

to Sixty-eighth streets, a distance of two hundred feet and ten inches, being the entire front of a block, consisting of eight lots, besides four lots on the rear of these, being two on Sixty-seventh and Sixty-eighth streets, respectively, and forming one plot, at the annual rental of one dollar, for the period of ninety-nine years. "This land to be devoted to the purposes of this Institution, and for such purposes only."

Plain and substantial buildings are to be erected on these grounds as soon as possible.

The Institution is supported and directed by an association of several hundred gentlemen, mostly of the Hebrew faith, who are annual contributors. On the 15th of July, 1869, Mr. Engelsman, who had been engaged for five years, as Principal, by the officers of the society, severed his connection with the Institution, and has since connected himself with the New York Institution at Washington Heights, carrying the prestige of his name and merit, as the chief expert of this system of instruction in America, to that old, time-honored college of deaf-mutes, the largest and best arranged of its kind in the world. The society, however, has not faltered in its enterprise.

Professor F. A. Rising, A.M., a graduate of Williams College, who had been employed seven months in the Ohio Institution, two years in the New York Institution at Washington Heights, and had been for some months the Vice-Principal with Mr. Engelsman, was appointed to take charge of the Institution.

He is a young man of talent and energy, entirely devoted to his calling; but it remains to be seen whether, with his limited experience in this particular and difficult system of instruction, he can successfully compete with those who have made it a life-long specialty. Previous to the removal to Broadway, the names of thirty-four pupils had been on the register, about half of whom had been boarded in the Institution. At their last anniversary, May 11, 1871, the managers reported fifty-one pupils in attendance.



THE NEW YORK INSTITUTION FOR THE BLIND.

(Ninth avenue and Thirty-fourth street.)

A striking exhibition of the wisdom and benevolence of the Creator is seen in his raising up, from time to time, agencies to guard and foster every interest of society. For many ages the blind remained wholly untaught, and sat mournfully, Bartimeus like, along the crowded thoroughfare of human life. Nothing was undertaken in America to ameliorate their condition, until within the last half century. Dr. Samuel Ackerly, Samuel Wood, and Dr. John D. Ross have the honor of being chiefly instrumental in inaugurating a movement for this long-neglected class, which will crown their memories with undying renown. Early in 1831, through their influence, a society was organized in New York, for the purpose of founding an institution for the education of the blind, and on the 21st of April, the same year, the State Legislature passed an act incorporating the society, with the title of "The New York Institution for the Blind." A school with six pupils was opened May 19, 1832, at 47 Mercer street, under Dr. Russ, which was the first of its kind on the conti-

ment. By the aid of fairs and donations, a piece of ground and buildings on Eighth avenue were obtained of James Boorman, at a nominal rent, with covenant to sell. An instructor in the mechanic arts was procured, and on December 2d, 1833, their first public exhibition was held in the City Hall. The proficiency of the sixteen pupils present, in reading from raised letters, their knowledge of geography, arithmetic, of music, and the skill of their workmanship in mats, mattresses, and baskets, excited great interest.

In the inception of the movement, the managers only contemplated the instruction of the blind of their own city; but as applications continued to pour in from abroad, they soon felt the necessity for enlarged and better accommodations. The present site of the Institution was obtained of Mr. Boorman at a reduction of \$10,000 below its market value. On the 30th of April, 1836, \$12,000 were given by the State, on condition that \$8,000 more would be raised by the managers; and in 1839 another grant of \$15,000 was made, to assist in erecting the buildings. When the site was originally obtained, it was far outside of the improved portions of the city, but is now in the midst of a densely-populated section. It is situated between Thirty-third and Thirty-fourth streets, fronting on Ninth avenue, is two hundred feet wide and eight hundred feet deep. The building was originally a three-story, constructed of Sing-Sing marble, strongly buttressed and surmounted with turrets, presenting an imposing façade of one hundred and seventy-five feet, with a north and a south wing one hundred and twenty-five feet each. The building has been greatly improved during the last year by the addition of a mansard story, enlarging the accommodations, and enhancing its general appearance.

A broad yard of fine cultivation is spread in front of the Institution, and the workshops occupy the rear. The society is a private corporation, and elects its board of twenty managers annually, which are divided into four committees; one on finance; one on supplies, repairs, and improvements; one on music and instruction; and one on manufactures. Each committee has charge of the department indicated by its name, and holds a weekly meeting, while as a board of managers they meet monthly for the transaction of regular business. The managers serve gratuitously, many giving much valuable time to the interests of the Institution. It has never been the design of the managers to make this a permanent

“Home” or “Asylum” for the blind, nor yet a “Hospital” for the treatment of optical diseases, neither is it a Prison where persons are involuntarily detained, but emphatically a *school* for instruction, to be entered or abandoned on mutual agreement. Only about seventeen per cent. of the blind were born without sight, the rest having lost it by disease or accident.

