

HIGHER EDUCATION FOR THE BLIND.

A VISIT TO THE ROYAL NORMAL COLLEGE AND ACADEMY OF MUSIC.



A LESSON IN GEOGRAPHY.

THERE is no class of persons for whom sympathy is more generally felt than for the blind. Very much has been done here, as well as in other lands, for their physical, moral, and spiritual improvement. And yet it is only of late years that any systematic efforts have been put forth to raise their intellectual condition, and to render them capable of self-support in the higher walks of life. There are, it is said, 30,000 blind persons in the United Kingdom, in the Metropolis alone 4,000, of whom the large majority are the recipients of charity, and more or less dependent on the help of the benevolent.

Till recently they have had, as a rule, no resource open to them but such occupations as basket or brush making, and the profits of those trades are so small that they cannot make a sufficient livelihood by them. They are consequently thrown, in part at least, upon the rates, or upon casual assistance. This, it must be admitted, was a short-sighted as well as ungenerous policy. Not only was it unjust to those unfortunates to provide no means by which they could fully maintain themselves and their families, but this neglect imposed a heavy burden on the public purse.

Both France and the United States have been before us in this most important matter. It is, therefore, most satisfactory that this reproach has been now, in great measure, removed from us by the very admirable and successful College and Academy of Music for the Blind in Upper Norwood.

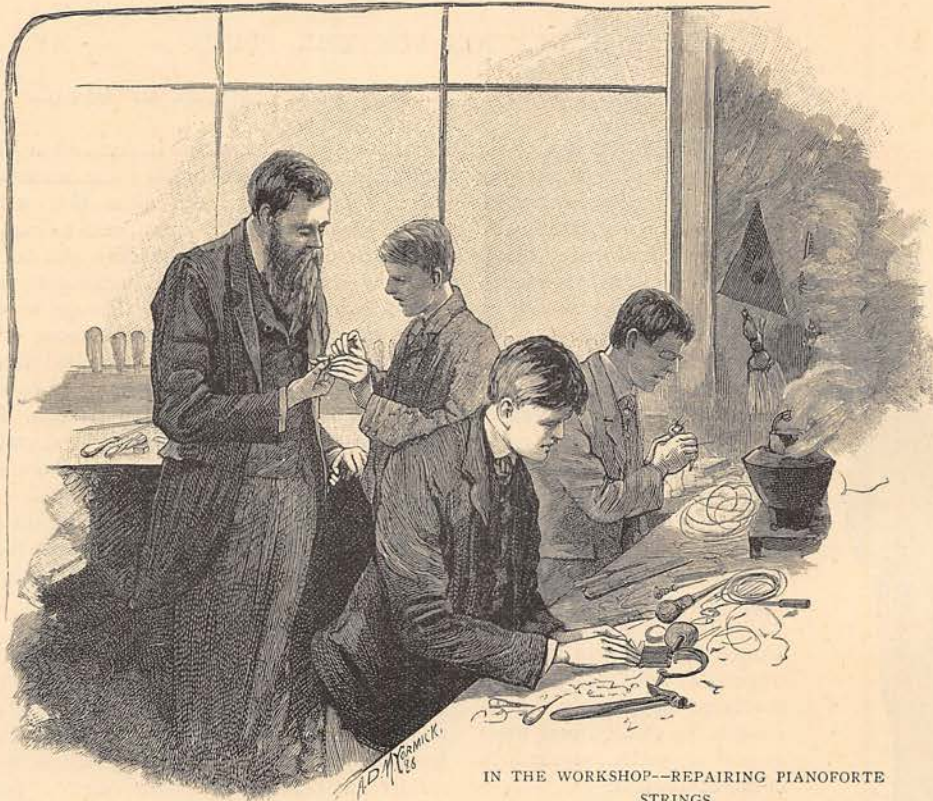
Its founder and principal, Dr. Campbell, an American gentleman, is singularly well qualified for this special and most difficult work. When only three and a half years old he lost his sight, and from his own painful experience possesses the key of sympathy which has unlocked the hearts of hundreds of his fellow-sufferers.

