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FOR THE HANDICAPPED

*Inaugural Lecture of Professor of Education
and Dean of the Faculty of Education
delivered at the University College of Swansea
on November 7th, 1972*

by

Professor D. G. PRITCHARD

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'Make them laugh ; make them cry ; make them wait' was Charles Reade's recipe for novel writing. At first sight it might also appear to be a recipe for an inaugural lecture, for you have certainly had to wait. But it is not my intention to make you laugh, and though I have taken handicapped children as my subject, the story I shall have to tell is full of hope and the ending is a happy one. You will not therefore cry. Moreover I have seen no indication that the wait has made you impatient to hear the story, although for me, apart from the drawn out agony of suspense, it has brought a two-fold benefit. It has made me conscious of, and therefore able to thank you for, the warmth of the welcome I have been given and the friendliness that has been shown to me. It has also made me aware of the immense debt that the College and the Education Department owe to my predecessor. You, Mr. Principal, have spoken on another occasion of his contribution, as Vice-Principal, to the College, and I welcome this opportunity of paying tribute to his work in the Department.

When Professor Gittins took up his Chair in 1956, the Education Department concentrated almost entirely on the initial training of graduates. However in 1961 he established the first of a number of advanced courses for serving teachers. This was for teachers of handicapped children, and it led to the Diploma in the Education of Backward Children. Its tutor was Mr. Maurice Chazan who later led the Department so ably when Professor Gittins was Vice-Principal and during the year after his death. In 1966 an option for teachers of maladjusted children was added to the course which was re-named the Diploma in Special Education. Other advanced courses followed. The Diploma in Educational Psychology is intended for graduates in psychology with teaching

experience who wish to train as educational psychologists. The Diploma in School Counselling caters for the need for personal, educational and vocational counselling for children, especially in large comprehensive schools, by providing specially trained teachers. The Diploma in Adolescent Development stresses the study of groups and informal education, and is intended for teachers, youth leaders and social workers. It replaced a basic course in the training of youth workers which had existed for some time.

All these courses, in youth work, counselling, educational psychology and special education, reflected Professor Gittins' concern for the deprived, the underprivileged and the handicapped. In his inaugural lecture, entitled Educational Opportunity, he referred to 'the quite astonishing dictum' that Condorcet incorporated in his draft Constitution for the infant French Republic : 'Instruction is the need of all, and society owes it equally to all its members.' As the Principal pointed out in his address at the Memorial Service to Professor Gittins, this thought explained his passionate interest in the provision of satisfactory educational facilities for all, especially the handicapped. It is also exemplified in the fact that four times as many pages are devoted to the education of handicapped children in the Report of the Consultative Committee on Primary Education in Wales, of which he was Chairman, as in the equivalent report for England, the Plowden Report. It is therefore appropriate that my theme tonight should reflect, at least in part, the interests of my predecessor.

Professor Evan John Jones, who held the Chair of Education before Professor Gittins, opened his inaugural lecture in 1947 with the following sentence : 'At the beginning of the last century the people of Britain realized that it was possible for all its children to be given instruction in schools.' In the sense that systematic instruction within the school walls tended to displace other forms of learning, this was true. It was certainly not true, however, in the sense that all children, whether

handicapped or not, could be given instruction in schools, for at the beginning of the nineteenth century there were only five schools in the whole of Britain which catered for handicapped children. Of these, two were for the deaf and three for the blind. Of provision for mentally handicapped or physically handicapped children there was none. Nor would there be any for half a century.

Of course, isolated attempts to educate individual handicapped children had been made long before 1800. Indeed Bede in his *Ecclesiastical History of England* describes how the Bishop of Hagulstad taught a dumb youth to speak.¹ But since Bede makes no mention of deafness, it is possible that the youth merely lacked speech, as opposed to being a deaf-mute. Be that as it may, eight centuries pass before another record which could refer to the education of the deaf appears, and it was not until the seventeenth century that any significant advance was made. In 1620 Juan Paulo Bonet, a Spanish Benedictine, published a record of his experiences as a teacher of the deaf and the manual one-handed alphabet he had used. Bonet used a silent method, he taught the deaf neither to speak nor to lip-read, and when in 1760 the first public school in the world for handicapped children opened its doors, it was Bonet's silent method that was used to educate its deaf pupils. The school was opened in Paris and its founder was Charles Michel, Abbé de l'Épée, who had for long laboured among the poor. To Bonet's finger alphabet he added an extremely effective system of arbitrary signs, and the silent method he used became known as the sign and manual system. It consisted of conventional signs for most of the common nouns and verbs, supplemented by the means of finger spelling any words for which no conventional signs existed.

