

## **The education of the imbecile, and the improvement of invalid youth.**

### **Contributors**

Home and School for Invalid and Imbecile Children (Edinburgh, Scotland)

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## THE EDUCATION OF THE IMBECILE.

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It is, we presume, within the recollection of many of our readers, that we were once accustomed to see running at large upon our streets, men and women, as well as boys and girls, in a state of idiocy, in various degrees. It is not more than thirty-five years since the parish authorities began to confine these within the walls of workhouses. Those who remember the disgusting objects and shameful scenes presented and occasioned by the miserable beings who so frequently, and, very often, most inopportunately, intruded themselves upon our observation, can estimate the benefit conferred upon society at large by the withdrawal from the streets of such nuisances. But it is painful to think of poor children, and others, whose instincts impel them to activity, being imprisoned, and treated as if they were criminals. Still more distressing is it to think of their having hitherto been allowed (for the most part) to pass their time in complete idleness. It is to be feared that, in very few instances, have any attempts been made to cultivate the feeble powers of mind and body which exist in most idiots, and are educible by proper training. They have been unjustly regarded as more useless than beasts; and, alas! have too often been treated with *more indifference*, not to say *cruelty*, than dogs or swine. While, therefore, we owe much gratitude to those who rid our public thoroughfares of the dirty, ragged, drivelling, mischievous creatures, whose very aspect shocked the sensitive, and whose weaknesses and bad habits excited the sport-loving boys to play all sorts of tricks upon them, to the great annoyance, and even personal danger of passers by—we owe *much more* to those who have, with admirable patience and perseverance, led the way in befriending the poor idiot, in bringing the blessings of education and of medicine, combined, to bear upon him, and who have (with the Divine blessing upon their labours of love) succeeded in shewing that there are not a few, formerly regarded as wholly unimprovable, who are susceptible of being trained and rendered useful members of society, although in humble spheres.

In his thesis on Alpine fatuity, (that is Swiss Cretinism, which is one of the worst forms of idiocy), published here in 1803, Dr Abercrombie distinctly pointed out the feasibility of attempting to do something effectively to ameliorate the lamentable condition of the Cretins, by bringing sanitary influences to bear upon them in infancy and childhood. The French physician, Fodéré, and the German Wenzel, about the

same time, advanced similar views. So far as Cretinism is concerned, it does not appear that any one attempted to reduce these views to practice until Dr Guggenbühl began his beneficent labours in 1839, in the Institution on the Abendberg, near Interlacken, Switzerland.

The expediency of subjecting all fatuous and imbecile children to medical treatment and educational training was strongly advocated by Dr Poole, (then of Edinburgh, now of Aberdeen) in a treatise on Education, which appeared first in 1819, as an article in the *Encyclopædia Edinensis*, and was, in 1825, published as a separate volume.

The following extracts from Dr Poole's book will shew how distinctly he perceived the work to be done, and how to do it:—

“What, but the most culpable indifference, can account for those appalling and truly heart-rending spectacles, so often witnessed in almost every village, and, still more marvellously, in the streets of our large cities? Is it as a foil, one might ask, or in compliment to the usually enjoyed proportion of intellect, that the poor idiot is permitted, if not encouraged, by the carelessness of his nominal keepers, and the dole of sickening humanity, in his objectless and staring perambulations among us? If this be the motive, why is so important a personage, as he must necessarily be esteemed, allowed to become a recipient of every abuse and cruelty which wantonness or fiend-like perversity thinks proper to heap upon him? Is he not entitled, if his visitations are either profitable or tolerable, to, at least, the humane treatment which our laws award to the brute creation? May not even his exterior resemblance to our species be somewhat enhanced by his being furnished with a decent garb to cover his nakedness, and protect him from the inclemency of the weather, or the harsher inclemencies of an insulting and a prostituted superiority? Finally, is there not a possibility, if he must go at large, of guarding him against brutality and outrage, with as much care, at least, as is manifested in the preservation of property?”

“In whatever manner these questions, or any similar ones, may be disposed of, it is certain that the evil is a reproach and a nuisance to society; and the proper remedy for it demands yet more profound examination, more ample command of means, and more extensive co-operation than may at first sight be imagined necessary. Nothing could be easier, it is true, than the alleviation, if not the entire removal of its most obnoxious symptoms. The fiat of authority might compel, under severe penalties, to be inflicted on near relatives, or, failing them, the official guardians of our municipal comforts, as in another case of deplorable misfortune, the entire disappearance and confinement of those helpless creatures, whose history has hitherto belied the splendid dream of human perfectibility. But, admitting the efficacy and expediency of legislative interference, is it fitting for an age of improvement and benevolence, to allow the success of such interference to be the ultimatum of what is desirable and practicable on the subject? Would it be, ought it to be, enough for us, that these unfortunates were removed from our sight? We answer—no. It is with some anxiety and commendable regard to decency and feeling, that we dispose of the dead bodies of our fellow-men. We protect, too, the last and common receptacle of mortality by an opinion of sacredness and a rigour of law, even against the demands of an important science, which can never be duly cultivated, so as to yield its full amount of benefits to mankind, without violating a sanctuary so respected. Shall we be less concerned about the disposal of those living beings, whose weakness ought to call forth our compassion in the very proportion that it renders them burdensome to society? That there prevails a great degree of negligence as to their condition and comfort, will appear very obvious, when we compare the little attention which has as yet been shewn them collectively, with the extensive plans

