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PART 1.—ORIGINAL ARTICLES.

Address on Idiocy.—By JOHN CHARLES BUCKNILL, M.D.,
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(*Delivered at the Town Hall, Birmingham, on the 26th March, 1873, at the Annual Meeting of Governors of the Birmingham and Midland Counties Asylum for Idiots.*)

MY LORD LEIGH AND GENTLEMEN,—Your presence here so far shews your interest in the subject on which I have had the honour to be called upon to address you, that I have confidence you will extend to me your patient attention while I enter into details which may not at first seem to be attractive except to medical men.

And, yet, I think, the study of mind, in any of its conditions and phases, must needs be interesting. If Grotius wrote truly that “there is nothing great in nature but man, and nothing great in man but mind,” the stunted and abortive rudiments of mind may claim equally with the more painful, but also more picturesque subject of its ruin, to engage the earnest attention of thoughtful men.

I have to tell you a tale. Not, I trust, as Shakespeare says, “A tale told by an idiot full of sound and fury, signifying nothing,” but, still, a tale of an idiot or of idiots. And I am warned by experience that I must trespass upon your patience so far as to describe what an idiot is.

On the occasion when it was decided by the Justices of the Peace for this County to establish the Asylum for Pauper Idiots, at Hatton, I well remember hearing an influential magistrate make the earnest inquiry—“Who can tell me what an idiot really is?”

I believe this question was not a vain and futile one, and that there are plenty of well-informed people who would have found it an exceedingly difficult one to answer well, and

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although I do know what an idiot is, I fear I shall not myself find this question an easy one to answer in this place.

I may give you the definition of the old legal authorities, that an idiot is one who from his nativity hath been a fool or a madman, who has had no lucid intervals; cannot number 20; does not know the days of the week, or his own parents.

I may even describe or define an idiot by quotations from Shakespeare. The passage already quoted shews that he had observed in the idiot purposeless and furious noise instead of comprehensible speech.

In the "Merchant of Venice" he refers to "The portrait of a blinking idiot." Again, in "King John," he refers to idiot laughter; and in "Titus Andronicus," to the manner in which an "Idiot holds his bauble for a God." Those of my audience who have observed idiots will admit how wonderfully the great Master of observation has herein touched so many salient points of true description.

Physiologically an idiot is a human being, who, from defect or disease of the brain at a period of life before the mind has become developed, has suffered an arrest of mental development to such an extent that he is incapable of the ordinary functions and duties of social existence. The time of attack may be before or after birth, sometimes so late as four or five years after, and thus the legal definition that idiocy is "*from nativity*," is not strictly correct.

The causes of idiocy are very frequently attributable to the faults or vices of the parents, either to their too great age, or to their ill health; but, above all, to their habits of intemperance.

The most trustworthy authority we possess on the causes of idiocy is contained in a report of Dr. S. G. Howe, the celebrated teacher of Laura Bridgman, and other Commissioners appointed by the Governor of Massachusetts, in 1848, to ascertain the cases of idiocy in that State. On this point the reporters observe—"By inspection of the tables it will be seen that out of 359 idiots, the condition of whose progenitors was ascertained, 99 were the children of drunkards. But this does not tell the whole story by any means. By drunkard is meant a person who is a notorious and habitual sot. Many persons who are habitually intemperate do not get this name even now; much less would they have done so 25 or 30 years ago, and many of the parents of the persons named in the Tables have been dead longer than that time. A quarter of a century ago a man

might go to his bed every night muddled and sleepy with the effects of alcohol, and still not be called an intemperate man. By pretty careful inquiry as to the number of idiots of the lowest class, whose parents were known to be temperate persons, it is found that *not one quarter* can be so considered."

Emphatically the stern text is true of idiots that "The fathers have eaten of sour grapes, and the teeth of the children are set on edge."

Before-birth idiocy is oftentimes caused by fright, care, or anxiety, ill health or accident happening to the mother.

After birth it is most frequently caused by falls on the head, by convulsions from teething, by eruptive fevers, whooping cough, but, above all, by bad air, bad nourishment, by cold, and by absence of the light of the sun, which produce rickets and scrofula in all its hideous forms, which produce *cretinism* in the damp and dark valleys of the Alps, and endemic idiocy, which is *cretinism* without goitre, in the damp, sunless courts and miserable homes of the lowest class of our town population.