Petted and spoilt himself, as if he were helpless, by fond parents, he learned the necessity of developing early the physical and mental energies of the blind. Though now a highly proficient teacher of music, he was at first pronounced incapable of learn-

ing that art, and doomed to basket and brush making. But his strong will and innate consciousness of talent carried him through difficulties that would have crushed many a weaker spirit, until he completed his studies at the Harvard University, and became Professor of Music in Dr. Howe's well-known institution, near Boston, U.S. Coming to Europe to recruit his over-wrought strength, and on account of the late Mrs. Campbell's delicacy, he travelled from city to city, studying the various systems of education for the blind, and in 1871 settled in London. Here, with the generous help of Dr. Armitage, he started a school of his own in three small houses at Norwood. This has steadily grown into the present noble College in Westow Street, Upper Norwood, under the patronage of the Queen and members of the Royal Family, and directed by a distinguished committee, with the Duke of Westminster at its head.

The romantic story of his life cannot here be told. We can only add that the degree of LL.D. was conferred upon him by the Glasgow University on account of his services in the cause of education; but these simple facts may suffice to show how eminently fitted is one who has achieved such results for others, and made such a position for himself, to develop and direct the energies of those similarly handicapped for the race of life. Our object is rather to invite attention to his present work, its method and results.

No better position could have been chosen than that in which the College stands. Within easy reach of London, close to the Crystal Palace and its high musical attractions, it is accessible from all parts of England. At the same time, it presents the charms and advantages of a quiet rural retreat. It is surrounded by lovely undulating grounds, six acres in extent. These are laid out with great taste and care in shrubberies, avenues of trees, flower-beds, grass plots, and a small lake. To many of the inmates, accustomed to the dreary confinement of a crowded cottage, or even of a single room in the courts of our large towns, it must seem like a very Eden. One is thankful to hear that, though unable to see these natural beauties, they are not insensible to them. Their faces will brighten as you say, "What a lovely view!" for they feel as if they saw it also. They will, perhaps, ask you to sit down under the spreading arbutus-tree, which "His Grace the Duke says is the finest that he knows." The pure air, and freedom for exercise, are an immense boon to them, of which they make the fullest use. They can range in perfect safety over the wide enclosure, for the sharp turnings in the paths, and occasional flights of steps, are indicated to them by an ingenious method of varying the surface with a sunken plank or brickwork just enough raised to give the needful warning. Guided by these landmarks,



IN THE WORKSHOP—REPAIRING PIANOFORTE STRINGS.

they can walk, or skip, or run, with all the speed and alacrity of young persons who have sight. This is of itself no unimportant part of their physical training. They thus learn to trust their own quick ears and sure steps, and in time to thread their way without any guide—human or canine—along the most crowded thoroughfares.

Dr. Campbell lays great stress on bodily exercise as tending to produce vigour and self-reliance in both sexes. He maintains that the blind, as a class, have less vitality than the sighted. From infancy they are, to a great extent, compelled to lead a sedentary life. "In my long experience with the blind," he has said, "both in Great Britain and America, I have found nothing that will rouse the indolent and encourage the timid but physical training; it is the lever which gives force to all other education."

With this view he has provided one of the best gymnasiums in the Metropolis, over which his son, Mr. G. M. Campbell, a practised gymnast, presides. It is perfectly wonderful to watch the blind youths, with the agility of monkeys, climbing tall, slender poles, spinning like Catherine wheels round and round horizontal bars, or, cat-like, walking with their hands along wide, steep ladders. The sack-race, again, is a great source of delight; and it is most amusing to see them, without the least fear, propelling themselves over the grass, as if they were animated bundles. Rifle drill, boating, skating, and

dumb-bells for the girls, each in its turn, afford them healthful and enjoyable exercise. Their muscles and sinews are thereby developed. In fact, everything is done to produce "the sound mind in the sound body"—the ideal of perfect health.

Athletics, however, are not here allowed to interfere with higher objects. As regularly as by clockwork the bell sounds at the appointed hours, and the students assemble in the class rooms. The College, we may here say, includes a preparatory school, a grammar or high school, a technical school, and an academy of music. The complete course extends over at least six years, and comprises a very thorough course of English education lasting for four years, and a scientific or advanced course of two years. All pupils, except some who come merely for some special purpose, such as pianoforte tuning, must take the four years' course, unless they can pass a satisfactory examination in all the English subjects. This is so ordered because it is found that the blind who succeed best in music are those who have received the best physical and mental culture.

