The greatest menace to a proper understanding of feeble-mindedness is the preconceived notion of what a feebleminded person is. To most people this term is synonymous with idiot or imbecile, and that means a human being who is so distorted mentally that it shows in his outward physical appearance. They are the pitiable wretches that one occasionally sees, or that one knows in his home community who passed along the street, known as "Crazy Jane" or "The Silly Boy" or by some such familiar term.
While such persons as these exist and have always existed in every community, they are the least of our troubles. They are poor, unfortunate, miserable beings, a burden to all that have to do with them, but nevertheless they do not constitute the great social problem that we find in the higher group of the feeble minded which we now call the Moron group.

We have known little about these people until recently, because we had no accurate means of determining who they were. We have all known that there are people in the community who do not get along well. There are people who do things that make us call them "fools," but we have not realized that even that meant they were irresponsible, yet such is the case. They constitute the great army of ne'er-do-wells, the great mass of people who cannot learn to do things rightly. Whether it be mere matters of every day work or whether it be conformity to social conventions or to law, it makes no difference; the same inability to conform marks them as below the normal level of intelligence. But these things do not appear usually until they are adults, and by that time they have either fallen into a form of living which we are unwilling to disturb, no matter how low or degrading it may be as long as it does not absolutely violate law, or else they have become criminal and we have treated them as criminals. But we are now able to detect these people. We are able to determine, while they are still children, that they are lacking in that brain power which is essential to enable them to function like normal human beings. We therefore have the opportunity, if we will, of picking out these children and treating them as their condition requires.

At the Training School at Vineland, New Jersey, they have established a department of research for the study of these conditions. As a result of five years study of these people, some things have been found out which are helpful in understanding the problem and the treatment of these cases.

By means of the Binet measuring scale of intelligence which is in use there, it can now be determined whether a child is progressing, so far as his mentality is concerned, at the normal rate or whether he is one, two or three years behind what he ought to be. Further, experience and study have shown that if a child is only one or two years behind, he can, with special care and special training, be taught those things that are essential to
functioning normally in society. In other words, he can become a normal person, although perhaps a little slow.

But if he is more than three years behind according to this scale, there is a more fundamental reason for his backwardness. In other words, his brain has not developed as it should and he is feeble minded.

Now, if he is feeble minded, he is never able to compete with his fellows in the struggle for existence; he is never able to manage his own affairs with ordinary prudence. The consequence is, that when he gets out in the world it is impossible for him to live a normal life. That means that not being able to earn an honest living in an honest way, he must make it in some other way. If he is of a phlegmatic temperament he may become simply a pauper: not being able to work, society will not allow him to starve and so he becomes an inmate of the almshouse. Of course a certain small percentage have friends who provide for them and they are not heard of in society.

But if this defective person is of a different temperament, he is not content to simply starve until society helps him out, but he takes the matter in his own incompetent hands and either steals or earns money by illegitimate methods—he becomes a criminal. If the defective is a female, one of the most natural courses for her both because she has not intellect enough to have any control over her sex impulses and because by a perversion of that impulse she is able most easily to earn money, as, and naturally becomes a prostitute.

And so we see apriori that there is a well paved road for the feeble minded person to either the almshouse or to the prison or to the brothel; and most of them who are not cared for by friends follow this road and sooner or later end up in these places.

That this is no mere theory, we may quote some figures as to what has actually happened.

Unfortunately we have not been studying these problems long enough to have exact data, but there are many indications that somewhere from 10 to 30 per cent. of criminals are feeble-minded and have fallen into the criminal life because of defective mentality; it is quite probable that an equal proportion of the people in out houses of prostitution are also feeble minded.

Careful examination of children in at least three large reformatories have shown that the inmates of these institutions are feeble minded to the number of 25 per cent. The Eugenics Laboratory in London has made some investigations which indicate that pauperism is hereditary and it is probably largely due to mental defect. From our studies at Vineland we have learned that a large percentage of drunkards are so because they are feeble minded and unable to control their appetites. If we say then that in round numbers one-fourth of all of these classes are replenished from the mentally defective group, we see the first reason why feeble mindedness is a menace to society because it is contributing such a large percentage to these groups that are making us trouble all the time. But this is not all.

A feeble minded person of this high grade is always a dangerous person to have about. Those that we have known probably in our home community as referred to earlier in this paper as "Silly Boy" or "Crazy Jane" or whatnot, have usually been considered as unfortunate and all that, but still harmless and innocent. And it may be that in a great many cases they have lived their lives and have been harmless. Yet each one was all the time a dangerous person. The very nature of their condition means danger. They are lacking in self-control while at the same time they have the same impulses and the same passions as normal people so that had it happened that they had been aroused, had been excited or angered, they would have done the most atrocious things, bringing shame and disgrace upon people and causing the loss of life and property. One has only to read the morning paper with a discriminating thought and knowledge of this condition to realize that an immense amount of crime is committed by persons who are feeble minded.

Not infrequently one finds, if he reads the article through, such a statement as this, "This person has been considered from childhood to be weak minded." So the second reason for considering them a menace to society is this, that even though they are cared for by some philanthropic person or possibly a relative who is able to take care of them and they are kept at home, nevertheless, they are even then a menace, because one can never tell when some primitive instinct or impulse may lead them to do things for which they are not responsible.