But whatever the cause of idiocy, I beg you to remark that it is never dependent upon the idiot himself, and herein lies a reasonable ground for more complete pity than can be extended to many cases of lunacy which have been occasioned by the fault of the sufferer himself.

The idiot has never become so through any vices of his own, through any faults even of his own. He, at least, is always that which our fine old English synonym represents him to be—an Innocent. Not always, indeed, an innocent, in one sense of the term, innoxious and harmless, but certainly innocent of his own lamentable condition, Innocent also of any sin or crime to which that condition may lead, as that of the Shrieves Fool, mentioned by Parolles, in "All's Well that ends Well," "*He was whipped for getting the Shrieves-fool with child, a dumb Innocent who could not say him nay.*"

I cannot resist the temptation to trace, however briefly, the manner in which the perception has gradually dawned upon the public mind, that it is a duty to help these Innocents from the misery and degradation into which, by no fault of their own, they have been plunged, and from which they can never be raised, except by earnest, active, patient, and beneficent effort. To indicate, however imperfectly, some of the principles by which they may be trained into the likeness of humanity, and some of the means by which they may be

educated, led out of the slough of brutishness into which they were born.

It is a curious fact that the first idiot who attracted the attention of scientific men, was considered not to be an idiot but a savage man, "Un Humain Sauvage." Condillac, the French philosopher, had speculated upon the manner in which a statue would demean itself, if, by a miracle, it could be animated like the statue made by Pygmalion, the Grecian sculptor, which Venus turned into a beautiful woman. How the intelligence would awaken under the impressions of the senses, and the emotions would bloom under the sting of the desires. Soon afterwards the typical savage man, the savage of the Aveyron, as he was called, was found, an adult who had lived all his life in the forests, without contact with his kind. He was taken to Paris, and excited there intense curiosity, speculation, and interest. Pinel, the illustrious physician to the Bicêtre, it is true, pronounced him to be an idiot, but Itard, the physician to the Asylum for the Deaf and Dumb, energetically combatted this conclusion, and for five years he gave unremitting pains to his education as a savage. At the end of that time Itard was convinced that Pinel had been correct in his opinion. He had immensely improved the wretched idiot, as we learn from the report of the French Academy, who expressed their astonishment that Itard had succeeded so far as he did, and remarked upon "the distance which separated his starting-point from that which he had reached, and by how many new and ingenious modes of teaching this lapse had been filled." Itard, however, gave up his task in disgust, with the remark, "Unfortunate! since my pains are lost, and my efforts fruitless, take yourself back to your forests and your primitive tastes. If your new wants make you dependent upon society, suffer the penalty of being useless, and go to the Bicêtre there to die in wretchedness."

This was written in the first year of the present century, and the poor savage of the Aveyron, the first educated idiot, seemed at that time likely to be the last. The labours and example of Itard were not, however, destined to be as barren as he anticipated, and the principles of training and treatment which he adopted with his poor savage still remain the true basis of the physiological education of imperfect minds. His example was subsequently followed, and his methods developed and perfected by M. Edouard Séguin, the first of all idiot teachers, whose treatise on idiocy and its treatment by the physiological method was and is the stan-

dard work on the subject. His methods have been extended and improved, but his principles remain the uncontroverted guides to practise even to the present day. M. Séguin was not a physician, although he was imbued with medical and physiological knowledge. He was, however, preceded by physicians almost as enthusiastic as himself, especially by M. Voisin, one of the physicians to the Bicêtre. In this great asylum, M. Ferrus had organized an Idiot School in 1828, in which the pupils were taught all that is most important in the teaching of the best idiot schools of the present day. Afterwards, in 1831, M. Falret established a school for female idiots in the Salpêtrière, the other great Parisian Asylum, and, nine years later, Messrs. Voisin and Leuret, physicians to the Bicêtre, organized the Idiot Schools in that great Asylum, which were so eloquently described in 1845 by Dr. Conolly in his letters to Sir John Forbes, which are published in the 19th volume of the "British and Foreign Medical Review."

