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*Statistical Notice of the Asylum for the Blind in Newcastle-upon-Tyne.* By the Rev. JOSEPH M'ALISTER.

[Read before the Statistical Section of the British Association, 22d August, 1838.]

IN the autumn of last year the attention of some benevolent individuals was particularly directed to the condition of the indigent blind in this town and in the adjacent counties. Subscriptions to a considerable amount were soon raised, sufficient to justify a committee in proceeding to some practical plan for aiding that unfortunate portion of the community. After the delays attendant on the drawing up of a code of laws and regulations, the present Institution was opened for the reception of inmates on the 28th of June last.

The objects of the subscribers to the asylum are, to afford to the indigent blind, religious, moral, and elementary instruction; to give employment to those who can work, and to teach the young such trades as are found suitable to their capacities. The building, at present occupied as an asylum, is situate in an enclosure in Spital, and answers very well as a temporary residence; but it is in contemplation by the public to have a more suitable building erected, as soon as a proper site and plan can be obtained. Upwards of £1100 have already been collected for this purpose.

The present master of the works at the asylum is Mr. Watson. The mistress is Miss Gallon, who has studied the plan of education pursued at the Glasgow asylum.

Number of blind entered on the books of the asylum is as follows:—

No. 1.—S. M., aged 55, a native of the county of Derry, Ireland; was two years at an asylum in Belfast; has resided in this town and neighbourhood for the last 20 years. He lost his sight when about 20 years of age; was taught to read in childhood. He weaves mats in the asylum, and receives on an average 1s. per day, whenever he works; he has also a little out-door employment. The material of his work is furnished, and the proceeds of his mats go to the funds of the establishment.

No. 2.—S. R., aged 34, a native of North Shields; born blind; was 4 years 9 months at Liverpool Asylum, where he learned to make baskets; has some taste for literature; and occasionally preaches in the Methodist connection. He is an inmate of the asylum, and receives 13s. per week, as a workman and as a teacher of his trade; he would like to *hear* readings from the periodicals; has never been instructed to read.

No. 3.—J. W., aged 14, is the pupil of S. R. above-mentioned; is learning to make baskets. He lost one eye at an early age in the measles; the other eye was destroyed by accident when 11 years old; was born in Newcastle, but of Irish extraction; was never at any other asylum; receives instruction daily in reading on Mr. Alston's improved system; makes considerable progress; he remembers the form of the alphabet easily, as he was taught to read before he became blind.

No. 4.—A. W., aged 23, a native of Newcastle; lodges with his aunt; comes to the asylum daily; lost his sight at 15 years of age; was taught to read in childhood; was 4 years at the Edinburgh Asylum; did not avail himself of the opportunity to learn Mr. Galt's system of reading; he found the angular letters so different from what he re-

membered of his alphabet that he could make little of them. He is at present engaged in making mattresses, and can also make baskets, and spin twine if occasion require. The material, cocoa-nut fibre, is furnished to him as mentioned above; he receives 8s. per week. He is a young man of good sense, and would like to have books read to him of an evening. He has a pretty clear notion of geography and numbers.

No. 5.—J. J., aged 15, born in Manchester; of Irish extraction; has resided for some years with his father in this town; can distinguish between light and darkness; but is exceedingly helpless, from the neglect of his education; he turns the wheel for a twine-spinner, and receives, for the present, 1s. per week.

No. 6.—J. S., aged 9; born blind; a native of Newcastle; can do no work; is a child of quick parts; the mistress has begun to give her daily instructions in reading, &c.

*General Observations.*—The Committee are making arrangements for the reception of other applicants for admission as speedily as their plans can be matured. The applications are numerous. The exact number of blind in this community has not been as yet ascertained by any statistical society: it is expected that this will become a subject of enquiry at no distant time. A private individual, who has devoted his services very much in behalf of the blind, has ascertained for me that, in one section of the suburbs, viz., the east district of the parish of All Saints, containing a population of about 9000, there are 21 blind persons. This, I believe, is more than double the proportion of the latest continental returns. It is to be observed, however, that this district is the locality of the lodging-houses of many of the wandering blind.

An important question with those who are directing attention to the intellectual culture of the blind is, what is the best alphabetic system which has been advanced for introducing this interesting class to the advantages of general literature.

