

In this country the conditions of life with respect to climate, food supply and our general surroundings are conducive to a vigorous manhood and womanhood in those blessed with a sound mind in a sound body. On the other hand those of delicate mould find the climatic conditions very trying. If it is necessary for the intelligent, industrious man to employ his whole time and talents in order to get the best out of life, what is the chance for the weakling? If we were living within the tropics, where we might tickle the ground with a hoe and it would laugh with a harvest, the problem of existence would be much easier. Here we have to spend an enormous amount of energy in protecting our bodies from the cold of winter by means of clothing and fuel. There, these things are superfluous. Seeing that to meet the cost of living requires such an output of energy, any means by which the number of our incapables could be reduced to a minimum should be heartily welcomed.

In all civilized countries, and particularly in those localities where there are large aggregations of humanity, the problem of how to deal with the lower strata of society is attracting great attention from statesmen, philanthropists and sociologists. While in large cities only is there full scope and opportunity for the vicious to prey upon the law-abiding, still in smaller cities like our own there is a very undesirable element. Nor is this confined to our towns; in many sparsely settled country districts may be found one or more families whose presence is a menace to the health and morals of the neighborhood.

A half century ago, when life was not so strenuous as to-day, the need of institutions for the care of the unfortunate and the unfit was not so pressing as now. Then voluntary assistance was more readily obtainable. To-day time is money, and service, rendered no matter by whom, has its cash value, and for this reason we must look at this problem from the economic rather than from the philanthropic point of view. Now some may think that we are going backward when we seek to transfer to the state the charge of all unfortunates, many of whom have been hitherto the special care of the humane. I think it will be found, that after we have systematically cared for all pronounced cases among the incapables, there will still be a wide field for the exercise of the altruistic spirit in assisting those among our friends and neighbors where a little timely aid or counsel might prevent misfortune or ruin.