It was in this school of the Bicêtre, where Séguin taught his idiots, and from which he has taught all the world the manner of his teaching. I think, however, that it was rather by reports of what was being done in Switzerland, than in Paris, that the stolid British mind was first moved.

Guggenbühl, also a medical man, in the pursuit of his practice said that he was moved to extreme pity by the sight of an old crétin, one of those miserable idiots with hideous swollen throats, who abound among the sunless valleys of the Alps. The sight, he says, "Fixed his vocation." "These stricken individuals of our race (he wrote), these brethren beaten down, are they not more worthy of our efforts than those races of animals which men strive to bring to perfection? It is not in vain formulas, but in charitable efforts that we must feel that divine love which Jesus Christ has taught us."

In 1839 Guggenbühl established by subscriptions, which were actively canvassed for in this country, an Asylum for Crétin Idiots on a mountain called the Abendberg (the Hill of the Evening), within a few miles of Interlachen. There he at first did good work, his idiot teaching being greatly assisted by the sanitary influence which the pure air of the mountain top exercised upon the peculiar form of idiocy with which he had to deal, and which was, to a great extent, caused by the noxious influence of the previous place of residence. The cause being removed, the tendency was that the effect should cease. Idiocy, from causes less certainly removable, cannot, to the same extent, admit of cure.

The maintenance of the Institution on the Abendberg needed subscriptions, and the effort to obtain these in England appears first to have greatly attracted the attention of English people to the work which was being done. The subject of Idiot Training had been advocated in an article by Dr. Poole, of Aberdeen, in the *Encyclopædia Edinensis*, in 1819, and subsequently by my friend, Dr. Scott, of Exeter, in 1847. In the year previous to the last date, however, the first Idiot Asylum had been established in this country by Miss White, of Bath. It was established in an ordinary gentleman's residence in Walcot Parade, in that city. The next Idiot Asylum was founded at Park House, Highgate, on the 26th of April, 1848, by Mrs. Plumbe and Dr. Andrew Reed, and this latter Asylum has developed into the magnificent Institution now so widely known as the Earslwood Asylum for Idiots at Redhill, the foundation stone of which was laid in 1853 by the late Prince Consort. In January, 1850, Essex Hall, at Colchester, was opened as a branch of the original Institution at Highgate. It is now the Idiot Asylum for the Eastern Counties. The Idiot Asylum for the Western Counties was established in 1864. A County meeting was called at Exeter, at which a provisional committee of gentlemen was appointed, and the Earl of Devon having offered the use of a house and grounds at Starcross, as a temporary Asylum, the work was commenced at once in a purely tentative manner, very much like the manner in which the work at Dorridge Grove Asylum has been carried out hitherto, although, in the one case, the first moving impulse was derived from the county gentry in public meeting assembled, and in the other by the modest benevolence of two medical gentlemen, Dr. Bell Fletcher and Mr. Kimble. The Western Asylum will soon be provided with fitting buildings and grounds like the one for the Northern Counties, at Lancaster, and that for the Midland Counties, at Knowle. Thus we may expect to have within a short time adequate establishments for the education of the idiot in the Western, the Eastern, the Midland, and the Northern Counties, besides the great Institution in Surrey, which, perhaps, may be considered to belong to the metropolitan and Southern Counties.

Scotland also has not been behindhand in this great work of Christian charity, two asylums for idiots having been established in that country in 1863, the one at Baldovan, and the other at Larbert, near Falkirk. The latter is intended to be the National Asylum, and to accommodate 200 inmates.

I have not time to refer to the good work done in Germany,

under Saegert, nor in America, under Howe and others, but I cannot pass over without some further detail the early history of our own Institution at Knowle. This Institution, the exact name of which is the Dorridge Grove Idiot Asylum, was founded by the benevolence of Dr. Bell Fletcher and of Mr. Kemble, surgeon, of Knowle, who each placed one poor idiot therein to begin with. The date of the first license is July 3rd, 1866, but it was opened a few months before. The first license was for 20 idiot girls, but this was afterwards altered into a license to receive 12 girls and 12 boys.