almost generally devised in this country, in favour of every class of unfortunates. Let us confine ourselves to a single city. In Edinburgh, we have a Magdalen Asylum, a Lunatic Asylum, a Blind Asylum, an Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, a House of Industry, and a great variety of establishments for sundry benevolent purposes. But, what is done in it—what has ever been attempted to be done in it—in behalf of that by no means small class of helpless creatures, whom the hand of nature appears to have cast around us as if to humble our pride, and to demonstrate our dependence, for much of what we deem our excellence, on the laws of the material world? The poor-houses, it is true, usually contain some of these unfortunate beings. But many of them are allowed to wander at large; and those, again, who are lodged there, are, with few exceptions, precluded, by the very circumstances of the establishments, and by the influence of a very general opinion as to their total incapacity for education, from all chance or possibility of being ever useful to society. We are not certain, indeed, that there is a single institution in Great Britain, exclusively, professedly, and systematically appropriated to this class of defectives. The reason of this neglect seems to be a persuasion, that there is only one species of the disease or evil under which they labour, and that this is entirely and for ever incurable. Some inquiry at least ought to be made before allowing such a conclusion; and even were this conclusion better founded than it is, there would, nevertheless, exist some ground for charging the practical consequences, as they are now displayed, with untenderness and impolicy. But it is contended, that the conclusion, in place of being warranted by facts, is disproved by them: that the mental defects of the individuals in question, so far from being all alike, are immensely dissimilar; that, in many cases, there is reason for imagining *the principle of substitution*, by which one faculty or sense is made to answer in some degree for another, might serve as the basis of successful education: and that it is possible, the very worst cases ever met with would yield so far to science and industry, as to vindicate and reward the patience and ingenuity bestowed on them. All that is meant to be given on the subject in this place are a few observations, which, it is thought, if extended and modified by further inquiry, might lead some benevolent minds to the adoption of a plan calculated to lessen the evil complained of.” . . . . .

“Where there are many manifest indications of this imbecility, it is recommended to have recourse to medical skill, for the purpose of putting into practice every means calculated to invigorate the constitution. Few persons, perhaps, are aware of the different effects produced on the state of both the intellectual and moral powers by peculiarities in diet and regimen. This is a subject on which some curious information might be obtained from those persons who are in the habit of *training* for sundry athletic purposes. One person, for example, who has had much experience in this way, Mr Jackson, has, positively, and we think most justly asserted, that the faculties of the mind are as distinctly improved as the condition of the bodily health, by the process now alluded to.” . . . . “It is surely obvious, then, there is ground for employing medical advice in cases of general imbecility presenting in early life; and there cannot be a doubt, that cases of this kind, which are allowed by despair to become confirmed and deteriorated, might have been relieved by professional interference. Who has not witnessed the expressionless inane countenance, perfectly indicative of the internal state, in a person just recovering from a fever, or reduced by poverty and hunger? Is it not quite conceivable, that a condition of the system somewhat analogous to this, but dependent on causes which have operated before birth, and continued to operate even for years afterwards, might admit of an alteration and improvement, similar to what occurs in these cases, on the restoration of wonted health? It would not be difficult to demonstrate the truth of these remarks, and to confirm the hopes they are intended

to excite, by an appeal to examples of infantine weakness followed by manly vigour. Instances are not wanting of great ability succeeding to long continued feebleness of constitution, which did not even seem to promise mediocrity. Gibbon and Sheridan are among the latest of this kind. In these cases, in addition to the employment of medical aid, it is of the utmost consequence to proportion the mental exercise to the mental strength. This may be so little as to render every sort of study absolutely improper, and every employment of the senses, beyond a certain degree, injurious. In short, the individual must be treated at first much as a plant, and that also a sickly one, with simple nourishment and exposure to good air. The next step is that of merely animal life, as characterized by sensations and perceptions, which will require suitable exertion. The manifestation of the intellectual or moral powers is an advancement of a still more promising nature, and may be hailed as the basis of some moderate endeavours towards ordinary education. But, throughout the whole process, great caution is necessary to guard against any overstretch of power in any direction, which would be sure to occasion a relapse, and, perhaps, entirely to prevent recovery." . . . . "But, enough, perhaps, has been said to point out the possibility of distinguishing differences in the class of defectives now treated of, and to confirm the idea, that something more might be done for many, if not all of them, then has usually been attempted. The philosopher, for such he should require to be, who should undertake to investigate the whole subject, and to suggest a suitable plan of remedy or alleviation, would perform an acceptable service to science, and merit the gratitude of mankind."

It is humbling to reflect that so long a period as thirty years should have been allowed to elapse before anything was done in Scotland to reduce to practice the views thus expressed so well by Dr Poole. Elsewhere, however, they were soon acted on.

It was in Paris that the first thorough educational experiment was made on idiots. In 1828, M. Ferrus, chief physician of the Asylum of the Bicêtre, organized a school for his fatuous patients, and caused them to be taught habits of order and industry, and to be instructed (as far as possible) in reading, writing, arithmetic, and gymnastics.

The success met with, led Messrs Voisin, Falret, and Leuret, to extend the system of instruction; and, latterly, all the educable patients in the hospital referred to have been systematically subjected to such means as are fitted to rouse and to invigorate the dormant and feeble faculties.

After witnessing the improvement in the condition of some of the objects of treatment in these schools of the Bicêtre, in 1844, Dr Conolly of London thus expressed himself:—"It is difficult to avoid falling into the language of enthusiasm on beholding such an apparent miracle; but the means of its performance are simple, demanding only that rare perseverance, (without which nothing good or great is ever effected,) and suitable space, and local arrangements, adapted to the conservation of the health and safety of the pupils; the establishment of cleanly habits; the presenting them with objects for the exercise of their faculties of sense, motion, and intellect, and the promotion of good feeling, and a cheerful, active disposition."

