

AN EXTRACT FROM AN ADDRESS DELIVERED IN BRISTOL, ENGLAND, ENTITLED "PREVENTION IS BETTER THAN CURE."

From both the moral and scientific point of view we must, if we consider carefully, see the absolute necessity for preventive measures in dealing with the feeble-minded or defective. No maxim is more frequently quoted than "prevention is better than cure;" and outside of the medical profession, no maxim is more persistently disregarded. Perhaps this is natural. People, as a rule, want to see immediate results from their work. They want to see sick people made well, sad people made happy, and dirty places cleansed. There is, however, a higher claim upon our leaning towards whatsoever things are true, beautiful, and of good report. Is there any worker for hospital, workhouse, or gaol, who does not, at times, feel heart-broken in witnessing the long procession of invalids, paupers, idiots and criminals? Who does not say to himself: "To what purpose all my work? The evil grows unceasingly."

But what is the evil might be stopped? Not for ourselves, but for a future generation? Could we not then rise to that higher unselfishness which is content to labour all a lifetime through, to fight all a lifetime through, in order that those who come after us may have less to fight with? It is because this point of view is not yet generally taken that it is difficult to procure sympathy for the imbecile as yet unborn, and for the society to which he will prove a curse. This is the sympathy now asked for. This is the comprehending sympathy which must be forthcoming if our nation is not to sink, dragged down in the scale of existence by its own diseases. A chain is no stronger than its weakest link, and the weakest link in the chain of our social life is the mass of mentally-feeble persons who live amongst us, unguarded and unguided, suffering and helpless, and perpetually propagating their species. The time has come when this trouble must be dealt with: very kindly, very gently, very tenderly, so far as individuals are concerned, but very plainly, very sensibly, very scientifically so far as society at large is concerned. As, years ago, our nation realized that we had no right to populate a new country with criminals, and ceased to send its convicts abroad, so now it is asked to realize that it has no right to provide for its own future a feeble, helpless, half-witted population. That this is what we are doing at present, there is no doubt, seeing that the main