

PRIMITIVE CONSCIENCE.

In the issue of the *News* of March 29th, an article appears under the above heading, containing quotations from Warring Wilkinson's article in the *Popular Science Monthly*, denying that deaf-mutes have a primitive conscience, and requesting my views on the subject. My attention has also been called to the article by letters from parents of deaf-mutes and others interested in their education. I will, with your leave, endeavour to state my own views, and what I know of deaf-mutes from over twenty years' experience in their education.

The writer of the article in the *Popular Science Monthly* is the Principal of the California Institution for Deaf-Mutes, and a gentleman of very liberal education and large experience, which should have some weight with the public. I would moreover state that the subject is not a new one, at least not to those engaged in the education of deaf-mutes. An article from my pen embodying the same views, and setting forth the deplorable condition of the uneducated deaf-mute, appeared some years ago in an English newspaper, and reference was also made to this same subject in the first annual report of the Protestant Institution for Deaf-Mutes, issued in 1871. Other writers, eminent men and teachers of great experience, have also published the same views regarding the mental darkness of the deaf-mute before instruction.

By saying that deaf-mutes have not a *primary* conscience, it must be borne in mind that the *uneducated congenital mutes*, or those who lost their hearing early in infancy, are referred to. I have long believed, and, after nearly twenty years' experience as a teacher, still believe, that "conscience" as now understood—the internal self-knowledge or judgment of right and wrong, or the knowledge of our own actions as well as those of others—is an *acquired faculty* in the deaf-mute. It is, I believe, education that brings conscience to him. We possess no record of a congenital deaf-mute who, by his own unaided efforts, has found out the being of a God, or discovered the fact of his own immortality. His mind is indeed dark and inert—in fact, hermetically sealed. How could it be otherwise in his condition? Locke says that man has no innate ideas, but that his mind in early infancy is like a *blank sheet of paper*, ready to receive any external impressions. So with the uneducated deaf-mute. His mind remains a blank as long as he is uninstructed. The famous Abbé Sicard, of Paris, a world-renowned teacher of deaf-mutes, says that "a deaf-mute (congenital and uninstructed) is a perfect cipher, a living automaton. He possesses not the sure instinct by which the animal creation is guided. He is alone in nature, with no possible exercise of his intellectual faculties which remain without action." Sicard, however, refers to the deaf-mutes of his day, nearly a hundred years ago, when through neglect, and being hidden away from society as a family disgrace, the germs of the rational and moral faculties were scarcely manifested. Such treatment of deaf-mutes in our own time is rare, and, with kindness and sympathy from the beginning, their minds have received considerable development. If conscience means internal self-knowledge, or judgment of right and wrong, a mind so dark, so inert, and wholly uninstructed as that of the uneducated congenital deaf-mute, could not reasonably be expected to possess anything like it. Uneducated deaf-mutes seldom exhibit compunctions of conscience when they have done anything wrong, but such symptoms gradually appear as the deaf-mute grows older and some instruction is imparted. The testimony of educated deaf-mutes themselves goes to support this view, and the personal experience and observation of the writer confirms it to a great extent.

The intellectual condition of the congenital deaf-mute, before instruction, is little above that of the more intelligent brutes, and lower than that of the most unenlightened savages. All philologists and mental philosophers agree that it is the gift of language that chiefly distinguishes man from the brutes, and that without it he would have little claim to the title of a rational being. The testimony of educated deaf-mutes throws much light upon the amount of knowledge they possessed before coming under systematic instruction. Very few of them had any idea of the creation of the world, or of the plants and animals which it contains. Their own reflections, and all the imperfect attempts of their friends to instruct them, have failed to give them any idea of the existence of a God or the soul. We need not wonder at this when we read that Ovid, who lived in the learned and polished era of Augustus, expressed the popular belief of his time in the theory that all things were produced by the due union of heat and moisture, which shows that deaf-mutes have not been alone in their utter ignorance of the existence of a Creator. The existence of the soul after death has never occurred to the uneducated deaf-mute. All the efforts of anxious parents to convey some idea to this end have failed. The pointing to the fire to convey an idea of hell impresses the mute that the body will be thrown into a fire for some cause by some person at some indefinite time. One English deaf-mute, known to the writer, whose home was within sight of the parish church and the county jail, had his notions of heaven and hell formed by his mother always pointing to one or to the other of those buildings according to the nature of his conduct or actions. If he required reproof she would point to the jail and the fire, but if she wished to show that she was pleased with his behaviour she would pat his head and point