Dr Guggenbühl's earnest efforts for the good of the poor Cretins, carried on for the last fifteen years in his alpine retreat, have done much to fix public attention on the possibility of ameliorating the sad condition of those unfortunates. We need not at present dwell on the de-

tails of Dr Guggenbühl's experience, as it is not perfectly applicable to the work we are called on to undertake in this country; but we *must* advert to the good example of devotedness to a work demanding so much self-denial and patience, which that excellent person has been enabled to set before us.

A pamphlet published by the late Dr William Twining of London,<sup>1</sup> in 1843, was the means of introducing the enterprise of Dr Guggenbühl to the notice of the British public. Considerable interest was excited, and money was readily raised in aid of the Swiss work.

In 1846, two ladies at Bath (Misses White) instituted, at their own charge, a small establishment for the reception and training of idiot children. This was the first in Britain. It is now supported—at least in part—by the contributions of the charitable; and, judging from the reports which have been published, it has been the means of doing much good.

We present some remarks, and a few of the cases recorded in one of the last reports of this school:—

“The children are instructed, as their capabilities permit, in reading, writing, arithmetic, and geography; and their acquaintance with external objects extended and improved. Religious knowledge and moral culture are directly or indirectly kept in view in every pursuit. Control of temper, obedience, order, and kindness to each other, are steadily inculcated; and sufficient progress has been made in these respects to justify much hope for their future conduct. The children show considerable affection for their teachers, and are, in general, happy and contented. Corporal punishment is not permitted in the establishment, but strict obedience is endeavoured to be enforced by means of moral influence.

“A brief notice of two or three cases may be desirable, as showing the working of the system.

“E. P. was ten years of age when admitted; idiotic from birth. His appearance and bearing gave evidence of great mental deficiency. He showed much reluctance to be instructed, and his memory was so little retentive that it required much persevering effort before any real progress was made. An additional impediment was found in the difficulty of controlling his attention. He did not seem to have any power over the organ of sight, nor sufficient mental capacity to fix his thoughts on any given subject, however simple. This, of course, much retarded his progress. Three times did he appear to be improving in reading and writing, and as often was he obliged to be put back to the very rudiments of these acquirements; the power he had for a time possessed appeared suddenly to leave him. But, by the exercise of patience and ingenuity, he was again led on to some degree of proficiency, and he has now been enabled to write two letters to his mother, who had formerly assured his teachers, that any attempt to teach him writing would fail, as she had herself used every endeavour to instruct him, without success. He has now been two years in the institution, and his mind has opened to the reception of much general knowledge, and there is no doubt but he will be capable of being instructed in some trade. A remarkable improvement has taken place in this child's disposition, which, from being extremely selfish and unyielding, has become gentle, liberal, and considerate; he shows much kindness to his younger school-fellows, whom he will at all times assist and protect, as far as lies in his power.

“S. M., deficient from birth, nine years old when admitted, perfectly

<sup>1</sup> Some Account of Cretinism, and the Institution for its Cure on the Abendberg.

ignorant and untrained, but gentle and tractable. She required much stimulating before she would take an interest in any employment. She has been one year at the institution. Her sluggishness has been in a great measure overcome, and her progress is now most satisfactory. Her attention has been much directed to needlework and house employments, in both of which she promises to excel. From having been allowed much licence at home there was some difficulty in bringing her into habits of obedience; but she is now so steady and orderly as to cause little trouble, and even to encourage a hope that, if spared, she will prove a useful servant in the establishment.

“H. B., aged eight at the time of his admission; was violent and unmanageable to a great degree; subject to fits of rage, during which he would throw himself on the floor, kicking and screaming, until exhausted. In walking through the streets he was with difficulty restrained from rushing into the shops, and seizing everything he saw in them, and has frequently attracted the notice of those passing by. He could only articulate a few broken sentences; nor could he give an answer to a question. He is now able to read and write fairly, can repeat many texts of Scripture, hymns, &c., and is perfectly orderly when walking, asking questions as to what he sees passing around him. His temper is equally improved.

“G. C. was nine at the time of her admission. She was so unruly at home as to be generally tied to the table, which she would drag about the room. She is now perfectly under control; reads, writes, and works at her needle; assists also at household work, washing and dressing the younger children.

“The success of the Bath institution will afford encouragement to others to commence the same work elsewhere; and, surely, no one can be considered more necessary—more charitable. The experience of the past affords strong hope for the future, if only means be supplied to carry out the plans now in contemplation. These are, in the first place, to secure a large and more commodious dwelling; and, secondly, thoroughly to instruct the inmates, according to their capacity, in various trades and employments, by which they may be able hereafter to support, or assist to support, themselves. For, it must be remembered, this institution is strictly for education and training, and not intended to be an asylum or permanent abode.”

