SEGREGATION OF THE MENTALLY DEFECTIVE

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SEGREGATION OF THE MENTALLY DEFECTIVE

The subject of my talk to-day is a plea for a more thorough segregation of the defective class. We, as Superintendents of Institutions for Feeble-Minded, feel it our duty to the public to throw what informing light we can upon this subject, and in order to accomplish much, we must have the hearty cooperation of the professors in our universities and instructors in our public schools. They should teach their pupils the danger of marrying into families where there is a history of insanity, epilepsy or feeble-mindedness, even though the contracting parties themselves are apparently normal. There are many of these families that should become extinct. "Every child has a right to be well born and if he cannot be well born, it is better that he be not born at all." It is a sad fact that the defective class seems to be gradually on the increase. It is estimated that there are 150,000 mentally defective in this country. If we could segregate all of the defective class, it would materially reduce the population of our state prisons, reformatories, workhouses, almshouses, and insane asylums. Frank Moore, Superintendent of the New Jersey Reformatory, examined the inmates of that institution by the Binet-Simon test, and as a result, found that 46 per cent were mentally subnormal. An examination of 100 admissions to the Delaware Industrial School by the Binet-Simon test showed that 79 were retarded and that 59 were distinctly feeble-minded. This, however, may seem a little high, but if there are 40 or even 25 per cent of the inmates in our industrial schools and reformatories mental defectives, it would mean a great saving to society and a betterment to humanity, if these mental defectives could be segregated during their natural lives instead of being sent to these institutions for short terms. In order to do this it would be necessary that every state in the union should have institutions for the segregation of defective delinquents who although belonging to the feeble-minded class require
different care and treatment than the ordinary imbecile. What is the use of sending these defective delinquents to our industrial schools, then on to our reformatories and finally, numerous terms to the penitentiary? This class comprises the majority of our habitual criminals. The general public has already been educated to the belief that it is a good thing to segregate the idiot or the distinct imbecile, but they have not, as yet, been fully convinced as to the proper treatment of this brighter and more dangerous class, the defective delinquent.

From a financial standpoint, segregation of the defective delinquent would be great economy, to say nothing about the more salient feature, that of stopping them from reproducing their kind. If we could segregate these defectives when they are young and keep them confined during their natural lives, it would obviate the expense of having them committed repeatedly to our penitentiaries when they grow older. Under our present plan, they are sent to our penal institutions for a short term for committing some crime; allowed to go out again, scatter their progeny and commit other crimes and depredations, only to be recommitted time after time. The segregation of the defective delinquent in institutions adapted for their proper care and treatment would bring the greatest relief to our industrial schools and reformatories, as they greatly handicap the management and treatment of the normal child, who through bad environment or mismanagement has landed in one of these institutions. If we could take the mental defectives out of these institutions, the remainder, or the majority of them, at least, could be reformed and redeemed to society. The defective delinquent is not capable of standing alone; he should always have a guiding hand and protective influence to keep him out of trouble.

The first object in establishing Institutions for the Feeble Minded was to take these feeble minded children and educate them in the hope of making them useful citizens and redeeming them to society. This, however, has long ago been abandoned, and we realize today that if we take these children into our institutions, brighten them up as best we can, then turn them out into the world, it has not only been a waste of time, money and energy, but we have done the world an irreparable injury. The education and training that they receive in our institutions conceal their defects to a certain extent, enabling them to marry more easily, often into innocent families, and as a result, we get back several for one. Some may say, what a pity to confine these children in an institution all their lives! But that is where they are greatly mistaken, as for instance, in Ohio, I can say to you that we have a community of over 1600 of the happiest children in the state, in our institution. They are much happier in the institution, where they are protected and kept out of trouble than they would be in the outside world, where they are subject to the scoffs and jeers of the public. As soon as the general public become sufficiently aroused to realize the disastrous results of thousands of mental defectives being annually born to imbecile parents, there will be laws forthcoming to prevent the mental defective and criminal from reproducing their kind. There is no use, however, of making laws in advance of public sentiment, for by so doing, they become a dead letter and act as stumbling blocks to progress. The most humane and ideal remedy is segregation, but where that becomes impracticable, then sterilization becomes necessary.

The institution should not be a place of mere detention nor on the lines of a penal institution, but an institution for care, education and training. As to the training of the mental defective, everything should tend toward their happiness and comfort in the institution, which is their home. Everyone is happier by having something to do, and if we can keep these children busy, they are happy. I believe that spending much time in the ordinary grade work with the mental defective is more or less futile, but there can be much done with industrial work, manual training and music. These children lack the power of concentration. They are apathetic in their interest in books, but they take quite readily to the industrial branches. These dull minds can be reached more easily through their hands than any other channel. For instance, if you will go with me for a moment to our school department, I will take you to a room where you will find a lot of little boys as happy and busy as they can be, weaving rugs, making hammocks, laundry bags, door mats, cane seating chairs, or learning to make shoes; then we will go to another room where you will see some happy, jolly, little girls making reed and raffia baskets; and if you will go to another, we will find boys at lloyd and carpenter work; on to another, and you will see a group of happy girls learning
SEGREATION OF THE MENTALLY DEFECTIVE

the mysteries of domestic science. I might go still farther but I have only mentioned these things to illustrate our ideas as to the education of the defective. Of course, we spend considerable time with music and are very proud of our orchestra and we make much of gymnastics. They are taught how to walk, how to stand, different dances, etc. In fact, we try to develop the different muscles of the body, and by training these muscles, it is wonderful sometimes how it seems to brighten the intellect. It seems useless to waste so much time trying to teach them something they can never do, when there are so many things they can accomplish (as well as the normal child) which is conducive to their happiness and makes them nearer self-sustaining.

