

**A GUIDE TO THE
INSTITUTIONS &
CHARITIES FOR THE BLIND
IN THE UNITED KINGDOM**

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A Guide to the Institutions & Charities for the Blind in the United Kingdom by Mansfield
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MANSFIELD TURNER & WILLIAM HARRIS

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TO THE
INSTITUTIONS & CHARITIES

FOR
THE BLIND

IN THE UNITED KINGDOM;
TOGETHER WITH
LISTS OF BOOKS AND APPLIANCES FOR THEIR USE,

*A Catalogue of Books published upon the subject of the Blind, and
A List of Foreign Institutions, &c.*

BY
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PREFACE

To the first edition printed for private circulation.

THE following papers are the result of a tour of visits made in the spring of this year, to as many Institutions for the Blind as we knew of, and could conveniently reach, for the purpose of obtaining information which might be of use to our own Institution, then struggling through great difficulties, and also with the hope of inducing some at least of the Committees to meet in conference, when a scheme to benefit all Institutions for the Blind might be discussed and matured. During these visits we were struck with the little knowledge each Institution possessed of what was going on elsewhere, and what was being done, or could be done, by blind people; and finding that we were the first persons who had systematically visited such Institutions, and who, therefore, had had an opportunity of comparing them, we determined to print, at our own cost, for private circulation, a short account of each institution we had visited (it will be observed these comprised the principal ones), and with a view to making a complete book of reference on matters relating to the blind in the United Kingdom, we invited those Institutions which we had not been able to visit, to fill up for us the form we have adopted.

We regret that some of these forms have not been returned to us, and that therefore our work is incomplete, but we hope that when our motives are understood, the value of this work will be more felt, and that these Institutions will assist us to make it complete.

The information here given has in every instance been submitted to the Institution referred to, for revision, and therefore it may be presumed to be correct.

In concluding, we are glad to take this opportunity of expressing our thanks to the Committees of those Institutions who received us kindly, and to every one who has rendered us assistance.

We shall always look back with pleasure to some incidents of our tour, and though it has made us feel that much remains to be done to make Institutions for the Blind more useful, and the blind more independent and happy, we may trust that He who has implanted the desire to benefit the blind, will give strength to fulfil the work, which we feel thankful to know is well begun in the conference so soon to be held at Birmingham.

Leicester, Sept. 24th, 1866.

P R E F A C E.

IN offering to the public this Guide, which in 1866 was printed for private circulation only, we think it right to state some of the reasons, why we have published it; and to offer some remarks on the subject matter of the Book. Among other reasons are the number of letters we received, requesting copies of the unpublished Guide, and asking for information about the Blind, coupled with the great difficulty we ourselves often experienced, in getting information on the subject, when we needed it. The fact that the condition of the Blind occupies at the present time a large share of public interest, which is evidenced by the attention of the House of Commons having been lately drawn to their condition; by their having been lately the subject of correspondence in the London newspapers; by the fact that the Institutions for the Blind were invited by Her Majesty's Commissioners to send articles made by, and relating to, the Blind to the International Exhibition this year; and lastly, that of late years so many Institutions and Charities have been established for their benefit.*

In almost every instance the information inserted in the Guide has been collected by personal inquiry, and from printed Reports and papers; and been submitted to the Secretary of each Society, for correction if needed. In some instances we have not received any reply to our communication, we therefore presume that the statement submitted was correct.

The figures in the tabular statement annexed are drawn from the Guide, and show some curious facts. Scotland with five Institutions

* NOTE. In the year 1800 there were only four institutions for the Blind in the Kingdom; during the next thirty years six others were added to the list; in the succeeding thirty years seventeen more were opened; while within the last ten years twenty new ones have been established, making a total now of fifty-three, without including Societies for Visiting the Blind at their homes, and other Charities.

sold, in the last year of which we have any report, goods of the value of £21,930; while England with forty Institutions only sold in the same period, goods of the value of £33,598; and Ireland only £454.

Scotland provides for (on an average) seventy-six blind in each Institution; while England only provides for forty-three; and Ireland for sixty.

The Donations and Subscriptions in Scotland for the same year, amount to more than £20 per head of the number benefitted; while in England they only amount to about £21; and in Ireland to about £16.

So far as returns have reached us, it appears that Mr. Moon's system of reading for the Blind is adopted by thirty-eight Institutions and Home-teaching Societies; while only twenty-one use the books of other systems.*

Of the 30,000 Blind in the Kingdom, there are only about 2,250 being instructed or assisted to work. The total amount received per annum for the benefit of the Blind according to the answers received, is about £66,000; but this only represents the amount reported in this Guide; besides this there are twelve Societies from which we have no return.

Of Institutions for the Blind generally, we may remark that in our search for information, we have been struck with the fact that at each Institution nearly the same difficulties appear to exist, the principal one being, the difficulty of selling the goods manufactured, at such prices as will secure a ready sale, and cover the cost of production; and consequently in most instances there is a large surplus stock. In cases where the stock is wholly disposed of, our observations lead us to think that sales have been secured by selling at a loss.

It is most important that the origin of this difficulty should be discovered, and if possible, removed; we will therefore now point

* Norz. Moon's, thirty-eight. Lucas's, seven. Roman, four. Alston's, four. Frere's, three. Braille, four.

out, what appears to us to be some of the causes of it, and venture to suggest a remedy.

First: It appears that it is too generally assumed, that the labour of the Blind *cannot* be remunerative, and therefore the business part of the Institutions is often conducted without energy and the ordinary principles of business are ignored; for instance it has too often happened, that when an Institution has been formed, unsuitable premises, in a back street, have been selected, and a blind man engaged as a teacher or shopkeeper; or at best, a sighted man has been appointed to overlook two or more trades, being unacquainted with at least one of them. Again, it has too often been the rule in the shop, that nothing should be sold which was not made by the Blind, so that (as there are many articles of daily use which the blind cannot make) the shop has been unable to supply all goods of the class in which it professed to deal. Again in purchasing material, &c., how often the manager when first appointed knows little or nothing of the qualities, &c., of some of the material and stock required, and is therefore obliged to trust to the principle of the seller. Lastly in the manufacture of goods, instead of being able to concentrate the labours of the Blind, upon the production of articles belonging to one branch of trade, as in the case of the sighted (by which cheapness and quickness might be attained), the workers are through the necessities of over-stock, obliged to be "Jacks of all trades," to the detriment of the manufacture; to the loss of the Blind, who generally cannot attain proficiency or quickness; and to the idea on the part of the public that Blind-made articles are dear and of bad quality. This is not the way an ordinary business is conducted, and it is not surprising, that in the case of the blind it should not be successful.

Let us now suggest how we think this great difficulty may be met; and if our plan does not commend itself to all as the best remedy, our purpose will be answered, if it sets men thinking on the subject.

We start with the proved fact, that the Blind, assisted by the sighted, can produce certain articles quite equal in quality to those