A PLEA FOR THE INSTRUCTION AND 
AFTER-SCHOOL CARE OF THE FEEBLE-
MINDED DEAF.*

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It may seem absurd to take the time of this 
body for the presentation of the needs of a 
small sub-group of that great class whose needs 
you are considering in so comprehensive a way; 
but surely a feeble-minded child is none the less 
so because he is also deaf. 

A fact which neither time nor place alters was 
long ago stated in those oft-quoted words of the 
peasant preacher of Nazareth,—"For he that 
bath, to him shall be given; and he that hath 
not, from him shall be taken away even that 
which he hath." This is but the assertion that 
abundant harvest results only from abundant 
seed scattered; wealth produces wealth; power 
of body and mind are the invariable result of 
endowment well used; and, on the other hand, 
for the meagerly endowed, either in body or 
mind, that little which he has is lessened by 
disuse and abuse. No clearer illustration of this 
truth can be found than in the restrictions 
which the loss of one faculty imposes upon the 
remaining faculties. The deaf are not so much 
to be commiserated for their loss of all the 
sweet sounds of life as for the loss in mental 
development which comes from the failure of the 
stream of language to flow in through the open 
channel of the ear; and the less the original 
edowment of mind, the greater must be the 
hampering and dallying effect of the deafness. 
The causes which produce deafness are, many of 
them, also causes of feeble-mindedness, and 
these causes surely lower the general vitality of 
the child both physically and mentally; there- 
fore the percentage of feeble-mindedness among 
the deaf will probably always be higher than 
among the hearing. These feeble-minded deaf 
children will be found grouped in several 
classes: (1) those who have been wholly neg- 
lected, being of too low mentality to gain ad-
mission to any school; (2) those who, having gained 
admission to a school for the deaf, are retained 
but a year or two and then begin a round of 
transfers from school to school, and at last are 
trusted out fitted for nothing, quite incapable of 
support themselves and more incapable of 
self-control —a menace to society; (3) those who 
have been transferred from the schools for the deaf 
to the institutions for the feeble-minded. It is not 
strange that these institutions hesitate to admit 
such children. Overcrowded as they are, they 
cannot be blamed for hesitating to assume such 
a special task as the instruction of those who, to 
their feeble-mindedness add deafness, and who, 
because of their lack of hearing, must receive 

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achusetts Society for Mental Hygiene, Ford Hall, Boston, Dec. 15. 
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was sentenced to three months in jail for larceny, and his stepson, to six months for lascivious acts. A thorough mental examination of all the members of the family would be liable to reveal others feeble-mindedness besides the 14-year-old girl.

9. Great Expense in Money and Effort Wasted.

In this particular family the father had deserted in 1908 and had not been seen since. An imbecile boy was committed to the Wrentham State School about the same time that the 14-year-old girl was placed in the House of the Good Shepherd. The sisters gave the girl up as incorrigible and the court then placed her in the custody of this Society, who enlisted the interest and service of the Boston Children's Aid Society. The two societies struggled along for a number of years to find good homes for the girl and to keep her contented and tractable when placed in such homes. Finally the Children's Aid Society had her examined and found her a committing feeble-minded child. There was no room in either of the schools for the feeble-minded at that time and she was therefore committed to the State Board of Charity, and an application made for her admission to the Wrentham State School when a vacancy should occur.


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These ten instances are but a few of hundreds that might be cited to illustrate the stupendous task which social agencies assume to deal with while the feeble-minded remain in the community, and it is reasonable to assume that there are many instances which have never come to the attention of any social agency before they become the active factors in various kinds of human tragedies.

The various social agencies of Boston have for many years struggled, and are struggling today, with indifferent success, with the effects of feeble-mindedness. They realize that it is useless to grant aid to a family in which one or both of the parents are feeble-minded. For the money will be wasted, the children will be neglected, one or more of them will be likely to be delinquent, and the money that has maintained the home has only maintained a group that become an increasing burden for the future. The relief societies that are interested in making their resources count for good citizenship see resources that could be put to better use frittered away on families that add weakness rather than strength to the body politic.

The social and civic agencies that are interested in the development of better standards of labor and better rates of wages find the borderline feeble-minded in employments where they cannot earn a reasonable living, but where they are used at low rates of pay to do the more simple tasks. The children's aid societies find it necessary to use their funds, which should be available for the care of the promising children, to care for feeble-minded children, for whom the State is unable to provide in its institutions or for the uncommittable borderline feeble-minded that make slight response to the effort that is made in their behalf, or are so unreliable that they upset all reasonable plans that the community can make.