It was also in 1846 (the same year that witnessed the opening of the Bath Institution,) that a notice of Dr Guggenbühl's hospice, was published in *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal*. This was reprinted as a separate pamphlet, and was the means of exciting no small interest in the object here. It was, we believe, written by the late Madame Gausson of Geneva, a native of Scotland, who, for many years, took the greatest interest in, and did much to promote the welfare of, the Abendberg hospital. Another tract from her pen, which was forwarded to this country by Dr Guggenbühl for publication, appeared in 1848, with an introduction by Dr Coldstream of this city, and supplies the most complete and interesting account of this now famous institution which we possess.<sup>1</sup>

The most important step that has yet been taken in this work was the formation of a large society in London in 1847, for the establishment and support of an asylum for idiots. The prime mover in this scheme was the Rev. Dr Andrew Reed of Hackney, a well-known and much respected Congregationalist minister. He still acts as honorary

<sup>1</sup> The Abendberg, an Alpine retreat for the treatment of Infant Cretins. Edinburgh: Kennedy.

secretary, and has had the satisfaction of seeing the society, and its several establishments, increase and prosper to an extent which proves at once the need that existed for such institutions, and the benefits which already they have been instrumental in conferring upon society. Not less remarkable also is the distinguished patronage which the society has secured. Foremost in which appears Her Majesty, and among the Presidents, Vice-presidents, and Board of Management, we find an array of noble and exalted individuals, which is the best guarantee that the work is worthy of general sympathy and support. The very first report contained the following statement:—

“Never has an infant charity made such progress in so short a period. Never has a board of similar character taken up such serious responsibilities; and never, perhaps, has any one been so sustained by public sympathy;” . . . “The benefit has already extended beyond the sphere of our exertions. The tone of public feeling in relation to the poor idiot has been raised. He never can again be the forlorn, abandoned, scorned, imprisoned creature he once was.”

The first asylum of this society was established at Highgate, in an old mansion-house, surrounded by gardens and policies of moderate extent. In 1850, Mr Peto (now Sir Samuel Morton Peto, Bart.), presented Essex Hall, a large house at Colchester, to be used as a supplementary institution. Both houses were soon filled. Three years ago, a movement was begun with a view to raise a sum of money sufficient to erect a large asylum. This was so successful, that already a most extensive and magnificent structure has been reared at Red Hill, Reigate, which has cost upwards of L.30,000. It is intended for the accommodation of a family of at least 500 persons, and is now, we believe, quite ready for their reception. On the occupation of the new asylum by those for whom it has been erected, it is expected that Essex Hall will be elevated into an independent idiot asylum for the four eastern counties. We had the pleasure of visiting the asylum at Highgate in 1851, and were highly gratified by the proofs everywhere manifested of love being the animating principle of the whole, as well as of the wonderful success accorded to the labours of the superintendent and teachers. In one of their reports, the directors of the London asylum thus state the principles on which the training of the pupil-patients is founded:—

“The board have acted on the principle, that *always there is mind, and that, in itself, it is perfect*; and that it has imperfect and defective expression from imperfect or deranged organization. The education, therefore, has been principally physical; and the board have availed themselves of separation, and of classification, in conducting it. They have sought for the particular defect, and begun with it. They have educated the eye, the ear, the mouth, the brain, the muscle, the limb; and have thus endeavoured to reach the better portion of our nature, that it also might be trained to moral and spiritual exercises.”

We quote from one of the latest reports the narratives of a few cases illustrative of the benefit of the training in the London institution:—

“—— —, a little girl, aged three years, admitted *June*, 1850. This case remarkably illustrates the advantage of very early treatment. She was

quite helpless; of dirty habits; could not even stand alone; and it seemed impossible to fix her attention. *April, 1851.* She has improved surprisingly. Her health is better, her limbs stronger, she can walk alone, has become intelligent, notices what is going on, knows the persons around her, and is still making satisfactory progress."

"M. L., a boy, aged thirteen years, admitted *July, 1848,* a congenital idiot; was not able to say two words consecutively; used bad language, as far as his imperfect articulation would permit; was deceitful, and could neither write, draw, nor sing. *April, 1853.* He can repeat any sentence; has given up the use of improper language; he can read, write, sing, and draw well; and has become very expert as a tailor."

"F. W., a boy, aged fourteen years; admitted *May, 1851;* could not read, write, draw, nor do anything; he was said to be beyond improvement; was very spirited, and ran away from home several times. *April, 1853.* For eighteen months after his entrance all efforts appeared useless, and patience was almost exhausted, as he did not know a single letter. Now he knows most of the alphabet, writes in a copy-book, is obedient and tractable, and has made several pairs of shoes and slippers."

"B. A., a young man, aged thirty-one years; admitted *March, 1850;* was very morose, solitary, incorrect in his habits; one of the most trying cases in the house. *April, 1854.* He is perfectly correct in his habits; often speaks; he is very amiable, and is very fond of his companions, some of the younger of whom he takes pleasure in leading about."

"B. T., a boy, aged fifteen years, admitted *October, 1852;* was the sport of all the boys in the village; was afraid of a stranger; would not speak to any one, even to his friends; he appeared quite hopeless. *April, 1854.* He did not speak for four months after admission; was constantly moping. He has now found that he is with friends, and is gaining courage, and can speak well; will repeat the creed, the commandments, and church-prayers accurately; is very attentive to the religious services at home, and is anxious to go to church every Sunday; can read and write well; and is a basketmaker. A short time ago he sent a specimen of his work to his parents, which much surprised them."

"D. A., a boy, aged thirteen years; admitted *May, 1851;* could only utter single words imperfectly; had never been subjected to control; was of dirty habits; used very bad language; and was almost inert. *April, 1854.* Speaks very well; habits are correct; can wash and dress himself; has not been known to utter an improper word for twelve months; he is one of the most forward in the play-ground; and a straw-plaiter."

"F. E., a girl, aged twenty years; admitted *June 1852;* was very deficient, and had never received any kind of instruction. *April, 1854.* For a long time little progress was made; now she knows all her letters; can join them into little words; can hem towels, do bead-work, and is learning to write on a slate; she is very active in her movements."

