathed and crippled energies ; it lays bare such springs of latent ecstasy, dark in their flow, and silent as is a subterraneous river, that need but a touch to bid them flash and kindle into air and light, to allow the heart or the intellect to believe that either man's body or his soul can perish. Yes ! I would say further, that physiology stands in need of Christianity as its complement ; it makes sense (to speak familiarly) with the gospel, and with it alone. It requires a commandment that is exceeding broad, and no creed will suit it but that which *saves* both soul and body,

which purifies and exalts and crowns each with an equal honour. Christ is the Saviour of the body ; the heaven to which He admits us is no blank uncomfited Sheol, of which Job said, 'I shall lie down in desolate places among kings and counsellors of old'—no shadowy Elysium to which Achilles and Iphigenia preferred *life*, be it even that of a slave 'toiling among men beneath the light of the cheerful sun.' Christ is emphatically the 'life ;' He is the Lord and the Giver of life in its fulness and entirety, and the resurrection which we obtain through union with Him is the restored perfection of *our whole nature*, the marriage of the purified soul with the glorified body,—a union without which neither can exert its full powers or know its true blessedness, and awaiting which *each* groans within itself, being burdened, 'waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body.'

And in a region presenting, as does all that has to do with Humanity, many apparent contradictions, it need not surely surprise us to find that we advance greatly towards the clear understanding of man's whole nature, through the contemplation of its exceptional and abnormal phases. The very imperfections and aberrations of Humanity seem to let light, as through chinks and crannies, into caverns within which it would not otherwise have penetrated. In insanity and delirium, for instance, both soul and body exert a fitful and irregular strength, of which the experience of calmer moments has possibly given little more than the hint. Even the wreck of mind will sometimes give proof of the power of mind, and manifest the superiority of will over muscle, in the energy of misdirected volition

put forth by a poor emaciated madman whom many strong men cannot hold. In dreaming, too, the soul is often stirred to depths of anguish, and raised to heights of ecstasy, such as actual life under its present limited conditions can never admit it to. The tenderest heart in its waking moments can neither conceive nor realize rapture so exquisite as the bliss that floods body and soul and spirit in a happy dream, nor can all that a cruel imagination has yet devised of subtle torture equal the absolute horror with which nightmare can crowd and overcharge a moment. Even some of our merely intellectual powers seem to gain strength in states like those induced by hysteria and somnambulism. Nay more! the mind under these unnatural conditions seems to develop a fresh range and order of faculties, as if a secret finger had been laid upon some hitherto unsuspected *stop* in the great organ.* The dull under these conditions become brilliant; the illiterate (as in so many cases of religious exaltation) eloquent; the very countenance is, as it were, transfigured into tender and expressive beauty. These things are enough to prove that around, above, *within* man, is a world from which he is at ordinary times excluded, yet a world which is surely his own, although it be for the present barred from him

* Nothing in this way is more wonderful than the influence of narcotics, and the consciousness of expansion and freedom, thronged with images of beauty, to which the soul attains under such influence. And yet it cannot be in the power of a mere drug to *create* such images, or to induce such energies. The secret of beauty and of energy is in man himself, and the power of the drug is *over the body*, imparting a momentary concentration to the nervous system, that lifts its weight from the soul, which is ordinarily kept down by a too feeble or too heavy physical organism, and enables both body and soul to ascend together to heights, from which, alas! both must quickly fall.

by angels or demons with their swords of flame, and as yet he can but look through the gate, so girt and guarded, for a moment, flinging his soul across through pang and spasm, so to win a dear-bought, momentary glimpse.

I.

And amongst the abnormal conditions of humanity, imbecility, at first sight so repulsive, so barren of all suggestion, will appear, when we come to look into it more closely, to be rich in analogical inference and full of tender poetry. For, taking man at the standard he was evidently originally designed to meet, what are any of us, even the most gifted, but beings to whom something is wanting, people of whom it may be truly said, to quote the ordinary North-country expression in speaking of the imbecile, *that we are not all there*. How much of us is wanting even to the best of us, none but He who made us knows, for *we* may be dimly conscious of some inward swerve and failure, but in His mind alone is drawn the clear perfection of the outline each was originally designed to fill. 'I do not wish,' writes Thoreau, 'ever to see John again, I mean him who is dead, but that other whom only *he* would have wished to see or to be, and of whom he was the imperfect representative.' To explain what I mean more fully, I would say that humanity, even under its happiest conditions, works under a stringent 'statute of limitations,' the grace and freedom of its movements is fettered, the crowning glory of its achievements dwarfed, by the imperfection of man's bodily faculties and organs. A man, even the greatest

man, is in some degree sheathed and swathed in an organization which literally renders him

‘Incompetent to keep
Heights which his soul is competent to win.’

But an idiot is one on whom this bodily organization has acted like the machinery of the iron shroud in the frightful mediæval story: it has crippled and crushed his rational and intellectual being, which lies within it maimed even to death, inert and passive as the prey within the folds of the boa-constrictor. An idiot is one who is never strong enough to cast off the swaddling bands of infancy, and who lives bound round with them from head to foot, until he exchanges them for the cerecloths of the grave. Therefore there is no sight that our world, so full of sorrowful ones, can offer, so deeply tragic as that of idiocy. Insanity itself is not so full of fearful suggestion, nor is its problem one of such intricate and overwhelming complication. For the poor maniac has at least *lived*; he is one who has suffered the extremity of woe and loss, but who still retains something of the dignity of him ‘who has had losses,’ of a being once responsible and intelligent, capable of feeling and inspiring love. He is now, in the expressive French phrase,* an alien from his kind, cut off from the broad swift-flowing stream of human interests and sympathies, ‘he is desolate with all his company;’ but the idiot, as his very name implies, is *isolated*, and has ever been so; he is disinherited from his very birth—even from before it. He is a being disassociated from all around him, without

* *Aliéné.*

ties, without aims, without resources ; his life's history is indeed a blank, summed up and circled in nonentity. He is one who, in the emphatic language of Seguin, 'can do nothing, can think of nothing, can care for nothing.'

The spectacle of idiocy fast bound in the iron misery of an imperfect organization, awakens in the mind the thought of a fatality more gloomy and irresistible than that which presides over a Greek drama. The bondage here is final, the soul's captivity lifelong. Yet even in learning the soul's dependence upon the body, we learn, as I have said, much of the soul's greatness ; and nothing brings out more strongly than does idiocy, the sharp distinctive difference between the animal and man. When the great governing principle of reason, intelligence, *that in fact which makes man what he is*, is unable to exert its supremacy, all in the lower, as in the higher part of human nature, is chaos and disorder, and the idiot is as far from the perfect animal as he is from the perfect man. Such is the grandeur of man's whole nature, that, as in all that is perfect and structural, defect in any part works ruin to the whole design. An animal is sufficient to its own wants—self-helpful, in harmony with the universe it belongs to, a law unto itself, guided and checked even as to its instincts and propensities ; but the man in whom the animal nature predominates is unable even to provide for the mere animal wants which have to him become imperious. He has lost his life's Dominant to which every fibre in his nature refers, and all is discord ; he is unable to help himself, out of relation with all that surrounds him ; and the utter absence of spontaneity in the idiot is one of the strongest witnesses we have to man's

inalienable freedom. If Man is robbed in any degree of his birthright, if the motive impelling, governing principles of reason, volition and affection, are unable to make their energies felt within him, he is indeed bereaved. He is one who may perish with cold and hunger, although he is the Father's son, and heir unto a kingdom, while the furred, finned, and feathered tribes of earth, sea, and air, know how to provide themselves with homes and sustenance.

The question which we are now considering, that of the educability of the imbecile, is not one of mere philanthropy. So far it has been chiefly considered in that light, and has engaged the attention of but a few persons, and they among the number of so-called enthusiasts. But if the principles laid down in the books and reports before us are true, and the facts to which they bear witness can be well established, it is a question which connects itself most closely with almost every other social one. It is an inquiry which bears, and that in no indirect way, not only upon education in general, but upon legislation, upon morals, upon the general relations of human beings with each other, and even upon the nature of moral accountability with God. 'The question as to whether or not the idiot can be improved,' says one who is well qualified to speak upon the subject,* 'is a question which touches upon the loftiest outlooks of psychology, the most important problems of education; and the light our researches shed is as valuable to the philosopher as it is to the physician.'