In the same year as De l'Épée opened his Parisian school, nine-year-old Charles Shirreff became a pupil of Thomas Braidwood. A Scot, Braidwood was educated

¹Bede, The Venerable. *Ecclesiastical History of England also the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, edited J. A. Giles, H. G. Bohn, 1849, pp. 237-8.

at the University of Edinburgh and established in that city a private school for the teaching of mathematics. In 1760 he was requested by a wealthy Leith merchant, Alexander Shirreff, to undertake the education of his son, deaf from the age of three. Braidwood saw the task as a challenge and accepted it. He had not, however, heard of Bonet and his finger alphabet, and he therefore taught the boy by the only method he knew, he taught him to speak and to lip-read. He therefore used the oral method as opposed to the silent sign and manual method. He was immediately successful, and his success brought him more deaf pupils. Gradually the mathematics school closed and in its place appeared Mr. Braidwood's Academy for the Deaf.

So began the first school for the deaf in Britain, indeed the first special school of any kind in Britain. Twenty years after the admission of Charles Shirreff the school was so well known that it had admitted four pupils from the United States. It had also admitted Samuel Johnson, though as a visitor not a pupil. He describes the school in his *Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland*, and part of his description is so typical of the man and illustrates so well the value of special education for the handicapped that it is worth quoting.

'This school I visited, and found some of the scholars waiting for their master, whom they are said to receive at his entrance with smiling countenance and sparkling eyes, delighted with the hope of new ideas. One of the young Ladies had her slate before her, on which I wrote a question consisting of three figures, to be multiplied by two figures. She looked upon it, and quivering her fingers in a manner which I thought very pretty, but of which I know not whether it was art or play, multiplied the sum regularly in two lines, observing the decimal place ; but did not add the two lines together, probably disdainingly so easy an operation. I pointed at the place where the sum total should stand, and she noted it with such expedition as seemed to shew that she had it only to write. It was pleasing to see one of the most desperate

of human calamities capable of so much help : whatever enlarges hope, will exalt courage ; after having seen the deaf taught arithmetick, who would be afraid to cultivate the Hebrides ?'¹

Part of the success of Braidwood's school was undoubtedly due to the publicity it received from Johnson's visit. But most of its success was due to the fact that the pupils he taught were few in number and, without exception, came from good homes. His nephew, Joseph Watson, who had taught under Braidwood, had none of these advantages when, in 1792, he was invited to become the Superintendent of the first public, as opposed to private, school for the deaf. It was situated in Bermondsey and was known as the Asylum for the Support and Education of the Deaf and Dumb Children of the Poor. By 1819 it had 200 children and it moved to new premises in the Old Kent Road. Unlike the children in Braidwood's Academy in Edinburgh, its pupils came from the poorest of families. Many of them were paupers, many were dull, all were profoundly deaf. They were crowded into large buildings with insufficient teachers for the individual methods that oralism demanded. Nor were their teachers always as capable as Braidwood had been. Under conditions such as these it was difficult for oralism to flourish. Far easier would be the teaching of such children, in such numbers, by the simpler sign and manual method. So the oral method declined and was replaced by the silent method of De l'Épée. This was to be deprecated, for not only were the deaf once again dumb, they were also cut off from communication with the speaking world. Moreover, without the acquisition of speech their language development was minimal and they would consequently be incapable of imaginative thought.

Other schools for the deaf were established in the early part of the nineteenth century including the first Welsh school. It was the Royal Cambrian Institution for the

¹Johnson, Samuel. *A Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland*, Strahan and Cadell, 1775, pp. 382-3.

Deaf and Dumb, and it opened at Aberystwyth in 1847 with two day pupils and two boarders. Three years later it moved to more highly populated Swansea, and exactly one hundred years later it moved again—to Llandrindod Wells, where it still stands. All the new schools, of which by mid-century there were over a dozen, followed the Asylum in the Old Kent Road and adopted the silent sign and manual method. But without the inspiration of a Braidwood, even the sign and manual method declined and became debased. Headmasters, who were sometimes known as superintendents because they were responsible for a boarding establishment as well as a school, allowed their assistant masters to acquire from the children what knowledge they could of signs, instead of training them themselves. Richard Elliot, later to become headmaster of the Old Kent Road Asylum, described the position when he joined the staff in the middle of the century. 'The Headmaster rarely came into the school . . . the assistants received no sort of training . . . not a word of direction, advice or encouragement was ever given to me or indeed to any of us . . . provided there was the appearance of work it seemed to be the business of no one in particular to see whether it was efficient or otherwise . . . The Headmastership seemed a sinecure.'

