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ANECDOTES

OF THE

B L I N D ;

BY ABRAM V. COURTNEY,

HIMSELF TOTALLY BLIND.

WITH A MEMOIR OF THE AUTHOR.

BY HIMSELF.



Boston:
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1835.

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ABRAM V. COURTNEY,
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INTRODUCTION.

It is not to be expected that, debarred as I am, from the usual advantages of my fellow men, having no access to books, having no eye for the thousand ways and means by which other men obtain information and communicate it to others, that I should be able to communicate my thoughts in the very best manner, or clothe them in the elegance of style. Let him therefore, who is disposed to find fault with the simplicity of my ideas, or the roughness of my expressions, reflect, that they come from one to whom the grand avenue of intelligence is closed. Nevertheless, I flatter myself that what I have to say will not be wholly useless or unentertaining. I have observed, that men generally take an interest in matters relating to the blind, or others deprived of the ordinary means of communicating with their fellows. Whose name is better known to the scientific world, than that of Sanderson, the blind professor of mathematics. Who has obtained a greater degree of notoriety than the deaf, dumb and blind girl, Julia Brace. Such notoriety, I am willing to admit, is not at all enviable; but, nevertheless, the study of the means whereby persons so deprived gain knowledge, cannot be indifferent to any one who wishes to know and understand his own mind. It is not without its practical utility. The faculties are notoriously improved by exercise. Take a man who can see distinctly, and blindfold him, and he is almost perfectly helpless. He stumbles upon snares and into pits, he runs against obstacles. I do no such things. I can estimate distances, distinguish persons and demonstrate a perception of many matters, which, I have found is astonishing to those who are more favored by Heaven than I

am. All this comes of the education of the ear, which, I think, is worth educating. If I communicate to others the means by which they may improve that sense, will it be said that my book, my life, or my example is in vain? Shall I not at least put a staff into their hands, by which their darkling path may be guided. Suppose a seeing person should undertake to walk over the late Gardiner Green's estate in a dark night, would he not inevitably break his neck? I could do it, without fear or danger. When a man loses an arm, the other is increased in proportion, and has the strength of two. The one eye of the one-eyed man has an augmented power of vision. I do declare that if it could so be that my sight could be restored at the expense of my hearing, I would not accept the offer.

People have sometimes deemed me an impostor, and have consequently treated me rudely, on account of the degree of perfection to which my ear has been cultivated. I forgive them, and wish any one who doubts the reality of my blindness, may try it by any test that does not involve bodily injury. Others have rebuked me for using my humble means of gaining an honest livelihood, saying that the public have made provision for the support of those who are made more or less helpless by the visitation of God. They seem to forget, or not to reflect, that the extinction of one faculty does not injure the others. If you prick a blind man, does he not bleed?—if you tickle him; does he not laugh?—if you treat him with contumely, does he not feel mortification and bitterness of heart? Shall he not also have an honest pride? If we were to see Mr. Daniel Webster, (to suppose an extreme case,) peddling pins and tape, we should despise him, not because that employment is dishonest or dishonorable, but because he did not improve the high abilities wherewith God has gifted him worthily—not because he did not do well, but because he did not do better. People are despised for being lazy, intemperate, unwilling to exert themselves, and willing to be a burthen to their friends; but I never heard a man who had lost a leg reproached because he could not run as fast as his neighbors. The loss of a limb does not absolve us from the obligation to use those which

remain. The pension laws of the United States seem to countenance this doctrine. They require that the soldier who applies for a pension should produce a certificate from his regimental surgeon, stating the amount of the injury he has received, whether he is one fourth, one half, or totally disabled; clearly meaning that he is to do the best he can to support himself. Then, though I cannot shake the hall of Fanueil with the thunders of eloquence; though I cannot wield the axe or ply the oar, is it not more honorable in me to exert such faculties as I retain to procure a subsistence, than to lie a dead weight on the hands of my friends?

To have done with this long preamble, I will proceed to relate the few principal events of my brief existence. I am now twenty-six years of age, am six feet in height, and in bodily power am not inferior to my fellows. I was born in Albany, and am the child of respectable parents, in the middle walks of life. My father was bred to the seas and was the master of a vessel. He was an American born, and so was my mother. I am pure Yankee, as far as I can trace my ancestry. I was not born blind; but had the use of my eyes for several years, in as much perfection as any boy.

At five years of age, I lost the sight of one eye, in consequence of an inflammation, which was brought about by a violent cold. I lost the sight of the other eye by violent means. It was put out while I was an apprentice, by a chip that flew from a log as I was splitting wood. In the first case, my illness was long and painful. Every thing was done for me that the skill of the faculty and the tender kindness of my parents could suggest, but the vision of that eye perished. I was not, however, aware of it till a year and a half afterwards. I seemed to see as well as before, and as the appearance of the optic was very little changed, no one noticed the defect for a long time. My mother was the first to perceive that anything was the matter, and it was then that I became acquainted with my misfortune. However, I felt no inconvenience from it, as far as I can recollect, until I lost the other eye.

When I was young, my parents left Albany, and removed

to Utica, which was then a small, wild place. They were affectionately attached to me, and gave me all the advantages their means would allow. They put me to school to a Mrs. Ripley, who was a good, kind and skilful preceptor. Indeed, I have always been singularly fortunate in my connections with those who have in any way had the control of my actions or instruction. Under Mrs. Ripley I acquired the first rudiments of a common English education. I am indebted to her for my A, B, C, and my ab, abs. Her pupils all liked her. I believe, from what I can remember of my boyish days, that I was a mischievous child, considerably given to practical jokes, though I cannot tax myself with ever having been vicious or malignant. I was good-natured then, and I believe I am so still. I can only recollect one instance in which I gave Mrs. Ripley serious pain. She set me a task which I easily committed to memory, as I always did. Indeed, I was rather remarkable for quickness of apprehension and tenacity of memory. Seeing that I would have a long time to be idle in, she would have retained me longer, while I insisted that I had fulfilled my part of the terms of the bargain, and would have gone home. She undertook to chastise me, and a trial of strength and patience ensued, which ended in the subjugation of my choler, and I asked her forgiveness. Another of my frolics was, rolling a heavy log down hill against the wall of a factory, which I bountifully beplastered with mud, but in this case I escaped detection and punishment.

I do not remember that I was ever quarrelsome, excepting on one occasion. On the contrary, I was of a gentle, perhaps a timid spirit. At the time of which I speak, my wrath was excited by a feeling of humanity. I was driving home a cow, and certain boys took the liberty to lapidate her. I stood up in defence of my cow, and returned their missiles, with interest.

I can remember, too, the robbing of several orchards, for which I take to myself shame. I did not do it from any desire to appropriate the goods of others; but from an inherent love of fun and frolic. On one of these occasions I was detected

in the fact by the owner, who pursued me. Finding that he was swifter of foot than I, I threw myself on all fours before him, and suffered him to stumble over me, and so escaped. I have retained a distinct recollection of this trick, because I have heard a similar one related of Stephen Burroughs, the notorious counterfeiter, and because I have been frequently reminded of it since I have been blind by unthinking persons, who have treated me in precisely the same manner. They did not, however, give me the same fair chance I gave him; for he could at least see what was in his way.

It was my father's custom to take his boys to sea with him, at least one voyage; probably to see if they had any vocation to a maritime life. Accordingly, when I was nine years old, he took me to Port au Prince, in St. Domingo, with him, in a small brig, of which he was master. My recollections of the place are distinct enough; but it cannot be expected that the observations of a child of my age can be of much importance. The city was built on the side and in the hollow of a hill, sloping down from the mountains, and then appeared to contain about twelve thousand inhabitants. The winds sometimes rushed down from the mountains in the back ground, with tremendous fury. The houses were of stone; most of them of one or two stories high, though there were several ware houses and other buildings of greater magnitude. I staid in the port six weeks, during which, I, my father, and the rest of the vessel's company were treated with the utmost kindness and civility by the newly emancipated inhabitants. They seemed to take an especial liking to me, probably because I was a boy; for, unless I am much mistaken, all the African race are remarkably fond of children. Indeed, I have ever observed, that persons of that color, if not so refined, are more polite, more attentive, and more affectionate than the white race. I never met with insult or offence from any of them. They may be ignorant, gross, and vulgar, but I never saw a negro who had a deliberately bad heart.

These people often invited us into their houses, and treated us with all the hospitality in their power. They were indolent,

yet did not want for any of the necessaries of life, and appeared very happy. They were a good, honest people, were just in their dealings, and true to their promises. There are some people who connect the idea of happiness and good character with a great amount of labor, but to judge from this specimen, there is no necessary connection. They were lazy and poor, yet they were good and contented. Their great enjoyment seemed to be to lie down and bask in the sun. They were very proud of having achieved their independence, hated the French and Dutch, and disliked my own countrymen on account of holding slaves. They were very jealous of any appearance of slight or contempt. As an instance of this, on entering the custom house my father omitted to take off his hat, and was promptly admonished of his neglect by a black officer. Their language, generally speaking, was a jargon, a mixture of bad French, Spanish, African, and, here and there, a little English. I thought the climate unhealthy. The weather was very hot and unwholesome, fogs prevailed in the morning. The streets were straight and regular. The side walks were bad. I do not think the people were, generally, so well looking as colored people are in this country. Their dress was pretty much the same. The great majority of them were coal black, but there were many mulattoes and some white men, but few white women. Their government and habits appeared to be entirely military. Every man was liable to be called on to do duty as a soldier. The black troops were quick in their motions, and expert in handling their weapons. I saw them drilled often. I cannot say so much of their artillery. A frigate came in while we were lying in port and fired a salute, which the negro artillerists returned; but very awkwardly. One of them was blown from the muzzle of the gun down the hill, and killed on the spot; another lost his arms, and died the next day. This accident created a great excitement; for these people seemed to have a great regard for human life. The men were buried with the honors of war. The guards at all the military posts were mounted and relieved with as much regularity as could be done by any people. The

whole people seemed to be in a state of alarm, and in constant dread of invasion. The standing order was, that, if they should be overpowered by any hostile, invading force, men, women, and children should abandon the settlements and fly to the mountains. Perhaps this state of excitation was the cause of their indolence as well as their military habits; for they showed no want of alacrity in the discharge of their duties as soldiers. Indeed, it would be unreasonable to expect them to work hard, and build houses and cultivate fields, which might have been burned and ravaged, or used, to say the least, by their enemies at any time. I leave this, however, to wiser heads than mine. There was a castle, that appeared to me a very strong place, on the hill, that overlooked the city. I went up to it once, and saw huge rocks, placed on pivots, in readiness to be hurled against storming parties, if any such should appear.

Another singularity that I observed, was the extreme fondness of the women for silk dresses and jewelry. They seemed, also, to be fond of the company of white persons; and those who had a mixture of white blood were proud of it.

The prevailing religion of the country was the Catholic; and there was no lack of churches, which were generally poor and mean. Crosses stood everywhere by the way side, which was the first I ever saw of such a practice. I saw the inhabitants kneeling before them. One would think that wharves were necessary to a commercial city, but there were none. We lay at anchor in the bay, and our unlading and lading was performed by means of scows and boats. There was no shipping in the harbor belonging to the government, and but very little belonging to private persons. The few vessels I saw were small, and of little value. The revolution had annihilated the commerce of the island. The principal dealings of the place were in articles of produce and food; and there were great numbers of provision shops. There were also shops where English goods were sold. The staple article of traffic was coffee. They had no great facility in making bargains; but if they were hard to deal with, they evinced no disposition to cheat us.

I cannot tax my memory with any farther particulars re-

specting this interesting people. And when it is considered, that I was then so young, and that seventeen years have elapsed since that time, it will perhaps be thought strange that I should remember so much. Those things are still distinct to my mind's eye, though to my corporal vision they are lost forever. It was in February that I bade farewell to Port au Prince.

