

The blind chinese children, Agnes et Laura, reading their lessons in public.

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Notes : Scène représentant deux jeunes chinoises aveugles lisant un livre. De part et d'autre de la scène : tableau des lettres de l'alphabet et des chiffres pour les aveugles datation manuscrite Fonds Baguer

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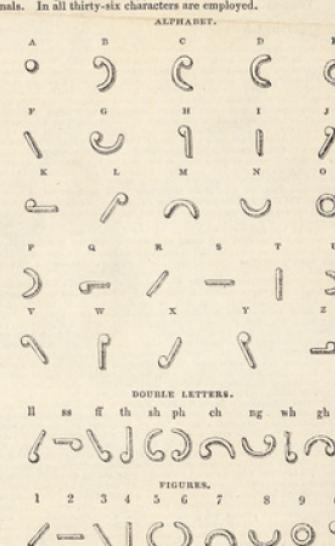


THE BLIND CHINESE CHILDREN, AGNES AND LAURA, READING THEIR LESSONS IN PUBLIC.

LONDON SOCIETY FOR TEACHING THE BLIND TO READ.

On Monday, Feb. 20, a numerous and highly respectable meeting of the friends of this society was held at the London Tavern, Bishopsgate-street; Mr. Hoare, Esq., in the chair. The Rev. J. Ramsey, the secretary, read the report, from which it appeared that the benefits of the society had been conferred on 29 boarders on the establishment, besides upwards of 50 day scholars. It also alluded to the great superiority of teaching adopted by this society, which enabled the blind to learn to read with ease and rapidity, a method which had been introduced into Egypt by Mr. and Mrs. Leiden, who came to England for the purpose of obtaining a knowledge of it, the prevalence of blindness in Egypt rendering such a work of mercy of the greatest importance. The whole of the Gospels of the New Testament, the Book of Psalms, the Book of Genesis, and several other books, had been printed by the society, and a few select hymns had been already composed by some of the boys, who ably anticipated that several inmates may ultimately become composers, and thus be put in possession of a perfectly new method of earning a comfortable subsistence. The report concluded with the following appeal:—“To every feeling mind the peculiar affliction of blindness is a subject of deepest commiseration; although it must ever be a cause of grateful prayer that God of love sufficiently fits to bestow upon these objects of his tenderest compassion and care a double portion of cheerful intelligence; thus rendering them subjects of the Christian’s brightest hopes; that, under his blessing, the society may be instrumental, not only in imparting to them secular knowledge, but, what is of far higher consideration, be the means of leading them to a knowledge of their God, and of life eternal.” The report was received and adopted. The Chairman, in a long and eloquent speech, enforced the claims of the society upon public sympathy. The appearance of the poor blind children before them was a proof of the helplessness of their condition. By the instrumentality of that society they had attained a moral, intellectual, and a Christian education, and, though shut out from the light of the world, it has shown them the way to face the Life or of Life which no one can take away or destroy. The children were then called upon to read various chapters in the Old and New Testaments, and the facility with which they turned to any particular portion of the Scripture selected excited the admiration of all present. Their style of reading would do honour to pupils possessing every natural function, and the clearness with which the characters were read by the Chinese children, “Agnes” and “Laura,” were objects of great interest, and read their appointed lessons with English emphasis and discretion. Attempts were made to confuse them by presenting to their touch books of a different character from those to which they had been used, but the hoax was in every case promptly detected, and the children, by the exercise of their memory, the characters were readily announced. Several young women, also whose sorrowful appearance was certainly not lessened by the large green spectacles with which their sightless eyes were covered, read and sang a variety of admirable pieces, to the wonder and delight of the audience. Several donations were announced, including £50 from the Goldsmiths’ Company.

The system of tuition followed by this society is the one invented and zealously introduced by the late Mr. Lucas, of Castle-street, Bristol. Its principles are so simple, natural, and easy of acquisition, that they promise to supplant every previous method. But let us explain. It has been invariably found that persons who are deficient in one sense, exercise those that are left to them more constantly, and for this reason most accurately. This is a fact well known to the blind, like the quickness in the eye of the deaf, are to be attributed to the constant exercise of those organs. Those persons who are deprived of one or other of their senses will, to a great degree, supply the deficiency by the aid of those still retain. Hearing and touch are the chief organs of the blind; by the first they recognise speech and the endless varieties and inflections of sound; by the second they become acquainted with the external forms of objects. The chief art of the instructor of the blind, therefore, consists in supplying, through an indirect medium, those ideas of which his pupil cannot obtain a conception through the ordinary channels. Accordingly we find that the invention of characters *relief* was among the earliest contrivances taken for the instruction of the blind. In the first attempt, a modification of the originally formed letter of the Sclavonian alphabet was chosen; this was followed by various arrangements of triangular characters; but in both modes the number of letters and signs, and the general similarity of their forms, made a totally new system desirable. This, in 1834, was discovered and perfected by Mr. Lucas. Abandoning all previ-



The manner in which the characters of Mr. Lucas are used may be seen in the following Psalm, only that the extract is given in Roman letters instead of using the stenographic characters.

PS. L.M. the 100th.

Mak a joyf noise n t L all y mde.

Serv t L w gladn, cm hf w princ w singl.

Kno y th t L he hs G: it is he th hath made us, a nt we ours:

we r h p pl t shep f his pastor.

Eate n h gats w thankgiv a n h corts w prais: be thankf u hm,

for h s name.

For h L s good; hs mrci s e lasti; a hs mrci ndurh to al-

grasrhs.

It will be observed that the repetition of numerous letters is avoided; particles are represented, in most instances, by their initial letter, and when a word, having been once mentioned, recurs immediately or frequently, it is represented by its initial letter also.

We strongly recommend that teachers of the blind may be employed in making a set of characters in the form of metal, made for their use. This is done by means of a hard black-lead pencil, or by a style (used by ladies in making eyelet holes), upon stiff paper or on thin metal, similar to that used for coffin furniture.

For this purpose a small embossing cushion may be prepared of

1843

SPECIMENS OF ARITHMETICAL EXERCISES.

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°C1G°-C91/C6.
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