

*STERILIZATION OF THE UNFIT.*

Some eighteen months ago (46 C.L.J. 614) we called attention to this subject, stating that it had been brought before the British American Medical Association by a prominent physician who had made a study of it; and also referred to the fact that in the States of Indiana and California Acts had been passed along the line referred to above. The necessity for some prompt and effective measure to prevent the bringing into the world of children with an inherited tendency to crime, insanity, idiocy or imbecility, has recently been brought prominently to the attention of the public in the Province of Ontario; and its Legislature has also become seized of the matter by the introduction of a bill by Dr. Godfrey seeking for an Act authorising the Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council to appoint for each of the provincial institutions for the care of the insane, feeble-minded and epileptic, boards of skilled surgeons whose duty it would be to examine their inmates, and, under certain safeguards, and when advisable, to perform operations which would prevent the procreation of children by those who might thus be declared unfit for parentage.

This would be a drastic measure, touching the liberty of the subject, but it would seem to be warranted under the conditions and necessities which permeate society as it exists. The rights of personal liberty are subject to "the right of the state to prevent by force the power of doing mischief, which is a necessary incident to a state of freedom;" and again, it is said that "there is indeed nothing, even among the most isolated groups of savage life, which approaches absolute liberty," if such terms be used in the sense of each doing what seems good in his own eyes, regardless of what is done by others: Patterson on the Liberty of the Subject, I. 74.

The duty which would be cast upon such a board as is referred to in Dr. Godfrey's bill is confined to inmates of the institutions there referred to. If and when any such legislation should take effect it might perhaps have a somewhat wider application, as there are other institutions, such as havens, or refuges for fallen women, which have to harbour such characters, who should be subject to the same law as would apply to inmates of provincial