Our vessel carried out horses, pork, and flour. My father made a very profitable voyage of it, and so, indeed, did I; for I was entrusted with a little adventure, consisting of a coop of barn-door fowls and other small matters, on which I speculated not unskillfully. For one game cock I received two guineas. I might have done still better; for the President, Petion, would fain have adopted me, promising to do his best to promote my welfare, but my father would by no means consent. He acted for the best, certainly, but it happened to turn out for the worst. Had I remained in Hayti, I should probably not have lost my sight. I also made a profit on a very handsome parrot that I bought on the island, and sold in New York for five dollars.

We were fourteen days on our passage out from New York, and had a very pleasant time. We were not so fortunate on our return. A violent storm arose in the Gulf Stream, from which we were driven back three times, before we could cross it. We laid to, two days, under close reefed canvass, after we entered the stream, and here we lost one of the crew by yellow fever, an ordinary seaman named Henry Wilkins. We also lost our main yard and boom. The whole passage back occupied twenty-seven days. I observed that the water in the Gulf Stream was greener and warmer than in other parts of the Atlantic, and could, moreover, be distinguished by great quantities of grass floating in it. Great flocks of stormy petrels hovered over it, which sailors call Mother Carey's chickens, and we saw flying fishes in abundance. Some of them, being pursued by a dolphin, came on board, and dropped on deck. We ate them. They are about the size of a herring, and are not unpalatable food. We also had turtles to eat, which we bought at St. Domingo. To add to the variety of our fare, one

of the hands, an Irishman, succeeded in enticing a shark to put his foolish head within the compass of a running bowline, by which he was hoisted on deck. He was eleven feet long.

I was much liked by the mariners at this time, on account of my agility, being always climbing about the rigging, an ability that has never left me to this day. I can explore the rigging of a vessel as well as any person who can see. Perhaps it is because, seeing no danger, I fear none. I was also excellent friends with the dog, and was amused at witnessing his sagacity. He had formed a strong attachment to a pig we had on board, and would carry him a portion of his food, before he would taste it himself. These incidents may appear of small consequence, but when it is considered that they are among the most prominent that enliven the memory of a blind man, I trust I shall be excused for dwelling on them.

After this voyage, my father returned to Albany, where he put me to school with a Mr. Hayes, whom I shall always gratefully remember. I was at this time nine years of age, and I remained with Mr. Hayes until I was eleven. During my stay at his school, my studies were reading, writing, arithmetic, geography and grammar. I made myself master of all but grammar, and in that I never could initiate myself. I gained several medals by my industry. Our master was liked by all the pupils, and was a good, kind, and intelligent man.

When I left school, I was taken back to Utica, and put at the school of a Mr. Dakin, who was a much more severe man than Mr. Hayes. My tasks here were heavier than at the former school, but I remained with Mr. Dakin till I was thirteen years old. At this school I found the same difficulty in learning grammar,—it is a thing into which I never could see;—but in all my other studies I did well.

From Mr. Dakin's, I was removed to an academy at Onandaga, under the care of Rev. Mr. Alexander. I rung the bell for my education and board. My mischievous fellow pupils used often to cut the bell rope, so that they needed not be disturbed in their morning slumbers by its hateful summons. Sometimes, for the same purpose, they would pull the rope up

into the belfry, so that I could not get at it; and several times in the winter season—after my unsuccessful attempts to move the noisy creature—I discovered, that in the preceding night it had been slyly turned up and filled with water—which had congealed into a solid body of ice. But rogues seldom escape punishment; and though they elude detection for a time, their very success hurries them beyond discretion, and their boldness completes their destruction. The ringleader of all the school mischief was an instance of this. Early one morning, the first of April, (a famous day for jokes,) he put a flat stone on the roof of the academy, upon which, with wood, he kindled a bright flame, and then shouted fire! fire! most lustily. When the people had collected at the unwonted cry, he popped up, pushed the burning mass from the roof upon their heads, crying out, “Ye April fools!” This finished his career. He was detected and expelled.

After six months, becoming discontented at this place, I was bound, by my father, as an apprentice to the printing business, to Mr. W. Williams in Utica. I applied myself diligently to this business—in due time was employed at the case and the press, and was making myself master of the trade. I had been in this employment about two years, and was but somewhat past my sixteenth year, when I was suddenly stopped in my progress by the accident which deprived me of the use of my remaining eye, and left me totally blind. No one who still enjoys entire the inestimable gift of perfect vision, can comprehend how much of sadness and gloom are shrouded in the single expression of *total blindness*. Let me here pause for a moment, and beseech my race not to let the very commonness of the blessings they enjoy deaden, while it should increase their gratitude,—and, while, from experience, they can exclaim, “blessed is the light of the sun,” let them not cease to praise him who gives and preserves the power of sight.

It may be easily supposed, that the accident which brought upon me this sad calamity, can, in none of its circumstances, ever be effaced from my mind. As I have stated, I had in very early life, lost the use of one of my eyes, but this had be-

come of comparatively little importance, as I was still able to attend to all the affairs of life. I had become entirely reconciled to it; but I little thought to what further trial I was to be called. It was on a morning in November, in the year 1825, while I was in the employment of Mr. Williams, that I was splitting some wood to kindle a fire in the printing office. In undertaking to break a stick in two crosswise, a part of it flew with great violence and struck me in my remaining eye. The blow was a severe one, and was attended with great pain. It was accompanied with the usual swelling, but I did not dream of the consequences that were to follow, nor did my physician. He followed the usual course to cure a severe contusion; but I found my eye-sight gradually failing, while the external appearances of it were diminishing,—until, in about three months from the period of the accident, I lost it entirely. No medical aid was of the least avail; and thus, before I was seventeen, in the midst of my apprenticeship, I was left in all the darkness and helplessness of a blind boy.

What was now to be done? I was of little or no use to Mr. Williams, and, indeed, I felt myself of no use to any one, not even to myself. Under such circumstances, man will forgive despondency, and it seems as if Heaven also would. But there is an end to all things, and even the blind, beside the duty of resignation, may find a sphere of usefulness. As soon as my case became hopeless, I was sent for by my parents, who had now removed to Syracuse, which was then but a very small place, and there I joined them. I was received by my parents with all the commiseration, and treated by them with all the tender kindness, which my forlorn condition so naturally awakened. But it was a long time before I could reconcile myself to my situation—all about me seemed gloomy and sad. I was nervous and restless,—and was like one struggling for something beyond his reach. And my feelings were not assuaged by the many ill-judging persons who visited me from curiosity, and who expressed their sympathy, by dwelling on my great loss, and telling me they should think I had rather die than live. I continued in this unhappy and desponding condition

for six months. I lost my flesh and strength ; so that I kept a great part of the time upon my bed. I found in my mother a most invaluable adviser and friend. She was continually striving to cheer my spirits, by reading to me, especially about the blind, how much in some cases they had done,—she told me of Milton, and, above all, she constantly directed me to look upon all as for the best. I cannot better express the sentiments which she inculcated, than in the words which the Rev. Thomas Blacklock, himself totally blind from early infancy, addressed to his mother.

“ What tho' thy son, dependent, weak, and blind,
 Deplore his wishes check'd, his hopes confined ?
 Tho' want, impending, cloud each cheerless day,
 And death with life seem struggling for their prey ?
 Let this console, if not reward, thy pain ;
 Unhappy he may live, but not in vain.”

Under this influence from my mother, I determined to give up these feelings of despair. Time assuages all griefs, and mitigates the severity of all calamities. But much as I owe to time, I cannot think upon my restoration to contentment, without paying the tribute of heartfelt gratitude to my beloved, but now departed, mother. I resolved to make an effort to cultivate my other senses of touch, taste, hearing and smell,—and it is wonderful, with what rapidity the powers of these senses increased. No one can comprehend what powers lie dormant within him, until stern necessity is upon him. I gradually learned to distinguish persons by their voice and steps—to measure distances by sound, with great facility—and at length I moved about the house with ease, and even made my way through the town of Syracuse, without much difficulty.

The situation of my parents became much reduced, and I determined to do something for my own support. I learned to distinguish the various pieces of money by the touch—and then purchasing various articles of merchandize and pamphlets, and taking a boy for my guide, I travelled about through the western part of New York selling them. I met with good success, always finding persons willing to aid me, out of pity for my condition. In travelling about, I heard of many blind persons,

whom I went to see, and the forlornness of the condition of many of them, helped to make me resigned to mine. I found many who had been born blind, and who having never been in any way instructed, were utterly helpless. They could not believe, when I told them, how many miles I had travelled, and what powers I had of knowing things. If there is any one who doubts the value and utility of the efforts now making, here and elsewhere, in behalf of these unfortunate persons, I wish he could only meet with some of those uncared-for individuals whom I encountered, and compare their condition with that of the educated blind. There is almost as much difference between them, as between that of those who see and those who cannot. But all I met were not of this description. I found some who were wonderfully skillful in various things, especially in music. I remember particularly a Mr. Ross, in Rochester, who was an excellent performer upon the violin. Though utterly blind, he had become perfectly familiar with the place, and, at his offer, I took his arm, and he conducted me all over it, telling me about the various parts, and the buildings. He carried me through the Eagle Tavern, pointing out all the rooms;—through the Munroe Garden, distinguishing the various beds of flowers,—and we walked together over the aqueduct of the canal, where there was no railing,—he sportingly telling me, occasionally, to *look down* and see what a dangerous place was beneath us. We returned from our ramble in perfect safety, thereby illustrating, that though true in a moral, yet it is not in a literal sense, that “if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.”

At the town of Lysander, I met with another blind man, who was a most excellent cabinet maker. I could not believe it possible, having never heard of such a thing as a blind mechanic, till I went into his shop, and felt of the work, and even then, I could not believe that he was blind, until, at his desire, I put my finger upon the orbits of his eyes, and found but an empty space.

I found many people, who were utterly ignorant of the capabilities of the blind, who thought that they could not know

day from night—could not dress themselves, and feed themselves—or do any thing—in short, that they must be perfect idiots. They carried this so far, that when they saw I could do something, and could take care of myself, they insulted me, and called me an impostor. But I only pitied their ignorance, and told them I thought it quite hard enough to be blind, without being also exposed to persecution for it.

After this tour I returned again to Syracuse. Emboldened too much by my success in rambling, I thought I could go round Syracuse with perfect ease, from my knowledge of it before I left. But I forgot what changes the spirit of improvement, so rapidly makes in all places in this country; even in a few months. An old cistern had been opened in the town, and in one of my attempts at walking, I very suddenly found myself at the bottom of it, while a large stone upon its side, which had accompanied me in my unpleasant and quite unsafe expedition, fell upon my foot and injured me severely. I was laid up at home three months. While confined with this lameness, I was visited by more of those very kind persons who, by way of sympathy, magnified my calamities, and found in my accident of tumbling into the cistern, fresh proof that I never could entirely overcome my difficulties. I remember one of them had been talking in this strain—wondering how I was to find my way through the world, and thinking I must despair—when I told him that for answer I would have him read a few lines from my good old friend, the blind Doctor Blacklock,—and I caused the following to be pointed out to him:—

“ You ask, by what means I my livelihood gain,
 And how my long conflict with fortune maintain?
 The question is kind, yet I cannot tell why,
 ’Tis hard for a spirit like mine to reply.
 If a friend with a friend must be free and sincere,
 My vesture is simple and sober my cheer:
 But tho’ few my resources, and vacant my purse,
 One comfort is left me—things cannot be worse.
 ’Tis vain to repine, as philosophers say,
 So I take what is offered, and live as I may;
 To my wants, still returning, adapt my supplies,
 And find in my hope what my fortune denies.”

While I was confined at home, I had an entirely unexpected visit from my friend Ross, of Rochester, who had been my

guide through that place. I was so rejoiced at *seeing* him, that had it not been for my lameness, I should have returned the compliment, and conducted him through Syracuse; but perhaps it was as well for his neck, that I could not attempt it. The first announcement he made to me was, that since we parted he had married a wife,—and, says he, “I am happy enough, *for she is the handsomest woman I ever saw*, and I advise you, as soon as you can, to get one, too.”

