

The Canada Lancet

VOL. XLIX. TORONTO, DECEMBER, 1915 No. 4

EDITORIAL

THE MARRIAGE OF DEFECTIVES.

It is never a good thing to interfere with the liberties of the individual except when such interference would prove a good to the public. When the welfare of the public is at stake, good government demands that the liberty of the individual be restrained. In no phase of modern life is it more justifiable to interfere with the liberty of the individual than in the matter of curtailing the ease with which mental and physical defectives may marry.

We do not propose going into any of the theories about heredity. One thing stands out as the result of wide observation that parents who are healthy of body and sound in mind are by far the most likely to have children who will partake of these two fine endowments—*mens sana in corpore sano*. We endorse very cordially the views of Dr. C. K. Clarke, Medical Superintendent of the Toronto General Hospital, to the effect that he “condemned the present marriage system under which imbeciles and mental defectives are able to obtain marriage licenses and be married without difficulty.”

This raises the wider question that there should be some institution for the care of the feeble-minded. They must be gathered up and segregated. This is by far the most economical way to deal with them, as it is both humanitarian and preventive. In some instances these persons might be taught some trade; but in all cases they can be kept out of harm's way, and the propagation of their kind arrested. This latter is by far the most important result to be gained by the isolation of these people.

All the provinces of Canada should give this matter earnest thought. Much has been done; but much remains to be done. Because much has been done is no reason why more should not be done. We urge now, as we have urged many a time in the past the establishment of an institution for the care of the feeble-minded.