Although it must not be supposed that this small and tentative Institution possesses the means and capabilities of efficiency which its benevolent founders and supporters would and do desire, and which, with the aid of public generosity, they are prepared soon to provide, I think it is but common justice that the public should know how much has been done here with small means. Moreover, such knowledge will guarantee the right application of larger resources.

On the 13th of this month I visited and carefully examined the Dorridge Grove Asylum, which, though by no means a chrysalis, is about to take its beautified transformation into the Midland Counties Asylum for Idiots.

In order that you may value my opinion, I think I may premise that, during the last thirty years, I have had the charge or the superintendence of a very large number of idiots and imbeciles, and that either in the discharge of official duty, or for the sake of professional information, I have repeatedly visited other Idiot Asylums—Earlwood, Essex Hall, Starcross, and Normansfield, the admirable Idiot Asylum for the more wealthy classes, which is conducted by Dr. Langdon Down, the former Superintendent of Earlwood. I think, therefore, that I may ask you to believe that I know much about Idiots and Idiot Asylums, and that I am able to form the opinion of a man conversant with the subject. The opinion impressed upon me by my visit to Dorridge Grove was most favourable. The little Institution is excellent, so far as it goes.

It appears to have been formed out of a row of three good cottages, with bright bow-windowed frontage overlooking a beautiful and wide landscape, and the rooms, though small, are very cheerful. I found it under the superintendence of an intelligent lady, Miss Stock, whose active kindness had endeared her to the awakening affections of the poor children whose gleams of enjoyment and fragments of usefulness in

this life, depend so immediately upon her unceasing care and tenderness. It was delightful to witness the bright smile of affection which greeted her from every one of the children. Even the girl who is the oldest inmate, and who is said to be affected with a pernicious temper, and who will bite and strike any other person, kissed the hand of Miss Stock with effusive love. In addition to the Superintendent there is a clever governess, Miss Farrar, also a head nurse and a staff of young nurses, who commence their own instruction and their duties at an early age, under the title of monitors. They are educated themselves at the same time that they learn the nature and the needs of the idiot children whom they nurse and train. The thing which struck me most forcibly was the happiness of all the children. This is the fact which has always struck me most, and delighted me most in all Idiot Asylums, and especially I remarked it as the characteristic feature of Dorridge Grove. Well knowing, as I do, what is the misery of a neglected idiot, I think this point cannot be too much dwelt upon. The misery of a neglected idiot is an awful thing to contemplate. The very word idiot means, according to some authorities, *solitary*, cut off from his kind, though others explain it to mean a *private person*, one incapable of public office. In point of fact, however, the neglected idiot is the most solitary of human beings, shut out by his infirmity from all feeling with his fellow-men—all sympathy; shut out also from all enjoyment of life, even animal enjoyment. Often he cannot use sight or hearing so as to distinguish objects or sounds. Often he cannot walk or stand. Often he is tortured with painful bodily infirmities. If the mental perceptions and emotions have in any way been developed, he is often still more tortured by malevolent or brutish passion. In a private house he is often an intolerable burthen, an incubus, a waking nightmare, and this Being in an Idiot Asylum becomes sociable, affectionate, and happy.

Let us think of that, and of the value of happiness in this life. Only be happy, my child, I have heard a good woman say to her peevish child; only be happy, all the rest will come. Make children happy, and they will not easily grow up wicked. I do not say—

“ Be happy, happy, happy still,
Let virtue follow if she will.”

But of this be sure, that if the happiness of a community,

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even a community of idiots, be secured, the paths of goodness and of usefulness will not be left untrod.

If the greatest happiness of the greatest many is the highest aim of statesmanship, the happiness of the most wretched individuals ought to be the most constant object of philanthropic effort.

Dorridge Grove is a school of happiness, and a successful one. How is this effected?

First, by teaching the idiot the use of his senses and of his muscles. By teaching him to see and to hear, to touch and to taste; by teaching him to speak, and, as far as may be, to converse. By teaching him to sit, to stand, to walk, and to play; then by teaching him to love and to trust, and not to hate and to fear; by replacing dull inanity or sullen moroseness with sociable attachment to others; by training and framing all the conditions of body and mind, however imperfect body and mind may be, towards wholesome, useful, and agreeable activities, in place of chill and torpid inertness, or the dull ache of helpless discomfort; to bring him from that former state in which he lay,

“ Remote, unfriended, melancholy, slow,”

somewhat within the circle of bright and active human life and affection.