The books and papers which now lie before us are not

* M. Delasiauve, Médecin de l'Hospice de Bicêtre.

cheerful reading, they are not of the kind which makes a half-hour pass pleasantly to the general reader, nor are they likely to be taken up except by persons particularly interested in the subject to which they are devoted. They carry us into the heart of deep scientific problems, and involve the weightiest practical conclusions. Seguin tells us that when he began to write on idiocy he found himself involved, without intending it, in moral, medical, physiological, and educational questions of the highest import. One question, he says, drew on another, each fact seemed to rest upon some anterior one, *alone able to explain and to interpret it*, so intimately connected are all researches that have Man for their object.

It does not fall within our present limits to follow out the questions into which these books enter largely; a few simple, clearly established facts are enough to make any thinking person feel the importance of their leading inquiry—‘*Can the idiot be educated?*’ England and Wales, it seems, contain at present about 50,000 idiotic and weak-minded persons. A formidable battalion, and the more so when it is swelled and strengthened by the vast number of unrecognised cases of mental infirmity, of backward, imperfectly developed, and peculiarly constituted children, who all require, in the language of those who best understand their condition, *a special* (or physiological) education, and who cannot be benefited, but will assuredly be injured, by the course of ordinary teaching. How all-important to the life of the family, to the well-being of the nation, becomes the question of their susceptibility to improvement! How worthy of the attention of the Government of every

Christian State! For the idiot, as it has been truly remarked, does not sink alone. The present scientific researches bring into clear light a fact which has been long familiar to the chaplains of jails and others practically interested in our criminal population, that a large proportion of it is made up of weak and mentally deficient people, whose infirmities have made them the easy victims and the ready tools of the vicious and designing. M. Voisin's attention was drawn to this subject by seeing a company of *forçats*, among whom his practised eye at once detected a man who was a manifest idiot, incapable of responsibility. In 1838, he inspected, along with a Commission appointed by the Government, a prison where 500 young criminals were submitted to his inspection. Upon a phrenological examination, it appeared that the heads of more than two-thirds of these boys, that is 315 out of the 500, were of the lowest character of development—a truly astounding proportion. These poor boys, who all belong to the very lowest class, had not only had to contend against every social disadvantage, but had started in the race of life under the heavy weight and disability an imperfect organization entails. Are such poor beings to be turned loose on society, to become centres of evil and degradation, or are they to be trained to peace and order, or at least to be sheltered, to be *saved* alike from injuring and from being injured? Such inquiries are certainly worthy of the attention of a great and Christian nation. Few who have considered the case of our pauper imbeciles with any attention, will doubt as to their having a direct claim upon the care of Government. State intervention

is sometimes a perilous boon to crave, and has been found more costly to the receivers than to the bestowers, but it can scarcely prove so to this peculiar class of sufferers, pressed under a double burden, and appealing to their country by a double claim of poverty. It is kind no doubt in the individually charitable to subscribe sovereigns, to fill purses, to weary their friends to give them a vote for Earlswood for the benefit of this or that idiot who has come across them in a chance way; but this is a question that ought not to be left to philanthropy.* It is one worthy of a nation's heart. It is time that England, who for her 50,000 imbeciles has as yet provided asylums for just *one thousand*, to ask whether we are to continue to

* We must not, however, forget to draw attention to the wonders which philanthropy, so far unaided and single-handed, is at present working. The noble Northern Counties Asylum now founding at Lancaster, which will be the largest in the world, owes its origin to the munificent gift of £2000 from a private individual in circumstances not even affluent. Its objects have been advocated with great ability and zeal by Dr. De Vitre, the chairman of the central committee. The secretary, Mr. James Diggins, calls the writer's notice to a very interesting feature connected with the work—the interest which has been taken in it by the humbler orders of men. The Provençals in their richly poetical idiom are accustomed to speak of an '*alms in blossom*,' by which they mean a gift given by the indigent to one yet worse off than himself, and we are all familiar with the touching Manx proverb—'*When the poor man gives to the poor, God himself smiles.*' Mr. Diggins tells me of a poor old woman in receipt of parish allowance who asked leave to send some work she had done to a bazaar spontaneously got up at Austwick, a small village near Settle, for the benefit of the Royal Albert Asylum, a bazaar which raised £74. 'In Lancaster,' he adds, 'the poor have liberally subscribed. Two working-men's auxiliary committees were organized for the collection of small weekly contributions of a penny and upwards, and their canvass has already resulted in the addition of £165 to our funds. Large donations have been received from their friendly and co-operative societies,—the Lancaster District of Oddfellows contributing as much as £105, and the Lancaster Co-operative Society, £26, 5s. Sunday-schools have also subscribed, one of them raising in a few weeks the sum of £18. The same generous interest has been evinced by the operative class in other towns; for example, the world-famous Rochdale Equitable Pioneers voted a donation of £52, 10s., and promised further assistance; and the Halifax District of Oddfellows, to whom the objects of the Asylum had been fully and ably explained by that earnest friend of the idiot, the Rev. Dr. Bedford Hall, have recently sent us £21.'

allow the weakest, the least fortunate among us, to drift hither and thither as chance and fate direct, the very *flotsam* and *jetsam* of humanity, or to decide whether as a nation we will seek to emulate the wise and loving economy of our Divine Founder, and strive to heal that which is sick, to bind up that which is broken, to bring back that which is driven away, to gather up of these fragments and leavings of human existence, 'so that nothing be lost.'

II.

The idea of educating the imbecile is probably the youngest born among the daughters of philanthropy. It has yet to make its way into general acceptance, and the apathy with which it is apt to be received in so many cases, arises from the want of interest which, even in subjects far more naturally attractive, belongs to pure and simple ignorance of their nature and objects. It seems well, therefore, to give a short historical outline of the rise and progress of this new science; and for this we have not to go back to any remote period, for the schoolmaster, as regards the feeble-minded, has not been long abroad. France, the nurse and mother of great ideas, too generous to remember Lord Bacon's famous adage, '*Fiat experimentum in corpore vili,*' ever ready to be *herself* the subject of each high experiment of liberty and progress, claims, along with many kindred glories, that of being the first worker in this peculiar field. Itard, in the early days of the French republic, was the first person who ever tried to educate an idiot, and his indefatigable labours upon the well-known

wild man of the Aveyron laid the foundation-stone of all that has been since done in the way of physiological education. Yet Itard, strange to say, never imagined himself to be educating an idiot, and all that has proved most valuable in the result of his experiments, grew, as in the case of those of alchemy, out of a mistaken aim. Trained in the principles of Rousseau, Itard sincerely believed that if a true savage—meaning by this a real wild man, one who would be considered such even by savage tribes—could be found, the task of his education would lay bare those ‘innate ideas,’ the true springs of human intelligence, which a false and artificial mode of culture had blighted and perverted. Such a subject for theorization he believed himself to have discovered in the ‘*sauvage de l’Aveyron*,’ a boy who at the age of about eleven was caught by some hunters in the woods, wild and naked, living upon roots and acorns. The literature of the eighteenth century, and above all the philosophy of Rousseau, says M. Esquirol, had made savages fashionable, and the wild boy was for a short time the gazingstock and wonder of Paris. Fashionable curiosity was however quickly satiated; the world soon grew tired of looking at a morose, unclean, ill-conditioned child, who bit and scratched every one who interfered with him. The poor ‘wild man of the woods’ was soon abandoned, and forgotten by all save by the few, Humanity’s true and faithful lovers, who never lose their sense of kinship with the great family we all belong to, and in whose eyes a man, however forlorn, degraded, and embruted, is still *a man*. He was visited by the illustrious Pinel, the earliest friend of the insane, who saw at once how nearly his characteristics

approached those of the idiotic children confined in the Bicêtre, and under the then rooted impression that nothing could be done to improve those who were born deficient, warned Itard that his cares would be thrown away. Itard took a different view of the boy's condition, but so fully agreed with Pinel in the firm belief that idiocy was incurable, and that children affected by it were not susceptible to the influence of any sort of sociability or instruction, that when after years of patient labour he found out that the boy was really an idiot, one who as such had probably been cast out by his parents to perish in the forest, he gave up his case for ever in deep disappointment and disgust. But the zeal and patience which Itard brought to an obscure and unrepaying task, and continued to exert through a period of five long years, were not really thrown away. Himself a man of true genius, he had caught from another, the Spaniard Pereire, the first teacher of the deaf and dumb, whose labours a little preceded his own, the secret of the education of the senses; he had learnt from him the futility of pursuing ordinary methods of culture with children whose whole organization was exceptional, and upon this hint of deep significance he spoke and acted.