to the church and then upwards and assume a reverent look. From this mode of control the deaf-mute formed his idea that the church was the place for those who had fine clothes and were well behaved, and that the minister was the object of worship or admiration. The jail he thought was for the poor, the drunkard, and those who robbed orchards, who were there cast bodily into a fire. Having observed a man in the street whom he once saw taken into jail, his astonishment was very great on finding that neither the man's person nor his clothes had been burned. The next time his mother threatened him with the terrors of the jail and the fire for misconduct, he gazed at her with a look of incredulity, shook his head and laughed. Queer ideas about death have been entertained by uneducated deaf-mutes. Most of them have thought that death was only sleep, and to put a body in a coffin and bury it seemed to them to be an act of cruelty. They have no sense of moral wrong doing. They think they ought to be allowed to do just as they please, no matter what it may be. A most intelligent lady, a congenital mute, who had reached a mature age before receiving any systematic instruction, confessed that she had been practicing falsehood for many years without the slightest notion that she was doing wrong. This is not an uncommon fault with such people. Another of great intelligence had been in the habit of falsehood and dishonesty without any compunctions of conscience. He never dreamed that he was doing wrong, and only dreaded the punishment which followed detection. Many instances could be cited if necessary from deaf-mute testimony in support of the assertion that the uneducated deaf-mute has no moral sense of right and wrong. He is a practical atheist, and if his friends have tried to give him an idea of a Supreme Power and such takes root in his mind, his conceptions on the point are most vague and unsatisfactory. Teachers of deaf-mutes have frequently watched the gradual development of the mind of their new pupils. It is found that, by associating among the other pupils, the new arrivals will soon gain the idea of a Being existing above "who can see them, and is angry when they behave badly," and the pointing upwards is often used by one pupil as a check upon another who is inclined to be naughty. Sometimes it has this effect, but I have more than once seen the admonitions defied by young deaf-mutes who had not yet obtained clear ideas on the subject. I have seen them disputing and their antagonistic principles aroused when one has been desirous of saying something especially annoying to his opponent, who, he knows, has a reverence for the Being above, and is shocked when anything is said against Him. He will say in his signs "God-bad," not knowing his blasphemy, yet with a secret shrug that he has gained his point, beaten his antagonist, who rushes with horror expressed on his countenance to report to his teacher the profanity of the other.

When the deaf-mute is put under careful control he comes to associate in his mind a line of conduct with what produces pain, and another line of conduct with what produces pleasure. Out of this grows a *sort of conscience* which leads him to be sorrowful when he does certain things, and to be glad when he does the contrary. This conscience is entirely dependent upon the person to whom he is subjected. "Given a good master," says Dr. Reet, the highest authority in America, "and he will be very likely to have a kind of moral sense that will be a safe guide in the life he leads, and will bring about habits which will be useful to him hereafter." So quite the reverse will be his conduct if he be placed under a bad master. He may be obedient, diligent, affectionate, habitually honest, but it will be owing to the influence of kind and firm control and good example—not to the higher moral and religious motives that are addressed to children who hear. He is too often self-willed, passionate, prone to secret vices and suspicions, but these bad qualities are generally the outcome of parental indulgence, and in having been the butt of thoughtless young people.

Is the uneducated deaf-mute morally and legally responsible? is a question which has been often discussed. In many criminal cases, both in Europe and America, uneducated deaf-mutes have frequently figured for murder, but they have been treated as irresponsible beings and no sentence has been passed on them.

There can be no more pitiable object than an uneducated deaf-mute, except where blindness is added to that of deafness. His condition points to conclusions which cannot be evaded. It is the duty of society to provide for his instruction at the proper age, and it is criminal on the part of parents and guardians who neglect to secure for their unfortunate child the benefits within their reach. To the deaf-mute education means *everything*. It means intercourse with fellow-men, hope, happiness, the pleasant communion with the highest intellectual achievements of men of all countries and all ages, which we find in books. It makes life in this world enjoyable and gives him hope of salvation in the world to come. To deny the deaf-mute education is to keep his mind on a level with the brutes. "To the hearing child," says Dr. Reet, "every word spoken in his presence is a means of intellectual development. Every person, literate or illiterate, with whom he comes in contact is for the time his conscious or unconscious teacher. In fact school gives him so small a portion of the knowledge he possesses that it may be considered rather the re-

gulator than the source of his attainments. To the deaf-mute it means home, hope, happiness; it means self-control and virtue; it means the full and free exercise of all the rights, immunities and privileges which belong to humanity."