These would seem to be sufficient grounds to justify the claim that the feeble minded are a menace to society and yet these two items pale into insignificance before the third, which is the appalling power of heredity in this kind of stock. Feeble mindedness is transmitted from father to son from grandparent to grandchild.
to grandchildren with a sureness and a prolixity that is simply appalling. Tredgold has estimated that this type of family increases at twice the rate of the general population. Our own researches at Vineland have given us families that show an enormous number of feeble minded individuals. We have traced them back at least five generations and it shows no tendency to run out as many seem to think. Indeed, it conforms very well to Mendelian inheritance for we find such things as this: That two feeble minded parents always have feeble minded children. We find that it sometimes skips a generation coming out in the grandchildren with redoubled force. We have studied over two hundred families and find that 65 per cent. of them show the hereditary character.

I can show you here only a few family histories to fairly illustrate the condition.

Chart I

**EXPLANATION OF SYMBOLS.**

Square represents males. Circle represents females. Square or circle with nothing in it means condition undetermined. White F. on black background means a feeble minded individual. D. Inf. means died in infancy. N. inside the square or circle means that the person was normal. All persons on the same horizontal line belong to the same generation. Those dependent from the same horizontal line are brothers and sisters. A vertical line leads up to the line connecting the parents of the group. The small black circle means miscarriage. S. syphilis. S. sexually immoral. T. tuberculosis. C. criminal. A. alcoholic.

Chart I. is a comparatively innocent one. The boy in the Vineland Institution, shown by the hand, had a feeble minded sister, two sisters that died in infancy and a brother and sister normal and there was one miscarriage. The parents of this family were both normal, the father had three brothers and sisters of whom nothing is known, the mother had three of whom one died in infancy, and one had two children, one feeble minded and one normal. The grandparents of our child were mother normal, father feeble minded. We thus have defect appearing in the grandchildren from two sides, although none is known among the children.

Chart II. is short but intensive. Our child has three feeble minded sisters and three feeble minded brothers and a sister that died in infancy. One of the sisters has married and has two children, one of whom is feeble minded the other is as yet undetermined. These children were the offspring of two feeble minded parents, so that in that whole family story for three generations there is not one person known to be normal.

Chart III. shows some bad moral complications. Our child, a girl, is the daughter of a prostitute, this woman has had four other children, and two still births, the children died in infancy except one which cannot be determined. This woman had three feeble minded brothers and one normal, also a half-brother that was feeble minded. The parents of this generation were a feeble minded alcoholic man and a woman who was a prostitute and had two feeble minded brothers. Their parents
in turn were a feeble minded man who has a feeble minded brother. Here again we have four generations with eleven feeble minded persons, two prostitutes, one drunkard, three children died in infancy, three miscarriages or stillbirths and four undetermined, only three normal people known.

Chart III

Chart IV is a sample of one of the blacker looking families. Our girl is the child of a feeble minded, alcoholic, syphilitic man and a feeble minded woman. This woman had ten brothers and sisters who were feeble minded, one was syphilitic and immoral. The parents of this family were an immoral woman who was feeble minded and twice married, her first husband was feeble minded as also was the second. The children that we have enumerated were the children of the first husband, the second husband also had two children, a girl was feeble minded and prostitute, she had three illegitimate children of whom one is known to have been feeble minded, her sister died in infancy. The great grandparents of our child are unknown, but the grandmother was twice married and her second husband was a feeble minded man, they had five feeble minded children of whom one was alcoholic, he married and had five feeble minded children all of whom were alcoholic. One of these married and had two feeble minded children. Here are shown twenty-seven feeble minded persons in four generations. At least three persons actually immoral, two suffering from syphilis and at least seven alcoholic.
These charts must suffice for samples, the rest will be published elsewhere in the near future.

You have read of the famous Jukes family in New York. You have thought that it was a wonderful exception. We have found two such families in the little State of New Jersey. Of one we have traced the relatives, blood and by marriage, to the number 976, of these only 141 can be determined to have been normal, 286 were distinctly feeble minded. The offspring of this very family are today among the most serious social problems that the charity workers of this State have to deal with.

Before closing I must answer briefly your question, what is to be done about it?

This divides itself into two parts. First, what can we do with those who are already born, these children are all about us. We have determined that at least two per cent. of the school population belongs to this class. With these there is only one thing, test them out by the Binet scale and determine who they are. Then place them in institutions, if possible, if this can not be done then in special classes in the public schools where they will be trained to do hand work as well as they can and thus become happy and as little a burden upon society as possible.

The responsibility here lies in the fact that if we do not detect them but send them to school to be taught the usual reading and writing and arithmetic and geography, and the like, we make a fatal mistake. They cannot learn these things in any practical way. Because of good memory they can seem to learn some of it but they are never able to make any practical use of it and we thus waste the time and fail of the opportunity to teach them to do things which would make them happy and somewhat useful. As citizens we must insist that our educators face this problem and deal with it at least in the light of present knowledge.

But we must go further than this. This is a day of prevention. What can be done to prevent this stream of bad protoplasm from coming into the world and keeping us busy with social problems? We can, if we will, prevent the birth of feeble minded children by, first preventing the marriage of feeble minded people, second by putting in institutions where they may be kept for life, all persons who are capable of begetting or bearing children and who would be likely to give birth to feeble minded children. Thirdly, we can sterilize these persons who would become the parents of feeble minded children. Of these three methods the ideal one would be to place them all in colonies where they would be kept as long as they live. One generation of work would then destroy the whole inheritance of work. But inasmuch as this cannot be done entirely and is too slow, we must, I believe, resort to some form of either castration or vasectomy and it must be practiced on the female as well as on the male. It must be carefully safe guarded to prevent malpractice but that can easily be done. If we would cope successfully with this menace of feeble mindedness, we must put aside sentiment and deal with the problem in a practical manner.

Vineland, New Jersey, April 25th, 1911.