

groups into their component units for purposes of study and control. For many years criminals, paupers and backward children were studied as groups, with amazingly few results. The study of the individual men and women and boys and girls who constitute those groups has, on the contrary, thrown a flood of light upon the problems involved. Such studies show always the overshadowing importance of feeble-mindedness.

DETERMINATION TO DEAL EFFECTIVELY WITH FEEBLE-MINDEDNESS.

It is very apparent that this new and widespread interest in feeble-mindedness is not an academic one. It is coupled with a determination equally widespread to deal with feeble-mindedness in a manner worthy of the intelligence and practicality of the American people. The State commissions which are at work have all been instructed not merely to study the problem of feeble-mindedness but to bring back to their legislatures some practical suggestions for dealing with these problems. This movement begins under some particularly favourable auspices. It concerns itself chiefly with childhood, for the best measures of prevention and care are applicable during real childhood, and feeble-mindedness is but a continuing childhood, which endures no matter how many years the feeble-minded individual passes upon earth. This fact insures at once a high degree of sympathy and interest. It is within our power to bear the cost of dealing effectively with feeble-mindedness for we are already meeting the much greater cost of failing to deal with it. The movement to provide for the feeble-minded is advantageous equally to the individual as well as to the race—a happy combination which does not exist in some other activities for ultimate human betterment. The present interest in conduct disorders, notably criminality, lends impetus to the movement to provide for the feeble-minded and is advantageous to the individual as well as to the race. The main issues in the programme for dealing with feeble-mindedness are simple and not the subject of serious controversy. Thus little seems to be lacking to insure rapid progress and ultimate success in attacking this gigantic social problem.

While there is much that we do not know about feeble-mindedness, we are in possession of a sufficient body of undisputable facts to warrant the adoption of an extensive programme for dealing with the mentally defective. We know how to determine the existence of feeble-mindedness in the vast majority of cases which are presented for examination; we know that the best method of prevention is continued institutional care; we know, within broad limits, the kinds of institutional care which are best for the individual and for society; we know some methods of dealing with feeble-minded children in the school; we know some of the conditions under which the feeble-minded may be permitted to remain in the community with comparative safety. What is chiefly lacking is not knowledge, nor general interest nor a determination to deal with the problem, but, in nearly every State, a frame-work of law and an administrative mechanism based solidly upon law that will make it possible to carry out measures already clearly indicated.

EXISTING LAWS FAIL TO PROVIDE FOUNDATION FOR SUCCESSFUL WORK.

At the very outset in our efforts to put what we know about feeble-mindedness and its prevention into practical effect, it is necessary to examine the frame-work which the law provides. Although adequate provision for the feeble-minded will be even more to the advantage of the feeble-minded themselves than it is to society,