To attach the wild boy to the habits of social life, to awaken his nervous sensibility, to extend the circle of his ideas, to lead him by degrees to the use of language,—such were the aims of Itard, and such are now those of the idiots' most advanced teacher; and none that have come after him, says M. Esquirol, have ever surpassed him in miracles of patience and ingenuity, in artifices brought to bear upon

continually recurring obstacles, in the separate training of every separate sense. These were so far successful, that although his work must be on the whole regarded as a failure, the boy who had lived in the midst of his fellow-men, as one blind, deaf, and insensible, learnt to see and listen, to distinguish objects by their touch and smell, and awoke to sentiments of tender and caressing gratitude towards his teacher. The name of Itard must be ever cherished by the friend of the idiot as that of the pioneer boldly striking into trackless forests, the pilot venturing upon 'perilous seas forlorn.' He takes high rank among the guides who have none to guide them, among the leaders following only the instinct of their own great souls. We are perhaps lingering too long upon the threshold of our narrative, and yet before leaving the well-worn subject of the wild man of Aveyron, it is scarcely possible not to be struck by the light his story casts upon days not very far from our own. Our own age has plenty of faults, and plenty of fault-finders to discover and proclaim them. We are told at least once a week, if not oftener, that there was never an age so shallow, heartless, and money-seeking as the present one; yet in Humanity we may perhaps have gained something that removes us a long way from days when, as in the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries, idiot children were frequently thrown to perish in the forests by their parents. Some few among these contrived to exist in spite of a thousand adverse chances, through the sole strength of instinct, and became assimilated to the wild beasts among whom they lived. Linnæus has left a list of ten of these unfortunate beings, whom he,

curiously enough, considered as forming a variety in the genus *Homo*. Its headings read strangely—

Juvenis Lupinus Hessensis, 1544—a young man found in Hesse among wolves.

Juvenis Ursinus Lithuanus—a young man found among bears in Lithuania.

Juvenis Ovinus Hibernus—a young man found among wild sheep in Ireland.

Juvenis Bovinus Bambergensis—a young man found among herds of oxen near Bamberg; and so on through the sorrowful catalogue,

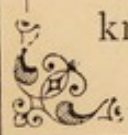
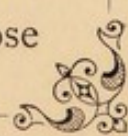
‘Sorte funesta clari.’

Contemporary with Itard's labours may be noticed those of another celebrated physician, Foderé, a Savoyard, who gave his attention to Cretinism, a local form of idiocy, involving physical and mental degeneracy of the profoundest type, attributable as is generally known to atmospheric causes, and to hereditary transmission in the places which have originally favoured its development. Foderé entered on the path since then more fully explored by Dr. Guggenbühl, and tried to ameliorate the condition of the Cretin* of the Alpine valleys, to make him serviceable in rural industry, and in some degree to educate him. But the attention, never perhaps very general, which had been excited by the writings of Itard and Foderé was not of that

* It is not perhaps generally known that the word *Cretin*, linked with such painful and repellent associations, is a modification of the family name of the great family of Christ. They were called ‘Chrétien’s’ by the peasantry, in the same spirit that has sometimes given them the name of ‘innocents,’ and which still continues in Eastern countries to invest insanity with a protecting halo. And the name imports that these are Christians as it were *par excellence*, children of the good God, born irresponsible, and therefore incapable of ever displeasing Him.

strong and lively character which can keep itself long awake. Public interest altogether slumbered on the question, and Pinel and Esquirol, so full of undying solicitude for the insane, only added strength to the ban under which the idiot lay, by casting the weight of their powerful authority into the heavy balance against him. For him alone there was neither help nor hope, and for about thirty years, dating the work of Itard at the very beginning of this century, we find a chasm in our narrative broken perhaps as the years go on by some solitary little-heeded voice.

But all things, according to the saying of Tertullian, ripen, and righteousness also ripens along with them. 'At certain times and eras,' remarks M. Seguin, 'the whole race of man, as regards the discovery of truth, seems to arrive at once at a certain point, so that it is hard to say *who* is the discoverer. All we know is that something which the race has long wanted has at last been found, and this point once reached, the friends of truth hasten in from all quarters to compare, to analyse, and to increase their great acquisitions.' 'For it is not enough,' adds Seguin, 'that a truth be ripe in the mind of a thinker, and that the vowed advocates of light and progress are ready to hail its birth, *the social medium in which it has to work must be also ready*, otherwise it falls upon soil in which it cannot germinate, and no decided result ensues.' Some such propitious hour had struck when in 1842 Dr. Guggenbühl opened his school for cretins on the Abendberg, while at the same time M. Saegert commenced one for idiots at Berlin, both without knowledge of the methods being pursued by Seguin, whose

indefatigable labours at the Bicêtre were in full vigour of operation. In 1846 a school was established in Leipzig by Dr. Kern. As early as 1819, Dr. Poole of Aberdeen had advocated the expediency of subjecting idiotic children to medical treatment and educational training, but the first practical effort in Great Britain was made by the Misses White of Bath, who opened in 1846 a small house in that city for the training of the imbecile, and commenced with four children. In the early part of 1847 there appeared in *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal* two articles on M. Seguin's work at the Bicêtre, which were written by Mr. Gaskell, then medical superintendent of the Lancashire Lunatic Asylum, and for many years subsequently a Commissioner in Lunacy. These articles attracted the attention of Dr. Andrew Reed, the renowned philanthropist, who, having secured the earnest co-operation of Dr. Conolly, and other active benevolent and scientific gentlemen, started an asylum at Park House, Highgate. The outgrowths of this institution are the National Asylum at Earlswood, one of the best known and most efficiently conducted institutions of the kind in the world, and the Eastern Counties Asylum at Colchester, of which Mr. Millard, one of the earliest friends of the idiot, is the able superintendent. Scotland in 1852 opened her first institution at Baldovan, near Dundee, promoted by Sir John Ogilvy; and Dr. Brodie began the good work in Edinburgh, now carried on upon a larger scale at the new Scotch Asylum at Larbert. In June 1853 the corner-stone of Earlswood, Surrey, was laid by Prince Albert. In 1863 a small asylum for the Western Counties was commenced at Star-cross, Exeter, under the leadership

of the Earl of Devon, and in June 1868 we see the foundation laid at Lancaster of a large institution for the reception of the idiots and imbeciles of the seven Northern Counties of England. A small asylum for the Midland Counties has, we understand, recently been started at Birmingham.

As early as 1842-3, two American gentlemen, Messrs. Mann and Sumner, had seen the work of Seguin at Paris, and written home an approving notice of it.* Idiot education was quickly set on foot in Massachusetts, and since then has been adopted as a *State duty* by New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Ohio. Seguin himself has been won to America, and has had the school of New York under his care; and one fact to America's undying honour must not pass unrecognised,—that even the heavy financial strain which the late war has laid upon all her energies and resources, has not been allowed to interfere with the keeping up of these establishments, nor has party feeling been allowed to check their beneficial working by preventing the admission of children from the Southern States.

The American reports, to which we shall have occasion to refer again, are characterized by a quite remarkable

* Seguin's deservedly eminent (we may call it pre-eminent) position among the teachers of the idiot, consists in the high and honourable place he gives to moral forces, especially to the freedom of the will. This at all costs and trouble he is bent upon evoking and strengthening, and while his predecessors had contented themselves with the mere education of the senses, his rare genius makes all that can be done in the region of emotion and impression subserve to the true if but partial awakening of reason, conscience, and will, feebly as each may be able to manifest itself. 'When we try,' he says, 'to educate the isolated idiot, we do not mean the mere teaching him reading, music, etc.: we mean to give him the sense and the power of establishing in the limits of his capacity those social relations (*rappports sociaux*) whose ever changing state is expressed by the two fixed words *rights* and *duties*.'

warmth and kindliness of expression, and by the broad basis upon which the work is placed. 'This school,' says the annual report for Massachusetts, 'had its origin in that respect for Humanity which is pained by the thought that any who bear its image should remain outcast from the universal family, unembraced in the common bond of brotherly love.'