As a result of this lack of guidance, children invented their own signs, which differed of course from school to school, and which were copied by the teachers and passed on to a future generation of deaf children. There was much memorizing and transcribing of written matter which was not understood. Elliot recounts the story of a boy who produced a beautifully written exercise of the conjugation of the verb 'to be.' Asked what 'I am' meant, the boy gave the sign for 'jam.' Moreover, with the first rush of deaf school building over, promotion for teachers became more difficult. Fewer good men came into the work, and the schools became more dependent upon teachers who were themselves deaf. At one period, out of nine assistants at the Old Kent Road Asylum,

six were deaf ex-pupils. In addition, the conditions of service were severe. In 1832 an assistant articed himself to the Headmaster of the Glasgow Institution for the Deaf and Dumb 'to serve night and day, Sunday and holiday, for seven years, under a penalty of £50.' Even when good teachers were secured, there were difficulties in retaining them. The Trustees of the Old Kent Road Asylum paid nearly £20 to buy out a teacher drawn for the militia. Another of their assistants, who was deaf, was seized by the Press Gang, and the Trustees had to prove his deafness in order to secure his release.

The task of the schools was made no easier by the increasing number of children entering them. This was due in part to the expansion in population and in part to lack of knowledge regarding the causes of deafness. A girl was admitted to the Brighton Asylum for the Instruction of Deaf and Dumb Children who, at the age of five, had caught scarlet fever, and had consequently suffered 'a bad discharge from the ear, which had been allowed to go unchecked under the popular delusion that to stop it would be fatal.' Instead she was allowed to become deaf. This was only some eighty years ago. There was at that time a great deal of deafness which could have been prevented. As an aside perhaps I could mention some of the causes of deafness of children at the Georgia Institution in the United States which might not have been prevented but were at least unusual. They included : taking strong medicine, kicked by a mule, thrown from a horse, and, strangest of all, firing a gun while the head was in a kettle.

Meanwhile, on the Continent, apart from France which had adopted De l'Epée's sign and manual method, the oral system still flourished. It had first been introduced by a German, Samuel Heinicke. He was strong-willed, tenacious and resolute, and coming from peasant stock he determined to escape his background. His ambition was to become a teacher or a preacher, and, as the first and unlikely step in the fulfilment of this ambition, he enlisted in the Dresden Royal Life Guards, part of the

forces of the Elector of Saxony. He devoted his free time to study, and became proficient in Latin, French and mathematics. His free time must have been considerable, for he also taught private students while in the army. One of these was a deaf and dumb boy, who so aroused his interest that he was about to leave the army to specialize in the teaching of the deaf when the Seven Years War broke out. Heinicke was taken prisoner but soon escaped to Hamburg, where he became organist and teacher at the nearby hamlet of Eppendorf. There he found another deaf and dumb child, and despite opposition he accepted him into his school. Using the oral method, he soon taught the child to speak. Other children were brought to him, and with each success his fame spread. Like Braidwood's Academy in Edinburgh, his school received many visitors including the Elector of Saxony himself, who invited him to return to Saxony to open a school for the deaf. At Leipzig in 1778, with a grant from the Elector and nine pupils from his school at Eppendorf, he established the world's first state school for handicapped children. And this is where Heinicke's school differed from Braidwood's, the state grant ensured not only its success but also the continuation of the oral method and its eventual re-introduction to Britain.

To this school in 1830 came Friedrich Moritz Hill. Hill, a German, who owed his name to his English grandfather, had been trained by Pestalozzi himself, and had embraced his master's methods. These he adapted to the needs of deaf children, especially Pestalozzi's tenet that young children learnt best in the natural environment of the home. Deaf children therefore, contended Hill, should be taught language as ordinary children acquire it, at their mothers' knees. Grammar and lists of words to be learnt by heart had no place in his method. The children would be assisted to speak through constant daily contact with common objects. Natural actions would be used to the same purpose, and lessons in schools for the deaf would be composed of spontaneous conversations between teacher and child. Hill remained at the

Leipzig school until his death, publicizing his method and training teachers in it.

Meanwhile in London Baroness Mayer de Rothschild was considering what might be done for deaf Jewish children. Her husband, banker and philanthropist, was head of the Rothschild financial house in Britain. He it was who advanced Disraeli four million pounds to complete the purchase of the shares in the Suez Canal from the Khedive of Egypt. His wife needed rather less money for her project. This was to establish a home and school for deaf Jewish children. Both were opened in Whitechapel in 1864.