For the purpose of gathering together the successful as well as the unsuccessful experience of the various social agencies dealing with families in Boston, the League for Preventive Work was organized about two years ago, through which the twenty constituent agencies that provide for its support may pool their information and learn from each other and from the general experience of the community. Feeble-mindedness is one of the degenerative influences in the lives of families with which all of these agencies deal. It contributes weakness to any constructive plan that we may make. The League is a defensive alliance in case work, by means of which our various agencies may learn from each other's failures, and may contribute strength through a broader and more intelligent view of the whole situation. It is the expression of a constructive interest in feeble-mindedness on the part of the twenty agencies.

Social work has during the last ten years been increasingly harnessed to an exact evaluation of scientific facts. Any new discovery in science, whose bearing upon case work is recognized, is eagerly accepted. On the other hand, our social case work agencies have a more or less valuable body of material, dealing with thousands of families. Through the great specializations which have come into social work, the whole social experience of the community with the family is divided among different agencies. The League believes one of its functions to be the gathering together of reliable facts, in accessible form, of the community's experience, so that it may also contribute in increasing measure what it has learned. In this way we hope that the League may be of greater service than to the agencies themselves; that from its material there may come contributions in social science which no single agency is able to make.
School for the Deaf in Philadelphia, one of the leading authorities of the country on the subject of the instruction of the deaf, says: "In common with most teachers of the deaf of the present day, I am of the opinion that the presence of feeble-minded deaf children in a school for deaf children, otherwise normally endowed, is harmful and unwise. It is harmful in that it subjects normal deaf children to influences that are morally injurious, and materially interferes with their best mental development. The presence of such children impairs the usefulness of the school by exacting time that may more wisely and more profitably be expended on normal pupils. It interferes with the grading, it exhausts the nerve strength of teachers and caretakers, it robs the normal deaf child of time and training that are justly his, and in the end it does not pay for the time and labor expended. The two classes (the feeble-minded deaf and the normal deaf) are so dissimilar in their condition and needs, and in the object and results of their training, that it is obviously unwise to bring them together for purposes of training and instruction. In the care of the feeble-minded, a small proportion excepted (morons), their care and training are largely custodial; and, in my opinion, should always be made so for the protection of the community; in the case of the normal deaf it is wholly educational, having for its only purpose intelligent, law-abiding, self-supporting citizenship. In the Mount Airy School feeble-minded pupils are never knowingly admitted. If by chance any are received, as soon as their mental condition is discovered they are discharged. Pupils not feeble-minded but of low mentality are retained just so long as they manifest any improvement; they rarely remain the full period of ten years. I suppose that fully thirty pupils have been denied admission during the past five years on account of feeblemindedness, and as many more discharged before the completion of the full period of training on account of low mentality and consequent inability to profit by the regular course of instruction." This school contains over five hundred pupils.

In two of the smaller European countries the attempt is made to base the education of the deaf on scientific classification. In Schleswig all deaf children enter a preparatory school, from which the brighter ones are removed to Grade A, as it is called—a school in another part of the city. Others are placed in Grade B school. After two years the duldest are transferred from this preparatory school to the C grade—a school for feeble-minded deaf children. In Denmark the procedure is practically the same.

In our own country no separate schools have been organized for deaf children of differing degrees of mentality, but in most, if not all, the schools there are classes of very dull pupils whose work is modified to fit their low grade of ability. In some schools, even distinctly feeble-minded children are retained. As stated previously, there are some excluded from all our schools either at the outset or after a fair trial, as incapable of profiting by the regular work of the school and as being a hindrance to the work of the brighter pupils and an influence not desirable morally.

The suggestion has been made, that if one school for the feeble-minded deaf were to be established in New England, it would be ample provision for the unfortunate of this class. That would, no doubt, be true, but it is necessary to keep in mind the after-school care of these same boys and girls who will need the closest supervision and custodial care to prevent the multiplication of their kind. This need of custodial care seems to indicate that the grouping of them with other custodial cases of the feeble-minded is the wiser course to pursue. Would not the establishment of a department in the new school to be opened at Belchertown seem a wise provision for the needs of this class?

Mr. Wheeler of the school in Hartford says, reporting for the last three years, "we have refused to admit three children who seemed feeble-minded. Eight have been dismissed,—two from Massachusetts,—and all of these children were of such low mentality that they were a menace to the others. We have no room for feeble-minded children, and teachers of the deaf should not be expected to teach the feeble-minded deaf in the same classes with normal deaf children. There are, no doubt, in New England quite a number of deaf children who could not be admitted to any school for the deaf. I wish that some arrangement could be made with one of the states to take all of these children and put them in a department by themselves under the care of a person who understands the deaf."

