

The need for controlling and in the majority of cases for segregating all feeble-minded children is of the utmost importance if the physical and mental standard of the race is to be preserved. Of the cases already examined a great many are unfitted on account of their low mentality for admission to special schools, although in certain urgent cases admission has been arranged in the absence of any other means of dealing with them.

The inmates of schools for feeble-minded children are given a very simple course of instruction suited to their limited intelligence. Instruction is largely of a manual character, since these children are able to advance very slightly in the arts of reading, writing, and counting. The object of the instruction is to quicken the intelligence and dexterity of the children, so that later on they may be able to take part in some simple occupation and be able to some extent to help to support themselves and to find some interest in occupations suitable to their limited capacities. Only in very exceptional cases, if in any, can it be expected that any feeble-minded children can be brought up to a standard approximating to that of even the less efficient members of the ordinary community. It has been found that those who most closely approach the ordinary standard of intelligence and capacity run greater risks and are subject to greater dangers even than those with a very low grade of intelligence. It should be definitely known that all statements relating to alleged curing of feeble-minded children, or to their replacement in ordinary schools under ordinary instruction, or to their becoming able to take their place in the ordinary community, are really the result of a misunderstanding of the types of cases to which progress such as the above refers. Improvement referred to in such statements has been accomplished not in the case of feeble-minded children, but in the case of merely backward children who make unduly slow progress under the ordinary methods of school instruction. There are many children of this type in New Zealand, but they are not placed in schools for the feeble-minded. Children who are feeble-minded in the real sense of the term are unlikely ever to improve sufficiently to make it safe for them to enter the general community. A great majority of them will need to be under protecting control throughout life, and all that the State can do for them is to reduce the amount of such supervision.

To meet the growing demands a school for feeble-minded girls was established during the year at Richmond, near Nelson. So far forty-eight girls have been admitted there, but accommodation is provided for about thirty more, and a selection is now being made of other applicants for admission. As two of the institutions at present utilized for industrial-school purposes (at Auckland and Caversham) will be vacated during the course of the ensuing year it is proposed to convert them into special schools for girls; these two schools together will accommodate about ninety girls. The problem of catering for the feeble-minded is a most difficult one, and, although the need for direct action is pressing, it is not advisable from a financial point of view to enter on any extended programme of establishing institutions without the most careful consideration. The provision for further accommodation for feeble-minded children will probably necessitate the establishment of a school in the North Island in order to avoid undue travelling on the part of inmates and their relatives.

In the meantime no ambitious programme of training the girls has been entered upon at Richmond. More attention has been given to the building-up of the children physically and of making their lives reasonably happy in their new surroundings—a liberal diet, plenty of exercise, and an occasional trip to the seaside are having a marked effect on the physical condition of the children. A teacher is attached to the staff, and a certain amount of kindergarten work is carried out.

It is proposed to obtain the services of at least two lady teachers who have had special experience in the training of feeble-minded girls, and to establish one of the institutions referred to above for the training of the younger and more improvable girls. As the girls become proficient in some craft, such as