At the outset the children were taught by the usual sign and manual method. However, hearing of the work of Hill, the Baroness invited a young Dutch teacher, William Van Praagh, who had been trained in his methods, to take over the direction of the school. The majority of the children at the Whitechapel school came from poor homes. Some were paupers paid for by Guardians, some were poor children educated and housed free of charge by the school. Only four were fee-paying. With this unpromising material, Van Praagh showed beyond doubt, what had not previously been shown in England and Wales, that the oral method could work. So successful was he, and so pleased was the Baroness that she determined to extend the oral system to all schools for the deaf. To this end, she canvassed her idea among, in her own words, 'people of influence and high position.' In 1871 two meetings were held at her home in Piccadilly. The list of those invited to attend is not extant, but good wishes and apologies for non-attendance were received from Gladstone, Mathew Arnold and W. E. Forster. At all events sufficient support was forthcoming to warrant the establishment of the Association for the Oral Instruction of the Deaf and Dumb in the same year.

Under the influence of the Association, the schools for the deaf changed, albeit gradually and in some cases reluctantly, from the silent sign and manual method to the oral method, so that today all deaf children are taught

to speak and to lip-read. Even so, the effects of having had two methods are still with us and the adult deaf still use and are taught conventional signs and the manual alphabet. Indeed there is still a certain amount of controversy regarding the most appropriate method since workers with the adult deaf feel that unless children are taught signs and the manual alphabet at school, they will be unable to participate in the social activities arranged for the adult deaf.

As with the deaf so with the blind, delay in determining the method by which they should be taught impeded the development of educational facilities for them. During the late Roman Empire, Didymus, who was blinded in early childhood but subsequently became Professor of theology and philosophy at the University of Alexandria, devised wooden block letters which could be handled by the blind. Based upon these, sporadic and mainly unsuccessful attempts to teach the blind to read continued until the seventeenth century. But even if the blind could be successfully taught, there would still be nothing for them to read, since block letters could obviously not be made into a book. However, when in 1651 Harsdorffer in Germany produced wax tablets by which the blind could write, there was far more purpose in learning to read. But still the difficulty of the block letters remained, and it was left to Valentin Haüy to adapt embossed print to the use of the blind. He discovered that if letters were printed heavily enough to show in low relief on the reverse side of the paper, they could be felt and interpreted by the fingers of the blind. Taking as his first pupil a blind waif he had found begging at the door of St. Germain des Prés in Paris, Haüy demonstrated the boy's ability to read to the Société Philanthropique which was sufficiently impressed to support Haüy's idea of founding a school. He therefore relinquished his lucrative post at the French Foreign Office, and with twelve blind children from an almshouse and funds from the Société he opened in Paris in 1784 the first school for blind children.

Two years later the school had thirty pupils, who were commanded to give an exhibition of their attainments before Louis XVI at Versailles, and by the year of the Revolution the number had increased to fifty. Within the walls of the school, which was a residential institution, the blind like the sighted without, responded to the call of liberty, and Haüy was faced with a popular rising, with which he dealt more tactfully and successfully than Louis was able to outside. But this was the least of his troubles. The Revolution threatened to overthrow all charitable institutions. The members of the Société Philanthropique went into hiding and subscriptions ceased. However in 1791 conditions improved materially when the National Assembly endowed the school with the house and funds of a suppressed convent.

In the same year, in Liverpool, the first school for the blind in Britain opened its doors. For the first few years of its existence it could hardly be called a school. It was in fact called the Asylum for the Indigent Blind, and the intention of its founder, the Reverend Henry Dannett, as expressed in the broadsheet in which he sought subscriptions for the institution, was to instruct the blind in 'Music and the Mechanical Arts, and so be rendered comfortable in themselves, and useful to their country.' The oldest under instruction was sixty-eight, the youngest nine, and although the number of children admitted gradually increased, there was not for many years any attempt to teach them to read. This was partly due to the fact that Dannett was at first unaware of Haüy's work in Paris, though by 1803 he had certainly heard of Haüy, although not necessarily of his method of teaching the blind to read, for in the Minute Book of that year he wrote, with rather less than historical accuracy: 'I have recently discovered that Monsieur Haüy had established a school on a somewhat similar plan in Paris . . . under the auspices of the late unfortunate Louis, who took great delight in visiting it . . . This amiable Monarch had a heart to feel, and a hand always stretched out to relieve, the distress of his subjects . . . One would

have imagined that the humanity of his character, and the remembrance of his former beneficent deeds, would have softened the savage breasts, and preserved him from the brutal violence of his lawless murderers, who, by his death, have cast an indelible infamy upon a Nation, heretofore deemed civilized !'