After my recovery, I started upon another traveling expedition, toward the southern part of New York. I felt, as before, great interest in all blind persons, and always inquired for them, and if I heard of any, visited them. I met with one blind man, who was the owner of a large farm—upon which he worked himself, hoeing corn, &c. He told me he got along without difficulty, and, indeed, that he could ride all about the town, some six or eight miles, with ease. I never had been on horseback since I was blind, though I was a good horseman before. But he made me get on a horse, and we, both on horseback, rode into town, a distance of three miles, without any trouble. We were hooted at by many of his friends, who had seen me the day before and knew me; and two blind men riding together on horseback, and known to be such, were certainly not a sight to be seen every day, and not a little amused them. The name of this man was Hooker. He was married, and the father of seven children. During my stay I visited many parts of his farm, in his company, and though it may seem strange, it is not the less true that he could do much manual labor on his own ground, such as hoeing, &c. His wife was a very amiable, excellent woman, and treated me with all possible kindness. Indeed, I never knew the wife of a blind man, chosen after the loss of his vision, who was not of this character. Depending more upon the kindness of a companion than others, they are more careful in their choice, and are often better judges from the voice, than persons who have more extensive sources of information.

I went through New York and the western part of Pennsylvania, selling my small stock as I best could, and meeting with

much trouble and persecution. Some people thought me an impostor, and were therefore disposed to treat me with harshness and insult. The course a certain Mr. Ruggles took toward me, was so peculiarly unmanly, that I think his behavior ought to be held up as an example to others in like sort offending. Though I proffered him ready money for his accommodations, he treated me as the basest impostor, and bade me, if I was in reality blind, to begone to the pauper asylum. This insult stung me to the quick, and I travelled three miles on foot after dark, with my pack, rather than remain in his house. This happened in Washington county. Otherwise I had not much reason to complain. I had good sales for my goods.

Hence I travelled to Pittsburg, where the people were kind to me ; but such a smoky den as they dwell in, I never smelled. I thought the very women must have been blackened by the atmosphere. It was the essential oil of coal gas. Thence I crossed the country to Cincinnati, but did not find the journey very profitable, till I arrived in the city ; where I speculated to good advantage in books. The spirit of this place is that of enterprise, and there are still many swine there, though Mrs. Trollope is gone. Thence I proceeded to Cleaveland, on Lake Erie. On the road thither I lost my way, for the first time, and encamped with my boy in the woods. We were much tormented with the polite attentions of those little insects who constantly cry "cousin" in your ears, till you are tempted to break the commandment and curse their claims to relationship. The wolves, too, made melody in their throats peculiarly pleasing to a helpless man.

Hence we sailed to Buffalo, in the schooner *Lady Robin*, where I did not do very well, but made an addition to my stock of goods for a more eastern market. There I found a blind musician, who proved a very good guide, and shewed me many fine things. Hence I pushed on to Batavia, where Morgan wrote a foolish book, and got his neck twisted for his pains. Then on to Rochester, and paid a second visit to my blind friend, and was assured by him again, that his wife was the prettiest woman he ever saw.

He and I walked about the place as usual, and in the evening we went to the theatre together, and the audience good naturedly cried out to us, desiring to know what two blind men could expect to see in such a place. We took their raillery in good part, as it was meant. From the theatre we retired to his house, where I took my lodging, as I always did; well knowing I was perfectly welcome. Next day we visited the Monroe garden and botanized together, he teaching me the names and qualities of plants with which I was, as yet, not so well acquainted. That night we went to a ball, where we enjoyed ourselves highly, and he acquitted himself handsomely, and to the satisfaction of the company, and to his own, as a fiddler.

Having thus enjoyed his hospitality, on the next day I again started eastward, with my boy, on a peddling excursion. I did not do so well in Rochester as before, and, indeed, I have always found, wherever I travelled, that the novelty presented in the person of a blind man, acting for, and taking care of himself, would attract more custom at first than after the edge of curiosity was worn off. On the same principle, people gave more to see a boy cut portraits and shoot arrows with his feet, than they would have done to relieve his necessity, though never so urgent. Charity is, at best, but a cold feeling. I proceeded to Canandagua, where my singular appearance was less stimulating to curiosity, and fared better there. It is a beautiful place, situated on the shore of a charming lake; that is, if I may be allowed to be in any degree a judge.

My next stage was to Geneva, of which I can say, that it is built on the side of a hill, on a lake shore, and seemed a stirring place. There, for the first time, I was aware of a man in my own unfortunate condition, engaged in sawing and splitting wood, which he performed with great dexterity. Finally, I reached Auburn, the terror of all the thieves and rogues in Gotham State, and visited the state prison, in a manner entirely voluntary. There, to my sorrow and mortification, I found a blind man incarcerated for a term of fourteen years, for a very scandalous and infamous crime. It seems that even the abso-

lute necessity of cultivating good-will, cannot always restrain our evil passions.

Having fulfilled all reasonable expectations in this little tour, I returned to Syracuse, where the first severe blow that had fallen on me since my blindness had been struck. My father was dead—of apoplexy. I was much afflicted, for he had ever been a good and kind parent, and I sustained great loss, indeed, in him. But divine wisdom has so ordered it that sorrow for any irreparable misfortune cannot last very long.

As I always took more notice of whatever happened in connection with the blind than with other men, I must not omit to mention, and I may as well do it here as anywhere, that in Clinton, Oneida county, I became acquainted with a blind Indian, who was much of a gentleman, and was considered an admirable performer on the flute, clarionet, and other instruments. I liked the Indians generally. They were a good, kind people, and took much notice of me, especially after I became blind. What I particularly liked in them was, their attachment to the truth. Young as I was, I was much struck with some things I saw among them. One of them was the sacrifice of a white dog, which they perform annually, in a most cruel and savage manner, by tying the animal fast, and then consuming it alive in a fire, without any regard to its sufferings. The spectacle filled me with disgust and horror, and as it is done from some motive connected with their superstitions, I suppose is not to be taken as a token of their general character. I believe the God of nature never made such abominable inhumanity a leading trait in the character of any man, much less in that of a whole people. Their war dance was also an amusing sight, though I could not understand it. The Onondagas had a castle built of stone on their lands, hallowed by their traditions and superstitions. I have been over it since I became blind, and could perceive that it was a work of considerable strength and extent.

Men, and women too, were generally kind to me—very kind. I was never insulted by any grown person, unless under the supposition that I was an impostor; for the external appearance of my sightless orbs does not at once convey the melancholy

truth. Children would sometimes take advantage of my defect, to place stumbling blocks in my path. One man only has abused me, and he was not himself at the time. He would have smoked in my face, to irritate me; but I have made it a rule not to return injury with injury. It was at Syracuse. Not succeeding in his unmanly attempt, he thrust me into the canal, but I easily got out again. An officer, who was present, instantly took him into custody. A great excitement took place—he was tried for the assault, convicted, and imprisoned thirty days; for which I was sorry, and would have begged him off, if I could. He was sincerely penitent, and asked my forgiveness. The judge would not listen to me or him. He was particularly good to me ever after.

As I was walking one day in Syracuse, I happened to stop opposite the church, and overheard several persons talking about the possibility of ascending the spire by means of the lightning rod. One of them remarked, that he did not think a sailor could do it. I observed that I could, at which all laughed. I proceeded to try the experiment, and actually mounted and descended upwards of seventy-five feet, as can be proved by the testimony of fifty reputable persons. I do not think there are many men who can see, who can perform this feat.

I next tried my skill at riding on horseback alone, and the beast being a steady goer, and not apt to be frightened, I rode ten miles and back in perfect safety.

After remaining some time there, I again applied my pack to my shoulders and started for Cherry Valley, where I had the misfortune to fall ill, and laid so for a long time, and incurred a heavy bill of expense into the bargain. My boy being here a useless incumbrance, and not being well able to provide for him, I sent him home, for a while, though we were mutually attached to each other. He was a good, honest, affectionate, civil spoken lad, and had been entrusted to me by his father, partly to gratify his natural longing to see the world, and partly as being less likely to fall into evil courses under my care than elsewhere. In the mean time his parents removed to Michigan, and I saw him no more.

When sufficiently recovered, I proceeded alone in the stage coach to Albany, and thence to New Lebanon, where I was kindly entreated by the honest Quakers, who would take no pay for my entertainment, though, from conscientious scruples, they would not buy a pedlar's goods. My next journey was three miles alone and on foot, to Hancock, and there they tackled a wagon on purpose to carry me on to Pitsfield, fourteen miles farther. Thence to Northampton, and still farther to Hartford, where I remained five months, having another inflammation in my eyes, and making an honest livelihood by peddling books and pamphlets, and then went to New York. There I found employment with a Mr. Whittington, who dealt largely in coffee and other aromatic vegetables. I was constantly occupied in grinding coffee two months.

I found many blind persons in New York, and made myself acquainted with them, at their asylum, which is a noble foundation, and elsewhere. Thence I proceeded to Quakertown, or Philadelphia, in search of more profitable employment, which I did not find, though I sought it diligently three weeks. I fell in there with a blind man of no common intelligence, named Joseph Landport, with whom I speedily became pretty particularly intimate. We walked all over the city together, and he showed me the line-of-battle-ship Pennsylvania. I remember, as we stood on her bulwarks, he remarked that "it would be one of the worst places in the world for a blind man to catch a fall, as there was nothing to grasp to save himself by." Her lower part was a perfect salt mine. He also took me to his house, and introduced me to his better half, whom I found of a character and temper similar to all the wives of other blind men I have known, excellent, mild, and amiable.

From Philadelphia I repaired to Baltimore; but no one had anything for the blind man to do. I then paid a visit to my friends on my way back to New York, and, on reaching them, was apprized of a misfortune worse than even deprivation of sight—the death of a kind and loving mother. My affliction was so violent, that it threw me into a fever, which again settled in my eyes, and I was obliged to go to the New York Hospital.

Another evil assailed me—a large and dangerous tumor gathered on my shoulder, and it was necessary for me to undergo a cruel operation. I staid there five weeks, and gave but eight dollars for board, medicine, and advice.

I now resolved to try my luck in Boston, and embarked in the steamer Benjamin Franklin. When I arrived in Providence an accident befel me, that might have had serious consequences. Walking about the streets with my usual confidence, I fell off a steep bank, but was, luckily, more frightened than hurt, and it did not hinder me from reaching Boston in safety.

It was here my good fortune to meet with that most excellent man and skillful practitioner, Dr. Warren, who showed me the utmost tenderness, and was the first who gave me any encouragement to hope that my sight might be restored. It was a vain hope indeed; but he did all the most consummate skill could do for me, and I am not the less obliged to him, that Divine Providence did not smile upon his efforts. I am truly glad that I am able, in this humble way, to express my gratitude toward this good Samaritan. By his means I was introduced into the Hospital without charge; and he performed an operation upon my eyes. It was exquisitely painful; but, for a moment, I did enjoy the inestimable blessing of sight, and that was compensation enough. I saw my benefactor's face, and forget it I never shall. I saw it by the first ray of light that had visited my eyes for eight long years; and the last, alas! that I shall ever see. May God reward him! But the light was soon darkened again, and at the close of two months I left the Hospital, as dark, and much more cheerless than ever.

But my gloom wore off again, and I found other friends, and kind ones. Passing one day by the Old South church, I met a large, strong man, who accosted me very abruptly, asking how old I was. Thinking, at first, from his manner, that his intention was to insult me, I thought to reply, "Not so old as I was when I was seventy;" but immediately recollecting myself, I civilly told him my age. He then demanded if I had heard of such a place as the liberality of Mr. Perkins has provided for

an Asylum for persons circumstanced like myself, and if I would like to enter it, or had taken any steps to gain admission. I told him I had not only seen, but had visited it—that I should like to be admitted; but that, being poor and friendless, I had no means. He told me to go to Dr. Howe, and ask admission in his name, and he would attend to the rest. I went, obeyed his directions, was admitted, and was an inmate of the institution (of which more will be said in another place) nine months. This benevolent gentleman was the late Lieutenant Governor Armstrong.