I have here a few charts that I want to show you illustrating the inevitable results of marriage in families where there is a history of mental defectives, or in other words, bad blood, and to emphasize the necessity of segregating the defective child, as it has been a pretty well demonstrated fact that from 65 to 75 per cent of mental defectives is due to heredity.

SYMBOLS.

Square indicates male — circle female. Where the squares or circles are plain it indicates that they are normal and where they are black, it indicates they are defective. The small black circles indicate miscarriages.

A capital letter indicates disease, habit or condition as follows:

Chart 1 shows the effect of feeble-mindedness in the mother. The father is normal, although from a shiftless, easy-going family. The results of this man’s marriage with a feeble-minded woman are four feeble-minded and five normal children, one of which is blind and a subject of charity. This shows a clear case of feeble-mindedness of three generations transmitted through the mother.
In chart 2, while the parents and the maternal grandparents and great-grandparents are themselves normal, we have evidence of a neurotic taint in the family. This shows itself on the maternal side by a feeble-minded uncle and great uncle and one feeble-minded second cousin and two feeble-minded third cousins. On the paternal side, there is a feeble-minded aunt. This illustrates the danger of marrying into a family where there is a morbid heredity, although the parentage on both sides, as far back as we can trace, be normal.

Chart 3. shows a combination of almost every form of morbid heredity, namely: insanity, feeble-mindedness, alcoholism, tuberculosis, syphilis, sexual perversion, prostitution. Another interesting factor is that alcoholism runs through every generation. The maternal great-grandfather and grandfather were alcoholics and a maternal great uncle, tubercular. There were three maternal uncles, alcoholic, one of whom was insane, due to syphilis. Also another maternal uncle, who had syphilis and one maternal aunt, who had tuberculosis. All through the father’s family, immorality exists, the father being alcoholic, sexual pervert and syphilitic as well as a criminal. He has one sister a prostitute and one sister feeble-minded. The boy in our institution was the only child from this union. The mother has married a second time and has had one child, which died in infancy from inanition.
CHART 4.

Chart 4 shows a combination of feeble-mindedness, insanity, alcoholism and the drug habit. The result of the marriage of this feeble-minded woman with an alcoholic and shiftless man, who has served three terms in the work house, is three feeble-minded children, two of them now in our institution, the third being too young for admission. The maternal grandparents were addicted to the morphine habit and while the maternal grandfather was not violently insane, yet he was sufficiently unbalanced, to be committed to the asylum and died there. The paternal grandparents were supposed to be normal, although they had four sons, who are chronic alcoholics, one daughter insane, and one normal.

CHART 5.

This chart shows the offspring of a union in which both parents were feeble-minded. Twelve children were born, ten of whom are feeble-minded. The other two, who are normal are, undoubtedly, illegitimate, as both parents are white and these two children, colored. The chart is so drawn because we have no history of the illegitimacy, and which were it not for the color, would be unsuspected. This chart clearly shows how the impossible event of normal offspring of feeble-minded parents is often apparently shown.
SEGREGATION OF THE MENTALLY DEFECTIVE

CHAPTER 6.

Chart 6 shows the effect of intermarriage of cousins, where morbid heredity exists. The parents of the child in our institution are first cousins, the mother being feebleminded and the father alcoholic. The result of this union were four feeble-minded girls, one of whom is a prostitute and one a sexual pervert. There is a maternal aunt who is feebleminded and a great uncle who was a bigamist. The maternal grandfather was feebleminded and alcoholic. The maternal great grandfather was a half-breed Indian and the great grandmother a full blooded Indian. There are two paternal uncles and one paternal aunt who are alcoholics. The paternal grandmother was alcoholic and the paternal grandfather insane and alcoholic. An interesting factor of the morbid heredity is a combination of alcoholism through the paternal side with feeble-mindedness through the maternal side.

SEGREGATION OF THE MENTALLY DEFECTIVE

CHAPTER 7.

Chart 7 shows the descendants of an alcoholic man who served a term in the penitentiary and who was married three times. His first and second wives were sisters, both normal. By his first wife, he had four children, all normal but one daughter who married twice had an epileptic, hydrocephalic son by her first husband. By his second wife, he had six children, four normal, one feeble-minded and one insane. For his third wife he married a woman who had been an inmate of an Industrial School and who afterwards became insane, being in the asylum three different times. The result of this marriage was two feeble-minded girls, who are in our institution, one boy who is a patient in the Ohio Hospital for Epileptics and one boy in the Industrial School. The man has died and the woman has married a second time. The third wife has a half sister who is insane. She was also an inmate of the Industrial School. This woman married a tubercular and alcoholic man, and to them were born six children, one of whom, a boy, is syphilitic, and the remaining five, three girls and two boys, are feeble-minded, and inmates of our institution. These children are half cousins to the two children by his third wife who are also shown as inmates of our institution.
SEGREGATION OF THE MENTALLY DEFECTIVE

CHART 8.

Chart 8 shows the result of a feeble-minded woman being left at large, she having had seven illegitimate children, all feeble-minded. After her marriage, she had four children, three of whom died in infancy before their mentality could be determined. The other child, a girl, is feeble-minded.

SEGREGATION OF THE MENTALLY DEFECTIVE

CHART 9.

The grandparents of the children in our institution were both feeble-minded. They had three feeble-minded children, one son and two daughters. The youngest daughter married a man who was not only feeble-minded but an alcoholic and the results of this union are just what we would expect, the entire family feeble-minded. The six older ones are inmates of our institution. The three younger ones are not old enough to be admitted. The father also had an illegitimate child by his wife's sister, which is also in the institution.