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The Undesirable.

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# The Undesirable.

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READ BEFORE SEABOARD MEDICAL SOCIETY OF VIRGINIA  
AND NORTH CAROLINA, DEC. 9, 1914, GOLDSBORO,  
N. C., BY C. BANKS M'NAIRY, M. D., SUPT.  
SCHOOL FOR FEEBLE MINDED,  
KNSTON, N. C.

MR. PRESIDENT AND GENTLEMEN:

In bringing this subject to your notice, on this occasion I hope. as I proceed, you will bear in mind, that it is not my purpose to bring anything new before you because I am quite sure you are all posted and well read on all questions that look to the protection and betterment of humanity, both physically and mentally.

I hope only to call your special attention to the one class of human beings, whose welfare, comfort, and mental and physical needs have been overlooked, or forgotten, for years, by the forefathers of medicine, psychology, and I might well say theology, in this mad rush, as it were, to discover something new and the undesirable human beings, such as feeble-minded, imbeciles, and idiots, had not until just recently, been given as much thought or care, in many instances, as domestic animals.

I think you gentlemen will readily agree with me that there is nothing so undesirable in one's own family as an imbecile, much less an idiot.

I know of nothing in this vale of tears, as we sometimes speak of this life, that will bring to the mother, the agonies. the shame, the remorse and pain, mental and physical worry, as to have the constant care of one of these low types of human animals. (I use the word Animal advisedly, because many of them are really lower in the scale of intellect and self preservation than the lower type of animal.)

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- I shall discuss this subject under three headings:
- 1st. Who Are the Feeble Minded, and How Many?
  - 2nd. What We Know of the Cause.
  - 3rd. How We Hope to Reduce or Prevent?

A prominent American has said, the great trouble with this problem of the feeble-minded is that there are so many of us.

I am quite sure you are all familiar, and can readily recognize the idiot and low-grade imbecile. They show it in their faces, they show it in their talk (if they talk at all), and in many other ways. The condition is manifest, but the real problem comes when we consider the higher grade imbecile and the moron. These people to the casual observer, are like the rest of us, but who, if allowed to go on and attempt to take their places in the world, are incapable.

A Moron is described as one who is capable of earning a living under favorable circumstances, but is incapable, from mental defects existing from birth or from early age, of competing on equal terms with his fellows, or of managing himself or his affairs with ordinary prudence.

It remains then, to discover some method of detecting the quality of the mentality in these cases, and thanks be to Prof. Binet, we now have a method of determining the condition of any particular child, in relation to its mental standard.

The Binet-Simon measure scale of intelligence.

As to the number in the United States, in the census report of 1890, one of the questions that was asked, was, "Are there any idiots or imbeciles in your family?" Result of this inquiry, that one in five hundred of the population comes under this class.

It is a difficult matter to get just what the true proportion is, as so many people naturally object to reporting any member of their family as idiotic or imbe-

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cile, unless they are very marked cases and the fact cannot be concealed.

It has been concluded by those who are familiar with the problem of feeble-mindedness that, at least, one in three hundred was a safe estimate. And still more recently and based upon a more careful study, Goddard has said one in two hundred and fifty. Others have dared to say one in two hundred of the population.

Goddard says, his study of the mentality of the entire school system of one thousand children resulted in finding two per cent of these children feeble-minded.

Dr. Terman tested a small system of eight hundred children and found a little over three per cent of the children were feeble-minded.

The number of feeble-minded, estimated in the United States today, according to the best authority, is about three hundred thousand.

I am not positive and have no correct statistics of North Carolina, but am quite sure that a conservative estimate will place them in the thousands.

Second. As to Cause. I realize fully that now I am treading on disputed ground and no doubt that many of you gentlemen will probably take issue with me as to the cause, as I shall treat this division of my subject.

It is a fact, says Judge Olson of Chicago, that insanity, feeble-mindedness and mental disease, are on the increase.

He further says that during ten years' experience as public prosecutor of the criminal courts of Cooke County, the fact was constantly being imposed upon him, that numbers of the criminal classes were defective to that extent—their defect was the cause of their criminality.