I liked Dr. Howe, and was well treated by him. He is a truly good man, and worthy of all commendation. But becoming very well acquainted about the city, and finding friends everywhere, it appeared to me more proper to gain my living by my own industry, than to eat the bread of charity in comparative indolence. I therefore left the Asylum, and hired myself to work at the press for J. T. Buckingham, Esq., of whom I have to say, that all his dealings with me, and I truly think, with all others, were upright and honorable. I wrought for him six months, and then left his employ because I found the labor too severe for me. Since then I have gotten my bread by selling books and pamphlets,—by running errands, and doing any little service in my power for those who will employ me. I have at times accepted the aid that my misfortune has rendered necessary; but I have never degraded myself by asking alms.

I like this city—and have pleasure to walk in its pleasant places. I like the citizens—they are the most polite, civil, honest and humane, whose voices have reached my ears. As long as they will give the blind man a living, he will abide with them; and when he dies, he hopes his bones will repose among them.

“ Boston forever ! city of my heart,
Let other cities all look up to thee ! ”

Only three times have I suffered reproach or insult in her streets. Once I fell into a cellar in Water street, and again into the same muddy and unwholesome hole, months after. My

friends advised me to desire him to close his dangerous premises, or complain of him to the authorities for keeping them open so long. I chose the former, and was advised to go to the Alms House for my pains.

Again, the same advice was gratuitously offered me by a merchant on Central wharf, who also nearly pushed me down stairs, to the great peril of my limbs. The only provocation was, offering to sell him a little book before dinner, and which would have cost him fifty cents, of which twenty-five would have been the commission of the blind man. The same circumstance once occurred on Granite wharf. It will profit no one to know the names of these good *men*.

Let not the reader think the blind necessarily destitute of intelligence. The Iliad, the Odyssey, and Paradise Lost, were written by blind men. A blind man was the savior of Rome; and afterwards begged in vain in her streets for a penny. Ossian calls himself blind. The best surveyor at one time in England, saw nothing. Saunderson was professor of mathematics, and wrote books on algebra and optics. A hundred instances might be cited; but the reader will best satisfy himself, by attending one of Dr. Howe's exhibitions. There is One who can illumine what is dark, as well as raise what is low. Him I thank for giving me comforts I did not know when I could see, and for supplying substitutes for the senses I have lost.

I can tell a dog from a cat, and form a pretty good guess at his weight, by the clatter of his claws on the side walk. I can distinguish most animals by similar tests. I can tell metals and minerals, by three, at least, of the senses. I can tell a man's size, weight, make, temper, age, whether his neck is long or short, by his voice and tread, and this I do by his tone, and the manner of his speech. If a man holds his head down in speaking, his neck is long; if the contrary, the reverse. I feel his voice strike me upwards, if short; downwards, if tall. I can distinguish most woods by their different degrees of weight and hardness. I can say whether land, wood, or water is before me, by smell and sound. I

know an African from a white, by his voice. I can pronounce what dishes are on table, and what flowers and fruits are in a garden, by the smell, and can judge of meat in the market, by the feeling. I can usually say how many persons are in a room, and what their sex may be; and how many horses are in a vehicle. I can pronounce whether a room is empty or furnished, or how full a cask or a large box is. I can feel any obstacle in my way before I touch it. Whether a hill or level ground is before me, I can judge, only by groping. I can distinguish different kinds of cloths and their quality, as well by touch as others do by sight.

I cannot read now, though I was in Dr. Howe's excellent institution for sightless persons nine months, and had an opportunity to have learned, which I regret that I did not improve. The fact is, there are so few books and maps printed in the raised characters, that it is scarcely an object for a man who already has the rudiments of education, to study them. Nevertheless it would have been an amusement; and I am confident I could have learned. Dr. Howe found no difficulty in teaching me the map of Boston; and so perfectly do I know it, that I have frequently acted as a guide to seeing men. The celebrated David Crocket was not a little astonished at being led by me from the Tremont House to the Blind school.

There is one thing that I have never been able to comprehend; and that is, it has been pretended that some blind men have been able to distinguish colors. If they could, they must have had some organs of perception of which I have no idea. I never could; and I do not believe it. I can as soon believe that the shell of an oyster feels as keenly as the tips of my fingers, or that a tortoise can outstrip a horse. There are other means by which they may be enabled to impose on credulity. They might learn the flowers by the scent and commit the colors to memory; and they must hear that the color of a sailor's jacket is usually blue.

I find my way with perfect ease and safety, by feeling for holes with my cane, by following the edges of the side walks, and by observing the general direction of the streets. The gas

light posts are my chief annoyances. I wait for horses and carriages to pass, and judge of their distance by the ear. I can foretell the weather by the feeling of the atmosphere. I can think of no other particulars likely to gratify the curiosity of the public.

To conclude ; whoever buys this little book, will perhaps find in it an equivalent for his money, and if not, he will at least have the satisfaction of having aided one upon whom the divine hand has been laid heavily.

ANECDOTES OF THE BLIND.

THE REV. THOMAS BLACKLOCK.

THIS gentleman was born in 1721, at Annan, in the county of Dumfries, in Scotland. His parents were from Cumberland. His father was a bricklayer, and his mother the daughter of a dealer in cattle.

He was not born blind, but lost his sight by the small pox at the age of six months. He was, therefore, kept at home, and his father encouraged an extraordinary inclination for books, which he displayed at a very early age. The best authors of the age were read to him, and, with assistance, he gained some knowledge of the Latin tongue. Poetry was his chief delight, and Allan Ramsey was his especial favorite. As early as his twelfth year, he began to write poems himself, one of which here follows, and may shew whether or not blind boys may be able to acquire education.

“TO A LITTLE GIRL WHOM I HAD OFFENDED.

How long shall I attempt in vain
Thy smiles, my angel, to regain?
I'll kiss your hand, I'll weep, I'll kneel:
Will naught, fair tyrant, reconcile?
That gold-finch with her painted wings,
Which gaily looks, and sweetly sings;
That, and if aught I have more fine,
All, all, my charmer, shall be thine.
When next mamma shall prove severe,
I'll interpose, and save my dear.
Soften, my fair, those angry eyes,
Nor tear thy heart with broken sighs:
Think, while that tender breast they strain,
For thee what anguish I sustain.
Should but thy fair companions view
How ill that frown becomes thy brow,
With fear and grief in every eye,
Each would to each astonished cry,

‘Heavens, where is all her sweetness flown,
How strange a figure now she’s grown!
Run, Nancy, let us run, lest we,
Grow pettish, awkward things as she.’

’T is done, ’t is done; my cherub smiles,
My grief suspends, my fear beguiles;
How the quick pleasure leaves my breast!
Ah! still be kind, and I’ll be blest.”

When he was nineteen, his father was killed by the fall of a malt kiln, but he found friends and protectors, who appreciated his uncommon genius. Some of his compositions being shown to Dr. Stevenson of Edinburgh, that gentleman took him to the capital, where he entered the University as a student of divinity, and there continued his studies four years. In the following year a volume of his poems was published. The rebellion then breaking out, he returned to Dumfries, where he remained with his brother-in-law, till the end of the troubles, when he returned to the University, and continued his studies six years longer. He became master of the learned languages, and of the French tongue; attained a knowledge of philosophy and theology, and a considerable fund of other information. In 1759 he passed his examination, and was licensed as a preacher by the Presbytery. He obtained a high reputation as an orator, divine and author, as will be seen by reading some volumes of his sermons, and his treatise on morals.

His manner of life was so uniform that the history of one week of it is the history of the whole. Reading, music, walking, conversing and disputation, occupied almost his every hour. In argument he kept his temper admirably—no angry word was ever heard to fall from him. He was, however, very sensitive of insult to himself or his friends, and would sometimes revenge himself by satirical verses, which, however, he would burn in a few hours.

He wrote, or rather dictated, with great readiness and rapidity, so that his amanuensis could scarcely keep up with him; but if he was at a loss for a rhyme or a word, he stopped altogether and left the piece unfinished. He could not compose sitting, and he acquired a vibratory motion of body, which increased in proportion as his fancy warmed, and he was pleased with his subject.

In 1762 he married a Miss Johnson, the daughter of a surgeon, and was truly blest in the connection. This was a few days before he was ordained minister of Kirkendbright, by presentation from the crown, which was obtained for him, by the Earl of Selkirk. But, from whatever cause, the inhabitants of that parish were so unwilling to receive him, that after two years of legal disputation, he compromised the matter, and accepted a small annuity instead. He had been inclined

to this course from the first. With this little provision, he removed to Edinburgh, and to make up the deficiency of his means, he received a number of young gentlemen into his house as boarders, and assisted them in their studies. Thus he lived twenty-three years, when his declining health and age obliged him to discontinue the plan. In the mean while he had received the degree of Doctor of Divinity from the University of Aberdeen.

No person was ever more agreeable to his pupils, and inmates of his house, than Dr. Blacklock. His mildness, his gentleness, and the warmth of his heart secured him the love and respect of all. The good man would sit in the midst of his young circle, all eager to pay him attention and do him kind offices. He seemed to forget his deprivation, and entered into the amusements of those around him with all the sprightliness of a young man. Music he loved, and was himself no mean performer on the flute and flageolet. He sung well, and was not ill pleased to be asked to do so.

Late in life he was afflicted with deafness, which must of course have been a heavier calamity to him than to another. However, his gentleness never forsook him, and his confidence in divine goodness was not impaired. His hour arrived in the fulness of years. In summer, 1791, he was attacked by fever, and died after a week's illness. His wife survived him.

His works speak for themselves.

JAMES WADDELL.

BY WILLIAM WIRT.

It was one Sunday, as I travelled through the county of Orange, that my eye was caught by a cluster of horses tied near a ruinous old wooden house, in the forest, not far from the road side. Having frequently seen such objects before, in travelling through these states, I had no difficulty in understanding that this was a place of religious worship.

Devotion alone should have stopped me, to join in the duties of the congregation; but I must confess, that curiosity to hear the preacher of such a wilderness, was not the least of my motives. On entering, I was struck with his preternatural appearance. He was a tall and very spare old man; his head, which was covered with a white linen cap, his shrivelled hands, and his voice, were all shaking under the influence of a palsy; and a few moments ascertained to me that he was perfectly blind.

The first emotions which touched my breast, were those of mingled pity and veneration. But ah! sacred God! how soon were all my feelings changed! The lips of Plato were never more worthy of a prognostic swarm of bees, than were the lips of this holy man! It was a day of the administration of the sacrament; and his subject, of course, was the passion of our Saviour. I had heard the subject handled a thousand times: I had thought it exhausted long ago. Little did I suppose, that in the wild woods of America, I was to meet with a man whose eloquence would give to this topic a new and more sublime pathos, than I had ever before witnessed.

As he descended from the pulpit, to distribute the mystic symbols, there was a peculiar, a more than human solemnity in his air and manner, which made my blood run cold, and my whole frame shiver.

He then drew a picture of the sufferings of our Saviour; his trial before Pilate; his ascent up Calvary; his Crucifixion; and his death. I knew the whole history; but never, until then, had I heard the circumstances so selected, so arranged, so colored! It was all new: and I seemed to have heard it for the first time in my life. His enunciation was so deliberate, that his voice trembled on every syllable; and every heart in the assembly trembled in unison. His peculiar phrases had that force of description, that the original scene appeared to be, at that moment, acting before our eyes. We saw the very faces of the Jews: the staring, frightful distortions of malice and rage. We saw the buffet: my soul kindled with a flame of indignation; and my hands were involuntarily and convulsively clinched.