III.

France meanwhile has continued the work she so nobly inaugurated. Among many names honourable in the ranks of those who, in the emphatic language of M. Esquiros, have endeavoured, and not in vain, to remove 'the mark of the beast' from the forehead of the idiot, Belhomme, Falret, Ferrus, Leuret, we come to one who even from the unscientific reader challenges a more than ordinary attention. M. Voisin is one of those ardent and lively thinkers who compel you to go along with them, perhaps not the whole length of the road upon which he is himself travelling, but assuredly further than you at first intend. They who have gone one mile in his company will certainly go twain, and find themselves richer in ideas than when they started. His attention has been greatly drawn to the consideration of the obscurer mental afflictions less obvious to the outward eye than idiocy, yet dating like it from birth, and interfering as surely and fatally as it does with the exercise of volition, affection, and will, displacing that grand triumvirate under whose rule alone a happy, respectable, and honoured life is a possible thing. Voisin's extended practical observations of idiocy, insanity, and mental and nervous maladies in

general, joined to profound phrenological studies, have led him to believe that in a certain nature any given moral faculty—say affection, or the sense of responsibility—may be as surely, though less obviously, wanting, as the power of attention, comparison, or the faculty of number is wanting to those whose deficiencies are intellectual. ‘We must learn,’ says Voisin, ‘that human nature is made up of instinctive, perceptive, moral, and intellectual elements, whose harmony constitutes the man. But an unseen enemy can sap and mine at any one of these, idiocy can besiege *any one of these faculties in separation from the rest*, or it can attack the whole nature at once, thus making of man, as the case may be, a complete or a partial wreck. It can work an innate weakening of the moral sentiments, it can enfeeble the motive springs of duty and affection, it can induce an actual deadness in the region of some great fundamental power, while the other powers remain undisturbed, and continue the independent exercise of their several functions.’


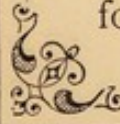
Also, says Voisin, there are a number of persons whose whole organization is exceptional, who do not conform to the common standard and level of humanity—people who are, and must remain, as he expresses it, *hors de ligne*, a class in which, along with weak and wandering, perverted and ill-balanced minds, he does not hesitate to include the bright inheritors of genius, and the possessors of extraordinary benevolence and heroic courage. All these, he says, are alike in this, that they sink below or rise above the safe mediocrity and even balance to which the great majority of the human race is vowed and consecrated; they resemble each other, sadly as the great hero and the great

criminal differ, in a certain *original want of adjustment and proportion*, which makes each pass easily, under exciting circumstances, into a state of exaltation, in which man, in Voisin's energetic language, 'is given up to his individuality,' when his actions become automatic, his passions irresistible, —when he is no longer, in the language of common life, his own master, but the blinded follower of a blind guide, left at the mercy of some fierce overruling instinct, or of some trivial outward circumstance.

Voisin founded a school in Paris in 1834 for the treatment of intelligences of an exceptional class. We know not what measure of success has attended this establishment, or whether its blessed promise of amelioration has justified the hope expressed with so much tenderness by one who in early days inspected it, and spoke of it 'as filling up a place until now left blank both to science and to humanity.' 'How much wasted wealth,' says M. Marc,* 'may *here* be restored to society! To say nothing of rocks and shoals avoided, and shipwrecks saved, what noble and generous natures, what hearts too deeply sensitive for their own peace, what magnificent intellects, perilously gifted and unsuitably placed for development, whose unrecognised powers have worked but misery for themselves and ruin to those around them, might have been saved and rescued! And leaving on one side these brilliant and exceptional cases, how many incomplete and partially endowed natures are there among us, which only *needed to have been better understood* to have been lifted to a larger, more liberal, more intellectual, more useful, and more happy life!'

* Premier Médecin du roi, Inspecteur de Maisons de Santé.

It is easy to see how great the difficulties must be in a work of this kind, and how far from certain the results. The task of training an idiot, however irksome, is simple compared with that of guiding and modifying a mind naturally 'erring and extravagant,' full of far greater capacities for gain and loss. The theories of Voisin have been severely censured, as being tinctured with materialism, and as tending to restrict the area of human responsibility. But the great onward march of Humanity has surely by this time carried us past the point when our advance was to be retarded by cries and watchwords, and we must no longer, in Voisin's own words, refuse to give due weight to facts, which, *however exceptional, are not on that account less positive or less evident.* It is impossible for any one who has observed human nature with any degree of attention, to doubt that a man's whole character is moulded, and his career and conduct determined, by the temperament and constitution he brings with him into the world. In ordinary cases this strong bent and set of nature is held under sway by reason, is modified by education, is kept in check by example and opinion; a rational man sees clearly that if he would be respectable, or even endurable, he *must* hold this or that propensity in abeyance, and in ordinary cases he feels that he *can* do so. How far, in the exceptional cases we are now considering, impulse and instinct wanting these given restraints become so fatal and irresistible as to place certain individuals beyond the sphere of accountability, only God, who is at once the Maker and the Judge of all men, knows. In ordinary cases, it is surely enough for us to admit, what experience plainly shows us, that *to*



*limit human responsibility is in no degree to lessen it.** If we are bound on one side, we are free upon another; and if man's freedom, according to Lavater's illustration, is only that of a bird within its cage, we have enough to do within our given boundaries, and need not fret that we can never overpass them. If our physical constitution is unalterable, our moral nature contains within it the germ and promise of infinite expansion. If humanity must still deplore its deep inadequacy, must still confess to a chasm never to be filled up between its bright intention and its faltering deed, —if it must say with St. Paul, 'how to perform I find not,' it may say with him, '*to will is present with me.*' Let nature bind man to the earth by fetters which cannot as yet be broken; he is the prisoner of a glorious hope, heir to a freedom to which every human affection, every heavenward aspiration testifies. He is a being who can will, who can desire, who can love, who can pray; a being rich in

* 'The freedom of the bird in its cage is an exact emblem of human liberty. Man possesses his given circle of activity, and that defined boundary it is impossible for him to surmount, and *within it* his sphere of action lies. *Each individual must continue what he is*, with the granted possibility of maturing and exerting himself to a determinate point. *An exact conception of human nature, and a proper idea of the limits to which it is confined, are of great service in making us lowly, courageous, meek, and active.*' 'When we have learnt,' Lavater adds, 'that human power and capacity, whether for feeling or action, are *bounded things*, and can extend the application of this truth from ourselves to others, we have found what constitutes the germ of all social charity and tolerance, and may hope to hold in check the hateful tyranny which leads every one to make his own individuality the standard of good, and to think that nothing can be right or good that deviates from it. *Every man has his own individuality.* When we perceive this we shall perhaps cease to demand ardent sensibility from the abstract reasoner, or the depth and exactness of this reasoner from the person in whose temperament feeling bears sway. *We shall learn to look in all that has to do with our fellow-men to that which is, and not to that which is wanting.* God has many vessels, of gold, of silver, and of wood; the gold may be unused and rusty, yet it remains a precious metal; *the wooden one may happen to be more useful than it is*, yet it must ever remain a wooden vessel. Neither care, thought, education, nor activity, can bestow on us another nature.'

intelligent and affectionate attributes, strong through supernatural aids, and as such removed further than line can reach or plummet sound from the region of the plant and the animal.

Voisin's theory as regards the instruction of the imbecile is 'to work upon what we find.'* *Développer ce qui existe* is his chosen motto, and we may add, that of the friends of the idiot in general. 'We must always remember,' says Voisin, 'that education and instruction do not *create* faculties; these, whether strong or feeble, must be there to begin with, and the part of the teacher is but by care and patience to draw them out to the best possible advantage.' To this end, these wise and loving teachers make, as one of these books expresses it, 'the grand tour' of the constitution of their poor infirm disciples; they make themselves acquainted with every faint manifestation of intelligence, they observe each fancy, each predilection, they take note of each feeler he puts forth, however feebly, so as to find the point from which they may best work the machinery through which they hope to rouse his innate faculties, and to bring him into relation with outward life. For we must

* A truth which applies to all mental and moral influence. This, when its power is the most direct and happy, is far less felt in what is *communicated* from one mind to another than in what is called forth by contact. An intelligent person in conversation with a powerful and original thinker has sometimes reason to be astonished with the unsuspected wealth and profusion of *his own* ideas. Even so, in the moral order, will love, hope, ardent admiration of an exalted character, exert the transforming influence so justly ascribed to them as quickening energies, reinforcing the mind's native powers. They do not create, they do not even change, but they vivify what is torpid, and free the soul's wings. Love never yet *made* a painter, though but for love Quentin Matsys might have died a smith.