Maybe I have dwelt too much upon this prime consideration of the gift of happiness, and have not stopped by the way, as I ought to have done, to lay proper stress upon the paths of utility which so often lead towards it. In ordinary life it is easy to make men useful, but most difficult to make them happy; but, fortunately for idiots, the amount of usefulness to which they may attain is no measure of the degree of happiness which kind and skilful training is able to confer upon them. Happiness, however, unlike usefulness, is not a quality which readily allows itself to be measured or tabulated, though we can somehow roughly estimate the vast difference between a roomful of joyous though imbecile faces, and what one knows of the expression which the same features would wear in solitude and neglect. But I must tell you of some of the useful things which the idiots have been taught, and I must begin with the very earliest paths of knowledge. Some of them have been taught to see—not that an idiot is blind, but sometimes he has not learned to use his eyes. He is incapable of fixing his gaze, and so of taking in sensations of form and colour sufficiently perma-

ment to be converted into clear perceptions. The difficulty of overcoming this radical imperfection is often exceedingly great. Séguin adopted the method of placing the child in a dark room, with a luminous portion on which something was traced likely to be attractive. This portion was made to move, so as to fix and draw after it the hitherto wandering gaze. He also adopted that which would appear to me the more potent method—of attracting and fixing the wandering eye by his own steady gaze. Séguin in one instance tried for four months thus to fix the eye of an idiot by his own steady gaze. At length he succeeded all at once. The child gave a cry of surprise, and from that time, instead of passing his hand over him, as he had formerly done, to ascertain his identity, he looked upon him with a kind of curiosity as at a new thing. From that time he began to look and to see with perception. Once the eye has been thus brought under control, lessons in colour, form, size, and arrangement follow, and the great inlet of all knowledge of the outer world has been effectually opened. The sense of hearing is more simple, but not the less do idiots need to be taught to discriminate what they hear. Their faculty for appreciating tone and harmony is curious and common.

The largest and most simple sense—that of touch—requires constant and most careful training. Touch is caused, not alone by impressions made upon the surface of the body, but is intimately connected with the muscular system, by which the idea of extension is given, so that a child who cannot move its limbs cannot be said to know the outer world by touch. The simple touch of the skin often needs to be educated in the idiot, but the muscular touch almost always, and is one cause of the immense importance which the training of muscular power and precision exercises in the development of these feeble minds. You will easily understand how difficult it must be to teach a child who cannot reach with his arms or clutch with his hands, who cannot stand or walk.

These faculties are among the first which have to be taught, and I am happy to report that I have observed them being patiently, persistently, and successfully taught at Dorridge Grove.

In the excellent report of Mr. Kemble, the medical officer for last year, it is recorded that at the beginning of last year a boy and a girl, who could not stand without support, have now been taught to walk fairly well alone. Besides this, other

muscular exercises of more or less complexity, but of almost as much importance, have been taught. A low-class idiot cannot feed himself, or he does so like an animal. We have in our language no words to express this symptom of brutality, but the Germans have the terms *fressen* and *saugen*—to eat and to drink like a beast—and this is what low-class idiots do, cramming their food into their mouths with their hands, or devouring it without the aid of their hands. The poor *sauvage* of Aveyron, who went on all fours, was observed to put his chin into the pool or the brook, and suck the water into his mouth like an ox or a horse. The idiots at Dorridge Grove are taught to use knives and forks, and those who cannot attain to this art are taught to use a spoon. Moreover, they are taught to dress and to undress themselves, and, instead of being filthy, disgusting, and immodest in their habits and demeanour, they are taught to be cleanly, decent, and proper in their conduct.

Advancing from these elementary conditions of social life, I find, still following Mr. Kemble's report, that out of the fifteen inmates of Dorridge Grove, seven can now speak fairly, and one indistinctly; four can read fairly; two can read by spelling words, and one knows some of the letters; two can write in copy books; one can write copies on a slate, and three can form letters on slates. From these rudiments of education we have the certain knowledge, from the attainments which have been reached in other Idiot Asylums, that some of these idiots will eventually be taught to read and to write with understanding—that the wide doors of book knowledge will be opened.