In the first thirty years of the nineteenth century a number of other schools for the blind were established, but all were patterned on the Liverpool Asylum and none taught their pupils to read. However, during the 1830's there was considerable development in Britain of methods of teaching the blind to read. This arose directly from the fact that Lady Elizabeth Lowther brought over from Paris for her blind son some of the books produced by Haüy in his type. Haüy's type was the ordinary, italic form of the Roman letter, and his pupils wrote ordinary script backwards with a steel pen on thick paper, and so embossed it on the reverse side. The type was therefore legible to both eye and finger. But it appeared to many closely connected with the blind that the Roman characters were not sufficiently distinct to the touch. They did not fulfil to the finger the promise they made to the eye.

The Edinburgh Society of Arts therefore decided to offer a prize for the best type for the blind. As a result, a number of new types were produced. They were of two main kinds. There were those which were completely arbitrary and bore no relation to the normal letters, and could not therefore be read by a sighted person without instruction. Others were based upon ordinary capital letters which were slightly modified to make them more easy to decipher by touch or, where modification was not possible, by the introduction of completely new characters.

The best known system of the latter kind was devised by William Moon who, losing his sight at the age of twenty-one, devoted himself to those who were similarly afflicted. He personally printed many books in his type at a small workshop adjoining his Brighton home, but he made no profit from his enterprise since he sold the books at below cost price. The University of Philadelphia rec-

ognized his work by conferring upon him an honorary doctorate of laws, and after his death the Moon Society continued to publicize his system. In 1914 the Moon Society was taken over by the Royal National Institute for the Blind which still publishes books and periodicals in Moon type for those who have lost their sight in later life and find Braille baffling because of its technical difficulties or because of work-hardened fingers which lack sensitivity. But in the 1830's the Moon system was not predominant, and it was but one of a number of competing systems which were in use. Each had its protagonists ; each was followed in one school or another. At a time when unity was the main necessity, those concerned with the welfare of the blind were divided against each other. The lack of uniformity meant that the schools worked in solitary isolation with their teachers loth to move elsewhere where the learning of a new system would be necessary. Moreover, there was a tremendous wastage of resources. In the main, the same few books, mostly portions of the Bible, were reproduced in each different type, with the result that there was comparatively little that the literate blind could read. In any case, the types themselves were nowhere near being ideal. Some were too complicated, others demanded a high degree of sensitivity of touch, while all were expensive to produce and laborious to reproduce.

Meanwhile, in France, the problem was being solved. In 1812 the three-year-old son of a harness maker at Coupvray blinded himself while playing with one of his father's awls. For Louis Braille this was unfortunate. For the remainder of the blind world the accident was to lead to a happy outcome. At ten, the young Braille entered the Paris school for the blind which Haüy had founded, and by the age of seventeen he had progressed so well that he was invited to remain at the school as a master. Shortly afterwards he learnt of a system of embossed dots which the post-Revolutionary army used to enable fire orders to be delivered by written message in the dark. Its significance for the blind seems to have

been lost on all save Louis Braille. He realized that whereas the permutations of the twelve dots in the French army system might be too complicated for blind fingers, the principle was an excellent one. He therefore reduced the number of dots to six which he arranged in a basic form of three horizontal pairs. Letters of the alphabet, punctuation marks and contractions were represented by the omission of one or more dots from the basic form. In all there were sixty-three possible combinations.

Braille had obvious advantages over all other existing systems. It could be adapted to any written language ; be used for musical notation and mathematics ; and, with the aid of a stylus, be quickly and easily written by hand. The dot was also easier to feel than the line, and since it took up less space, works in Braille were less bulky. Yet the tradition that the embossed letter had to resemble the printed one was so strong that its inventor had the greatest difficulty in securing its adoption, even by his own school. Little wonder, therefore, that its introduction to Britain was delayed. But prejudice, stubbornness and lack of unity delayed its introduction for longer than was necessary. Not until 1872 did the first British school teach its pupils by Braille, and twenty years later children were still being taught by other types.

That Braille was eventually introduced was due to Thomas Rhodes Armitage, who in 1868 founded the British and Foreign Society for Improving the Embossed Literature of the Blind, which is today the Royal National Institute for the Blind. Armitage who came from a wealthy Irish family had served as a surgeon in the Crimean War and later became a general practitioner in London. When, at the age of thirty-six, his sight began to fail he gave up his practice and undertook welfare work with the blind of London. He found many living in squalor and by begging. Those who had as children learnt to read at one institution could not use the system of reading taught at another. Equally, those who had been taught the rudiments of a trade were unable to

follow it when left to fend for themselves without materials and a market for their product. What was required, he realized, was not monetary relief but efficient education and training to secure employment.

