

THE SCHOOL FOR IMBECILES
Interesting Anniversary Exercises

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The State of Minnesota has not failed to respond generously to the call of humanity in behalf of the unfortunate classes among its citizens who were proper subjects for its fostering care. The insane have been cared for, and ample provision made for the reception and education of the deaf and dumb and the blind. One class, however, more to be pitied than even the insane, has until within the past year, received no proper recognition of the obligation that humanity imposes. This embraces the feeble-minded or imbeciles. The most forlorn of all of God's creatures, in many cases despised and hated by their parents, who would have rejoiced in their removal by death as a deliverance from a constant source of mortification and a grievous burden, there seemed to be no proper abiding place for these poor outcasts, and no hope of relief from the terror of an existence that was only a living death. By a stretch of the discretion conferred by the statutes governing the insane asylums, numbers of the feeble-minded and idiotic had found a refuge at St. Peter, but the accommodations at that building having proved insufficient for the fulfillment of its legitimate purpose as an asylum for the insane, the legislature determined to eliminate and send home the imbeciles. A benevolent modification of this policy resulted in the appointment of a medical commission to examine all who came under this classification, and select the most capable of them for subjects of an experimental attempt to educate them and render them self-sustaining at a school to be established for the purpose, which it was believed could be most economically and efficiently conducted under the management of the Institute for the deaf and dumb, and the blind.

The school was established one year ago with fifteen pupils, which number has been swelled by accessions resulting from periodical examinations of the inmates of the insane asylums, while, on the other hand, some have been returned as incapable of improvement. The present number in the school is nineteen. The school is in charge of Dr. G. H. Knight, an experienced instructor from the institution at Lakeville, Conn., assisted by Miss Hattie Hale.

A number of visitors among our citizens were present on Thursday evening last, to witness the exercises of a review.

The methods of instruction were first explained. The pupil is first taught the relation between an object and its name in printed characters by exhibiting the object, as a ring, a key, &c., and the corresponding word upon a block. The next step is the writing of the word upon a black board, and finally words are incorporated into sentences. When it is considered that the difficulty is here not alone in finding an avenue to the faculties of the brain as in the case of the deaf and dumb, and the blind, but that the faculties themselves are in such a rudimental and feeble state that a course of stimulating and building up is necessary before they can be in a

receptive condition, the difficulties of the case will be manifest. The task was the greater in consequence of the fact that all of the pupils but two were of foreign parentage, and the acquisition of the English language was the first necessity. Under these circumstances, the success attained in the experiment, as shown in the exercises of the evening, was very gratifying. Some of the pupils wrote simple sentences upon the blackboard, which were given them orally, such as "a good boy," "a man runs," &c. The letters were well formed. An arithmetical exercise followed, the pupils numerating and adding by means of colored balls strung upon wires. The most advanced boy performed some sums in simple addition upon the blackboard. A class of boys and girls performed a series of evolutions in perfect time to music, with wooden dumb bells, guided by diagrams upon a chart. One of the boys, who seems to have the musical facility largely developed, played the bones with a dexterity that would do credit to an expert "end man" in a burnt cork concert. The same lad afterwards sung a song in good time. Among the exercises was dancing, of which the pupils are very fond, and several of them go through all the figures of square dances, including even the "Lancers," without an error.

When the exercises by the pupils had closed, R. A. Mott, Esq., Secretary of the Institute board, made a few interesting remarks, in response to an invitation by Dr. Knight. He expressed his surprise and gratification at the improvement in some of the pupils that a year had brought forth. He had visited the institution on the first day it had opened. The children had just been brought from a mad house, and some of them acted more like wild beasts than human beings. They had clawed their food with their fingers, swallowing ravenously and indiscriminately every article of diet within their reach. Some of them fought each other till the blood ran down their faces. They had received no sympathy or care, and their parents, in many cases, never communicated with them, cared not to hear from them and would not regret their death. The good results of the efforts bestowed upon them in this school were full of encouragement.

The improvement in the temper and deportment of some of the pupils, as we learned from conversing with Doctor and Mrs. Knight, has been marked. From being savage and intractable they had become orderly and obedient. One girl whose hands had to be kept in mittens to prevent her scratching the faces of her companions, is now gentle and takes a sisterly care of a younger one. Four of the pupils are already sufficiently trained to be capable of supporting themselves by their labor, and others are making encouraging progress. It seems to be a work requiring almost infinite patience and hopefulness, but Dr. Knight and his assistants seem well fitted for their duties, and by kindness and tact are gradually developing intellectual faculties in natures where it would seem in vain to look for a foundation upon which to build.