"C. E., aged eighteen years; admitted *February, 1850;* she could not read, write, nor do any kind of needle-work; her speech was very imperfect; her habits incorrect; not much hope of her improvement was entertained. *April, 1855.* She speaks well, and is more intelligent. She can read and write very nicely; and will correctly write down short sentences from dictation; she has become very expert with her needle; can make a shirt, with a little assistance; she knits mittens, comforters, and other useful articles; assists the other girls in dressing; and can make beds."

"S. J., aged seventeen years; admitted *December 1852;* a congenital idiot; his speech was unintelligible; he was unmanageable at home, and had suffered from neglect; could neither read nor write, and seemed incapable of thinking. *April, 1855.* He can now read, write, and spell very

well ; is obedient and attentive ; and his countenance has become more cheerful ; is active in the play-ground ; and works in the tailors' shop."

"J. H., aged thirteen years ; admitted *November*, 1853 ; an imbecile from birth ; could neither read nor write ; and was very pugnacious. *April*, 1855. He can read and write well. The discipline to which he has been subjected has made him a quiet and useful lad. He assists in putting some of the little boys to bed ; he is one of our best singers ; and is learning the tailoring business."

Last year 259 pupils were under training at the two establishments supported by the London Society. And the general result of the experience gained in these, so far as the progress of the pupils is concerned, is thus stated :—"It is now delightfully patent to every observer, that for three-fourths of the pupils, much, very much, may be done"—"for the remaining fourth only protection and comfort can be provided."<sup>1</sup>

The results of some of the cases treated in this asylum show that the patients will be able, on their dismissal, after five years' training, to contribute in part, and in some cases entirely, to their own support. Already eight of the female patients have been engaged as servants ; and as this is never done as a matter of charity, it is among the best proofs that can be given of the efficiency of the training which they have enjoyed. The board of management of the London asylum have done good service in arousing attention to the interests of the idiot in other districts of the country, in which they have been greatly assisted by the Rev. Edward Sidney, Rector of Cornard Parva, Suffolk. In the report for 1854 they remark :—"There is reason to hope that in Lancashire, Yorkshire, Edinburgh, and Dublin, an interest has been created, which will issue in separate local action."

A most interesting Lecture on "Teaching the Idiot," was also delivered by Mr Sidney in St Martin's Hall, as one of the series of Lectures in connection with the Educational Exhibition of the Society of Arts, Manufactures, and Commerce, in 1854. The series is published in a very cheap form, by Routledge & Co., London and New York.

Private institutions for the training of imbecile youth have also been established at Chilcompton near Bath, and at Lowestoft.

In 1845, the work was begun in America, and that in a very thorough manner. The statistics of idiocy were carefully taken up in the state of Massachusetts, and presented to the Senate along with a plan for training and teaching a certain number of patients, and a grant of money from the public purse was made for the establishment of a well-appointed institution. This has been presided over since its formation by the well-known Dr Howe, who has published some most interesting reports of his progress. Take the following as a *resumé* of the results attained :—

Several of the pupil-patients, who were in a condition of hopeless idiocy, have gained some really useful knowledge, the most of them have become cleanly, decent, docile, industrious ; *all* have improved in personal appearance and habits, in general health, in vigour, and activity of body, and are happier and better, in consequence of the efforts

<sup>1</sup> The lowest rate charged in the London establishment is L.25 per annum for each child ; for most of the pupils, L.50 is paid.

made in their behalf. Dr Howe, at the outset, had entire faith in the practicability of his ideas, and his faith has now become assurance. This assurance is shared in by the parents of the children, and by many who have watched the trial.

Besides ten beneficiaries of the state, eight private pupils have been received into the institution; some of these are from wealthy families out of the state, who are willing to pay a high price for the advantages thus secured.

Two cases are described, in order to show by example what has been done by the school. The first is of a boy, who may be taken as a type of the idiot proper:—

“He is a congenital idiot. Before coming to the school he knew nothing, could do nothing, observed not the first rules of decency, was utterly helpless, and, doubtless, under the usual system of neglect, would have remained so; or, as is universally the case with neglected idiots, would have become, if possible, worse. This child now takes the visitor’s hand, talks, articulates distinctly, and, going to the letter-frame upon the table, not only selects and arranges the letters to speak any short word, but, without aid, also forms the sentence, ‘Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name,’—words which are now only familiar to the eye of the idiot child, but which may yet penetrate his soul. His parents have been touched by the beautiful change. Pouring forth his delight at the progress of his son, the father said,—‘George now *plays with* the other boys; he *plays like* the other boys.’”

The second case is one selected from that large class of persons who are born with a certain capacity, and who, under proper treatment, would have manifested a moderate share of intellect, but who have been badly managed, and become idiotic, or have been misunderstood and considered idiotic:—

“This boy was a frightful sight to observe. He could not stand, or even sit erect. He had no command of his limbs, not even so much as an infant of three months. He is described as lying like a jelly-fish, as though his body were a mass of flesh, without bones. He could not chew solid food, but was fed on milk, of which he consumed an inordinate quantity. This boy is so changed that he is no longer regarded as an idiot. He is decent in all his habits, and tidy in his appearance; his countenance is bright and pleasing; he can sit at table and feed himself with a knife and fork; he shakes hands, is pleased and smiles, and can readily read.”