But when he came to touch on the patience, the forgiving meekness of our Saviour; when he drew, to the life, his blessed eyes streaming in tears to heaven; his voice breathing to God, a soft and gentle prayer of pardon on his enemies, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do"—the voice of the preacher, which had all along faltered, grew fainter and fainter, until his utterance being entirely obstructed by the force of his feelings, he raised his handkerchief to his eyes, and burst into a loud and irrepressible flood of grief. The effect is inconceivable. The whole house resounded with the mingled groans, and sobs, and shrieks of the congregation.

It was some time before the tumult had subsided, so far as to permit him to proceed. Indeed, judging by the usual, but fallacious standard of my own weakness, I began to be very uneasy for the situation of the preacher. For I could not conceive, how he would be able to let his audience down from the height to which he had wound them, without impairing the solemnity and dignity of his subject, or perhaps shocking them by the abruptness of the fall. But—no: the descent was as beautiful and sublime, as the elevation had been rapid and enthusiastic.

The first sentence, with which he broke the awful silence, was a quotation from Rousseau: "Socrates died like a philosopher, but Jesus Christ like a God!"

I despair of giving you any idea of the effect produced by this short sentence, unless you could perfectly conceive the whole manner of the man, as well as the peculiar crisis in the discourse. Never before did I completely understand what Demosthenes meant by laying such stress on *delivery*. You are to bring before you the venerable figure of the preacher: his blindness constantly recalling to your recollection old Homer, Ossian and Milton, and associating with his performance, the melancholy grandeur of their geniuses; you are to imagine that you hear his slow, solemn, well-accented enunciation, and his voice of affecting, trembling melody; you are to remember the pitch of passion and enthusiasm to which the congregation were raised; and then, the few minutes of portentous, deathlike silence which reigned throughout the house: the preacher removing his white handkerchief from his aged face, (even yet wet from the recent torrent of his tears,) and slowly stretching forth the palsied hand which holds it, begins the sentence: "Socrates died like a philosopher"—then pausing, raising his other hand, pressing them both clasped together, with warmth and energy to his breast, lifting his "sightless balls" to heaven, and pouring his whole soul into his tremulous voice—"but Jesus Christ—like a God!" If he had been indeed and in truth an angel of light, the effect could scarcely have been more divine.

Guess my surprise, when, on my arrival at Richmond, and mentioning the name of this man, I found not one person who had ever before heard of *James Waddell*! Is it not strange, that such a genius as this, so accomplished a scholar, so divine an orator, should be permitted to languish and die in obscurity, within eighty miles of the metropolis of Virginia? To me it is a conclusive argument, either that the Virginians have no taste for the highest strains of the most sublime oratory, or that they are destitute of a much more important quality, the love of genuine and exalted religion.

JAMES MITCHELL

Was born in Ardlach, a Highland parish of Scotland, on the banks of the Findhorn river, A. D. 1795. His father was minister of the parish. He was the youngest but one of seven children, all, but himself of perfect conformation. While he was yet a puling infant, his mother observed that he did not look at any bright object, and that no noise,

however loud, could rouse him from his slumbers—from which she inferred the melancholy truth that he was both blind and deaf, and would consequently be dumb. Mother like, she loved him the better for his utter helplessness.

As he grew older he could distinguish persons by the touch, and was very able to tell his own playthings from those of his brothers' and sisters'. He was generally good tempered, though somewhat irritable. His oldest sister did all she could to instruct him. When he behaved well, she patted him on the head—when otherwise, she would push him away.

He fed himself, and let the family know when he was hungry, by pointing to the closet where provisions were kept. If he had a headache he would lay his head on some one's lap, and put his hand upon it; if he was sick, he placed his own hand on his heart. He was fond of walking, and soon learned to find his way about, and even to run without fear. A little boy used to follow him to see that he came to no harm. He loved play, and had several little amusements, not altogether peculiar to himself. Toward the boy who was his companion he evinced his attachment in a manner something like that of the lame dog, who, having been cured by a surgeon, brought a friend of his own race to his benefactor's house to be cured also.

While he was quite young he hurt his foot so severely that he could not walk, and used to sit by the fire with it upon a cricket. When he recovered, the cricket was conveyed to the garret. More than a year afterwards, his little companion received a hurt of the same nature. James missed him, and after having ascertained where he was, and what ailed him, by feeling, immediately went to the garret, found the cricket, went to the kitchen and gently placed the child's foot upon it.

He was fond of the stable, into which he would go with a whip, when any strangers arrived, and examine matters and things. He felt of the legs of those he met, to know if they wore boots. Fearing that he would come to harm, his parents bade the servants watch and prevent his visits to the stable. Uneasy of being deprived of his favorite amusement, he took occasion to lock the kitchen door, while all the domestics were within, and then went to the stable.

He was often in great danger. He discovered new walks about the grounds, and every day extended his geographical knowledge. Not far from the house was a deep and rapid stream, with a very narrow bridge over it. One day his father found the poor helpless boy in the very act of creeping over. To prevent him from going thither again, he twice had him put into the river, after which he was careful to go there no more.

Mr. Mitchell, too, was fond of his blind son, and when he was fifteen took him to a Dr. Gordon, at Forres, who examined his eyes, and

counselled that he should be taken to London. Thither they went, to the celebrated Dr. Cooper, who would have couched his eyes; but the boy struggled so violently that the assistants could not hold his head still enough. They then returned home, and two years after Mr. Mitchell again took his son to Dr. Gordon, who ascertained, by several experiments, that James had so far gained the use of his eyes, as to be able to see white paper when placed before him. After a while, however, he was as blind as ever.

When the forlorn child was seventeen, his father died, and it was observed that he shrunk with instinctive dread on touching the dead body. He had never touched a corpse before, and could not have known what death meant. The feeling must have been purely instinctive; for he showed no sorrow at the funeral, but examined the assistants, and walked smilingly with them to the grave. Nevertheless, he missed his parent, and for some time after, went every day to the grave and patted the green turf with his hands. He shewed no signs of sorrow, though he did of uneasiness. A little while after Mr. Mitchell died, his wife fell sick, and James was admitted to her chamber. Finding that she was ill, he wept, perhaps thinking that she would follow his father.

A tailor came to the house to make him a suit of clothes. He took the man to the room where his father died, stretched his head backward, and then led him to the grave. Soon after, being ill himself, he was put into the same bed, and was so unwilling to remain there that it was found necessary to remove him, after which he was quiet. He also remembered his father's habits. A clergyman coming to spend an evening, James pointed to Mr. Mitchell's bible, and made signs to the family to kneel. He was an affectionate lad, and was always anxious lest any of his friends should be hurt. One day his sister, walking in the damp grass, her feet were wetted. Discovering this, he was uneasy till she changed her shoes. He knew that her feet were wet, and many other things, by the smell. It was thus that he discovered the presence of a stranger, and the place where he stood.

James was often much troubled to discover what was going on, and one day was very uneasy at his mother's absence. His sister placed his head on the pillow once for every day she would be gone. He understood her at once, and was quiet. He seldom attempted to work, though he would sometimes try to assist any of the servants whom he liked. He seemed to have a correct idea of a house, and would build models, of turf, leaving holes for the windows. He could not learn to make baskets. He would not play with children, but was fond of infants, whom he would take in his arms. After a time his sight was so far revived that he could tell a bright object from a dark

one, and could distinguish a difference of colors. This was discovered by his putting objects of different hues together. He compared the flower of the mustard plant with the yellow epaulette of an officer. He would sort flowers, putting the red by themselves, and the blue by themselves, &c., and would follow a person with a red cloak. One of his greatest pleasures was, to put on new clothes. He would stay by the tailor while they were being made, and be angry at any delay. He was very happy in the company of the shoe maker on like occasions.

He knew a horse that had belonged to his father, and shewed pleasure at the meeting, led him to the stable, took off the saddle, and gave him corn.

When James was about eighteen, his mother removed to Nairn, from which he learned to wander several miles, but always returned at dinner time. He liked to be in a carpenter's shop, and to handle their tools.

He had a considerable degree of reflection. Finding that a new pair of shoes were too small for him, his mother put them into a closet. A day or two after, a new thought struck the blind boy. He got the shoes and put them upon the feet of the boy who attended him. He would lock people into the stable, and once pretended to look through a knot hole, from which it appears he knew that others could see, and how. At sixteen he learned to smoke, and would go to a shop for pipes and tobacco. Once being sent for two pipes, he returned with one only in his hand, and it was found that he had hidden the other under his jacket. He laughed heartily at the jest.

When James was nearly eighteen, Dr. Gordon wrote of him as follows:—"He communicates his ideas by natural signs. As soon as I began to examine his eyes opposite a window, he turned to his sister and stretched out his arm laterally, which was his usual sign for *London*. It is obviously the expression of distance. For getting on horseback he raises his foot, and brings his fingers under his feet in imitation of stirrups. He puts his hand to his mouth to express food. By an anxiety to leave the house, and an imitation of the manner of stitching shoes, he intimated a wish to go to the shoemaker's. He took his sister's teasing him, by getting in his way, in good humor, as he also did her taking a whip from him. On her trying to persuade him that a large dog was a horse, he laughed, and made a motion as if to mount the animal."

After his mother's death, which happened about 1825, James's sister writes thus of him:—

"*My Dear Sir*,—I think my mother's death has influenced James's conduct, and softened his temper more than any event in his life. During her life, when I refused compliance with any capricious wish,

he made an appeal to her ; but since her death, he has scarcely ever attempted asking any thing out of the common routine, and if he has done so, and been refused, he has taken the first opportunity of getting over his displeasure. On one occasion, when he had broken his pipe before another had become due, he thought he might supply himself by some half-pence which had been left in the cupboard, and came hanging about me with the broken pipe, and a half-penny shoved into it. When I found myself obliged to notice him, I signed to him to replace the half-penny in the cupboard ; which he did immediately, but in very ill humor, and left the room, slamming the door. However, he returned in a little time with a new pipe, having been more successful in an appeal he had made to some of his friends, his good humor perfectly restored, showing me his prize, and apparently expecting me to participate in his pleasure. I gave him a fixed allowance of pipes and tobacco, consisting of two pipes, and about the third of an ounce of tobacco every day. Two days ago he evinced a sense of justice, on one of these occasions, as strong as any I have seen him exhibit. It is usual to give him a new pipe after dinner, and it is generally brought into the room a short time previous. On the occasion alluded to, he broke the pipe, and put the tobacco into an old one he had in his pocket. I remarked the action, but took no notice of it until he turned round after dinner, as usual, for his pipe, when I took the two matches generally given along with it, and put them into his hand, and he very quietly took them, and smoked with his old pipe, and did not ask another, until it became his right, after breakfast, the next morning.

“The most striking effect my mother’s death had on him, was the fear of losing me also. He, for a short time, appeared to be unwilling to quit me for an instant ; and when I did get away from him, he went through every part of the house in quest of me. Now, though not appearing to labor under the same fear, the efforts he sometimes makes to secure my services are really odd. I have known him sit for half an hour and upwards, watching the movements of our servant, until satisfied of her being fairly out of the way, and then come for me to light his pipe, or to render him any other service, being certain of my attendance in her absence. When I happen to be from home for a day or two, all the repairs which his clothes require, are kept until my return, or if he has been absent himself, he is sure to find some employment for me on his return.

“He continues to take an interest in the employment of the workmen in town, and in their work ; particularly mason-work, examining what has been done in his absence, and fearlessly ascends the highest part of their scaffolding. While the addition lately made to this house, was roofing, I saw him ascending the slaters’ ladder, and

getting on the roof. Laying himself down, and fixing his heel in a rough part of the surface, he moved himself along, one foot after another, until the fear of his slipping rendered me unable to remain longer to look at him. I believe such is his common practice, whenever anything of the kind is carrying on. He is so inoffensive, that all classes contribute towards his safety, and to his amusement; allowing him to enter their houses, and handle whatever he has a mind to, as he never attempts carrying anything away with him, nor injuring it while in his possession. Indeed, except in one instance, I never knew him exposed to any unpleasant treatment in these visits. It was in the case of a family of the name of ——, who came to reside in this neighborhood, and who were unacquainted with his situation. When he went out as usual to the house, (where he had been accustomed to range at pleasure,) and began to feel the umbrellas, and other articles in the lobby, they remonstrated with him, and getting no reply, then proceeded to turn him out of doors, which they effected, after receiving as many blows as he could bestow in the struggle.