During the thirty-nine years of its operations, the Institution has had under its instruction something more than one thousand different persons, most of whom have been young. On January 1, 1871, its students numbered 129, though 157 names had been on the roll during the year, none of whom had been in the Institution over seven years. In 1834 the managers began to receive State pupils, *i. e.*, the indigent blind, who have since been educated at the public expense. Only those are now received and educated as New York State pupils who are residents of the counties of Suffolk, Queens, Kings, and New York. Application for admission must be made to the Superintendent. Pay pupils are also received at \$300 per year. About ninety-four per cent. of all received have been New York State pupils; the remaining six per cent. have been pay pupils, and those admitted from New Jersey.

The total expenditures of the society during the first thirty-eight years amounted to \$2,025,000. The managers thankfully acknowledge the generous aid received from the Legislature, which has amounted to over \$20,000 per annum on an average; yet to their credit be it remembered that sixty per cent. of all their expenditures has been obtained through their own management and liberality. The society was for many years encumbered with debt, which was at length removed, though the improvements of the last year, amounting to about one hundred and twenty-five thousand dollars, have again somewhat involved the Institution, which indebtedness the managers have secured by mortgaging the property. The annual expense of the Institution at present amounts to about \$45,000, which appears at first view like a large sum; but when we consider the unavoidable expenditures of its triple instruction departments, literary, musical, and industrial, the extra service necessary to care for so many who walk in perpetual darkness, and the wastes of material in their instruction, our opinions are greatly modified. Books for the

blind are expensive. The American Bible Society furnishes a Bible to those who have sight for forty-five cents, but the same society charges, for the cheapest Bible for the blind, \$32.

A map of the United States, suited to an ordinary school-room, may be obtained for \$3 or \$4; but one of the kind adapted to the blind costs \$75; and so on to the end of the chapter.

Books, however costly, are required in all branches of study. The literary department embraces a thorough English course, including higher mathematics, philosophy, chemistry, history, etc.

Particular attention is given to music, in which the blind often excel. In the Industrial department, mat, broom, and mattress making, and many kinds of fancy work, are taught. Much material is unavoidably wasted in the workshop, where so many clumsy fingers must feel their way to knowledge and usefulness. The course of instruction pursued by each pupil is the one for which he appears to be best adapted. Some pass through all three departments, others but one. The most gratifying results have crowned the thoughtful endeavors of this benevolent association. It has supplied the means of culture, of subsistence, in some cases of affluence and of great usefulness, to a large portion of the community who otherwise must have remained a burden to themselves and their friends. Among the students of former years may now be numbered merchants, manufacturers, life and fire insurance agents, organists, teachers, farmers, and clergymen.

During the last two years, the use of the sewing machine has been introduced among the girls, some of whom have already proved themselves adepts in its management, performing the finest and most difficult tasks with great facility. Every encouragement to industry is afforded. As soon as one becomes a successful workman, he receives some wages, when he is encouraged to open an account with a saving bank, which many have done. The last year of their stay, they receive full journeyman's wages for all they do, to enable them to start business for themselves when they return to the outside world.

The Institution is under Protestant management, but persons of any creed are received, without designedly interfering with their religious faith. About one-third of the teachers in the Institution are blind, and have been educated within

its walls. Among the number is Mr. Stephen Babcock, who is a cultivated Christian gentleman. The principal difficulty in the matter of educating the blind has been in the lack of a system of writing and printing adapted to the touch of all. Carefully compiled statistics show that, with the line-sign system mostly employed in this country, not more than forty-eight per cent. of the blind pupils have ever been able to read with tolerable facility. The Superintendent of the New York Institution, Mr. William B. Wait, has had this matter for several years under examination, and after the most thorough analysis of the principles of the language, and of the wants and capacities of the blind, has finally invented, and introduced into his school, a new point-sign system, which all can readily learn, which may be written by the blind, and which will greatly aid in their education.

At a convention of Superintendents of the various Institutions for the blind in the United States, held in Indianapolis in August, 1871, this system, after thorough discussion, was unanimously adopted as the system of point writing and printing for all the American Institutions. Mr. Wait is now engaged in adapting the system to the writing of music.