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A. ESBARY,
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Newfoundland and Its Blind.

(By J. M. Howley.)

Article III (Continued.)

THE BLIND HERE AND ELSEWHERE.

As is most natural for us to imagine, the greatest strides in the matter of caring for the blind have been taken in the great countries of western civilization, Europe and America. To enter into any great detail of the various associations and institutions that have from time to time been established in these countries, and the work that has been accomplished by them would be a task on the patience of the reader that I do not propose to levy. It is necessary to our purpose, however, to relate a few of the many matters that have come to my notice in a cursory study of the cause of the blind and the steps taken for their benefit.

France holds the palm as the first nation to take definite measures to educate, train and care for the blind. The first school for the blind was established in Paris as far back as 1784, by Valentin Haüy, a man whose name has become great in connection with a work which is now world wide. France also leads in the matter of after care for the trained blind, and an institution to-day exists bearing the name of the great pioneer of this branch of philanthropy. This is known as the Valentin Haüy Institution, and has branches throughout France, with its central office at Paris. While it is not a teaching or training institution, nor yet an asylum or home for the blind, it embraces every known facility that can be afforded for the betterment of the condition of the blind. Numerous institutions exist throughout France, for the technical training of the adult blind, for the preliminary education and care of the young blind and for the care and well-being of the aged blind. Many of these institutions are independent of state subsidy, but some are subsidized. The training in France's institutions consists principally of music and music teaching, and massage, but some of the institutions teach broom and brush making, basket making, weaving, shoe repairing and kindred subjects.

England rapidly followed France's lead and established its first institution in 1791. Scotland followed in 1793. Both of these countries have since given great attention to the care of the blind and are to-day well supplied with institutions such as have been mentioned in the case of France. The same branches of industry are taught as in other countries and the institutions exist for the placing of the blind in positions suitable to their attainments. It might be well to observe that in England, in seven or eight cities, blind children are educated in the common schools with seeing children, and education is compulsory with them as with the seeing. Many of our people are familiar with "St. Dunstan's" which, no doubt, we consider to be the outstanding institution for the blind in the United Kingdom. But St. Dunstan's is a very recent institution, and is concerned solely with soldiers and sailors blinded in the great war. It has been my good fortune to read various letters of appreciation written by former students of St. Dunstan's, and I cannot refrain from mentioning one that particularly appealed to me.

A certain Captain was blinded in the great war. Before his enlistment he had been a fairly large clientele, and when his great handicap came upon him, he naturally considered that he must look for other fields of labor. In his letter to St. Dunstan's, written after he had left the institution, he stated that he had returned to his former occupation, and was giving entire satisfaction to his old customers and even obtaining new ones. To my mind, this lightened as to how this result was accomplished, the fact appears to be a marvellous one.

The examples set by France and the United Kingdom were quickly followed by practically every country in Europe, so that within twenty years of the establishment of the first institution at Paris, all the important countries of the continent had taken the matter of the care of the blind to heart, and to-day we find them liberally supplied with ways and means for caring the positions of the blind. Particularly in this time of Germany, where some of the most up-to-date institutions are to be found. At Chemnitz, Saxony, the institution for the care and training of the blind reaches the proportions of a small village.

Austria, Italy, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Holland, Belgium, Switzerland, Spain, Portugal, have all fallen into line, and in no half-hearted manner. Even darkest Russia and the land of the terrible Turk are not without their institutions.

Russia had in 1911 thirty-one residential schools caring for upwards of eleven hundred children, a workshop employing one hundred trained blind adults, eleven asylums for the aged blind, caring for four hundred and thirty-eight persons, and besides these, three industrial homes for the adult blind and eleven industrial institutions for the trained blind.

In Turkey, a school for the blind was established at Urfa, Armenia, in the year 1903. This owes its foundation mainly to Miss Corning Shattuck,

an American Missionary. Some of its graduates have brought the advantage of their training to other parts of the former Ottoman Empire.