“He was afterwards seen by two gentlemen, bellowing with rage. They wished to get hold of and soothe him, but found it impossible, from the rate at which he was going; and although regretting his apparent irritation, they were not a little amused, upon approaching the house, to see a domestic peeping fearfully out at a half open door, and the other members of the family, which consisted mostly of females, at the windows whence they could obtain a view of the person who had been the cause of so much fear and trouble to them. He has given up going to church for four years, probably because he found the confinement irksome. He walks about contentedly, during morning service, but expects the house to be kept open for him, during the afternoon.

“I have mentioned those particulars that have occurred to me, and shall not attempt an apology for the manner. James’s visit to Relugas, has several times occurred to me. The only thing respecting it, in which there could be misconception, is the idea of his having thought of paying for his food, as I have never been aware of his having any idea connected with money, farther than its being a means of procuring pipes and tobacco. I have been told that upon half a crown being given him, he had gone into a shop, and laid it on the counter, and the wished for articles not being given him immediately, he had taken it and thrown it to the opposite side of the street, as being utterly worthless. On another occasion I know he carried home a similar sum, and gave it to the maid servant, who chanced to be the only member of the family he could meet with. I consider the action as merely indicative of satisfaction.”

James Mitchell died at the age of thirty-two.

DR. NICHOLAS SAUNDERSON.

This wonderful man was born at Thurlston, in Yorkshire, in 1682. His father was in easy circumstances, and was therefore able to give him every advantage. At the age of one year, the child lost not only his sight, but his eyes also, which came away by abscess. At riper years, he had no more idea of light or colors, than if he had been born blind.

He was early sent to the free school at Penniston, where he learned the rudiments of Greek and Latin, which he afterwards so improved, by his own application, as to be able to read Euclid, Archimedes and Diophantus in the original. Latin he could not only read but write, elegantly. French he understood, and was perfectly well acquainted with the classics and belles-lettres. When he had done with the grammar school, his father began to instruct him in arithmetic, for which he presently displayed an extraordinary aptitude. He made long calculations from memory, and formed rules of his own for the solution of problems, so that, in any difficulty, the scholars applied to him for instruction, rather than to the master.

At eighteen, Mr. Richard Underbank was induced by his uncommon capacity, to teach him algebra and geometry, in which he was assisted by Dr. Nettleton. They furnished him with books, and read and explained them to him; but he soon became able to teach them. His passion for learning grew with his growth, and his father sent him to a private academy in Attercliff, where logic and metaphysics were the principal studies. Neither of these matters were agreeable to our blind hero, and he therefore made but a short stay in the school. He remained some time in the country, prosecuting his studies in his own way, without any assistance, excepting that of a person to read to him; for he could master any difficulty that occurred, by the force of his genius. But now, his father's family having much increased, his friends began to think of putting his abilities to some practical use, and it was resolved that he should go to the University at Cambridge, as a teacher, to which place he went in the year 1707, and a chamber was given him in Christ's college. The society were much pleased with him, gave him the use of their library, and afforded him every facility.

Mr. Whiston was then mathematical professor, and good-naturedly consented that young Saunderson should take a class. His fame soon spread far and wide, men of learning sought his acquaintance, and so many applied for his instruction, that he could not find time to attend to them all. Sir Isaac Newton's Treatise on Optics, and his Universal Arithmetic, were the basis of his lectures, however strange it may seem that a blind man should teach another the powers of the eye.

Upon Mr. Whiston's removal from the professorship, Queen Ann

issued a mandate to the heads of the colleges to confer on Mr. Saunderson the degree of Master of Arts, upon which he was chosen Lucasian Professor of Mathematics in November, 1711. He was recommended to this preferment by the great Sir Isaac. His first performance in the chair was an elegant speech in Latin, which was received with great applause.

From this time he gave himself wholly to the duties of his station till 1723, when he took a house in Cambridge, and married the daughter of the Rev. Wm. Dickens, by whom he had a son and daughter, who both survived him. In 1728, George the Second paid a visit to the University, and expressed a wish to see Dr. Saunderson, who accordingly waited upon him, and was created Doctor of Laws.

Dr. Saunderson's constitution was naturally strong, but his sedentary habits brought on a scorbutic habit of body, and, for some years, he was afflicted with a numbness in his lower limbs. This, in the year 1739, ended in a mortification in the foot, and his blood was in so ill a state that no art could stop its progress. He died the 19th of April, in the 57th year of his age, and was buried in the chancel at Boxworth. He was regretted as a public loss, and especially by those who were acquainted with his private character.

Dr. Saunderson did not pretend to be able to distinguish colors—on the contrary, he satisfied himself that that was an impossibility. But he could distinguish the least roughness with great nicety. He detected a counterfeit set of Roman medals which had baffled the knowledge of a connoisseur, by the roughness of the new cast. The least variation of the atmosphere was sensibly felt by him. He could tell when an object was held before his face, or when he passed near a tree, if the air was calm.

He had a board bored full of small holes, which were stopped with pegs of different sizes, by which means he made his arithmetical calculations, and pegged down sums, products and quotients with perfect accuracy. He calculated the schemes in geometry that lie in different planes by an armillary sphere, and had the regular solids cut in wood, by which he was able to communicate his ideas to his pupils.

His hearing was as acute as his touch—he could distinguish the fifth part of a note, and had an extraordinary taste for music. He played well on the flute. By this sense he distinguished persons, and could tell the size of a room, or the distance of the wall, and on walking in any place, for the second time, he could say exactly whereabout he was placed.

He could, in his mind, multiply, divide, extract the square and cube roots, work algebraic calculations, infinite series, &c. with the greatest accuracy. Nay, he could detect and correct slips of the pen as well in signs as numbers. In the more abstruse studies, when once he had

obtained a perception of any scheme, however perplexed, he never required any further assistance. He saw the whole, every link in the chain of reasoning, at a glance. In his address as a teacher, he was superior to all others. He perfectly knew the difficulties of young minds, and how to obviate them. His expression was clear and forcible, and his method so just that no one was at a loss to follow him.

His inclination was not for the abstracted parts of mathematics, which end only in contemplation. To engage his attention, a proposition must have its uses. He considered this science the key to philosophy, and thought the mind was better entertained in exploring the works of nature, than in pondering upon the subtle properties of abstract quantity.

There was scarcely any part of mathematics on which this great man had not wrote something, but it was only when the intensity of his professional labors had brought on a violent fever, that, at the solicitation of his friends, he gave himself leisure to throw his writings into form. In a very short time he produced the splendid work that he bequeathed to posterity.

His talents were not confined to study. There never was a more agreeable companion. He spoke so much of objects of sight that one who did not look at him would not have supposed him blind. His judgments on the passions and interests of mankind were as acute as those on philosophical subjects. The beauty of his expression surprised all who listened to him. Above all, his reverence for truth shone forth in every circumstance of his life and conversation. His sentiments on men and things, his praises and censures, his friendship or disregard, were expressed without reserve. This frankness made friends of all who were honored with his acquaintance or esteem, but made him enemies of many of whom he thought ill—a natural consequence of his scrupulous and disinterested sincerity.

When he was informed that his most sanguine friends had no hope of his recovery, he heard them with calmness and serenity, and, after a short silence, resumed his gaiety and spirits, and conversed with as much composure as he had ever done when in perfect health. He appointed the following evening to receive the last sacrament; but before that time came, he was seized with a delirium, which continued till his death.

“It is said of DEMOCRITUS, that he put out his own eyes, that he might think more intensely; imagining that the acuteness of the mind was taken off by the sight.”

“EUSEBIUS, an Asiatic, who was blind from the age of five years, had treasured up in his mind all kinds of learning, and explained them with the greatest clearness to others.”

“DYDIMUS of Alexandria, though blind from his infancy, and therefore ignorant of the very letters, not only learned logic, but geometry, to perfection.”

“DIODOTUS, Tully’s master in philosophy, exercised himself with more assiduity after he became blind, and taught geometry, describing his diagrams so clearly, that his scholars could draw every line in its proper direction.”

JOHN MILTON.

THE life of the blind seldom presents much variety of incident, and thus it is that a memoir of the great, the immortal Milton can occupy but a small space. He was born in 1608, in London. His father was a man of easy circumstances, and could afford to provide him with private tutors, from whose instructions he derived considerable benefit. He was afterwards sent to St. Paul’s school and finally to Cambridge, where he remained some years, and took the degrees of B. A. and M. A. Declining to take holy orders, he retired to his father’s house at Horton, in Buckinghamshire, and resided there five years, during which he pursued his studies with an ardor and diligence which have seldom been equalled, and besides storing his mind with learning, produced the exquisite poems, *Comus* and *Lucidas*, which alone could have given him a rank inferior to none in British literature, but which have been cast into the shade by the transcendent lustre of the *Paradise Lost*.

On the death of his mother, in 1638, Milton obtained his father’s consent to make a tour on the Continent, in the prosecution of which he was received with the greatest attention by the most eminent men of the time. After an absence of fifteen months he returned to England, with the acquisition of many honorable friendships, and a great addition to his stock of knowledge. It had been his intention to visit Greece, but the civil commotions which preceded the rebellion were commencing, and he thought it his duty to uplift his voice among the loudest in the cause of liberty.

Immediately after Cromwell had usurped the royal power, Milton was appointed Latin secretary of the government, and besides discharging the duties of the office, distinguished himself by several works in the defence of republican principles, and of the leaders in the revolutionary struggle. Before he obtained this situation, he had some domestic troubles, which, probably, had a strong influence on his feelings and opinions. In 1643 he married a Miss Powell, whose

connections were all staunch royalists, and Milton's lady shared their feelings, opinions and prejudices. Whig and Tory could no more agree than fire and tow, and, in little more than a month after their marriage, Mrs. Milton asked permission to visit her family, and soon after gave her husband to understand that she never intended to return to him. This caused him to publish some very free notions on the subject of divorce, and he was about to marry again, when his wife came to her senses, and, upon repentance, was restored to favor. At this time he taught a school, by which he was enabled to support, not only his own family, but also his father and mother-in-law, who had lost their property, like other leading members of the royalist party.

After suffering for some time under a disease of the eyes, in 1649 he lost the sight of them entirely, and never recovered it. But this caused no diminution of his ardor for learning. He commenced a history of England, but carried it no farther than the Norman Conquest, and also wrote part of a Latin Thesaurus, which was published in the Cambridge Dictionary of 1693. Events now happened, which checked his temporal prosperity, but compensated him by concentrating the powers of his mind. But for the Restoration, which took place about this time, the world would probably never have seen his noble epic. He lost his office, was driven into obscurity, and was for some time in danger of suffering for the active part he had taken in the councils of the revolutionary government. Fortunately for the world, his genius was no longer to be occupied with politics. He was left in peace and solitude, and the splendid revelations of his imagination burst forth. He dictated the *Paradise Lost* to his two daughters. He felt the loss of his sight keenly, as will appear from the following pathetic lines:—

“ Thus with the year
Seasons return, but not to me returns
Day, or the sweet approach of ev'n or morn,
Or sight of vernal bloom, or summer's rose,
Or flocks, or herds, or human face divine ;
But cloud instead, and ever during dark
Surrounds me. From the cheerful ways of men
Cut off ; and for the book of knowledge fair,
Presented with a universal blank
Of Nature's works, to me expunged and rased,
And wisdom at one entrance quite shut out.”

