

During my twenty years' work amongst mental patients the most depressing and discouraging circumstance which I have encountered is the utter ignorance and misconceptions on the part of the general public as to the nature of insanity, and particularly in regard to the conduct to be expected from the inmates of mental hospitals. This is largely due to certain novels which depicted the abuses in private asylums prior to the middle of the nineteenth century; but its persistence is fostered by the fact that, apart from chance personal relationships with a mental hospital, the members of the public have little inducement or opportunity to acquaint themselves with the present-day management of these institutions. It is most desirable that in the inauguration of a new scheme of care for the feeble-minded no similar misconceptions should be allowed to arise, and that the public should be encouraged to take an active and intelligent interest in all phases of the work. That the present is an opportune time for such public co-operation is shown by the recent formation throughout New Zealand of societies such as the Howard League for Penal Reform, the Mental Hygiene Committees, and the Borstal Association.

Every one must sympathize with the main objects of these associations, but in the absence of any real co-operation with the administrative Departments concerned their attitude tends to become critical rather than constructive, and they are led to adopt extreme views under the direction of uninformed enthusiasts, lay and professional.

I would therefore strongly urge the formation in each main centre of local social-service associations, whose principal executive officer would be the social-service worker. These associations would be somewhat analogous to the branches of the Plunket Society, and should, of course, be subsidized by the Government. The functions of the local associations would be—

- (1) The after-care of patients on parole, and the oversight of those in community care:
- (2) The placement of such cases in suitable employment (NOTE: The London Central Association for Mental Welfare advertise for work for their protégés, and they make a point of being quite frank with employers as to the past histories of the patients. They get an average of eight replies to each of their advertisements. In America and in several places in England the demand for trained defectives is greater than the supply, and this has progressively increased as the capabilities of the patients have become known):
- (3) The interpretation of the Department to the public:
- (4) To acquire authoritative and accurate information, and to create a sound public opinion upon eugenic questions by means of lectures and the distribution of literature, &c.

General.

In the course of my tour I have visited many organizations which deal with problem, delinquent, and destitute children, and, while it was interesting to observe the various methods of approach used by these different agencies, one could not fail to reflect upon the vast amount of vicarious parenthood thrust upon the State. In the Juvenile Courts which I visited I saw many children arraigned for the most trivial "offences," which could have been more fittingly dealt with in the privacy of the home. The psychologists have so successfully spread the doctrine of the evils of repression that parents are afraid to punish or even check the misbehaviour of children, with the result that the youngsters come to be regarded as "problem" cases or delinquents, and are dealt with by Courts or clinics. Even if there is little publicity attaching to these attendances, the magnification of trifling offences into "moving dramas" with the child as the central figure cannot but be harmful. The view held generally in the States can be gathered from the opinion expressed to me by the psychologist attached to the New York Juvenile Court, that "every delinquent needs a mental examination, even if it is a boy charged with throwing stones." It is wrong on every ground to allow parents to shirk their responsibilities by handing their children over to Courts and clinics as "problems." The problem in many of these cases is the parent, and a solution may possibly be found by providing penalties for contributory negligence.

It would be tempting to dismiss the matter with the reflection that we compare favourably with America in this respect, but, in the light of our favourable New Zealand conditions and the high estimation which our social provisions enjoy throughout the world, it is somewhat startling to learn that in this country we already have about five thousand children committed to the care of the Education Department, that there are about eighty private orphanages, and that of the three thousand children in them only an extremely small percentage are orphans. An increasing sense of the privilege as well as the responsibilities of parenthood must be regarded as an important factor in the cultivation of a eugenic ideal.

The Eugenics Board.

There are many interests involved in a scheme such as I have outlined for the care and control of the mentally deficient, the sexually abnormal, and the socially inadequate, and it would be well to have them all represented on the Eugenics Board.

I suggest, tentatively, that the Board should be composed as follows: (1) Inspector-General of Mental Defectives; (2) Director of Education; (3) Controller-General of Prisons; (4) a highly qualified and experienced psychiatrist, who would be a departmental officer; (5) an experienced woman social-service worker; (6) a member nominated by the voluntary after-care associations.