Mrs. Warner, principal of the Beverly School, says: "I would certainly urge that steps be taken for special provision for the feeble-minded deaf children of the state, either in a school for them or under a special teacher in a school for the feeble-minded already established. As the children grow older, the need of some place where they can live and not be a menace to the community is much more apparent."

Monsignor Splaine, in charge of the school at Randolph, says: "We are glad to hear that some effort is to be made to secure a better understanding of the feeble-minded deaf child. We are occasionally obliged to reject applications for the admission of such children to our school, as we do not think it wise or just to retain them in schools with normal deaf children. Sometimes we have given a child the benefit of a doubt and admitted him on trial, and have later found it necessary to discharge the child. In such cases, parents have said that they had great difficulty in securing admission to the existing schools for the feeble-minded. A special department in the school for the feeble-minded, or, better still, if the numbers warrant
it, a special school for these sub-normal deaf children, similar to those now established in Europe, would seem to us the best method of caring for them."

Miss Jordan, of the Day-school for the Deaf in this city, and Miss Fuller, so long in charge of that school, express themselves as "glad that there is a possibility of giving to the deaf children of this state, who are mentally below the normal type, instruction suitable to their needs." They think "they should have a school entirely independent of other handicapped pupils and should have skilled, experienced, sympathetic teachers." They urge also that "the greatest possible care should be exercised in deciding about admissions to schools for these children," and "that only persons of experience with deaf children and skilled physicians should take the responsibility of deciding as to placing a child in such a school."

These are the opinions of those who are in charge of the schools in which the deaf children of this State are being trained. Is it not evident that the problem of our feeble-minded deaf is of sufficient importance to demand the thoughtful attention of those who are attempting to solve the great general problem of feeblemindedness?

THE DEFECTIVE GIRL WHO IS IMMORAL.*

BY MABELLE B. BLAKE, BOSTON,
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This paper deals with the high-grade defectives, those who to all appearances approach most nearly the normal type.

It is not a great many years that we have been able to recognize the most typical cases of this group. They approach too closely to the lowest types of the normal to be distinguished readily without more or less observation.

It is a group out of which may come the delinquents, the diseased, the unmarried mothers, and those with immoral proclivities, spreading disease and moral corruption.

Even in this day and generation a feeble-minded girl is often brought before a court and treated as a responsible person. She may, perhaps, be sent back to her home with an admonition to mend her ways. She may be put on probation or possibly committed to an industrial school. Whatever the decision, she fails to respond to treatment. If she goes back to the old environment, she soon falls a victim to the same influences that first brought her to the court. The community denounces her and says she is incorrigible. She, the poor unfortunate that she is, becomes a source of corruption and disease, and she bears children, one after another, who inherit her misfortune.

In a recent study made in a city in a nearby state of the problem of girl delinquency, out of a group of twenty-nine cases investigated, the following results were given. Of this number six were found to be subnormal. Three of the girls were found to be feeble-minded, two border normal, one unstable and neurotic, none able to care successfully for herself. In addition to the number examined, one other is known to be feeble-minded, one is in the incipient stages of insanity; six more give evidence of being decidedly subnormal, and would undoubtedly be found deficient if given the Binet test. Speaking as conservatively as possible, eight girls of the twenty-nine (27.5%) are known to be subnormal mentally. There are indications that the entire fourteen (48.3% of the whole) are subnormal; also associated with this mental debility is usually bad heredity of various sorts and a permanent lowering of moral tone through long contact with degrading environments.

Still going on with this study group, the report states that, with the exception of one girl who continued until she was fifteen years of age, all of the twenty-nine girls left school at the age of fourteen. The large majority show a retardation in their grades.

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In studying a group of 196 children who had previously been under the care of the Boston Society for the Care of Girls, and who had been returned to parents and relatives, we found that, out of thirteen who were defective but not committable, four, after leaving our very careful supervision, gave birth to illegitimate children. Fortunately, we have come to a realization that no amount of effort on these defective girls will bring about a desired development, because they do not have the faculties upon which to build.

Let me give you three cases of girls whom we have known intimately, each girl being a high-grade defective.

**Case 1.** Sarah, a girl of fifteen, came to us before we realized the importance of a mental test at the outset. She came for protection of herself and her illegitimate baby, three weeks old. When Sarah's father had died, five years previous, in Nova Scotia, the mother came to Boston with Sarah and three younger children.

Sarah's history showed little development mentally. She was often promoted in school to make room for the next child, and because she seemed too old to remain in the lower grades. The father of