Determining to concentrate first on the improvement of their education, Armitage realized that the first necessity was for an uniform system in order that a plentiful supply of literature might be produced. Moreover, this system would be selected by men themselves blind, who would try out each system but would have no vested interest in any. Armitage obtained the collaboration of four others, all well educated, of whom the most colourful was James Gale. Known as the Blind Inventor and the Gunpowder Tamer, he had discovered a method of making gunpowder explosive or non-explosive at will. He volunteered to give a demonstration on Wimbledon Common by sitting on a barrel of gunpowder mixed with his secret substance, and allowing a red-hot poker to be thrust into its side. Fortunately perhaps, his offer was not accepted, although he did successfully demonstrate his invention by less flamboyant methods.

After two years of research Armitage and his collaborators reached their decision and recommended Braille as the educational system for blind children, though for the elderly and 'the dull of brain and touch' they advocated the Moon system. However despite their recommendation it was to be some years before the schools would be prepared to discard their own well-tried systems. Conservatism and inertia played their part, but so, with greater cogency, did the fact that they were loth to discard the few books they had so laboriously collected or printed.

However by the 1880's the majority of blind children, like the majority of deaf children were being educated. Moreover, like the deaf, the final method by which the blind would be educated had been established and was being introduced into the schools. Finally, like the deaf, there were two different methods, one for adults and one for children. But of educational concern and educational

provision for the mentally handicapped and the physically handicapped, there was almost none.

The first residential institution for the mentally handicapped was established in the 1850's and by 1880 there were five such institutions, all of which were called idiot asylums. They catered mainly for adults, and although children were admitted, provision for their education existed in only three of the asylums. Even in these the provision was rudimentary. The children were taught, possibly looked after would be a better description of what occurred, by untrained teachers of poor quality in classes which contained as many as eighty children. Moreover, the level of ability of the children varied tremendously. Some would have been capable of being educated in special classes in ordinary schools, had there been special classes in ordinary schools. Others were of extremely low grade, and of them a contemporary account stated: 'Those incapable of further instruction are taught merely to sit still in school.'

This lack of educational effort on behalf of the mentally handicapped was due in part to the fact that they attracted less sympathy than did the blind and the deaf. Indeed, there was considerable stigma associated with mental handicap and consequently there were no pressure groups advocating that they should be educated, as there were on behalf of the blind and the deaf.

Even though there was more public sympathy for the physically handicapped, the first educational provision for them came about almost fortuitously rather than as a result of agitation on their behalf. In 1851 several wealthy women decided to open in Marylebone an industrial school to which girls who appeared before a court could be sent by the magistrates. It opened with three girls, one of whom chanced to be a cripple. The interest of the Committee controlling the school was thus aroused, and it was realized that there was a special need to cater for crippled girls. Accordingly a 'cripples' home was founded in addition to the industrial school. By 1870 the joint establishment contained one hundred

girls, seventy-five of whom were crippled. The remainder were physically fit, and had been sent to the school under a magistrate's order. It had been decided to retain the industrial school connection, so that the non-handicapped girls could do the heavy housework which was too much for the handicapped. Without such a joint plan, the Committee was at pains to point out, the expense of the school would have been much greater. But it was unfortunate that the first school in Britain for physically handicapped children should be such a joint scheme, since there would be enough stigma attaching to special schools without the additional association of delinquency.

However, encouraged by the success of the venture, the Committee of the Marylebone school had enlarged itself to include men, and in 1865 opened the first school for crippled boys at Kensington. No other school was to open during the nineteenth century, and for 35 years the Marylebone and Kensington schools provided the only educational opportunity for physically handicapped children in England and Wales. Moreover, the education given was minimal, a little reading, writing and arithmetic, plus religious education. The teaching was by voluntary teachers. Its extent was an hour or so each morning. For the remainder of the time the children were taught a trade, and in this respect the schools were similar to those for the blind and the deaf. In fact, all the nineteenth century schools for handicapped children had certain characteristics in common.