As for the industrial lessons, I observe that six can wash and dress; four can make a bed; four can set dinner and tea table; seven can pick fruit, shell peas, &c.; while, as yet, eight can do nothing of the kind. "The improvement in this class consists in the increased aptitude of several of the children to do small things for themselves, and for some of the others. For instance a little girl eight years old makes herself really useful in the nursery, helping to dress and undress the children, and waiting upon the nurses in various ways."

With increased means and appliances these industrial lessons will be extended to simple arts and handicrafts. The manufacture of mats is an extensive one at Earlswood, and that of sash lines has been adopted at Starcross. The wash-house and laundry for girls, and the cultivation of the ground

for boys, will be established and developed into regular employments. All these simple industries deserve our most earnest attention, because they are attainable by so many. Some few idiots will, no doubt, manifest special aptitudes of an extraordinary and surprising power, but these are *show cases*, and must, from the nature of the case, be few and far between. We have many of us, no doubt, heard of the idiot at Earlswood who constructed a perfect model of a man of war. I have examined the marvellous model, and have conversed with the shipwright who, I have no doubt, was a congenital imbecile. But such constructive powers, combined with such congenital weakness of intellect, must needs be exceedingly rare, and I should certainly not advise the Governors of the Midland Counties Asylum to make their plans with any view to what we may call the higher education of idiot genius. It will be more wise to avoid exciting any expectations beyond those which probabilities warrant, and which sober common sense will justify. I well remember the time when the enthusiastic Guggenbühl brought question on his scientific reputation by the account which he gave of a speechless idiot who, on seeing a magnificent sunset, all at once exclaimed, "*Die Sonne, Die Sonne.*" The sun, the sun, and who from that time continued to communicate his ideas to those around him by speech.

I also remember the statement made by Mr. Pycroft, the medical officer of the Western Counties Asylum, that "In the year 1864 the first patient was admitted, but as he was adjudged by the medical officer and by the committee generally to be a clever boy of much more than average intellect, he was returned to his parents." These two cases illustrate two pitfalls of overstatement and mistake; unbridled enthusiasm, and the possible treatment of children as idiots who are not so. You may thoroughly depend upon it that there is nothing of this kind at Dorrige Grove, nor will be at the new Asylum; and I, for my part, prefer not to dwell much upon wonderful and exceptional cases. Granted that they sometimes exist, I believe that the real good effected is by no means so great as that in very common cases where the starting point has been lower. The measure of good effected, as the French Academy pointed out in Itards' case, depends upon "the distance which separated the starting point from that reached." To teach an idiot, who, to begin with, cannot walk, crams his food into his mouth with his hands, and bolts it, using his teeth mainly to

bite viciously anyone who comes near him, who never puts on clothes or takes them off except by tearing them; who has no more cleanliness and decency in his natural habits than an animal living in the fields, and incomparably less, therefore, than a dog or a cat which respects the cleanliness of the house; to teach such an idiot to walk, to work, and to play; to dig with a spade, or to kick a football, to feed himself with a knife and fork, to dress and undress himself, to wash, and behave in a cleanly and decent manner, to kiss his companion instead of biting him, to have the use even of a few words which he articulates and understands, even if he should not be able to read well, or to write a fair copy—I say that the difference between the starting point and the winning post, to me seems greater than when a weak-minded man learns to build the model of a ship.

When a higher starting point has been attained, a far more surprising result may, indeed, be secured. The helpless imbecile may be educated up to the point which renders it possible to introduce him into the social life of our age as an independent and efficient man. This culmination of so-called idiot education must, indeed, always be rare, but that it is sometimes reached there can be little doubt. My friend and literary collaborateur, Dr. Daniel Hack Tuke, in writing of Herr Saegert, of Berlin, says, "He assured us when we visited his school in 1853, that he had indubitable cases of idiocy in which the head was small and malformed, yet in which the results of education were so triumphant that they were ultimately able to mix with the world without being recognised as idiots." "In one instance a young man underwent confirmation without the priest suspecting that he had been delivered from idiocy." But perhaps the most remarkable illustration is contained in a letter which I have recently received from Dr. Langdon Down, and which he permits me to quote. He says in this letter, which is dated the 15th of the present month, "My experience at Normansfield has led me to believe more fully than ever the great benefits which may be conferred on idiots and imbeciles by systematic training in special institutions. I have had several patients from very good families, where no expense had been spared in their instruction, but whose progress had astonished their friends when they had been six months under training at Normansfield. If such advantage can be conferred on the wealthy, how much more the relative advantage on the poor. I have seen