These ranging from the idiot, who requires custodial care, to the imbecile, who is quite harmless, up to the highest type of feeble-minded, known as the moron, or borderland cases. In which group is to be found the

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most dangerous individuals. And of the defects of the race, none is attracting more attention, on the part of the physicians, court officers, social workers, legislators, than is feeble-mindedness today.

The moron, to the superficial view, is often considered normal, though perhaps somewhat dull and backward. He is unable, however, to compete on equal terms, with his fellows, and is unable to manage his own affairs with ordinary prudence. The defect may be in-born—germinal—and, therefore, the hereditary failure of the higher structures of the brain to develop, or it may be acquired, as for example, through an accident or injury to the brain of the child in early life. The failure of the development of the brain may be due to injury of the child at birth by prolonged or difficult labor. It may also be due to injuries inflicted by the midwife or careless attending physician.

There is still another group, which includes all of those cases due to arrest of growth of the brain from such causes as maternal injury or diseases affecting the developing embryo. These may be said to be congenital, as for example—that infectious disease—syphilis, which is responsible for so much mental deficiency.

I think it is a generally conceded fact, by Alienists, Neurologists, and Psychologists, that the cause of two-thirds of the cases of feeble-mindedness is due to heredity.

We may say the human family is composed of individuals of all grades of intelligence, from the lowest to the highest, but the particular grade of intelligence is characteristic of the family possessing it and is transmitted.

If human mating always took place between persons of the same level of intelligence, we should have generation after generation of children of the same intelligence as their parents. We have only to look back

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in history a little to discover families of superior intelligence, where the level has been maintained through three, four, or perhaps, six generations; the Adams' and Edwards' families, for instance, says Goddard.

It is important to realize that most of the mental defects have existed from birth or early age, and pathological studies of neuropatic constitutions, covering several manifestations of abnormal, nervous systems, such as insanity, epilepsy, and feeble-mindedness prove, beyond doubt, the fact that heredity is the first and prime cause of mental deficiency.

The most evident fact in heredity transmission is death, and the next is a tendency toward disease.

According to Neo-mendelian classification, if an individual inherits a determiner, say for normality of nervous structure from both parents, he is termed duplex for that character; if from but one parent, simplex; and if from neither parent, mulliplex.

Because Gregor Mendel considered the peas of his garden and how they grew, is built on the conception of unit characters and their determiners.

Mendelism regards an individual as a Mosaic of independently inheritable characters, whose appearance depends on the way in which their respective determiners are thrown together in the product of the union of the germ cells, each bearing determiners.

The Kallikak family, as reported by Goddard, from one member of which sprang four hundred and ninety-six known descendents, all but two of whom were respectable and useful citizens, and also through a clandestine mating with a feeble-minded girl, four hundred and eighty mediocre and subnormal individuals, one hundred and forty-three of whom were distinctly feeble minded.

Estabrook studied "The Nam Family" in the back woods of New York, finding seven hundred and eighty-

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four individuals, of whom 19 were epileptics, 24 insane, 15 in orphan asylums, 3 in girls homes, 40 in state prisons. Eighty-eight per cent of the females and ninety per cent of the males were alcoholics. Licentiousness characterize 232 women and 199 men.

Florence Donaldson found, in two families of New England, rural community, 737 persons dealt with; 136 feeble-minded; 10 epileptics; 24 showing criminal tendencies; 8 prostitutes—alcoholism in a greater or lesser degree characterized nearly all—65 receive state aid and 37 are state wards.

In the Hucks family, reported by a field worker in Massachusetts, 315 Hucks, including 121 others who have married into the family and have been included in the study, there have been 112 matings, producing 12 epileptics, 50 alcoholics, 52 sexually immoral, 56 probably sexually diseased, 48 feeble-minded, all morons.

“The Village of a Thousand Souls” is a middle-western town observed by Gessell for the past 33 years. Out of 220 families, feeble-mindedness was found in 37, alcoholism in 36, insanity in 22, epilepsy in 3, and a number of eccentrics scattered throughout the village.