The first and major characteristic was what might be termed the asylum principle. Indeed, some of the early special schools, as I have already mentioned, included the word asylum in their titles, not because the children attending them were weak-minded but because the name summed up the conception that the schools had of themselves. They were to be places of refuge from a cold, cruel and inhospitable world. Consequently they were, without exception, residential institutions in which the children had little or no opportunity for contact with the outside world. For example, the Charity Organization Society

describing the Kensington School for physically handicapped boys stated in a report in 1890 that the object of the school was 'to receive for three years—board, and clothe and educate on Christian principles—destitute, neglected or ill-used crippled boys.' So far so good, but once a child was admitted, he was not allowed to leave, even for one day, during the whole of the three years. Apart from walking out with the Matron for exercise, he never left the building. He could have a visitor once in three months. He could write a letter once a month. Otherwise he was excluded from the outside world. Similarly at the Asylum for the Deaf in the Old Kent Road no child left the school in term time, save to attend church, and at the London School for the Indigent Blind the regulations stated that children who had friends could join them for a week at Christmas and Midsummer. But not all had friends. Undoubtedly this lack of contact with normality, this almost complete segregation from ordinary life was one of the worst features of the education of the handicapped during the nineteenth century. Nor was the isolation confined to the children within the institutions. The institutions themselves were divorced from the outside world. Thus the mainstream of educational progress passed them by. Secure in their own little worlds, some superintendents cared not what happened elsewhere. Those who did care had little opportunity for finding out. 'I am one of the old school teachers,' said William Sleight in 1885; 'I have been Head Master of the Brighton Institution for the Deaf and Dumb forty-three years tomorrow. I went there from Yorkshire. For a long time I did not see a fellow labourer once in three or four years; we were isolated and alone.'

The second characteristic was a concentration upon industrial training and was a corollary of the asylum principle. Almost without exception the earlier special schools had attached to them sheltered workshops. It was intended that the majority of children, when they left the schools at the age of sixteen, would enter the workshops. With this end in view, much of the children's

time from the age of twelve onwards was devoted to preparing them for their entry to the workshops, and this preparatory work took place in the trade training department of the schools. At the outset this scheme was fairly satisfactory, but as more and more children passed through the schools, so the workshops became more and more full, until eventually only a small proportion of those leaving the schools could enter the workshops. Nevertheless, the trade training departments continued to assume that the children would be entering the workshops. Even this would not have been too damaging if the trades for which they were trained could have been followed economically in the outside world. But they could not. They were the traditional trades associated with the handicapped—mat, mattress, basket and whip-lash making—trades that lent themselves more to sheltered than to open industry. Even when, as at Hull, the Institution for the Blind attempted some variety by making ships' fenders, the project had to be abandoned when the Institution found itself undersold by the products of Durham Gaol, though the School for the Indigent Blind at Southwark had more success when it produced sash-cords, since it could proudly report that: 'Her Majesty's pictures at Buckingham Palace and Windsor are suspended by sash-lines manufactured at this Institution.' Thus although an attempt was made to provide some form of vocational training, it was based on the false assumption that the handicapped would be permanently institutionalized, and therefore many children left the schools prepared neither for living in society because of the asylum principle nor for earning their living in it.

The third characteristic was a concentration upon, almost a preoccupation with, religion. Apart from their desire to protect the handicapped, the founders of, and subscribers to, the first schools were frequently moved by religious conviction. Consequently, religious instruction appeared frequently on the time-tables of the schools. For example the time-table for a Sunday at the Yorkshire Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, as recorded in an

annual report in the middle of the last century, started with gospel study from 6.30 to 8.0 in the morning. Then there was a religious service from 10 to 11.30 and from 11.40 to one o'clock, that is three hours save for a ten minute interval. In the afternoon there was gospel study from 3 to 5 and again from 5.30 to 7.30 in the evening. Thus the day started with gospel study at 6.30 a.m. and ended with gospel study at 7.30 p.m., and this was the time-table for even the youngest children who were not only deaf but also dumb. One wonders whether time-tables like this one were actually followed, or whether they were included in the annual reports to please the subscribers who, being ardent Christians themselves, would wish to believe that the children were being given adequate religious instruction.

If this was the case, there were some entries in the annual reports that must have given them gratification. The Ulster Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, and the Blind recorded in 1838 that: 'A little mute, in his 8th year was unfortunately killed at one of the Factories before he could have known the revealed will of God. Very different, however, were the circumstances of a poor blind boy, who died about the same age. He was delicate and deformed; but during a lingering and painful illness he discovered a vigour of mind, an eagerness for spiritual instruction, a meekness of disposition, which gave satisfactory evidence of a saving change of heart.' Ten years later another institution noted that: 'A blind Irish girl, suffering from great delicacy of health, was received into the school two years prior to her death, under peculiarly providential circumstances. It was deeply interesting to her Christian friends to remark how gradually she was led from the errors of Romanism to the pure doctrines of the word of God, by a blessing on the power she acquired to search the Scriptures for herself.'

The motives were not therefore always altruistic. Proselytism sometimes played a part. However, it is likely that the main underlying reason could have been



put into, though it probably never was, the following words: 'Poor Johnny, he's not going to succeed in this world but we'll make jolly sure that he succeeds in the next.' Part of this sentiment is admirable, but the ready acceptance of failure is to be deprecated. Success must be sought for the handicapped now as well as hereafter.