The preparatory school is conducted on the Kindergarten system, and includes besides reading, writing, arithmetic, and object lessons.

The grammar school curriculum extends to history, sacred and secular, geography, mathematics, modern languages, &c.

Seldom has the writer heard better lessons given

than those he was permitted to attend during his visit to the College. In one room, where geography was the subject, embossed maps of the British Isles were placed in the hands of the scholars. The boundaries, rivers, mountains, towns, manufactures, products, physical features, were brought out by skilful questioning, and described with a readiness and accuracy such as might have shamed many a class of sighted pupils. In an adjoining room anatomy was being taught. An erect skeleton wore a weird aspect that might have startled a nervous visitor; but both young men and maidens (for they are taught together, after the American custom) handled it without alarm, and with lightning rapidity indicated the various parts of the human body, and their relations to each other. A third class was occupied with an object lesson. A box of some fifty or sixty specimens of carpet, floor-cloth, &c., was set before the students, and they were challenged to distinguish by their touch between Brussels, Kidderminster, and tapestry, linoleum and oil-cloth, to describe their qualities, and state reasons for preferring one to another.

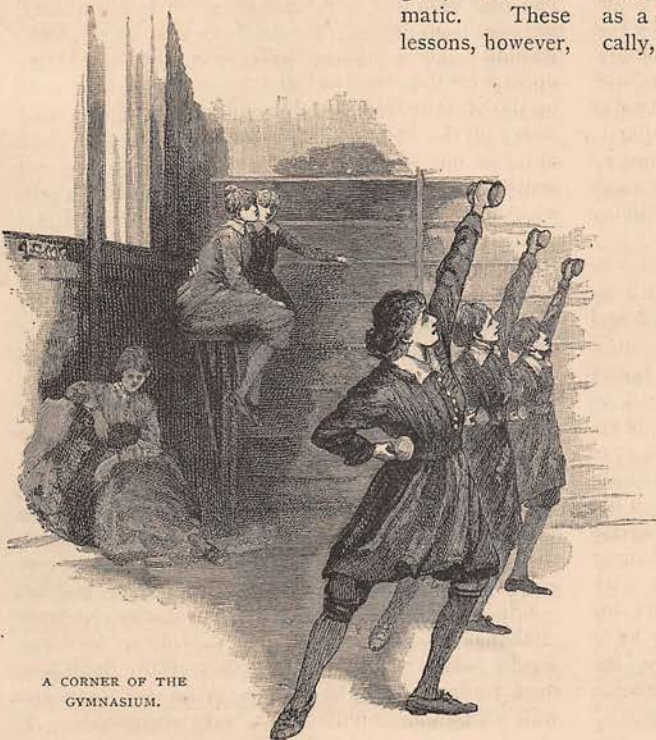
Lessons on Euclid and algebra I had not an opportunity of hearing, but Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools has reported that "the lesson of the first division was actually amusing as well as interesting. The first time," he added, "I have ever known amusement extracted from a subject of itself so dry and abstract." To correct reading, of course, much attention is given; and the rendering of one of Shakspeare's plays appeared to be rhythmically correct and intelligent, if not dramatic. These lessons, however,



IN THE KINDERGARTEN.

that were then in progress, form but a small part of the extensive and varied range of study through which the more advanced pupils have to pass; but one design is kept in view throughout: it is the very practical one of qualifying the blind to obtain an honest, respectable independence. For this purpose Dr. Campbell relies chiefly on the cultivation of music. This is taken up by many in its higher form as a profession, studied not by the ear, or mechanically, but according to its true scientific method, until they can go out as teachers, performers, or composers. He does not accept the common opinion that most of the blind are born musicians, but he holds that those who have sufficient intellect may acquire the science of music, and through it the art. With this view he employs the best teachers he can procure, while he trains the ear and the taste by concerts and recitals of the works of the great masters, such as are frequently to be had at the Crystal Palace. The public concerts given by his pupils there, at the Albert Palace, Battersea, as well as before the Queen at Windsor, and lately in the presence of the Belgian Court at Brussels, are the highest evidence of his success, for they have elicited the warmest encomiums from competent judges.