There are at present various systems before the public: the angular characters of Mr. Gall of Edinburgh; the Roman characters improved by Mr. Alston of Glasgow; the stenographic forms of the late Mr. Lucas of Bristol; and two or three American modifications of Italics.

The advantages of an alphabet for the blind, resembling as nearly as possible the existing Roman letters, are beginning to be generally appreciated. It is to be desired that, ultimately, one uniform system of typography will be adopted in all asylums.

A respectable teacher in this town, Mr. D. Liddell, who was secretary to the present committee of the asylum for the blind in its early history, has been engaged for some time in giving the systems of Mr. Gall and Mr. Alston a fair trial, with a young girl of St. Andrew's poor-house, of promising talents. She has been receiving instructions for about a year, and can read pretty fluently according to either system. Although she was first introduced to Mr. Gall's angular characters, she found little difficulty in learning afterwards the Roman letters of Mr. Alston.

This is the system she may eventually pursue. I examined this child a few days ago, and was forcibly struck with the idea that, though it is a very practicable thing to teach the blind to read, still it is an exceedingly difficult task to teach them to think accurately. In every sen-

tence where a visible image is introduced, the meaning is more or less vitiated to those born blind; and the integrity of the mind, by constantly receiving what it cannot understand, is sadly endangered, unless a wise and assiduous mental culture, peculiarly adapted to those from whom knowledge at one entrance is "quite shut out," accompany every reading in a mixed literature. As yet little philosophy has been brought to bear practically on the education of the blind. There are some exceedingly valuable hints thrown out on this subject in a chapter devoted to "mutes and blind," in the "Retrospect of Western Travel."

If we should receive all that has been written on this subject by benevolent persons it would appear that we have already a literature for the blind, and the blind can now be taught to read and write in three or four lessons. It is much to be regretted that any exaggeration of this kind has ever been mixed up with so good a cause. Time is a necessary element in the education of the blind; and the teacher must be an individual well acquainted with the laws of the human mind. As yet the education of the blind is in the *letter*, the *spirit* is not developed. When we look at the admirable invention of raised tangible characters, we must confess that the *printer* has done his work nobly; but the *school-master* is not yet abroad among the blind. Seeing men have created a suitable literature for themselves; but, for the blind, this literature contains an element of excess which is fatal to intellectual unity.

We may, however, look forward to the time when many splendid results may be expected from the *special* and *philosophical* education of those faculties which the blind often possess in an eminent degree.

*A Statement of the Number of Seats in the several Churches and Chapels, distinguishing the several Religious Denominations to which they belong, within the Parish of All Saints, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, containing a Population of about 20,000 Inhabitants, in the Month of August, 1838.\**

[Read before the Statistical Section of the British Association, 22nd August, 1838.]

Name.	Denomination.	No. of Seats.	
All Saints . . . . .	Establishment . . . . .	1,400	} 1,990 seats in the Established Church.
St. Ann's . . . . .	Do. . . . .	500	
Trinity Chapel (Seamen)	Do. . . . .	90	
Roman Catholic . . . . .	Roman Catholic . . . . .	1,500	} 8,570 seats in Dissenting chapels.
Quakers, or . . . . .	Friends . . . . .	500	
Carloli Street . . . . .	Presbyterian . . . . .	700	
Bethel . . . . .	Do. . . . .	400	
Wallkowl . . . . .	Do. . . . .	500	
Sandgate . . . . .	Independent . . . . .	200	
St. Peter's Quay . . . . .	New Connection, Methodist	500	
Ebenezer . . . . .	Do. Do. . . . .	150	
Silver Street . . . . .	Primitive Methodist . . . . .	1,100	
Ballast Hills . . . . .	Do. Do. . . . .	150	
Gibson Street . . . . .	Wesleyan Association . . . . .	1,200	} 1,250
Forster Street . . . . .	Glassites . . . . .	120	
New Road . . . . .	Wesleyan Methodist . . . . .	1,200	
Stepney Bank . . . . .	Do. Do. . . . .	200	
St. Lawrence . . . . .	Do. Do. . . . .	150	} 1,550
		10,560	

\* This table was prepared in consequence of a discussion which arose in the Section, respecting the means of religious worship existing in the parish to which it relates.