So even in spiritual things, conversion, the soul's most wondrous transformation, conforms to the same law. The change the Holy Spirit works on the heart of man is effected by the awakening of dormant *but existing good*, and the consequent repression of evil.

remember that idiocy, in the view of those who best understand its nature, is to be looked upon as the result of an imperfect physical organization so shutting up the soul within its material envelope that it can neither receive impressions from surrounding objects nor make its own power felt upon the external world. Sometimes, as in cases of hydrocephalus, the senses may be active, and the brain itself in fault, unable to register the impressions sent to it ; in others, an active brain may be cut off from all communication with outward things through dull and blunted senses, and through the deadness of the great nervous system, whose fibres are the conductors and agents of motion and sensation. In either case, remarks Seguin, one result follows, *isolation, incapacity* ; or, in other words, that absence of spontaneity which seems the distinguishing characteristic of idiocy. Dr. Down says, ' Out of 276 children at one time under my care, 118 of them were dumb from the absence of mental power to co-ordinate the vital mechanism of speech into an aptitude for articulate sounds.' In its most complete manifestations, or what is in these books called 'profound idiocy,' the human being is so wanting in sensation and so utterly deficient in will as scarcely to rise above vegetative existence, respiration and digestion being the only acting functions. This state is always attended with great bodily weakness ; it is often induced by repeated and frequent attacks of epilepsy, whose recurrence keeps the sufferer physically at too low a point to be raised by any leverage, however skilful, so that these cases are hopeless for the instructor. Beings of this class would perish with hunger in the very midst of food if they were not fed as infants are

obliged to be. But even in cases where the blight of idiocy has laid a less heavy finger, we shall always find the idiot one who has to be laboriously and painfully *taught* all that happier children learn insensibly. Things which are toys to other children are to idiots serious studies. *All* is foreign to him, unfamiliar, for he alone has never been able to catch the mother-language of general Humanity; he has the helplessness of childhood without its endearing grace, and knows not how to feed or clothe himself, or how to make his simplest wants known. He is one emphatically, 'who having eyes, sees not; who having ears, hears not; and having hands, handles not.' 'The idiot,' says Seguin, 'does not *see*; their look generally, when they do look, seems thrown at haphazard, and not to go or stay by any exercise of wish; it is evident that they have great difficulty either in directing or fixing a *willed regard* on any object at a little distance, and they seem to hunt about for things they crave for, as if they had but an accidental and unsteady sight of them.' With regard to the faculty of hearing, this accomplished teacher tells us that many weak-minded children are practically deaf and dumb, who are not so organically. They *can* hear, but from the profound indifference and inattention their state induces, they are really insensible to sound, until the slumbering faculty is awakened and trained to exercise.* And it is not only each several sense that requires a separate education, but

* In this interesting condition, says Seguin, the child will sometimes *hear the sounds he knows and wishes for, and none other*. For instance, he will hear music, and not the speaking voice; he will retain and repeat tunes, and not be able to hear or repeat a single word.

even the simplest muscular movements are in the idiot inept and irregular; he cannot move, sit, or stand like other people; every gesture is a revelation of his peculiar infirmity. His limbs are either convulsed and agitated with continual *aimless* movements, or stiffened into the rigidity of that *inertia* peculiar to the idiot, and presenting, says Seguin, the most formidable among the many difficulties his teacher has to encounter. The silent immobility of his 'I will not' differs, he says, most essentially from the positive refusal to move which either man or animal can exert at pleasure. *His* attitude is wholly negative, and arises from the absence of any external inducement which solicits, or internal motive which induces him to exertion. He must be wooed and coaxed to action. 'Even to walk,' says Seguin, 'presents to him at first so many difficulties, that we may say it is as hard work to him as to think. So he will leave it alone till he is compelled or bidden, and will scarcely undertake anything on his own impulse.' To grasp or lay hold of anything we wish for would seem one of the simplest of conceivable operations, yet whole pages of one of these interesting works is devoted to the subject of 'prehension,' or the action of the hand in taking, losing, and keeping hold. 'No language,' says Seguin, 'descriptive or scientific, can give an idea how many steps are required before a child will learn to throw a stick from him in the direction the teacher points to.' An idiot, from being unable to perceive the relation which one object bears to another, has no idea how, in common parlance, to set about anything of his own accord. Seguin tells us that in teaching his pupils to draw a figure so simple as the

square, they could not be brought, except at the expense of countless artifices, to see that in order to form it the four lines must be made long enough to meet each other at each corner.

These artifices, these aids, these encouragements, are indeed endless. Not the adept watching his crucible, nor Newton pondering over the mighty problem of the universe ever brought more zeal and patient devotion to bear upon his task than is here given to quicken the dormant intellect of an idiot, to aid the obscure travail of some poor feeble and fettered soul, to send a ray of glimmering light down the deep sunken shaft of the pit where Humanity lies bound like Joseph, and forgotten of his brethren.* Incidentally in these books, and as mere matters of course, we find it recorded that a teacher, before he could make a child distinctly articulate and perfectly master some key sound in a speaking lesson, repeated the same experiment 600 times, or we come across some evidence of tender ingenuity like that of Dr. Guggenbühl, who, after many ineffectual attempts to teach his Cretin pupils the alphabet,

* The idiot seems always to conform to Locke's definition of him, and to continue one who cannot 'reason, compare, or abstract.' On this account, says Seguin, the task of teaching him to read would have been much easier than it is, had written letters remained, as in the days of hieroglyphics, *the direct representation of the thing they signify*, instead of being, as they now are, mere bizarre and arbitrary signs, in no way logically connected with their object. Even so, he adds, a chasm yawns between the written letter and the articulated sound,—no relation connects, no similarity makes them one; and to acquire a knowledge of them is indeed a feat of mental gymnastics.

'Ulysses knew, indeed,' says Madame de Gasparin, in her affecting story *Un pauvre Garçon*, 'that one apple and two apples made three apples, and when the innkeeper's son took two of them away, he was aware that he had only one left; but this transaction, however simple in itself, stunned and stupefied him when it was translated into figures. The white symbols upon the black slate conveyed not one idea to his mind, however long his restless eyes might wander over them.'

succeeded in quickening their attention by drawing out the letters in phosphorus on the wall of a darkened room. Miracles of patience and of love such as these, and the kindred ones that have lately been brought to bear on the teaching of the deaf-mutes and the care of the insane, at once recall and fulfil a deep saying of our Saviour, when, alluding to His own beneficent works of healing and restoration, he says, '*Greater works* than these shall ye do, because I go to my Father.' To raise the dead was for God an easy task, but for a man it is surely a gigantic one; all things were possible to the Master—'*Speak the word only*, and thy servant shall be healed;' but of the disciple, in a work like the present, it may be said truly, 'that he has nothing to draw with, and the well is deep.' None has gone before him on his path, and he has, as it were, to explore and make good each step he takes.

IV.

