

State that every member thereof should be able to render the full service of which he is capable, and when one considers the numbers who are hampered in their daily tasks by the attention which they must give to mentally unfit relatives, one realizes that this is itself a matter of no small concern to the State. And when we further consider that the vast majority of the mentally incapable, who in Canada number many thousands, are not merely useless members of society but must be supported by the public, it is seen that there is an economic side to the question which is of no small consequence. But there is still more to be thought of. The so-called lesser grades of mental defect are perhaps really those of paramount importance, for these are accountable for a very large share of the criminality, immorality, delinquency, and pauperism which cost us so dearly, and it is these lesser defects which are most likely to be passed on from generation to generation. The problem, then, is many sided, and bears so intimately upon national efficiency and national progress that we cannot afford to disregard it.

From all quarters we hear that insanity is becoming more prevalent. There can be no doubt that the number for whom institutional care is being sought is increasing in a much greater ratio than the general population. This is to be accounted for, in some measure at least, by increasing confidence in the administration of institutions for the insane, but a quicker recognition of mental abnormalities than formerly, by the comparative ease with which patients may now be transported to institutions, by a growing attitude of intolerance on the part of communities to the vagaries and eccentricities of those showing even a trifling mental warp, by a lessened sense of responsibility on the part of relatives, and by other factors which come less into evidence. While much of the apparent increase in mental infirmity may thus be accounted for, there still remains the fact that the burden which mental defect imposes on the State is growing, not only steadily, but rapidly, and many careful students of sociological problems express the conviction that the percentage of population manifesting a greater or lesser degree of mental deficiency is really growing larger. If this be the case, the importance of devising some check to so disastrous a trend is obvious.

Despite the fact that the evidence that heredity is prominently concerned in the causation of insanity is still largely circumstantial, it is impossible for one who has followed out the family history of many cases to dispossess himself of the belief that it is a potent factor in predisposing to and even in determining mental breakdown. For while the seemingly determinant factors may be external, they are often consequential upon the mental attitude of forebears. This applies especially to such things as home and personal hygiene, food and habits generally. When we consider heredity, we must take account not merely of mental abnormalities but of all conditions in the forebears which may militate against the