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THE NEED OF AN INSTITUTION. FOR CRIPPLED AND DEFORMED CHILDREN

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Among the many institutions and charities which the State of Minnesota supports for defective children one class of children, namely, those who are crippled or deformed, seems quite forgotten and this is the case all over our country. In fact the United States is years behind Europe in the treating of such cases. Only for the last six or seven years, and then only in two or three cities in our country, has the treatment for such children been put upon a scientific basis, and has given reasonable hope of success.

People living in our Western states, even when they have moderate means, have little opportunity of even finding out what can be done for such children. Cases that have for the last thirty years been treated successfully in many European countries have in this country been pronounced incurable by the family physician or the poorly equipped specialist. Hundreds of children are every day studying in our public schools, contending with well, strong children, sitting in positions and engaged in tasks at which they constantly grow worse physically. A great number of such children might easily be cured. Are not these children entitled to a training that will be a benefit instead of a hindrance to them?

They are surely entitled to their share of the public school funds, and it should be used to give them a training best suited to their needs. It may be said that a hospital is what is needed. This is not so. It is a home that is needed.

A hospital can keep such children only for a few weeks at the best. Take a case where the child has been in a hospital for treatment; been fitted, perhaps, with some apparatus it should wear. The parents are directed as to the best treatment, and the child is dismissed. Go in a few weeks to the child's home, and you will in most cases find the apparatus thrown aside, the child sitting in positions and occupied at tasks that are very hurtful to it. All of these cases, either stubborn ones or those which yield easily, need constant and persistent treatment and constant watchfulness.

Physicians will tell you that the greatest obstacle they have to contend with is to get the parents to be persistent in treatments, especially if the treatment is disagreeable to the child. This is one reason why such children should be in a home where their schooling could be carefully supervised and the best scientific treatment methodically given to them.

Then what shall we say of another class of children who sadly need help-children who have some physical defect, and yet have no care, no place worthy the name of home, and are constantly having work required of them which they never ought to do. Such children are often very ambitious, and the amount of work some of them perform is something appalling; and this in a time when they should have the most tender care and physical training.

There have been cases of spinal curvature taken when a child was young and. by systematic treatment of gymnastics and massage, completely cured in a year. We do not say all such cases can be cured in a year, or that all can be cured; but we do say a great number have been cured. And yet, go through our cities among the poorer classes, and question the parents of children with similar trouble, and in nine cases out of ten you will find that

nothing is being done for them, and their parents will shake their heads, in their ignorance, and tell you that nothing can be done. Is it not better for the state to take a child like that, board it for a year or two, give it proper-treatment, and only let it do tasks that are suited to it and send the child back to its home cured and sound, than to supply it with an elaborate day school system that is totally unsuited to its needs and strength, and under which it constantly grows worse? Then we have still another class of children—children who can never hope to attend the public schools; children who must have a long period of weary treatment; and yet at this time their brain is very active, and should have proper training.

Take a child, for instance, with hip disease. Often the treatment is long and painful, but there is no reason the mind should not be trained. These children above all others need mental equipment for the life work which will in time surely press upon them. There are many employments that such children could be trained for with profit to themselves and to the state, and yet they often waste their childhood uncared for, untrained, and drag out a weary life contending with problems for which their stronger brother and sister have had ample training. It seems as though the justice of this measure must speak for itself. Surely it is best for the state that such children should be cured whenever possible, and educated so that they may be helpful, self-sustaining members of the state.

The marked success that has attended the efforts that have been put forth in this country in this direction ought to encourage us to undertake the work. Two years ago there was started in Boston a school for deformed and crippled children. So far it has depended entirely upon private gifts. The St. Andrew's church gives them the use of a large room, and every morning an omnibus is sent to the homes for the scholars, as it was found quite iinpracticable for the children to come through the streets alone. The only aim has been to establish a day school, no medical treatment being attempted The school opened with about fourteen, and they now have over forty pupils. All of these children are little folks who never ought to attend public schools, and many of them are the children of poor parents, who would have to leave them at home all day uncared for except for this school. The periods of study in the school are much shorter than at public schools, recesses being more-frequent. The chairs and desks are suited to the needs of the different children. The school opens at nine o'clock. At half past ten the children have a light lunch. At noon they are taken down to the dining room to a plain substantial dinner. In the afternoon cots are brought out and many of the children rest or sleep; others have their playtime, only the strongest having a short study time in the afternoon. At four the omnibus takes them home. Hampered as the school is by its unsuitable quarters, it has already accomplished a great good, and gives promise of a bright future. Another school which was opened in June, 1895, by private charity, is the Peabody Home for Crippled Children. This school is, I believe, the only attempt in Massachusetts to provide a home for such children. It especially aims to provide a home and medical treatment for. children who are homeless, or whose parents cannot care for them properly. The trustees of the home have leased a farm at Weston, Mass., and have lately issued their first report. They have nine children in the home, and already one or two cases that would otherwise have grown incurable have been treated and helped. In Brooklyn

there is the Home of St. Giles the Cripple, which receives the children from New York. In Chicago there is a home for crippled children at Humboldt Park. This home is not able to care far more than one-filth of their, applicants.