And if we ask to what good has this great cost been made, and inquire into the reward of so much devoted labour, the results which these reports and papers lay before us are indeed surprising. Their testimony as to the amount of good already done is uniform, and when we consider the great and real difficulties of the work, the statistics laid before us by the various reports we are considering, English, Scotch, and American alike, the general impression is abundantly cheering. One and all speak of bad habits corrected, of health and morals improved, of many children who were a positive burden to their family being now able to maintain, or partially maintain, them-

selves by their own labour. Dr. Howe tells us, of the children placed under his charge, many who were in a state of apparently hopeless idiocy have gained useful knowledge, most of them have become cleanly, decent, docile, and industrious, and *all* of them are happier and better in consequence of the efforts made in their behalf. Dr. Kitching of the York Retreat does not hesitate to affirm that, judging from what has been already done, 'the operation of an Idiot Asylum has been, and will continue to be, *marked by results more marvellous than any other class of benevolent exertion.* Intelligence has been evoked where it seemed hopelessly crushed under the ruin of the material machinery; industrial power has been elicited where helpless dependence threatened to be coeval with life: knowledge has been implanted, and has borne fruit in soil which had the aspect of remaining irretrievably barren, and human beings of both sexes who must otherwise have groped through life on a level not far removed, intellectually, above the animals, have been changed into happy men and women, enjoying many of the privileges and discharging many of the duties of society.' Dr. De Vitré, in a speech made at the late foundation of the Northern Counties Asylum, says, 'As far as our present statistics go, there are only six per cent. of the whole family of idiots in this country who are incapable of improvement; one half of the remainder can be so far benefited by training as to be made able to attend to their own wants with some degree of propriety; *of the whole, at least ten per cent. can be restored to society as useful members of it.*'

In this doubtless very high average of good accomplished

all the reports before us concur, and add to their generally encouraging statement some very interesting cases of a more extraordinary kind. Among these we may notice that of a pupil of Dr. Guggenbühl, who was sufficiently cured to become a schoolmaster, and was capable of instructing his scholars in four languages. We are also told of a physician, once resident at Montpellier, in childhood an undoubted Cretin, but who recovered, passed through a professional education, and became the author of a book on Cretinism. Seguin tells us of several among the American pupils who passed out of idiocy into heroism, and enlisted of their own accord to defend the republic. One of these, after doing good service as a soldier, was captured by Grant's army, and died a prisoner in the miserable Andersonville stockade. Another youth, who had been pronounced incapable of instruction in ordinary schools, learned in the institution at Syracuse to speak, read, and write well, and developed great and useful capacities for work in the farm and garden. Seguin tells us how he, moved, along with another comrade, by an intelligent patriotism, joined the army, and after serving half a year, was smitten by typhus fever, and dragged himself 'home,' *i.e.*, to the asylum, at the door of which he was found in a dying state. His companion served with distinction two years, and was fatally wounded at Fisher's Hill. Instances like these must, however, be looked upon as exceptional, as in general cases, whatever amount of improvement may be effected in the habits, conduct, and mental acquisitions of those who are born so far below the mark which others start from, an absence of originating power, *a want of self-direction*, will remain,

which seems, as one of these books expresses it, always to call for the directing and guiding hand. In judging what education can effect for the idiot, we must be careful not to compare him with the average man, with whom he must always appear to a disadvantage, *but with himself* in his untrained, original condition, or with that of those of his fellow-sufferers upon whom no such care has been bestowed.

V.

The theory on which the education of the imbecile rests is stated in language which some may think extreme by Dr. Parrish of Pennsylvania. At a meeting there in 1859 he said, 'The notion that imbecile children or idiots did not possess minds was not admitted in this institution. He himself believed that every creature born in the form of man had a mind'. Darkened and infirm it might be ; shut out from human sympathy and aid, alone in its solitary gloom ; wayward and without intention and purpose so far as we could see ; but yet, far down, behind its sorrow, in its solitude, somewhere in its nature, was the image of God. But for our faith in the existence of mind in every human creature we could not labour with any hope of success.' He adds elsewhere, 'Mind is not *wanting* in cases of imbecility and idiocy, it is only warped, weakened, or overcome by physical causes. The brain is *there*, but its workings are clogged by disease.' In accordance with this view, every effort of the teacher of the idiot, from whatever point he works, is directed to one aim, that of awakening what is

dormant and setting free that which is bound. We have seen in the quotations made from Seguin's writings how perseveringly this aim is kept in view as regards the intellect, and how vast and varied a machinery is brought to bear upon the passivity in which the will sits in the idiot, like the lady in Comus, 'locked up in alabaster.' The same end is kept in view by all the gymnastic exercises and hygienic aids which have been found so valuable; all these seek by a series of shocks and stimulants to rouse and rally the physical energies from their death-like trance. Dr. Guggenbühl's climatic experiment with regard to the Cretins, whom he has removed from the depressing influence of their native valleys to a home where they breathe the clear stimulating mountain air, is a sort of crowning achievement in this line, and its eminent success shows what may be gained as to general intelligence by the bracing and tightening of the fibres of a relaxed and languid physique. But there is one irresistible engine, the powerful reinforcer of all other leverage, the fulcrum alone strong enough to affect the imminent deadly breach in the thick-walled rampart which lets the forlorn hope pass through into the citadel. Love is in this region, as in all others, the stand-point from which, when once won, the world can be moved from its place. 'It would surprise no one,' says Dr. Howe of Massachusetts, 'to hear that neglected children have been awakened to affection by the kindness shown them in this institution, for we all know that love will call forth love; yet we have here been taught a new fact, *that love also elicits intelligence.* We have learnt how it is that God himself works when He would quicken the

faculties of His creatures, *and love is brought before us as the magnetic force of the moral, as electricity is of the physical, world.* It vivifies and exalts all that is ethereal in man—reason, affections, will; and all who would do good may here learn a lesson that points them to the hiding of their power, in the element of their nature through which alone they can open the way of hopeful and beneficent communication with every one who wears the human form.'

Seguin closes a series of admirable remarks upon what is required in the moral training of the imbecile, as to order, obedience, authority, in these remarkable words: 'Our work is one *ever changing in form, never changing in object*; it is a work in which the teacher, the nurse, the physician, the philosopher, the moralist have all something to do. But all that each does must be done in the spirit of affection, and that of the deepest kind. Science, art, literature, education, medicine, philosophy, may each do something for our pupils, but love alone can truly socialize them, *and those alone who love them are their true rescuers.* Moral association, sociability, family affinity, all these have to be *created* in the idiot; his sense of affection stands in need, like all his other senses, of development. *All of these poor children may be taught to love by being loved*; and to make the idiot feel that he is loved, and to make him eager to love in his turn, is the end of our teaching, as it has been its beginning.' 'The treatment of idiocy,' adds Seguin, 'is a commentary upon St. Paul's declaration; we may bring skill, even genius, to the task, we may understand all mysteries and all knowledge, we may speak with the

tongues of men and of angels, and if we have not love it will profit us nothing.'

And along with the blessed influence of love, another sentiment, equally holy in its origin, and scarcely less powerful in its effects, is freely brought into play in the education of the imbecile. When love is present, joy, under one form or another, can never be far distant, and when the poor idiot is re-baptized into the great human family, these two stand together at the font his elected sponsors, to declare, and promise, and vow in his name glorious things which he as yet can but imperfectly apprehend. Nothing in these manuals is so affecting as the large share which pleasure and delight take in the work of intellectual and moral regeneration. The idiot, it seems, is one who must above all things be *pleased*. He is not cognisant of the claims of duty, nor alive to the promptings of interest; he is, alas! unconscious of the fit and fair, and utterly careless of the profitable. Yet as regards both doing and having, he knows what he *likes*. His teachers will often watch for weeks and months to see the first gleam of intelligent interest making itself known in a manifestation of pleasure—in sense, sight, or sound. Perhaps some day he will take up a pencil in a shy and furtive manner, and quickly lay it aside if he sees that he is observed, or he will betray a passing susceptibility to the power of music.* No such hint or indication is thrown

* The writer of this paper has known a gentleman who, as a boy, from an utterly failing physique and a general want of mental power, was rapidly sinking into Cretinism, raised and restored to health and spirits by being allowed to devote his whole time to music, *the only thing for which he cared*, and to receive the education of an organist. He was afterwards able to go through the usual university education in classics and divinity with a fair amount of credit.

away, be it even *playing with a straw*, mentioned in one of the Philadelphian reports, as being, in the case of a remarkably sluggish and inert boy, the first voluntary action he was ever known to engage in. The same report tells us of an idiot of the most depraved class, 'a moral idiot, secretive, roguish, thievish, ignorant, and indifferent, also as obstinate as a mule, whose whole better nature was brought into exercise through the delight with which it was found he listened to a well-told story.' Judicious advantage was taken of this by his teachers, improving lessons were inculcated, and this boy was found to have a susceptible heart, as easily led into right as it had been darkened and misled by wrong. He gave evidence in due time of strong religious feeling, and became so honest that he was trusted with money, while in the schoolroom his progress was surprising. Even his very gait was altered. Instead of thieving, he gave a poor woman in poverty and rags a large portion of his Christmas savings; describing himself after this act of charity as 'feeling big in here,' laying his hand on his heart with great pathos. The extreme susceptibility of the idiot to pleasurable emotion, his delight in colour, in music, in perfumes, prove to us that man cannot even at his lowest estate forget that he was meant by God to be happy. Some secret instinct tells him that he is the Father's son, brought up in His house, rejoicing continually before Him, and when rudely disinherited, he will all the more earnestly strive to re-vindicate his original right and claim to joy. The idiot, it seems, must have something for his fancy to caress; something to minister to *that innate necessity for delight*, which is perhaps the deepest part of

man's nature, and the secret alike of its power and of its degradation.