It is indeed astonishing that the deaf-mute and the methods employed in his instruction are so little understood by the public, even at the present day, and this is why many parents of deaf-mute children fail to appreciate the benefits those institutions established for their education confer on them. There are hundreds of deaf-mutes in the Province of Quebec totally uninstructed, — irresponsible beings, — which means a danger to society and a reproach to our boasted civilization. Montreal has done nobly in this work, and Mr. Joseph Mackay's munificent gift will be fully and justly appreciated, but I fear not in our day and generation.

T. WIDD.

Montreal, 15th April, 1879.

DR. BLAZER.

BY MAX ADELER.

"He was no kind of a doctor for an almshouse, anyhow," said the steward, referring to the late resident physician of the institution. "He hadn't the qualifications."

"How do you mean?"

"Why, he'd get interested in a novel or something, maybe, and he'd sit up there in his room and never go near the paupers. And when I'd ask him if he wasn't going to see the sick ones to-day, he'd look up and say:

"I'm not very well myself this morning. Jones; s'posing you just step over and put mustard plasters on the entire institution."

"So I'd have to obey orders, you know, and I'd plaster up the whole crowd, sick and well, and pretty soon you could hear those paupers howling worse than a menagerie, and see 'em hopping about as if they were dancing plain cotillions. But they had to bear it. Doctor's orders, you know; and there he'd sit and read, and read, and read, until he found if the heroine got married or not; and that the plasters couldn't come off till he said so. It was awful!"

"Was he always that way?"

"Not always, of course. Sometimes he'd practice on the paupers to find out the effect of medicines. One day he ladled out a bucketful of paragon among the inmates, and put the whole crowd asleep for five days. Never waked up once. It was like a graveyard, only the snoring. A short time after he gave them ipecac, and for a week there were eighty-five paupers going around with asthma, wheezing like an omnibus-horse with the heaves; and last September he trepanned three bald-headed paupers and set brass door-plates on the top of their skulls. Nothing at all the matter with them, only he said he thought they would look nice with lids on top of them and he wanted to keep his hand in practice for the operation."

"Did the victims like it?"

"Like it? Certainly they didn't. But he was allowed by the directors to do what he pleased."

"One time, when he wanted a bone for something or other, he took a rib out of the side of a tramp from Manch Chunk. Said the operation was necessary to keep the man from going into the consumption. He had the rib made up into suspender buttons, I suspect. And he used to experiment with transfusion of the blood, too. He would take blood from an Irishman and put it into the veins of a German, and vice versa, until the Irishman at last could speak nothing but German and the German talked with a brogue. Always trying some ridiculous plan or other. I never saw such a man."

"Was he successful in his practice?"

"That depends on what you call successful. If a man was real sick and the nurse would go for Dr. Blazer, the man would send off a farewell message to his relations, tell where he'd like to be buried, say his last words and make up his mind for the worst. He'd flit off before morning. In serious cases the doctor was regarded as certain death around here. I know when I told the country undertaker that he was to leave, the undertaker sat down and cried like a child. Said it wasn't right to take the bread out of a man's mouth in such hard times. He got so much for every burial, you know. And one of the directors voted straight along not to dismiss Dr. Blazer, because, the directors said, there were too many paupers anyhow, and if the number could be steadily reduced by legal means, it would be a good thing for the taxpayers. Do you know what I think? I think I'd rather have Asiatic cholera in my family than to take Dr. Blazer as a boarder. It's not half so deadly."

"Why was he discharged?"