Such are two of the cases; others, equally gratifying, might be mentioned. Dr Howe considers the experiment to have been entirely successful; and that it has demonstrated, that among these unfortunates, left to grovel in the lowest idiocy, there are many who can be re-deemed, and rendered comparatively intelligent, happy, and useful. How far they can be elevated, and to what extent they can be educated, can only be shown by the experience of the future; but, certainly, the experience of the past does not justify the entertainment of meagre expectations. Our American friends fully realize the extent of their mission. They do not limit themselves to the improvement of the intellect and bodily condition; the still harder task is attempted of appealing to the moral sense, and drawing out what little capacity there

may exist for comprehending right, for exercising conscience, and for developing the religious sentiments.

The promoters of the effort for the improvement of the idiot in America calculate on many important indirect results of their labours, not the least of which is the diffusing of greater knowledge of idiocy throughout the community, and, as a consequence, the saving of many children who really have mental capacity, from being condemned as incapable of improvement. A case in illustration is so impressive that we must present it to our readers:—

“Michael Maher, aged thirteen. This boy was quite unmanageable by any means within the reach of his father or friends. They knew no way to make him obey but that of force or blows. He was formerly a tolerably bright boy, but he had been in this condition for years, and was rapidly growing worse. He seemed to live in continual terror, and seldom spoke a word. The first time that I heard him utter a word was one day when his father took hold of him to make him obey some command, upon which, with his knees fairly knocking, and his body trembling all over, he screamed convulsively,—‘Will good boy—will good boy.’ This was enough to show that, whatever may have been the cause of his strange condition, the daily treatment he was receiving was gradually crushing his feeble intellect, and would tend to drive him into hopeless idiocy or insanity, and yet his father was a sober, well-meaning man, and not a cruel parent. He simply did not know how to govern his own feelings, nor how to train those of his unfortunate child. The boy, therefore, was taken into our school at once. He is still a little shy, but he has lost all the appearance of terror; he not only comes readily when called, but often goes up to those belonging to the home, and puts his arms affectionately about them, and returns their caresses. He takes his place in the class, and strives to imitate all the motions of the scholars, and obey the signs of the teacher. He can select the letters of the alphabet, and understands a few words. He is obedient and docile, and tries hard to learn with the others. He is affectionate, and much gratified by any mark of praise or approval. He begins to talk, and is rapidly improving in every respect. The following letter from Mr Downer, who brought him to the institution, will show how much, in the opinion of that gentleman, he has improved under the treatment he has received in his new home. The improvement is mainly attributable to the spirit of gentleness which pervades the household. This has quieted all his terrors, and soothed his spirit, so that he is able to give attention to the judicious instruction which Mr Richards imparts to him.

“Dr S. G. Howe.

“BOSTON, Feb. 14, 1850.

“DEAR SIR,—I availed myself to-day of your invitation to visit the institution for the benefit of the feeble-minded, that I might have an opportunity of witnessing the improvement (if any) of the boy Michael Maher, who has been enjoying its privileges; but I hardly know how to comply with your request to communicate how his present appearance struck me, as compared with that which he exhibited before being placed there. When I remember his wild and almost frantic demeanour when approached by any one, and the apparent impossibility of communicating with him, and now see him standing in his class, playing with his fellows, and willingly and familiarly approaching me, examining what I give him; and when I see him already selecting articles named by his teacher, and even correctly pronouncing some words printed on cards, improvement does not convey the idea presented to my mind—it is *creation*—it is making him anew. I also noticed an entire change in his manner of moving his hands, and whole body. In truth, as he stood in his class, it was with difficulty

I recognised him, so changed was his appearance. I was struck particularly by the fresh and healthy appearance of his skin and complexion, which was formerly pale and haggard.

“If, sir, he is a fair sample of what training and education can do for idiots, I can only say, God speed you in your endeavours to build up such an institution—it has but to be known to be appreciated, and to have the views of its founders carried into successful operation.—I remain very truly, &c.,

SAMUEL DOWNER, JR.”

In Philadelphia and New York also, more recently, asylums or schools for the defective have been instituted, and are now in successful operation.

Although, as we have seen, it was in Scotland that some of the earliest suggestions as to the feasibility of ameliorating the condition of the fatuous by appropriate training were made, yet it was not until 1852 that the work was actually begun in this country. The subject having attracted the attention of Sir John and Lady Jane Ogilvy, (whose beneficent labours amongst the poor of Dundee had made them familiar with all the multiform causes of distress affecting the lower grades of society,) they generously resolved to erect, at their own expense, an institution for educating the imbecile, on their estate of Baldovan, about four miles from Dundee. The Baldovan Orphanage and Asylum also enjoys the distinguished patronage of Her Majesty and His Royal Highness Prince Albert. A handsome structure was reared and opened for the reception of inmates about a year ago. Under the same roof, but under a totally different management, there is a small institution for orphans and other destitute children, belonging to the Scottish Episcopal Church in Dundee. “The advantage of having such children, healthy in body and mind, to be companions for the imbecile children during their play hours, when they have advanced to a certain stage of cure, need hardly be pointed out.” The department for idiot children is well arranged, and capable of accommodating between twenty and thirty children, with attendants. Dr Fleming of Dundee is the physician in ordinary to this establishment, which enjoys also the advantage of being watched over, both by the benevolent founders, and by a committee of intelligent gentlemen, especially interested in the work, through local connections and otherwise. The details of treatment and training are superintended by Miss Bodman, an accomplished educator, who has acquired the principles of her art in the schools of Switzerland and London. It is too soon to speak of the results obtained at Baldovan, but we have reason to believe that these have been as encouraging as elsewhere. No report has yet been published. It is not to be carried on as an eleemosynary institution, but rather as a self-supporting one. Nevertheless, the charges for children of the humbler classes are so moderate that some parochial boards are found willing to place certain of their poor imbeciles there. Superior accommodation is provided for young persons accustomed to the refinements of higher life.