'In this wreck of powers,' says Seguin, after a striking description of the utter incapacity of will which is so marked a feature in idiocy, 'one human, irresistible impulse remains; low as we find the idiot, far lower than the brute in regard to activity and intelligence, he has like all the rest of the human race, *what no animal possesses*, his hobby, his charm, his amulet, the *external object towards which his human centrifugal power gravitates*, and this, be it a broken piece of china, a thread, a rag, an unseizable ray of the sun, he will spend his life in admiring, kissing, catching, polishing, sucking it, as the case may be. Take away that amulet, the occupation of his life is gone. This species, so to speak, of worship, shows that if the idiot is unable of his own accord to enter into relation with the outward world, he is ready to do so if we only know how to help him.'

The masters we are now dealing with do not certainly require the warning conveyed in the old adage. They *find* 'Jack,' alas! a very dull boy to begin with, but they certainly will not *make* him so by all work and no play. Play is recognised with all its honours,—in fact, declared by Seguin to be 'a moral power,' a training in sociability, courtesy, and self-restraint; toys are in high favour, music, dancing, and theatrical representations are freely admitted, pictures, recitations, dialogues, and animated narratives, each find their place; '*form is added to facts, colour to forms, movement to the whole.*' Seguin says that he has in all cases

found that those among his pupils who have made the most progress have been those most brought into relation with works of art, and adds that the energetic stimulant, which *the poetic element* gives to life, is too little taken into account in general education,—a subject upon which, it is scarcely necessary to say, researches like these cast valuable light, for in Voisin's words, 'we are still dealing with man although under a different aspect.' Much that Seguin says with regard to the barren conquests of ordinary routine education might be carried into a wider field, and many of his golden sayings are capable of universal application. 'What,' he asks, 'do we gain by the mere exercise of memory? It impedes rather than improves. *Better one thing thoroughly known than a hundred only remembered.* Teaching many facts is far less fruitful than teaching how to find the relations between a single one and its natural properties and connexions.' 'We must never,' he adds, 'confide to mere memory what can be learnt by the exercise of higher powers; *or often instead of the living true idea, we give a false and incomplete one, or add a mere name in the place where a thought ought to have been.* All that lives is produced by contact; a fact received in isolation from other facts does not germinate; *that which enters the mind alone dies in it alone.*'

Another axiom is, always to teach that which lies nearest to what the child already knows. Many of Seguin's rules with regard to authority, command, and influence of a less direct sort, as to how and in what cases each may best be brought to bear upon the childish or undeveloped will, are so instinct with genius and light, that they cannot be but

available to the general nursery and schoolroom,—‘profitable,’ like the sayings of the wise, ‘in whatever direction they are turned.’

But who can estimate or sufficiently admire the patience these books record,—the boundless resources of skill and ingenuity, the powers of genius itself called forth and kept in unceasing play? And to what end? Not to breathe life into a statue or bid the canvas speak; not to command a listening senate or to win the smile of beauty and of love; not to gain the coveted laurel or to obtain a name among our fellow-men; but to awaken a ray of intelligence in some poor sickly and repulsive child, whose whole nature is perhaps too torpid to respond to kindness, and whose faculties are certainly too dull to guess at the great sum of time and thought and care that is spent over his improvement. ‘In almost every other description of charity,’ says Lord Dufferin, addressing the friends of the imbecile, ‘the act itself is its own reward—whether it is from the gratitude of the recipient, or whether it is derived from the pride we feel in witnessing the success of our undertakings. But, in the present case, at all events, it would be vain to look for any such return. The blessing we receive is a silent one, and droppeth as the dew droppeth from heaven. Those lips which you have taught to use articulate sounds, will never be able to pay you in spontaneous thanks, those hands which you have taught to acquire the skill of the mechanic—nay, even that of the artist, will never press yours in token of intelligent acknowledgment. But, nevertheless, the time will come when you shall have your reward, and shall see these poor creatures, whom many of

us would scarcely care to recognise as our fellow-men, whose life in this world is, indeed, amidst the tombs, when you shall see these pariahs of society "sitting at the feet of Christ, clothed and in their right minds." Then, though perhaps not till then, you will understand the meaning of those words, "Inasmuch as ye did it unto the least of these, ye did it unto me." Yet, though the idiot may truly be numbered among that portion of humanity, 'blind, and halt, and maimed,' who can never recompense their benefactors, such devoted generosity will surely meet a due reward, and will find it in that 'better resurrection' to which their good deeds contribute so largely—the restoration of humanity *as a whole*, to intelligence, to faith, and to God. Let no one think of the idiot, as persons wholly uninformed on the subject are apt to do, as a happy and harmless if limited being, shielded by his very infirmity from the awful burden of responsibility,* and freer than are wiser people from care and pain. These books reveal a sadly different story. Some of the phases they exhibit are so repellent, and some of the narratives they tell so dark and terrible, that no one would pause over them except to gain some desired end, and that end once attained he might pray to be able to dismiss and to forget them for ever.

* The list given in some of these books of the bodily diseases to which idiots, in addition to their participation in all ordinary ones, are particularly liable, such as epilepsy, chorea, rachitis, is indeed a formidable one, and must in some degree perplex the advocates for the comfortable doctrine of compensation, believers in which are generally pretty well at ease in their own individual minds and bodies and estates. The saying of the wise man, 'The poor is oppressed because he is poor,' unfolds a truer doctrine. When the mind, the body, or the outward circumstances become depressed below a certain point, kindred afflictions, allied infirmities, gather quickly round the whole life, and misery makes it a prey.

The experience of few grown-up people is so limited as not to have shown them something of the evil which a poor being so fearfully left to his own guidance may both suffer and cause, a risk of course greater in the humble order of life, where continual care and watching of a weak-minded person is impossible, and where, unless the tone of the family life is unusually good, such persons too often become the centre of wide-spread moral debasement,—for the idiot, be it ever remembered, *does not sink alone.*

These books show us that the naturally harmless idiot, apparently incapable of either good or evil, if left to his own unguided instinct, is apt to furnish but another example of the degradation to which the savage and the outcast, to which, in fact, all human beings in a state of isolation, almost inevitably descend. The animal instincts, deprived of the sweet outlet of natural humanizing affection, and unrestrained by either the strong abiding check of reason, the subtle, continual influence of decorum, become altogether imperious, and soon reduce the man to a state far below that of the animal whose existence, in the absence of higher regulating principles, is truly ‘a law unto itself.’ Far otherwise is it with the poor idiot. His own darkened nature becomes to him ‘a horrible pit, full of mire and clay,’ and no evangelizers went ever on a more blessed errand than those who descend into it with light and encouragement; who put his feet upon the rock, and order his goings, and who in many cases succeed in putting a new song within his mouth, enabling this poorest among all earth’s denizens to rejoice in God his Maker.

VI.