A home similar to the one at Weston, Mass., is what Minnesota should have. At first there would be no need of great buildings. A comfortable dwelling house in the suburbs of some large city would be all that was necessray. We say, near a large city, for several reasons, one being that the great number of such children needing aid are among the poorer population of our large cities, and the home would be more accessible for them; but the great reason would be—if at first only small appropriations were made by the state—the superintendent of such an institution could from a large city find many competent people who, by slight training, could become efficient assistants in massage or gymnastics—such assistance is in a great way mechanical, and is often rendered by students from gymnasiums, under the direction of a physician. Such assistance could be rendered by the hour, and at much less cost than it could possibly be obtained in a small town.

The medical department of such an institution should be under the control of a specialist, who is in touch with the latest methods for treating such diseases. These services would at first be one of the greatest expenses of the institution, and the buildings, apparatus, and the school department could be allowed to grow as the need for them developed. There should be, though, no economy in the medical director; an unskilled person in such a place would be a crime. What the state has done and is doing for the deaf and dumb and blind, it should attempt to do for this other class of children, so that it may be possible for any child who grows up in this state in the future to obtain the best medical aid and treatment that our age can give.

THE CARE OF DEPENDENT CHILDREN IN ORPHAN ASYLUMS.

BY REV. J. H. GAUGHAN OF RED WING.

In a Conference of Charities and Corrections the helpless orphan naturally receives attention. Since the Creator is pleased to leave children for years totally dependent on others, he certainly intends that the great law of charity (love of our neighbor) should to some extent supply the want, when in his providence he sees fit to remove their natural protectors, providers, and instructors.

In pagan times and lands we are told that heartless mothers and fathers exposed their own sickly or deformed little ones to death, or for a consideration sold the healthy ones into slavery, or for other nefarious purposes. If parents so dealt with their own offspring, strangers could scarcely be expected to be more humane; and hence we find before the coming of Christ and the establishment of the Christian church the civilized world, despite its wonderful material and intellectual progress, possessed no institutions of benevolence. With few exceptions, the rich and prosperous members of ancient society cared nothing for the misery and wretchedness around them.

As the charity and humanity of the patriarichal ages departed might and passion seem to have ruled the world as they pleased.

The condition of the unfortunate, the weak, and the helpless had become deplorable, when the Son of God came to redeem fallen man and to rekindle the fire of charity in the human heart. Coming in the form of helpless infant, he ennobled childhood, and rendered that state ever after one of tender solicitude to all who recognized in the Babe of Bethlehem the Savior of mankind. As he advanced in years and entered on the public fulfillment of his great mission, charity was ever set forth as the queen of virtues.

The solicitude of the Savior was most marked for children, as is apparent from his rebuke to the Apostles themselves, in his memorable, "Suffer little children to come unto me," and, "Whosoever receives one of these little ones receives me." Whilst his tender mercy was most manifest on many occasions with the outcast and sinner, he seems to have lost all patience with those who did not properly regard the young: "Whosoever shall scandalize one of these little ones who believe in me; it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck and he were cast into the sea."

The spirit of practical charity as caught up by the infant church, showing itself in the care of the poor, the indigent, and the unfortunate, for whose special benefit deacons were chosen [Acts vi., 3] to judiciously distribute the alms provided.

The successors of the Apostles, true to the divine mission confided to them, as we learn from the decrees of popes and councils, were ever mindful of Christ's little ones. For this great need of humanity there have been found at all times since the advent of Christianity heroic souls, willing to devote their all to alleviate the sufferings of the needy members of the human family.

In our day and country there are many voluntary organizations doing noble work in providing asylums for the orphans. In reviewing briefly the work done, I shall first consider the part taken by the Catholic Church, which is historically the pioneer in erecting and maintaining asylums.

According to the Catholic Directory for 1895, there were in the United States 243 asylums, caring for 33,064 children. Following the example of the bishops of the early church and succeeding ages, Bishop Grace, shortly after his arrival in 1859, opened an orphan asylum in St. Paul. Until 1878, when the boys were removed to a new asylum in Minneapolis, 600 children were cared for. The one asylum of 1859 has now increased to seven in the state, having in charge last year 358 orphans or half orphans. Since the organization of this asylum system in Minnesota 3,249 secured homes, were fitted for caring for themselves, or circumstances changing at their own homes were taken back; those, together with the 358 remaining in the asylums at the close of last year, give a total of 3,607 children temporarily provided for by the various communities of Sisters having the orphans in their charge. In these orphan homes the children are taught the common school branches, whilst some of the more talented and promising ones are given special advantages, to fit them for teaching or other intellectual pursuits. The boys who remain long enough are taught suitable trades or farm work, and several are reported as doing well after leaving the asylums. The larger girls, from the instruction given, become teachers, typewriters, salesladies, or dressmakers, or secure domestic employment in families taking a kindly interest in their cases. With rare exceptions the children do remarkably well, so that, even with the lack of that best of all training, a good home, many have gone out from the asylums, and are nobly fighting the battle of life on their own responsibility, the peers of many having better opportunities.