Other less gifted students take up music as a skilled handicraft, and become piano tuners. Pianos, or portions of pianos, of every size and description, are procured, which they learn to take to pieces, put together again, or tune, under a competent sighted master. Thoroughness is here, as throughout the institution, like the Medo-Persian law, which altereth not. Without it the blind would have no chance



A CORNER OF THE GYMNASIUM.

in the race of life against those who can see. With it 90 per cent. of the pupils have completed their course, obtained certificates, and occupy respectable—some of them lucrative—positions in society. In the last year's report it is stated that fifty-nine of the old pupils earned £6,111 during that year. One had won by open competition against the sighted an excellent appointment as organist at Glasgow. Five young women were making from £70 to £80 a year each as teachers in London, and another was working successfully as a missionary at Huddersfield. One, who had been for a time employed as a governess in a private family, had become a successful teacher under the London School Board, the fifth ex-pupil of the College thus employed by the Board.

One feature of this noble institution—the most important of all—must not be omitted. We are thankful to know that the highest welfare of the pupils is not lost sight of. There is daily family worship, and on Sunday mornings special mission services are held in the College, mainly choral and led by the students. The working classes of the neighbourhood attend in

large numbers, and addresses are given by ministers of various denominations. The great aim of the College was stated by Canon Fleming, in his speech at the Guildhall in 1881, to be “the harmonious development of the moral faculties in earnest Christian character, as exemplified in the two great commandments of love to God and love to man.” Dr. Campbell himself, in his last report, announced it to be his aim “to send out Christian men and women of cultured minds, correct habits, and good manners.”

It should be added that this is in the truest sense a charitable institution, which the founder earnestly hopes will become a national university for the blind. Of the 176 pupils most are unable to pay for their own education. There is no endowment, and a too limited subscription list. The interest on a mortgage on the freehold property of £12,000 is a heavy annual burden on the funds. Will not some of our numerous readers whose hearts sympathise with this good work, and who have means at their disposal, send the principal a thank-offering for the priceless blessing of sight?

WILLIAM BURNET, M.A.

PEDDLERS AND HAWKERS.



HE itinerant vendor of varied wares has played for ages a distinguished part in the economy of country life. In the days before railways and the penny postage system, he was a valued link of intercommunication, and an esteemed disseminator of news. To-day

his rôle in these respects has been greatly modified; but his place is not vacant, and his trade still thrives. A brief sketch (from life) of his work, and his many amusing idiosyncrasies, will have its interest for many students of English provincial character.

The large and exceedingly miscellaneous class of travelling country salesmen is arbitrarily divided by Act of Parliament into two sections—peddlers and hawkers. These terms are not synonyms, interchangeable at will, although, by the well-known law of the greater including the less, the hawker may if he chooses style himself a peddler. The peddler is restricted to journeys on foot, and to personal carriage of his own goods. The regulations to which he is subject—of police supervision, &c.—are set down on the certificate which is his lawful permission to exercise his trade, and for which he pays annually the sum of five shillings. The hawker may travel either with cart or van, as may best suit his convenience; his character has to be approved; for his licence he is mulcted in the fee of £4 yearly. Naturally, the hawker is the aristocrat, and the peddler the plebeian of the profession.

To start in business as a hawker of the class who patrol the country with vans, carrying carpets, brushes, or earthenware, is an undertaking that requires capital. The cost of a van, with its necessary appointments, will vary from fifty to a hundred pounds. The stock-in-trade may represent another twenty or thirty pounds. These figures, with their consequent risk, operate on the one hand to deter fresh beginners, and on the other to keep in the ranks veterans who grow weary of the continual change. They constitute one of the factors which maintain these hawkers as a self-centred, isolated community—a race apart from those with whom they deal and temporarily sojourn.

Peddlers, again, fall into several distinct categories. There are those who may be spoken of as locally attached, who have a habitation and a name, and in most cases take, week in and week out, a regular and unvarying route. And there are those whose ambition is wider and more restless, who journey from county to county, and are seldom seen twice in the same locality within a long term of years. Beyond and beneath these are the occasional and, so to speak, amateur peddlers, who more properly belong to the formidable hordes of vagrancy, and who are genuine Ishmaels, with their hand against every man, and every man's hand against them. Many legitimate and recognised peddlers travel with some single speciality—brushes, combs, ornaments, spectacles, or even clothes-lines. These have often a pride in their profession which would vie with that of the flourishing town tradesman. The rounds taken are long and, with their interminable calls, very wearisome. To