The final characteristic of the education of the handicapped was that during most of the nineteenth century their schools were neither provided nor assisted by the State. They were voluntary in the fullest sense of the word and dependent upon the contributions of subscribers. Moreover, they were not backed by either of the major voluntary societies, the National Society and the British and Foreign Schools Society, which had been providing schools since the beginning of the century. The two societies had been receiving State grants since 1833, and in 1870 they were joined in the provision of schools by the school boards which, in addition to State grants, were given the power of raising a rate. But the State still made no contribution towards the education of the handicapped, and it was not until towards the end of the century that the State first permitted, and later compelled, local authorities to provide for the handicapped.

As a result of State intervention there was a rapid growth in special education. Not only was complete provision made for blind and deaf children, but also for the first time special schools for slow learning children were opened as opposed to the previously limited provision in the idiot asylums. But provision for the mentally handicapped was still limited, since the new special schools could only accept children who had been certified as feeble-minded under the Mental Deficiency Act. Moreover, the schools themselves were known as mentally defective schools, and the stigma attaching to them was considerable. However, many of them were day, as opposed to residential, schools, and the move away from nineteenth century institutionalism had begun.

The process was completed by the Education Act of 1944. This overhaul of the national system of education

brought a new deal for the handicapped. No longer were they to be treated as a class apart. Whereas previous legislation had dealt separately with the education of the handicapped, now the provision of special educational treatment was merely made part of the general duty laid upon local education authorities to ensure that children are educated in accordance with their ages, aptitudes and abilities. New categories of children requiring special educational treatment were recognized including disturbed or maladjusted children, and children attending special schools for slow learners would now be known as educationally sub-normal not mentally defective children. Moreover, the stigma of certification was removed and the new educationally sub-normal schools could accept not only children of limited ability, but also those whose failure at school was due to environmental factors. Finally, and probably most importantly, the Education Act of 1944 emphasised that handicapped children should wherever possible be educated in ordinary schools. The segregation of the nineteenth century was to be replaced by the integration of the twentieth.

And so at last I come to the happy ending. It is a case study of a severely handicapped girl who has been successfully educated in ordinary schools.¹ Sixteen years old, she had congenital absence of the right arm and a very rudimentary left arm. She was in a grammar school and was among the first five in her form. She could feed herself by means of a special spoon strapped on to her rudimentary left arm, but she could not use the arm for writing. Instead of the missing right arm she wore an artificial arm for cosmetic reasons, but she could not move the artificial arm in any way. She wrote, turned the pages of her books, painted, did needlework and opened door handles with her toes. She was unable to take any science subject in school as she could not manipulate laboratory apparatus; neither did she take part in physical education. In each of her form rooms in school

¹The case study is taken from the *Report of the Chief Medical Officer of the Department of Education and Science 1962 and 1963*, H.M.S.O., 1964, pp. 91-2.

a desk top was placed on the floor for her so that she could write on it with her toes.

Her two major difficulties were dressing and using the lavatory. In her early years in the primary school her elder sister looked after her, then girl friends took over when her sister left the school. By the age of fifteen, when she and her girl companions had become sensitive about help in the lavatory, the senior woman mistress assumed this responsibility. This mistress and the headmaster were very sympathetic and had a real understanding of the girl and her needs.

She also had admirable parents, and the mother was particularly knowledgeable since she was a trained nurse. She gave her daughter every opportunity to use her feet from infancy ; whilst still in the cradle she was given paper to tear with her toes. She always wore socks that were knitted so as to leave the toes uncovered so that she could quickly slip off her shoe to write or open a door.

The local education authority also played its part. In the girl's early years the authority arranged for her parents to have a council house near the primary school, and when she transferred to the grammar school a taxi took her to and from school daily. Her case is an excellent example of the co-operative effort that has to be made by home, school and local authority if the best is to be done for severely handicapped children.

Certainly it is a better example than could be found one hundred years ago. But one must not be too critical of the nineteenth century institutions. The handicapped children may have led regimented and isolated lives, but they led them in comparative comfort. They were well housed and well clad, and though their food may have been plain and monotonous, it was wholesome. Those who were admitted were the lucky ones. Many of them were spared the horrors of begging or the boredom of life in the workhouse. They were given a modicum of education, and some of them were taught a trade. This was all the institutions set out to do. This is what they did. Of them it might be said, as Newman said of the Utilitarians : ' They aimed low, but they achieved their aim.'