We have said that the claims of this subject are far too weighty to be left to mere individual charity. Yet it is well, perhaps, that philanthropy should in this case, as in many others, work out the first experiments, which may afterwards be carried forward on a broader scale, as one of universally admitted obligation. The institutions which are at present being founded demand a heavy outlay; they are large, and necessarily expensive,—as a single master cannot here, as in places of ordinary education, take charge of a great number of pupils. ‘Here,’ says M. Delasiauve, ‘all preceptorial action is necessarily minute, immediate, sustained, and in some degree individualized on each separate object,’ so that a large staff of teachers and superintendents is called for, and these, it is scarcely necessary to say, must be unexceptionable as regards intelligence and moral tone. ‘Large asylums,’ Dr. Kitching says, ‘are at present needed to carry out this work, which is an altogether peculiar one, and requires adaptations physical, intellectual, and systematic, which no other instrumentality can supply. An idiot asylum is a singularly complex thing. It combines the sanatorium, the hospital, the gymnasium, the school, the workshop, and the chapel, and each of these has to be brought to bear under modifications adapted to the peculiar character of its pupils. The difficulty, as well as the variety of the work to be accomplished, requires a corresponding adaptation, and versatility of power in those by whom it is performed.’ Considerable space is also required for the varied exercises the children so impera-

tively require, and another object gained in large institutions is to be found in what in these reports and papers is called 'mutuality,' or the efficacious stimulus of numbers, which seems most friendly to the state of the imbecile, whose natural foe is isolation. They are naturally prone to imitation, and the moving pantomime which is here ever going on around them, solicits, and as it were constrains, them to attend and to participate; they are more at ease, too, it appears, and happier in the company of each other than in the world, where a vague yet crushing sense of their own infirmity is apt to grow upon them to a degree that checks any possible improvement. These institutions must also be contemplated in the light of asylums and refuges for those who are incapable of receiving permanent benefit; and to see how great a blessing they may thus prove, we need only look around us, and see how many idiots of the hopelessly incapable class become a terror and perplexity to their relatives, and very often, in poor families, exhaust the whole energies of a parent by the continual and harassing anxiety which watching over them entails. This burden is sometimes life-long, and though often, to the honour of human nature, met with the tenderest devotion, often also what is really, as poor people express it, 'a heavy handful,' is *felt* to be such. Some hearts are formed to love and pity the unfortunate, yet when we look at human nature as it really is, and remember that weak-minded people are always more or less troublesome, and sometimes very provoking—when we reflect too that in many of these cases the infirmities which constitute misfortune are such as at the same time create repulsion, we shall cease to wonder at the appalling

instances of neglect and cruelty which the reports of the Commissioners in Lunacy have so frequently brought to light.

‘Our social system,’ says Lord Dufferin, ‘is so artificial, its machinery is so delicately constructed, the daily life of each one of us runs so smoothly along its appointed groove, that it is only now and then, when some accident flashes a gleam of light down into the inner recesses of our national life, that we become aware of what unimagined horrors are bred within the very heart’s core of our boasted civilisation. All of a sudden, however, a vague paragraph will appear in a country newspaper, to the effect, perhaps, that in some remote village an unfortunate being, no longer to be recognised as human, has been dragged forth from a life-long imprisonment in some filthy sty in one of England’s most idyllic villages. Inquiries are set on foot, the police and magistrates bestir themselves, and at last the truth appears in a more ghastly form than the most sensation-mongering imagination could have invented.’

Such considerations, however, are but incidental to our subject; they will readily occur to any one who looks at it in the light of reason or experience, or who will follow out with any degree of care the bearings of any one case of mental infirmity which may happen to come under his own notice. Such an inquirer will soon learn enough to convince him that in the idiot, and *in those most nearly connected with him*, are to be found, if anywhere, the persons who need all the help and support and comfort which the stronger members of the Christian family are bound to furnish to the weak and heavily burdened ones. ‘The trans-

formation of the idiot,' says Dr. Kitching, 'sets many others free. The late well-known Edward Smith, of Sheffield, stated in a public meeting at Scarborough that every idiot life required the devotion of a sound life for its care and tending whilst at home. By the restoration of every idiot to the capacity of self-tendence, a sound life is set free in addition, and restored to the general profit of society. Five thousand idiots cured of their helplessness, give back 10,000 useful lives to the community. Here is profit. Here is encouragement for the promoters of idiot training. Arithmetic, however, but faintly represents the advantages gained. It requires no strain of the imagination to picture the heavy gloom, the heartache and despondency of the parents, in that house where an idiot boy or girl is born. The anxious cares, the fears of danger, the incessant watching, the ceaseless round of innumerable ministrations throughout each day, exhaust the energies and bear down the spirits of every member of the family. At what a sacrifice of life's sweetest liberties is the idiot child reared !'

Nor must we forget, in considering this great subject, that we were men even before we were Christians, nor become oblivious of the claims of our brotherhood in that great 'congregation of Humanity, the first church founded by Jesus Christ upon earth, long before He himself appeared on it,'*—Humanity, which, in the admirable words of Lavater, we shall find as we study it more closely, 'ever *even in its humiliation*, astonishing, ever a subject of wonder, surpassing even under its imperfect and abortive conditions

* Lacordaire.

the most lovely and perfect animal nature. Each circumstance connected with the human nature in which we share *cannot but appear to us in the light of a family consideration*, while we learn to rejoice and to triumph in the existence of whatever is happy, *and to endure all that is favoured with the endurance of the Deity.*





ROYAL ALBERT ASYLUM

FOR

Idiots and Imbeciles of the Northern Counties, LANCASTER.

Under the Patronage of Her Most Gracious Majesty the Queen.

WHAT affliction is there that more pathetically appeals for alleviation to the intelligent and benevolent than that of idiocy? By his aimless wanderings, uncouth gestures, vacant looks, and incoherent utterances, the idiot becomes the object of the scoffer's cruel jest, and his mental deficiencies are made manifest to all. In the homes of the poor, the idiot often passes a cheerless and neglected existence, and is a heavy burden upon scanty resources; and, in the most affluent circumstances, it is impossible to command in a private home the scientific appliances, medical skill, and other beneficial influences essential to the successful treatment of the idiot. Left, then, to himself, the idiot rapidly deteriorates, and becomes utterly helpless. But in an asylum, where he can be isolated from all that can degrade and irritate, surrounded by bright and happy associations, and treated with firm gentleness, the idiot's condition may be greatly ameliorated. He may be improved in health, habits, and self-control, and trained to industrial pursuits; his mind may be developed, and his religious feelings aroused and directed to that Divine Love which pitifully regards the weaknesses and sorrows of the feeblest of mankind. Idiot Asylums are now in operation in England, Scotland, America, France, Germany, and other countries.

It is estimated that there are 50,000 idiots in England and Wales, but as yet the Asylum accommodation is most inadequate, being insufficient for 1000. With a view to meet the urgent necessities of this afflicted class in the north of England, the Royal Albert Asylum is now being erected at Lancaster. This Institution will provide, in the first instance, for 500 cases, and will be capable of easy and inexpensive enlargement if necessary. It is intended for

all classes, provision having been made for the admission of paid as well as free cases. It will be quite unsectarian.

The movement for its establishment has received the warmest encouragement from every class of society. Her Majesty the Queen has extended to it her powerful patronage, has conferred upon it the name of her late illustrious Consort, and has subscribed liberally to its funds. The Nobility and Gentry in the district are enrolled in its lists of presidents, vice-presidents, and local committees. Working men in several towns have established Auxiliary Committees to procure small periodical subscriptions from their own class, and their Co-operative and Friendly Societies have voted handsome donations. Influential ladies are collecting for the Building Fund, and donations have been received from Sunday-Schools and Bible-Classes. Bazaars, Sermons, Lectures, and Penny-Readings are amongst the agencies which have been spontaneously employed by a benevolent public to aid this deserving charity. On the 17th of June 1868, the Foundation Stone of the Asylum was laid by the Right Hon. the Earl of Zetland, K.T., Grand-Master of the Free and Accepted Masons of England; and many Masonic Lodges in the north have expressed their appreciation of the object by liberal contributions. Upwards of £45,000 have been contributed, but £15,000 more will be required to complete the undertaking. With such abundant proofs of earnest and practical sympathy, the Central Committee are vigorously pressing forward the erection of the Asylum, and confidently rely upon the hearty support of every friend of the idiot and imbecile, so that the Institution may be opened *free from debt*. Who will not extend a helping hand to the dependent and neglected idiot, and obey the apostolic injunction to 'comfort the feeble-minded'?

EDWARD D. DE VITRE, M.D.,
Chairman of the Central Committee.

JAMES DIGGENS,
Secretary.

LANCASTER, June 1869.

Subscribers will be entitled to a Life Vote for each vacancy due to their respective Counties for a Donation of Five Guineas, and to an Annual Vote for an Annual Subscription of Half a Guinea. Every information will be gladly supplied by the Secretary.