

there seems to be little recognition on their part of the "accelerated" pupil, who enjoys "one crowded hour" of triumph at school and then retires to the asylum, to spend a vegetative existence as an incurable dement. It is not only the pupil who falls behind in his standards who requires special treatment; greater attention should be given to the precociously brilliant pupil, and any oddities of behaviour, seclusiveness, or disinclination for social intercourse with his fellows, which are often early signs of inability to stay out the race, should be regarded as of sufficient importance to call for medical examination, and possibly a change from academic studies to recuperative treatment under more natural conditions.

(B) THE FEEBLE-MINDED.

(1) *Idiots and Low-grade Imbeciles.*

These gross cases should always be in institutions where their simple requirements as to diet and cleanliness can be adequately met, and not in private houses where their helplessness imposes a serious burden upon their parents and other members of the household. The presence of an obvious idiot in a household of children frequently does harm by tending to produce an inferiority complex in the other young members of the family.

(2) *Higher-grade Imbeciles, Moral Defectives, and Morons.*

The vast majority of the feeble-minded come within these categories, but it must be borne in mind that while it is theoretically possible to so divide them, in practice there is no sharp line of demarcation, the different classes overlapping and merging into each other. One thing they all have in common—the need for some degree of State supervision; but the nature, extent, and duration of that care depends upon such factors as the amount of defect, their family circumstances, and the provision made by the State to deal with the whole problem.

The rationale of any State scheme for the social control of the feeble-minded should be to bring each defective to his maximal efficiency in the society in which he will live his life, whether in an institution or in the community under proper supervision. I propose to review the measures adopted in other countries in this respect, and to record the opinions I have formed as to their probable value in regard to New Zealand.

Special Day Schools.

I was particularly recommended to visit the special day schools in Birmingham, and the English Board of Control officials unhesitatingly pronounced them to be the best in Great Britain. The Lady Superintendent of Special Schools in the Birmingham area accompanied me on a visit of inspection to the Sherborne Street School, which she described as being the model for this class of education. There are 140 children at the school, and we visited all except two classes; but I was frankly very disappointed with what I saw. The average mentality of these children was much lower than I had expected, and a very elementary knowledge as to the cause and nature of imbecility should be sufficient to make the authorities realize the utter waste of energy and money involved in "educating" these children on the lines at present being attempted. I saw a lesson in weights and measures, but it was mere parrot-like repetition, and any impressions gained were unlikely to be retained sufficiently long to be of practical use. I saw simple dances being performed, and also a farmyard game which would be useless from any point of view. I inspected a carpentry class, but the children were listless and inattentive, and the work exhibited to me was utterly valueless as industrial training. This contrasted most unfavourably with the occupational classes seen in the residential schools.

Another day school visited was Cambridge Road School, Ottawa, Canada. The classes in this school are much smaller than in the English Schools, the average number being nine, so that a good deal of individual tuition is possible; but the results are just as one would expect from the type of pupil. One of the teachers expressed to me the opinion that "the lessons taught are quickly forgotten in most cases, but we do occasionally come across a girl who does improve." The majority of the children in this school were of the imbecile grade.

I visited other special day schools in Scotland and in America, and I was not favourably impressed with any of them. The teachers were for the most part earnest and devoted to the work, but the majority of the pupils were of a class whose structural brain-defect rendered them inaccessible to the type of instruction prescribed.

In common with most other people who have studied this question, I do not believe in the unnecessary committal of children to institutions, but in nearly all cases some real training is necessary if they are to live outside an institution and remain in harmony with society. The main points in this connection are the inculcation of the habits of prompt obedience and self-control, industrial occupation, and attention to the primary organic functions.

The parents of many of these children are themselves feeble-minded, and any good which might be done in the day school is bound to be largely discounted by a home atmosphere of squalor, thriftlessness, alcoholism, or vice. The headmistress of the Sherborne Road School told me that she has always felt that residential schools were the only suitable institutions for the education of these children, and I have no doubt this is so, apart from very exceptional circumstances.

Residential Schools.

There is a very natural antipathy on the part of parents to have their children, however defective they may be, committed to institutions. Such committals are felt to imply a reflection upon the family standing in the community, and are regarded as little less disastrous in this respect than would be the committal of one of its members to prison. This objection would in large measure disappear if it were clearly understood that the function of the institution was constructive and educative and not custodial.