Deeply impressed as we are, with a sense of the gratitude which the nation owes to the worthy baronet and his lady, who have so liberally and well commenced this good work in Scotland, we cannot but hope that they will have the satisfaction of seeing their example followed in many parts of the country. This, we are assured, would be regarded

by Sir John and Lady Jane Ogilvy as the best reward they could meet with. May they be long spared to enjoy such rewards—blest in blessing others!

We are without any exact data as to the actual number of imbeciles in any of our large cities, or in Scotland generally—but we cannot doubt that they are very numerous. In Ireland it was found by the census of 1851 that of idiotic persons, as distinguished from the insane, there was 1 in 1336 of the population, and in Massachussets, in 1846, among 185,942 of town population, a number not much above that of our own city, there were 361 true idiots, *i.e.*, those whose mental feebleness was from birth, and there were many others whose mental powers were impaired from other causes. Among 420 cases, which were examined by the American Commissioners, 185 were under 25 years of age, and of these 174 seemed capable of improvement—only 13 seemed hopelessly imbecile. These were found to belong to all classes of society,—only 148 of the 420 cases were paupers. From these data, which accord with our own limited observations, we believe that, in Edinburgh alone, there are certainly numbers sufficient to call for a special effort being made for their relief; and in Scotland generally, it is estimated, that there are above 2000 of our fellow creatures who are the subject of impaired mental powers, and who wait for that amelioration of their condition which, elsewhere, they have already been proved capable of receiving.

Very recently, we are glad to learn, an institution for the treatment and training of invalid and imbecile children has been opened in Edinburgh. It is under the immediate direction of Dr David Brodie, whose qualifications and experience are devoted mainly to the work of doing all that medical science and improved systems of training point out as applicable to the improvement of the physical and moral conditions of the objects of his care. He is assisted by Mrs Brodie, whose previous engagements in the education of youth have well prepared her for the laborious but hopeful duties of her present position. A visiting committee, composed of several respectable and influential gentlemen, will inspect the institution from time to time; two medical gentlemen, Drs John Smith and Coldstream, whose attention has been specially directed to the work, will act as physicians; so that the public are supplied with the best guarantees that can be given for the establishment being conducted in a thorough and efficient manner.

The founders of this Edinburgh School were very unwilling to add another to the already very numerous, and yet inadequately supported, charitable institutions of this metropolis. They, therefore, made various attempts to induce the managers of some of the large and richly-endowed educational establishments to engraft the plan upon their own. These attempts failed, chiefly from its having been found impossible to adopt such a scheme, without illegally contravening the charters of the respective schools applied to.

An application was also made to the City Parochial Board for leave to establish a school for pauper children in connection with the workhouse, should any considerable number of imbecile paupers of a suitable age be found to exist in the city. The subject was earnestly pressed upon the attention of the Board by Dr Smith, who, in a printed me-

morial, stated what had been done elsewhere for the good of fatuous children, and urged the Board to establish proper schools for the poor objects under its care. This memorial was extensively circulated, and helped not a little to rouse the attention of the public to the subject.

It is likely that, sooner or later, Parochial Boards, generally, will be led to move in this matter. Either they will establish schools of their own, or send their fatuous pauper-children to some of the existing institutions. But for such movement, it was considered quite inexpedient to wait.

Dr Brodie having resolved to devote himself to the good work, a few generous friends supplied the means of making a commencement. No small difficulty was met with in endeavouring to find a suitable house. An airy and quiet situation in the outskirts of the town, with a good house and garden, was a combination not easily found. The tenement ultimately secured is in Gayfield Square. It is, in several respects, admirably adapted to its purpose. As in the case of Baldovan Institution, it is desired to have the Edinburgh school a self-supporting one. The Directors, however, are willing to receive contributions from the benevolent, either for the general support of the Institution, which cannot be expected, for some time at least, to be supported by its own proper revenue, or for application to particular cases belonging to the less affluent classes of society, of which a sufficient number is known to exist. It is rather recommended, however, that such cases should be provided for by the union of benevolent individuals directly interested in the several pupil-patients. This feature of the Institution, as well as the disinclination so generally felt by the parents of weakly children to part with them, will, probably, cause the progress of this new establishment to be slow. But, to admit of the superintendents being gradually initiated into the difficulties of their task, there seems to be a providential fitness in the slowness of its increase.

The following sentences are extracted from the circular which was issued at the time of the opening of the institution :—

“ The objects to be aimed at are :—

“ 1st, The improvement of the general health, by physical training, exercise, bathing, and all other suitable appliances. 2d, The awakening, regulation, and development of the mental powers, by those means, peculiarly adapted to this class, which have already been found so effective in similar institutions. 3d, The employment of those educational resources which have been systematically developed in connection with *Infant Training*, with so much modification and extension as may be necessary to meet the peculiarities of the pupils. 4th, In the cases of the more advanced pupils, the providing of some suitable occupation, giving healthy employment, at once agreeable and profitable, to all their powers; especially keeping in view such occupations as may fit the pupils for future usefulness and intercourse with society.”

“ The institution will receive a certain proportion of children and youth not affected with mental imperfection or peculiarity, but who are, from bodily ailments or other causes, unable to take their place at ordinary schools. The combination, which this institution presents, of practical medical experience with efficient educational resources, will supply, it is hoped, a want which is much felt by the parents of children in the condition here referred to.”