Again, in the *Sampson Agonistes*, he thus vents his repinings:—

“ O loss of sight, of thee I most complain!
Blind among enemies ! O worse than chains,
Dungeon, or beggary, decrepid age!

Light, the prime work of God, to me's extinct;
 And all her various objects of delight
 Annulled, which might, in part, my grief have eased.
 Inferior to the vilest now become
 Of man or worm.
 Oh dark, dark, dark, amid the blaze of noon,
 Irrecoverably dark; total eclipse,
 Without all hope of day."

Paradise Lost was completed in 1665, when Milton was near sixty years old. At that time he had been blind several years, and also suffered from gout, from which he was seldom free. His fortunes had been continually fluctuating, and he had witnessed many domestic reverses. His first wife had died, and he had taken unto himself another, whom he also lost within a year. But his blindness rendering the services of a companion absolutely necessary to him, he married for the third time, and his third wife survived him. While these events were happening, he lived in almost every part of London; but finally settled in Bunhill Row.

Several difficulties prevented the publication of the Paradise Lost, after it was completed, which were partly owing to the licenser, who could raise any objections he chose against any book, partly to the booksellers, who were like booksellers in our own days, afraid of risk, and partly to the state of the public mind at the time. There was no reading public, no book clubs, circulating libraries, or facilities for circulating literary works. Men of fortune and talents only were in the habit of reading; a small part of the body of the population. There was, indeed, a popular literature, but it was gross and sensual, appealing to the vilest passions of mankind. The poetry of Milton was above the age. The book-sellers would give only five pounds for the Paradise Lost! with the agreement that five more should be paid after the sale of thirteen hundred of the first edition, and the same sum after the sale of the same number of the second, which stipulation was also to extend to the third edition. The name of this encourager of literature was Simmons, a printer. All that Milton lived to receive was ten pounds. He died the same year the second edition was published. The work reached the third edition in ten years.

About three years after the publication of the Paradise Lost, the History of England before mentioned, was printed, and, in the following year, 1671, Paradise Regained, and Sampson Agonistes appeared. The former of these poems was written by the advice of one Elwood, a quaker, who had been Milton's pupil, and to whom he had shown the manuscript of the Paradise Lost. "Well," says the quaker, "thou hast said much of Paradise Lost, friend John—but what hast thou to say of Paradise Regained?" Milton made no answer, but

took the first opportunity to drop the subject, from which it appears that his own judgment of the *Paradise Regained* was the same as that of posterity.

Few men of letters have ever suffered so much from the cares of life as Milton did. There is reason to think, either that his passions were not naturally strong, or that he learned to subdue them at an early age. He was sincere and constant in his friendships, but he wrote to his friends with scrupulous precision, and seemed to find a greater relish in the intercourse when the learned spirit of antiquity assisted it. Love of woman never made him neglect severe assumption of authority, and no melting tenderness entered into his composition, either as child, husband, or father. There was a calmness and tranquillity in his manner, amounting to sternness. The ordinary passions of our nature seem to have had little influence over him. His master feeling was the love of freedom. In the only retirement of his home, oppressed with care and blindness, and wearied with the changes of fortune, this passion burned as fiercely as in his youth. When he saw his fondest hopes disappointed by the destruction of the Commonwealth, he appears to have cherished a bitterness of feeling, as well as an enduring sorrow, that must have had its effect in shortening his days. His death took place on the 10th of November, 1674, at his residence, and he was buried in the chancel of St. Giles's Chapel. In 1737, a monument was erected to his memory in Westminster Abbey.

Milton's person is described as of the middle size, and his features as of surpassing beauty. While at Cambridge, he was called "the lady of Christ's College," and it is related of him, that, while sleeping under a tree, a lady of rank was so smitten with him, that she kissed him. In his advanced age he suffered so severely, that his hands became almost deformed and his face of a sickly paleness. His habits were extremely temperate, and he was studious to the last year of his life. He rose at four or five, and retired at nine. The first thing he did on rising, was to hear a chapter read in the Bible, and he then studied the subjects he was occupied with till twelve, after which he took an hour's exercise, and then dined. With playing on the organ, an hour or two of study and conversation with friends, the day was concluded, and having eaten a few olives, smoked a pipe, and drank a glass of water, he retired to rest.

Milton had five children, four by his first and one by his second wife, and of these, three daughters survived him. One of them only had children, and there is no lineal descendant from him now living.

DR. CHESELDEN.

THE name of this eminent practitioner is put at the head of this notice, because, though he has given the world the history of the case to be mentioned, he has not thought fit to give the name of the patient. What is known of the matter will be here set down, and nothing more.

The young gentleman upon whom Dr. Cheselden operated, though said to be *blind*, was not totally so. Like others who have cataracts, he could discern day from night, and could distinguish bright colors in a strong light, though he could not tell the shape of anything, unless by feeling. The reason of this is, that the light by which such perceptions are led is let in through a thick humor, and the person afflicted sees in the same manner that he would, if looking through a glass of jelly. Thus it was with this young man, who could distinguish the colors in a good light, yet did not know them when he saw them after being couched. Like other persons in like circumstances, he thought scarlet the most beautiful of all colors, and of others, the most gay were the most pleasing to him. Black was very painful to him, and the first time he saw a negro woman he was struck with horror.

When the operation was performed, and he saw, he could form no judgment of distances; but thought all objects touched his eyes, and none were agreeable to him, but such as were smooth and regular. He could form no idea of their shape, nor did he know one thing from another, whatever might be their difference in magnitude; but upon being told what things were which he formerly knew from the touch, he would say that he might, perhaps, know them again. As he had too many things to learn at once, he forgot some of them, and, as he said, first learned to know, and then forgot a thousand things a day. He had several times forgotten to distinguish the dog from the cat, and was ashamed to ask, but he caught a cat, which he knew by feeling, and then, setting her down, said, "So, puss, I shall know you another time."

He was greatly surprised that those things which had appeared most agreeable to his touch and taste, were not the most so to his eyes. He expected that the persons he most loved would be the handsomest. He could not tell what pictures represented, and it was not till two months after he was couched, that he discovered that they were intended for solid bodies. Up to that time he took them for party-colored planes, of painted surfaces. Even then, he was no less surprised that they did not feel like the things they were intended to represent, and was amazed that what appeared prominent and uneven by the lights and shadows, was flat, and asked "which was the lying sense, seeing or feeling."

Being shown his father's miniature in a locket, and told what it was, he saw the likeness, and was very much surprised at it, asking how it could be that a large face could be compressed into so little room, and said it would have seemed as impossible to him, as to put a bushel of anything into a pint measure.

At first, his eyes were too weak to bear a strong light, and whatever he saw he thought extremely large; but on seeing things of still greater magnitude, he conceived those he had first seen to be less, having no conception of any lines beyond the bounds of his vision. He knew that the room he was in was but a part of the house, yet he could not conceive that the whole house could look bigger than the part. Before he was couched, he expected little benefit from seeing, excepting reading and writing, for he thought he could have no more pleasure in walking abroad than he had in the garden, which he could do with ease and safety. There was this advantage in being blind, he said, that he could go about much better in the dark than those who saw; and he did not lose this ability for a long while, or require a light to go about the house after dark. Every new object was to him a new delight, and he was by no means able to express his satisfaction. His gratitude to Dr. Cheselden he could not conceal. For some time, the tears would start into his eyes whenever he saw him, and if he did not happen to come at the time expected, he could scarcely forbear weeping at the disappointment.

Being carried upon Epsom Downs a year after his sight was restored, he was exceedingly delighted with the wide prospect before him, and called it a new kind of seeing. And being now lately couched of his other eye, he said that objects appeared large to this eye, but not so large as they did at first to the other. Looking upon the same object with both eyes, he thought it looked twice as large as with the first couched eye only, but not double, as many had expected it would.

It is related of this young man, that he had been accustomed to receive the services of a young lady, who was not particularly remarkable for beauty, and to whom he was betrothed. They were mutually attached. When he was about to be couched, she took him by the hand and told him that he would doubtless see beauty that would banish her from his affections. He replied that he never could, and he kept his word.

Dr. Cheselden says, that he restored the sight of several other persons who had no recollection of ever having seen, and they all gave the same account of their learning to see as the young man, above commemorated, though not so fully and distinctly. They all said this; that, never having had occasion to move their eyes, they did not know how to do it, and could not, at first, direct them to a particular object, but in time they acquired that faculty.

JOHN METCALF.

THIS man, who was commonly known by the name of Blind Jack, was, perhaps, the most extraordinary person whose memory is preserved. Though he became blind at a very early age, his knowledge of the country (Derbyshire) was such, that he was employed as a waggoner, and, occasionally, as a guide in intricate roads during the night, or when the tracks were covered with snow. He at last became a projector and surveyor of highways, in that difficult and mountainous region, the last occupation one would suppose a blind man would think of. Nevertheless, his abilities were such that he never lacked employment, and most of the roads about the Peak of Derbyshire were altered and improved by his directions. With the assistance of a long staff only, he was seen traversing the roads, ascending rocks and precipices, exploring vallies, and investigating their extents, forms and situations, so as to answer his designs in the best manner.

A BLIND man who lived at Puisaux, in France, was a chemist and musician, and could very well estimate the proportions of objects. He could judge of distances or of heights, or if liquor was poured into a cask he could tell how full it was by the noise made by the running. Like Dr. Saunderson and others, he discovered the proximity of objects, by the action of the air upon his face. He was also a good judge of weights and of the capacities of vessels.

MR. J. WARE.

THIS gentleman was famous in his generation for couching cataracts. One case, particularly, described by him, was an operation on a Master W., seven years old.

The child made no exclamation during the operation, nor did he make the smallest motion with his head or hands. The eye was immediately bound up. The next day he made no complaint. On the second day, the doctor found him standing near the fire, with a handkerchief tied loosely over his eyes, and he said he could see the table, by which his mother was sitting, under the bandage. He observed,

that it was covered with a green cloth, and that it was a little farther off than he could reach, which was really the case.

The Doctor then held a letter before him, a foot from his eyes, and after a little hesitation he said that it was a piece of paper, longer in one direction than the other, and that he knew it was square by the corners. He pointed to the corners very readily. A small oblong band box, covered with red leather, was then shown to him, and he at once said it was red and square, and pointed out the corners. He also distinguished the shape and appearance of an oval silver box. He then called a mug a basin, but presently corrected himself and said he knew it was a mug, by the handle. He was also sensible of the difference of distance, when any object was removed farther from or nearer to him. These experiments gave him no pain.

Before this, he had never been able to distinguish any object whatever, and could only discern colors when they were very strong. On the third day the light gave him no pain. Being shown a knife, he said it was a spoon, but soon saw his error, and distinguished the blade from the handle. He likewise recognized a yellow pocket-book, and pointed out the silver clasp. He knew what the Doctor's hand was, but could not tell the number of the fingers, or see any difference between one and another of them, until he was taught. Dark colored, smooth objects, were more pleasing to him than those that were light and rough. Two days after, he saw, from the window, a dancing bear in the street, and distinguished a number of boys who were standing about him, especially noticing one who had a bundle of clothes on his head. On the same evening a looking-glass was held before him, upon which he said that he saw his own shadow. He could not then distinguish the features; but the next day he could.

In another case, where the patient was fourteen years old, and had never before seen, precisely the same results were obtained. The lad took hold of his hand at different distances, saying, whether it was brought nearer to, or carried farther from him. These things do not agree with the impressions of Mr. Cheselden's patient, who imagined that every object touched his eyes.

Mr. Everard Howe couched a boy twelve years old, who could discern light, but neither form nor color. He was only imperfectly restored to sight, and he thought that all visible things touched his eyes. Another patient of the same gentleman, a boy of seven, could distinguish both light and color, and with him the operation was wholly successful. He could distinguish distances instantly, but it was long before he could judge of form. He said a pair of scissors was a knife, and a guinea he called a seven shilling piece. Four days after the operation he was allowed to go about, and on going to the window, his attention was attracted to a horse and cart. These he

pronounced to be a dog drawing a wheelbarrow. The same mistake was repeated. At first he called all regular shaped surfaces round, but soon learned to distinguish better.

