

THE EDUCATED BLIND.

Many otherwise well-informed persons have a very limited knowledge of the attainments and capabilities of the educated blind people of this country and some crude ideas as to the functions of the institutions of learning which are devoted to the education of the blind, and continually refer to these institutions as "asylums." This indicates a misconception of the objects of the institutions and is an injustice to their students and alumni as well. These places of learning are no more "asylums," in the generally accepted sense of that word, than are the schools, colleges and universities for the education of the seeing boys and girls; the only difference being that the blind receive their board and tuition at the expense of the state, while those in attendance upon boarding schools, colleges and universities are compelled to pay their own way. There attaches to the word "asylum" a sense of helplessness, aimlessness and inefficiency, while as a matter of fact the persons who have attended and are now attending our institutions for the education of the blind are in many cases the equals and superiors, in intellectual attainments and even in professional walks of life, of those who are blest with perfect vision.

The Perkins Institute.

In the 44th annual report of the trustees of the Perkins Institution and Massachusetts Asylum for the Blind, issued in October, 1875, Secretary Samuel G. Howe made the following very truthful statement:

"A blind man is no longer necessarily classed among paupers and dependents. Lack of sight is no longer a barrier in the way of exercising various callings and professions, and of filling positions of usefulness and distinction. There will be found among the graduates of the institutions for the blind in this country, not only ingenious mechanics and skillful workmen and women, but good writers, talented musicians and able teachers. Taken as a whole, the blind of today abhor the idea of dependence, and strive to become industrious members of society, and useful citizens. They are brought up to regard individual independence as one of the essentials of human happiness, and the ability to work as its only secure basis. They have, in short, so raised themselves in the esteem of their fellow-citizens, that they are no longer regarded as objects of pity or charity."

Samuel Bacon.

This calls to mind an illustrious example, a person who has been blind since he was eleven years of age, and whose history is particularly interesting to the people of this locality. We refer to Prof. Samuel Bacon, who resides upon a farm a few miles from Nebraska City. This gentleman was the founder of the state institutions for the blind in Illinois, Iowa and Nebraska. The En-

cyclopædia Americana contains the following relative to Professor Bacon:

"The Illinois Institution for the Education of the Blind owes its origin to Mr. Samuel Bacon, a former blind pupil of the Ohio Institution, a student of Kenyon College, Ohio, and a superior mathematician. Leaving Ohio for the West, he stopped at Jacksonville, Ill., where the citizens requested him to start a school for the blind. He commenced in April, 1848, to procure statistics, books, etc., and on June 1, 1848, a school was opened with four pupils under Mr. Bacon's charge. These pupils were exhibited before the legislature January 13, 1849, and the impression was so favorable that an act establishing the institution, under a board of trustees, was passed at once. Mr. Bacon was appointed superintendent. The number of pupils increased; a building was erected, which a few years later was burned; a new building was soon after erected. On the resignation of Mr. Bacon, Dr. Joshua Rhoads was appointed superintendent.

"Mr. Samuel Bacon, who had successfully established the Illinois institution, resigned and became an instructor in mathematics in St. Louis, Mo. After two years he decided to commence a school for the blind in Keokuk, Iowa. He collected four children, and commenced the work of instruction in September, 1852. Desiring to avoid the influence of party politics, he requested the legislature to place the institution under the management of a corporation. The senate passed such a bill, but the house refused, and it was established as a state institution, with a board of four trustees, in 1853. Mr. Bacon was appointed principal.

"Mr. S. Bacon visited Nebraska in 1873, and, encouraged by his success in establishing the Illinois and Iowa institutions, at once decided to make a similar effort in Nebraska City, which was successful. On September 22, 1874, the legislature made an appropriation of \$18,000 for a lot and buildings for the accommodation of fifty pupils. A board of trustees was appointed January 13, 1875, which was the date of its organization. Mr. Bacon was elected principal. Some legal difficulties having arisen as to the real character of the institution, whether it was an asylum or an educational institution, the supreme court, it is said, decided it to be an asylum. Mr. Bacon vacated his charge in November, 1877."

During recent years Professor Bacon has resided quietly at his farm home near Nebraska City, but his interest in educational matters, especially as they pertain to the blind, remains undiminished. Like every other good citizen, he is in favor of removing the institutions for the education of the blind from politics. Appointments to positions of trust and authority in these institutions should not be made to liquidate political obligations, but should be made regardless of politics and in the interests of good government and proper education. In Nebraska we have too often experienced the sad results of political appointments in the state institution for the blind.

NEW YORK CENTRAL RAILROAD.

EDITOR THE CONSERVATIVE:

Dr. George L. Miller, in a late number of THE CONSERVATIVE, was not quite correct in giving the many original links in what is now the New York Central Railroad. The original route built from Syracuse to Rochester, was via Auburn, Geneva and Canandaigua, being quite circuitous. The Rochester and Syracuse short line is very direct and was built later, in 1851-2, and is the main line of the New York Central.

The Rochester, Lockport and Niagara Falls R. R. was also built in 1851-2. The writer was an assistant engineer in charge from Rochester to Spencerport—ten miles. The road ran across the corner of a large farm three miles west of Rochester, owned by Mr. William Otis, who, in addition to being a farmer, was a railroad contractor. He was a man of marked practical ability, and had the contract for building the first twenty-five miles of the railroad west from Rochester. He had three sons, one of whom, at that time, was a lad of fourteen years, and ten years my junior, and is now the famous Gen. E. S. Otis, of Philippine fame.

The New York legislature, at its session in 1852-3, passed an act providing for the consolidation of the several links in the original line, and the two new roads, the Rochester and Syracuse and the Rochester, Lockport and Niagara Falls into one corporation to be called the New York Central Railroad Company.

Among its provision, very remarkable at that early day, was one providing for a maximum passenger rate of two cents per mile for all distances, whether long or short. This low rate has been in operation for nearly forty-eight years and has saved the people of the state, as well as the general travelling public, many millions of dollars.

But there were kickers in those days as well as in these. Many members of the legislature, on their return home, had to face an angry and excited constituency, and were roundly denounced for having "sold out," and turned the state over to a grasping monopoly, and the Spencerport member was threatened with a coat of tar and feathers.

This wise consolidation was the beginning of the magnificent New York Central Railroad as it is today, the finest piece of railroad property in the world, and whose quadruple tracks, its trains and train service, in excellence, luxury, speed and promptness, are without a peer.

O. B. GUNN.

Kansas City, Mo., June 28, 1900.

An autopsy on a 13-year-old Ohio boy whose head measured thirty-one and one-half inches in circumference revealed a hollow brain. Thus has death removed another prospective populist statesman.—Washington Post.