

the age of twenty-one years, if necessary, after which, if unable to take care of themselves, they shall become wards of the Government.

“That in the opinion of this Conference the issuing of marriage licenses should be confined to a municipal officer—for instance, the municipal clerk.

“That in the opinion of this Conference, it is desirable that steps be taken to prevent the marriage of a mental defective.

“That in the event of the permanent organization of this Conference the permanent executive be instructed to press on the Government the desirability of introducing such legislation.”

The best way to deal with drunkenness is not to make drunkards, and the best way to deal with the feeble-minded is to stay their coming into the world. It is not possible to prevent the birth of a certain number of feeble-minded persons. Conditions in utero, the accidents of birth, and the diseases and injuries of childhood are sure to give every community its quota of these unfortunates. But they should not be allowed to marry, and in this way their numbers may be kept down to the minimum.

It has been argued that acquired characteristics are not inherited. The sensible stock breeder knows enough to select healthy parents from which to rear his young animals. Disregarding all fine spun theories, it cannot be contradicted that a healthy parent, in the law of chances, is more likely to have healthy children than is the case with a sickly or delicate parent. That great surgeon and philosopher in medicine, Sir Jonathan Hutchinson, once said: “The syphilitic parent may not give syphilis to his child, but he may do worse and give his child a poor constitution. This latter may not be curable.” There can be no dissent to this view.

We would press upon the Governments of all our provinces to place on the statute books such a law as will regulate marriages so as to make it impossible for the feeble-minded, the epileptic, the criminal and the confirmed drinker to enter into the married state. We interfere with the liberty of the individual to prevent crime, so we should interfere with individual liberty in the prevention of disease and degeneration. Take the case of Kallikuk of the Vineland, N.Y. From Martin Kallikuk, who served with Washington in the Revolutionary War, and who left an illegitimate son by a feeble-minded woman there have been in all 480 descendants. Of this number 36 have been illegitimate, 33 prostitutes, 24 confirmed alcoholics, 3 epileptics, 3 criminals, 8 keepers of houses of ill-fame, and 82 died in infancy.

But one can also recall the notorious Jukes family that cost the United States so much. In Drs. Bucknell and Tuke's work on insanity the case is mentioned of a woman in London who became the ancestor of 80 degenerates and criminals.