The backwardness of Scotland, (notwithstanding her abounding educational talent, and her eminent medical zeal and skill,) compared with other lands, in efforts for the imbecile, has been justly the subject of remark ; and, in connection with the merely invalid portion of youthful society, it so happens that we may take a lesson from what has been done in other countries, where they have been more ingenious in devising means for the improvement of their faculties, so as to fit them for usefulness.

The following notice of an interesting Institution for this class will shew that, with them, as with the imbecile, a rich reward attends effective and judicious efforts for their improvement.

“ Before quitting the subject of Hospitals, I cannot help alluding to an Institution which has been lately established in Hamburg for the cure of diseased and decrepit children belonging to the better classes. In this private hospital, children with limbs or bodies distorted, are received from the earliest age, and may remain till eighteen. The patients are subjected to a regular course of bandaging and bathing, and during their residence in the establishment are educated in every branch of study. The beds upon which the inmates are kept for the most part reclining, are constructed so as to be moved to any angle, and afford every facility for the patient eating, drinking, and even writing. Over the top of each couch is placed a large mirror, which not only reflects every corner of the apartment, but may be so turned as to show the patients those who may be passing on the street. Twice a week the patients quit their beds to be bathed, and to take an airing in the garden ; and on other days, when the weather is fine, the beds are wheeled out into the open air. Before any child can be admitted into this institution, an examination must be made, or recommendation given by an experienced surgeon, that the patient is admissible ; and on being admitted the child receives everything from the institution that is requisite for its education, support, and cure. In addition to the more common branches of education and moral discipline, the patient is taught foreign languages, mathematics, history, geography, and music. For all which advantages, including constant medical and surgical attendance, the annual board is only 1200 marks. The parents, relatives, and friends of the children, except under extraordinary circumstances, are only admitted into the institution once a month. It is but due to Herr Goette, the originator and proprietor of this hospital, to say that although the institution was only established in 1823, he has already sent out several individuals perfectly cured, who most probably, had they not been placed under his care, would have continued objects of pity for life, a burden to themselves and to society.”<sup>1</sup>

The object then of the Edinburgh Institution is to provide, as far as possible, suitable assistance for those children who are unfitted from any cause for the training of ordinary schools. Some may think that it might be more advantageous to have separate establishments for the Invalid and the Imbecile,—and to this there can be no possible objection, were it easy to secure the combination of medical and educational appliances which they require ; but, under judicious direction, it is quite clear that the two classes may be combined in one institution with very decided benefit to each other ; of course complete separation would be necessary, so far as educational proceedings were concerned, but, in the family arrangements, carefully regulated social intercourse would afford invaluable opportunities for exercising the kindly affections of the invalid, and stimulating the intellect of the imbecile.

<sup>1</sup> Germany in 1831, by John Strang, vol 1, p. 60.

From the history of this movement, as sketched in the preceding pages, we think the following deductions may be legitimately drawn :—

1. That very many, perhaps a majority of children, born with such defects of the nervous system as issue in idiocy or imbecility, are susceptible of great improvement, both in mind and body, under appropriate treatment and training.

2. That *all* fatuous children ought to be subjected to the proper means of education in institutions devoted to the purpose.

3. That such institutions ought to be superintended, or conducted by, properly qualified medical men.

Some distinguished members of the medical profession in Denmark, Prussia, Saxony, and Wurtemberg, have, more or less recently, devoted themselves to the forwarding of this good work in various ways. For example, in Copenhagen, the learned Professor of Physiology in the University, Dr Eschricht, published last year an interesting treatise "On the Possibility of Educating Idiot Children to become useful members of Society." In the same city, Dr Hybertz has published an elaborate statistical inquiry into the extent to which idiocy prevails in the various countries of Europe; and has also devoted himself to the treatment of a certain number of children affected with it. Mr Moldenhawer, also, in the Danish capital, has commenced a work of the same kind; while in Schleswig, Dr Hansen is similarly employed. Dr Sägert of Berlin, Director of the Royal Institution for the Deaf and Dumb in that city, has written much and well on the treatment of idiocy, and has, for several years, laboured personally in training imbecile children. At Bendorf, near Coblenz, Dr Erlenmeyer has a small establishment of the same kind. In Saxony, Dr Kern at Leipsic, and Dr Gläsche at Hubertsburg, near Dresden; in Wurtemberg, Dr Müller at Winterbach, and Dr Zimmer at Mariaberg,—are all in charge of institutions for treating idiocy, varying in extent.

A proof of the zeal in this good cause which exists in Denmark, has lately been shewn in the mission of a gentleman, in all respects well qualified, charged by the government of that country to visit, and report upon, all the institutions for the cure of idiocy in Europe. This commissioner, (Mr John Moldenhawer, who published last year an account of the German establishments), after having visited the English schools, came to Edinburgh, in expectation of seeing something worthy of his attention, and was disappointed. Dundee alone, in all Scotland, could furnish him with the material for his report.

The subject of the treatment of idiocy lately engaged the attention of the Academy of Medicine at Paris; a paper on it having been read before that body in July last, by M. Delasiauve, physician in charge of the epileptics and idiots at Bicêtre. This author homologates the axiom of Voisin, regarding the object of the education of the idiot, namely, *to develop what already exists*. He announces a classification of idiots with reference to their various degrees of aptitude for education, and suggests some improvements, both of a general and special kind, which he thinks ought to be introduced into establishments devoted to the cure of idiocy.