The status of the institutions in Russia and Turkey, at this date, is a matter for conjecture only, but in normal times, these unfortunate countries were not entirely oblivious to the requirements of at least a portion of their afflicted.

The continent of America has gone into the matter of training and employment of the blind on a large scale, our great southern neighbour, Uncle Sam, taking the matter up in his usual whole-hearted way. The first institution in the United States of America was founded in Massachusetts in 1829. This was the progenitor of the present Perkins Institution, perhaps the most largely endowed institution of its kind in the world. Every state in the Union to-day has its one or more training and employment institutions, and with one or two exceptions all are dependent on state subsidies, seventy-five per cent. of the being entirely so. And in this great country, state subsidy is something more than the mere words convey. To cite one example, I may say that up to the year 1917, the care of its blind had cost the state of Illinois more than one million dollars. The great heart of the American nation is alive to the needs of its blind, and its philanthropists have in many cases largely endowed institutions established for their care and betterment.

Canada, whose example in most matters is more closely followed by Newfoundland than that of any other country, has one or more institutions in every province, and all these institutions are in receipt of subsidies in one manner or another from their respective Governments. The Halifax School for the Blind was founded in 1867, and a similar institution in Ontario in 1872. The other provinces have since established their various schools and agencies.

We next turn to the cradle of our race, the continent of Asia. Here we find the first recorded effort to make provision for the care of the blind, and the country that claims our attention is Japan.

As far back as the ninth century, the Japanese enacted laws concerning the blind, and it may not be amiss to give a few examples of what these were. They may appear to us of different classes and manners and times, to be one and the same, but stringent, but they tend to show the attitude of our present allies towards the blind in bygone ages. There was a law governing debtors and creditors, which usually favoured the poorer party, but when one of the litigants happened to be blind, the law invariably found in his favour. Another law ordained that if a blind person was injured in the streets, the seeing persons concerned were compelled to pay all damages, whether they were blameable or not. A special tax was levied for the maintenance of the blind, and proper officers appointed to look after their welfare. I find that the blind were taught music and massage principally, and for long years they enjoyed, not by an inherent or granted right, but by a tacit understanding, as it were, a practical monopoly of those arts. This monopoly was only broken after the introduction of western methods by the Japanese in the latter part of the last century.

Japan has to-day some fifty-seven institutions, caring for upwards of sixteen hundred blind, and practically the same trade are taught as in the countries of Europe and America.

I also find record of institutions in China and Hindustan, not in number commensurate with the great populations of those countries, but sufficient to show that some attention is given to the needs of the blind.

Information concerning Africa is not available to any great extent, but record of institutions in Egypt has come to my notice, and I presume that the influence of the mother country has given impetus to the great southern commonwealth—The Union of South Africa.

The same influence is found in Australia and New Zealand, where many institutions have been established and the usual trades are being taught. Here another outstanding result of training the blind has come to my attention. In New Zealand one of the branches taught, as it is also in other places, is shorthand, not the usual shorthand as we see people know it, but a special system adapted to the blind and known as the Braille system. It is on record that a student at one of New Zealand's institutions became so proficient in this art that he took down a speech made by Sir James Ward, speaking at the rate of about one hundred and twenty words per minute, and made an absolutely correct translation of it.

These few isolated cases of proficiency that I have quoted, tend to show what can be accomplished by

the blind with proper training, and in view of the result, the effort is surely justified. To sum up, it appears that with a very few exceptions, every country on the face of the globe, claiming any degree of civilization, has long been cognizant of the necessity of making some effort to ameliorate the condition of the blind, and has set out, either

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statured methods to reach that goal. None of them, as yet, has reached the zenith of its work in that direction, or attained the results which it is felt can be reasonably expected; but their faces are turned in the right direction, and it is only a question of time when the fulness of the harvest will reap the work and fulfill the anticipations of the sowers.

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