"Why, I'll tell you. It seems that he was partner of one of the contractors for furnishing the poor-house with victuals. He kept it secret; but we all noticed that he used to go around with a kind of a two-horse power double-acting stomach-pump. About three days in the week he'd start in ward No. 1 right after breakfast, and pump out every pauper clean through to ward No. 8. Consequence was the inmates would be so raging hungry by dinner time that they'd eat like anacondas. After dinner out'd come that pump again, and by supper time the inmates would be willing to eat paving-stone or brickbats, they'd be so near starved. And so he'd go on, until the com-

missary department'd be bankrupted over twenty-four hours. I believe that man could have dumped out the whole Russian army in a day with that medicine. It used to turn some of the feeblest paupers nearly wrong side out. So the directors began to inquire what made the expenses so heavy, and when they called the doctor up about it, he owned up, and Mr. Perkins said that as three more weeks of that stomach pump would put the county treasury into the hands of a receiver unless it could incur a second national debt, he thought the doctor had better go. So he was dismissed."

"Left, did he?"

"Yes, left. And the morning he was going away he cut five toes off some paupers in ward No. 4 and put them in alcohol for study, he said, and he gave a pauper from Lower Merion some kind of medicine that threw him into fits so that he's been bouncing around up stairs like an India rubber ball ever since. There he goes now! Hear him? I'll have to go up and sit on him. Have to do it two hours every day by order of the directors. I'm not employed here as a kind of paper-weight to hold down paupers with fits, hanged if I am!"

Then the steward flew up stairs and I withdrew. It is to be feared that the death-rate will suddenly increase at Periklomen, where Dr. Blazer has gone to practise.

BRELOQUES POUR LAMES.

ON account of the decided manner of his spouse, Smythe says his children are governed by *ma-shall* law.

A NEWSPAPER man in Texas has married \$2,000,000, and a sorrowing brother adds, "Please exchange."

ANTHONY TROLLOPE says that he never knew a nice woman who did not think it proper to look up to her husband and be governed by him.

THE best natured man will get a trifle mad when his wife tells him that she has made "ulsters for the boys" out of his last winter's ear muffs.

"OCH," said a love-sick Hibernian, "what a recreation it is to be dying of love! It sets the heart aching so delicately there's no taking a wink of sleep for the pleasure of the pain!"

"THE wicked stand in slippery places," but for a perfect picture of reckless insecurity you want to look at a frightened woman trying to stand on a camp-stool to keep out of the way of a mouse.

WHEN the mild spring days come, if they ever should, look out for the showy \$35 baby-carriage pushed along the sidewalk by a bedraggled-looking mother who hasn't had a square meal all winter.

"MA," said a little girl, "if you'll let me buy some candy I'll be good." "My child," solemnly responded the mother, "you should not be good for pay; you should be good for nothing."

OF course no woman ever did such a thing, but supposing now for the sake of argument, as it were, that a woman was to go to church for the purpose of showing off her new basque, would it be sac-religious, so to speak?

THE latest yarn about fast time is to the effect that on a certain American railroad a young man put his head out of the car window to kiss his girl good-by, when the train went ahead so rapidly that he kissed an old African female at the next station.

"Now, isn't he an angel?" said the fond mother, as she seated the little fellow in his high chair at the table for the first time. "A sort of destroying angel," remarked the cynical father, as he saw the \$5-castor go spinning to the floor with a crash.

CAR stops; smiling young lady enters; every seat full; an old gentleman rises at other end. "Oh, don't rise!" says the lovely girl; "I can just as well stand." "You can do just as you please about that, Miss," says the old man, "but I'm going to get out."

"WELL, how is the spring trade?" said a gentleman to a friend the other day. "Dry goods never brisker," was the reply. "My wife shops all day, every chair in the house is covered with bundles, and I think of sending my pocket-book out of town for change of air—it's so thin."

THERE is an old saying that a man may elevate a woman to his own plane, but a woman seldom meets with equal success. Girls should think of this before bringing sorrow to the hearts that have loved and cherished them. Unequal marriages seldom turn out well, and in nine cases out of ten the eyes of the foolish girl too soon awaken to the sad realities of disappointment and remorse.

MRS. MURIEL took great interest in parish affairs. Last year she promised to assist in decorating the parish church. One illuminated text she thought would look well over the chancel screen, and she requested her husband to bring it from town. As might have been expected, he forgot the text and size, and wired to his wife for particulars. To the surprise of all the telegraph clerks, the message came flashing over the wires: "Unto us a child is born, nine feet long by two feet broad."