

and gaining some slight conception of the problem of mental deficiency.

During the reign of Edward II of England, the feeble-minded were first recognized in legislation by an act in which the Crown took possession of and held land belonging to a feeble-minded person and disposed of it to his natural heirs at his death. It was about the middle of the 17th century that the first organized effort was made to care for the feeble-minded. St. Vincent de Paul secured from Anne of Austria permission to use as an asylum an ancient chateau in France and there gathered the outcast children who were mentally weak and cared for them.

Clinically there are three classes of feeble-minded—the Idiot, Imbecile and Moron. The Idiot is a child whose mental development is arrested to the extent that his intelligence never attains to a higher point than that of a normal child of three or four years of age; the Imbecile, that of a child between four and seven years; the Moron, that of a child between seven and twelve years. The Idiot, while he may be a great burden in the family, yet on account of his limitations never becomes a serious social problem. The Imbecile, also a problem in the home may, on account of his higher development and his ability, in a limited way, to move farther from the home and thus, at times, away from interested supervision, falls under the influence of designing or thoughtless persons and becomes a real agent for harm in the community. The Moron, however, with his comely appearance, his free though limited use of language, goes much farther afield and is usually unrecognized by the community as a mental defective until he has committed some overt act or sown the seed for a sequence crop of serious social conditions for the community to reap.

Etiological mental defect is of two types—Accidental and Hereditary, perhaps in the ratio of 50 per cent. each. The Accidental occurs in families of good stock, comparatively free from mental and nervous diseases and defect. These cases of defective brain can well be compared to the defect of any other organ of the body occurring in a child of a family otherwise vigorous and strong. Accidental mental defect occurring as it does in families of good intelligence rarely becomes a serious community problem. The children thus afflicted are intelligently understood by their parents and other members of the family and their supervision and care are thus assured. These children are well cared for in the home, in the state schools or in private schools and, further than a great disappointment and grief to the parents and family, are not social problems. It is the other 50 per cent.—the hereditary type of mental deficiency that is of great concern to any forward looking community, state or nation. Hereditary pauperism and feeble-mindedness are synonymous. That is, where for

generations families or members of families have been supported at public expense. The mental surveys of prisons have shown that the prison population is from 30 to 60 per cent. mentally defective. The mental survey of prostitutes in Boston as conducted by Dr. W. E. Fernald a few years ago showed that 50 per cent. of these women were mentally defective. The recidivists in our courts are feeble-minded. The mental examination of a hundred mothers of illegitimate children in a Pennsylvania Hospital cared for at public expense showed that more than 90 per cent. of these women were feeble-minded. Hereditary mental defect is, therefore, closely associated with pauperism, prostitution, spread of venereal diseases, crime, illegitimacy and, in fact, all the social ills. In the studies of the Hill Folk in Massachusetts by Davenport, the Jukes Family in New York by Dugdale, The Kallikak Family in New Jersey by Goddard, is shown the far-reaching and calamitous results of hereditary mental defect. In the Kallikak family especially is shown the virulence of the germ plasm of mental deficiency as carried by the feeble-minded girl, the founder, on the maternal side of such a large family of degenerates. The germ plasm of the founder of this family on the paternal side which, when crossed with that of a normal woman founded a brilliant family of useful people, was impotent in neutralizing the degeneracy carried in the veins of the feeble-minded girl. Davenport says that almost every county in the nation has one or more communities similar to the Hill Folk. With these families carrying such marked degeneracy in their germ plasms in every county throughout the nation, is it any wonder that the stream of human life is being continually polluted. Many of the brightest young people of these families drift into the larger centres, there marry and thus start a new focus of degeneracy.

It is evident that feeble-mindedness in the human race is nothing new, but it is also evident that there are family strains in which the germ plasm is so tainted with mental deficiency and degeneracy, that these families should become extinct.

How shall this menace of feeble-mindedness be held in check? What shall be done to prevent this form of hereditary mental defect from spreading? for it is well known that feeble-minded families are remarkably prolific. There is just one remedy that will meet this condition and that is education of the public on this important matter that strikes at the very heart of the nation. Enlighten the general public on any subject in a democratic Anglo-Saxon community and eventually that subject will be correctly settled. We must not think however, that the community is educated on this subject of feeble-mindedness until every teacher, every clergyman, every physician, every lawyer and all leaders in the community are properly informed. Then legislators,