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## THE CAUSES OF MENTAL IMPAIRMENT IN CHILDREN.

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Probably no one factor so largely contributes to the increase of the dependent classes as abnormalities of mind or morals begun in children. The causes conditioning these states are the fundamental ones which underlie all insanity and crime, and have been discussed in the earlier essays of this series. It is my privilege to call attention with some particularity to those phases of the matter which are less conspicuous, but yet from the nature of the subjects, young persons, rich in possibilities of remedy.

It is entirely impossible to do justice to the subject in so brief a paper, but this will serve as an introduction to the subject on some future occasion. It is enough if I can here suggest avenues of research, and may myself learn something of the subject by pursuing it further. Above all I could wish the general practitioner might become interested in searching into causes and making and recording observations in these lines. Successful treatment of insanities depends upon the prompt recognition and judgment of the family physician. He may thus avert unspeakable evil from those in his keeping, and he must aid the specialist to the uttermost, both by keen observation and by promptly bringing suspicious tendencies to the notice of alienists. He it is who has the opportunity to note the potentialities of families—their trophic energies, their resisting powers, susceptibility to toxic influences, the stability of their nerve cells. His is the privilege of setting aright, when possible, evil traits, and remedying faulty educational plans, and detecting those sensorial defects on which depend abundant developmental possibilities.

The causes of mental impairment are twofold—remote and immediate, or essential and accidental. My friend, Dr. Pearce, in a paper attached to this has gone into statistical detail, presenting with much clearness well-accepted views and a large amount of entirely new data. He sheds some light on the subject of etiology. Our sources include reports from Elwyn and Vineland School for Feeble Minded Children, where I am on the consulting staff, data and opinions from my friend, Dr. Tomlinson of St. Peter, Minn., the California Home for Feeble Minded Children, the private school of the Misses Cox and Bancroft, and that of Mrs. Seguin, and researches among the dispensary records of the orthopedic hospital, where we are on duty.