the relative of a nobleman, living in all the luxury of a country house, so put aside by her sisters, senior as well as junior, that she never ventured on a remark, and at length lost speech. I have seen the same girl at Normansfield pass from monosyllables to thorough conversational language, amid the companionship and the sympathy of her peers. Several of my former patients at Earlswood are now self-relying as well as self-supporting. One called on me a short time since at Normansfield and dined with me. Another is now the canvassing agent of an insurance office, an office whose business is really money lending under the pretence of life insurance, and *his* business is to find out needy people in localities, a position requiring a little tact. Several are getting their livelihood as carpenters and shoemakers." These highest results, which have actually been obtained in favourable cases, justify hopes of success, which, without such experience, prudence would forbid us to entertain. Prudence I have before advocated in aim and in statement, but there is another quality which must go to the successful education of the idiot, and that is *enthusiasm*. These qualities may seem antagonistic, but they are not necessarily so, and, depend upon it, that without a warm glow of enthusiasm in his work, the teacher of the idiot will find his task dull, barren, and unprofitable. In all fields of labour where moral influence tells with great power, if there is no enthusiasm there will be no high degree of success, and I have been assured by the most successful teachers of idiots that the higher their enthusiasm, and the more ambitious their aim, the greater has been their success, frequently to their own wondering surprise. There is certainly no institution in which the dull routine of a self-satisfied pedagogue will be more surely barren of satisfactory results than in a school for idiots.

With these remarks I shall close my narrative, and I have nothing more to add beyond an earnest appeal for your sympathy and support. On this point and in this place I think I may be very brief. The wise benevolence of the people of Birmingham is too well known to permit me to feel justified in making at any length an appeal for this new charity. The many admirable institutions in your town so plainly manifest your readiness to relieve the distress of the wretched that it seems only requisite to make fully known to you the need of help for those who have been the most miserable and neglected of human beings. If you

think of the constant, patient, self-denying labour which is demanded from those into whose hands the practical work of idiot education falls, you will not, I think, be disinclined to find some portion of the means by which this work is carried on. When you think of the idiot rescued from the slough of wretchedness and brutishness, and made a happy and sociable human being, you will not, I think, for want of pecuniary support, allow the institution to languish which has been founded by one of your most estimable townsmen, and which is occupied, as I am informed, to the extent of two-thirds of its accommodation, by idiots from your own streets. When you think of the narrow home of the artizan or small trader, which is rendered intolerable by the presence of an untrained idiot child; when you think of the waste of time—which is waste of sustenance to the working man—involved in the most unsatisfactory care of a single idiot in a small home, you will not, I think, be disinclined to support an institution which will relieve such homes from the *incubus* with which they are cursed. You who rejoice in the glorious possession of manly strength and mental vigour will not withhold the throb of sympathy and the hand of help from those whose condition, before our time, was without help and without hope. The men of Birmingham—the men of steel—will not steel their hearts against such a claim on their charity, nor permit that the institution which has been founded to effect this good work shall be unable to discharge its full mission of beneficence for want of funds.

The Use of Digitalis in Maniacal Excitement. By W. JULIUS MICKLE, M.D., Medical Superintendent, Grove Hall Asylum, Bow.

Though many writers have advocated the use of digitalis in various forms of insanity—such as acute, paralytic, or epileptic mania—yet there appears to be great diversity of opinion as to its efficacy, great variety in the methods of administering it, and a wide range in the quantities prescribed. While one has been content to order five to ten minims of the tincture three or four times a day, another has given, in similar cases, single doses of half-an-ounce of the same preparation.

Having used a variety of medicines for the alleviation of restlessness, agitation, quarrelsome irritability, noisy and threatening language, or impulsive violence, as exhibited in