The difference between the observations of Drs. Ware and Cheselden may be reconciled, by the supposition that the patient of the latter had enjoyed a smaller share of vision than those of the former. Mr. C. says, expressly, that though his patient could distinguish strong colors, he had not the most remote idea of form.

DR. HENRY MOYES

Was a native of Fifeshire, in Scotland, and lost his sight by the small pox so early in life, that he did not remember ever to have seen. He, however, made great proficiency in every branch of knowledge, and particularly in chemistry, natural history, and natural philosophy. He was very fond of mechanical employments, and expert in the use of edge tools. He afterwards became a lecturer on natural philosophy and chemistry, and performed his experiments with his own hands, with great dexterity. He also lectured with great ability on optics, and the phenomena of light and colors, though he had no correct visual perception of either. It was only when the rays were strongly refracted through a prism, that they had any effect upon his eyes. Red had a disagreeable effect on his eyes—he compared it to the touch of a saw. Green, on the coat, conveyed an agreeable sensation to him, which he considered as like the feeling of running his hand over smooth surfaces. Polished surfaces, winding streams, and gentle slopes were the figures by which he expressed his idea of beauty; while rugged rocks, irregular points, and boisterous elements conveyed his feeling of terror and disgust.

Dr. Moyes long abstained from the use of animal food and fermented liquors. He was remarkable for the cheerfulness and equanimity of his temper, and greatly excelled in conversation.

A CERTAIN blind sculptor in the *Cours de Peint* of De Piles took the likeness of the Duke de Bracciano, in wax, in a dark cellar. He also made a noble marble statue of Charles the First, with great elegance and justness.

MR. NICHOLAS BACON, a descendant of the celebrated Lord Verulam, lost his sight at nine years of age, but afterwards addicted himself

inveterately to study. Yet he found great difficulty in procuring admission into the learned seminaries of Brabant, where he lived. This prejudice he completely overcame, and was created Doctor of Laws in the city of Brussels, and became a pleading counsellor or advocate in the council of Brabant. He won almost every cause in which he was engaged.

STANLEY was stone blind, and yet an admirable organist and composer. His ear was so fine, that he could accompany any lesson with a thorough bass, though he had never heard it before; thus anticipating the harmony before the chorus were sounded. It is said that he could distinguish colors by the touch, and it is certain that he could play at cards, by means of certain little punctures in them, which the closest inspection could scarcely detect.

JULIA BRACE,

THE DEAF, DUMB, AND BLIND GIRL,

Is now an inmate of the American Asylum, at Hartford, in Connecticut.

She is the daughter of John and Rachel Brace, natives of Hartford, and was born in that town, June 13, 1807. At four years of age, she was seized with the typhus fever while on a visit at Glastenbury, a few miles from Hartford. She was taken sick on Monday evening, Nov. 29th, 1811, and on the Saturday morning following, she became *blind* and *deaf*.

Before her illness, she had not only learned to speak, but to repeat her letters, and to spell words of three or four syllables; and for some time after the loss of her sight and hearing, she was fond of taking a book, and spelling words and the names of her acquaintances. She retained her speech pretty well, for about a year; but gradually lost it, and seems now condemned to perpetual silence. For three years, she could still utter a few words. One of the last of these words was "*mother*."

Julia was at first unconscious of her misfortune. She seemed to imagine, that a long night had come upon the world, and often said, "It will never be day." She would call upon the family to "light the lamp," and was impatient at their seeming neglect, even to give her an answer. At length, in passing a window, she felt the sun shining warm upon her hand; she immediately held out her hand, and pointed with delight, to indicate that the sun shone. From the January after her illness, until the following August, she would sleep during

the day, and be awake through the night; and it was not until autumn, by taking great pains to keep her awake during the day, that she was set right. She is now as regular in this respect as other persons. From the period of her recovery, she seemed to perceive the return of the Sabbath; and on Sunday morning, would get her own clean clothes, and those of the other children. If her mother was reading, she would find a book, and endeavor to do so. The intervention of a day of fasting, or thanksgiving, will confuse her reckoning even now; and some time elapses before she "gets right."

Unable as she was to lift or penetrate the veil of darkness and silence which separated her from the world, the privations she endured, without any consciousness of the cause, might, very naturally, appear to her like a cruel punishment which those around were inflicting. It was probably from some feeling like this, that during the first winter after her recovery, she seemed *irritable*, almost to *madness*, would exhibit the most violent passion, and use the most profane language. The next summer she became calmer; and her mother could govern her to some extent by shaking her, and stamping on the floor in sign of disapprobation; and stroking, or patting her head, when she conducted well. She is now habitually mild, and obedient, and affectionate.

During the first summer after her illness, she was very unwilling to wear clothes, and would pull them off violently. At length her mother took one of her frocks and tried it on her sister, with a view of altering it for her. Julia had always been remarkable for her sense of justice in regard to *property*. This seemed to be awakened; and she took the frock, and put it on herself. After this she was willing to wear clothes, and even cried for new ones. She has ever since been fond of dress. At nine years of age she was taught to sew, and since that time has learned to knit.

Julia is now twenty-eight years of age. She has been resident for several years in the American Asylum at Hartford, where she is supported in part by the voluntary contributions of visitors, and in part by her own labors, in sewing and knitting. A language of palpable signs was early established, as a means of communication with her friends. This has been much improved by her intercourse with the deaf and dumb, and is now sufficient for all necessary purposes.

Her countenance, as she sits at work, exhibits the strongest evidence of an active mind and a feeling heart within; and thoughts and feelings seem to flit across it, like the clouds in a summer sky. A shade of pensiveness will be followed by a cloud of anxiety or gloom; a peaceful look will perhaps succeed; and not unfrequently, a smile lights up her countenance, which seems to make one forget her misfortunes. But no one has yet penetrated the darkness of her prison house, or been able to find an avenue for intellectual or moral light. Her mind seems, thus far, inaccessible to all but her Maker.

THE BLIND TEACHER.

THE life of Mr. Nelson was a striking exemplification of that resolution which conquers fortune. Total blindness, after a long gradual advance, came upon him about his twentieth year, when terminating his college course. It found him poor, and left him to all appearance both pennyless and wretched, with two sisters to maintain, without money, without friends, without a profession, and without sight.

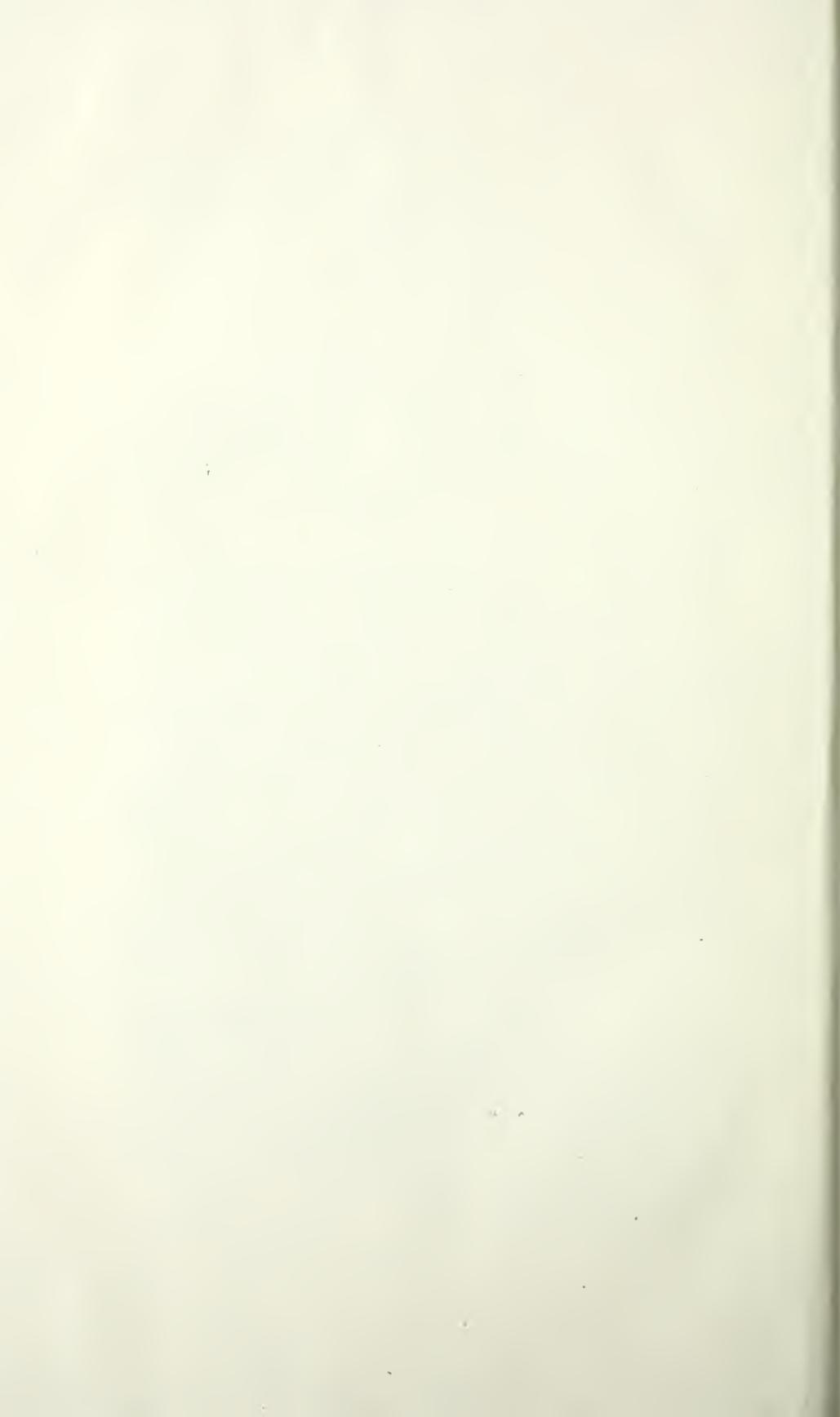
Under such an accumulation of griefs, most minds would have sunk, but with him it was otherwise. At all times proud and resolute, his spirit rose at once into what might be termed a fierceness of independence. He resolved within himself to be indebted for support to no hand but his own. His classical education, which from his feeble vision, had been necessarily imperfect, he now determined to complete, and immediately entered upon the apparently hopeless task, with a view to fit himself as a teacher of youth.

He instructed his sisters in the pronunciation of Greek and Latin, and employed one or other constantly in the task of reading aloud to him the classics, usually taught in the schools. A naturally faithful memory, spurred on by such strong excitement, performed its oft-repeated miracles; and in a space of time incredibly short, he became master of their contents, even to the minutest points of critical reading.

In illustration of this, the author remembers on one occasion, that a dispute having arisen between Mr. N. and the Classical Professor of the college, as to the construction of a passage in Virgil, from which his students were reciting, the Professor appealed to the circumstance of a comma in the sentence, as conclusive of the question. "True," said Mr. N., coloring with strong emotion; "but permit me to observe," added he, turning his sightless eye balls towards the book he held in his hand, "that in my *Heyne* edition it is a colon, and not a comma."

At this period, a gentleman who incidentally became acquainted with his history, in a feeling somewhere between pity and confidence, placed his two sons under his charge, with a view to enable him to try the experiment. A few months' trial was sufficient; he then fearlessly appeared before the public, and at once challenged a comparison with the best established classical schools of the city.

The novelty and boldness of the attempt attracted general attention; the lofty confidence he displayed in himself excited respect; and soon his untiring assiduity, his real knowledge, and a burning zeal, which, knowing no bounds in his own devotion to his scholars, awakened somewhat of a corresponding spirit in their minds, completed the conquest.—GRIFFIN.



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