The tribe of Ishmael was a tribe traced back by McCulloch to 1790, comprising 30 family units, 62 individuals whose descendants in the six generations numbered 1,750 known, and 5,000 estimated, resembling that of “The Jukes,” a family studied by Dugdale in 1887 in which he reports 1,200 individuals—280 were professional paupers, 140 criminals, 60 habitual thieves, 50 prostitutes, a total of 2,300 years in the poor house, 7 murderers. He reports their cost to the state at a million three hundred and eight thousand dollars.

We cannot expect the development of a pure, healthy, and noble race of women and men, when the blood of the mother and father has inherited determiners, that must produce their kind and has been poisoned



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by the contagion of vice and the effects of syphilis.

Can the vulture breed the eagle? Can the jackal engender the lion?

The treatment of this problem, notwithstanding the difficult sociological aspects, is relatively simple.

Segregate, prohibit marriage, and sterilize.

All three measures within the limit of agencies under social control.

We realize however, when it comes to selecting a breeding class, we tackle the trinity of biology, psychology, and sociology, rolled into one problem of a formidable bulk.

The ancients regarded idiots, imbeciles, the feeble-minded, and neurotics as God cursed, fit only for reproach and persecution.

The Spartans made short work of them.

Early christians were compassionate and merciful.

In 1837, Sequin founded a school for idiots in Paris and brought his gospel to America.

In 1842, Guggenbuhl studied and formed a colony for Cretins in Switzerland.

In 1850, he was impeached and the institution abolished.

Seagert established a school for imbeciles in Berlin in 1845.

William Twinning and Miss White founded a private school for defectives in Bath, England, in 1843.

In 1848, Park House, High Gate, was made the home of 27 children, and two years later these with 23 more were removed to Essic Hall.

Since that time, the interests in these unfortunate human beings have increased to national dimension, and even yet twelve states of our union have no laws at all upon the subjects of the marriage or divorce of the insane, feeble-minded or epileptic.

Thirteen states have no home for the feeble-

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minded.

I don't think the question of segregation is any longer debatable. All intelligent people agree that something must be done to protect these unfortunate beings, girls especially, must be protected during the child-bearing period.

This is a Herculean task and is likely to become burdensome.

It is conservatively estimated, that there are, in the United States today, three-quarters of a million insane and mental defectives at an annual cost of 110 millions, and yet one-quarter of this million is allowed to propagate their species, which if we do not wage a moral, political and physical campaign against, history will, in the course of time, brand us a nation, once powerful, but now degenerate.

I don't think any state has yet felt that it could bear the increase taxation necessary to segregate all of its defectives, and yet we are constantly reminded that they are on the increase.

To the thinking mind, something more radically effective must be done.

I am fully aware that even in our profession, there are those that believe that the communication of disease in marriage is a matter between husband and wife and that society has nothing whatever to do with it.

Society should be the foundation of life, and strength to the state and nation.

Can the heart of a great State, as revealed in her laws, be rotten and her children be pure, healthy and virtuous?

When the mother, a leader in society, a woman of untold influence, spends a greater part of her time, mentality and energy in what she terms innocent and instructive amusement, in being the victor of a prize at

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a bridge party, that would equal in cost the heaviest losing at a one dollar limit, poker game during a sitting of four hours. In other words, she points to the gambling table and the deceitful smile of chance as a royal road to caste, to wealth, to position in state and church.

“What shall it profit a woman if she gain the whole world of academics of social distinction and lose her own soul of motherhood?”

The laws of the state are defective, society is rotten, when they do not consider man and his offspring from the following standpoints: The development and perfection, of the individual, physically, intellectually and morally for time and eternity, as an individual, with reference to his fellowmen and his relations to his Creator in time and eternity, says Dr. King.

He says further that society owes it to God and our nation to hand down to posterity a vigorous manhood and womanhood, and thereby wipe out the great social evils, alcohol and syphilis, that are giving us a heritage of moral and physical weaklings, to tax our respective states for appropriations almost beyond endurance.

You ask, What the Remedy? Let every man's standard of social morality be elevated, proclaim to the world that the libertine cannot enter your home, ostracize the social circles that entertain him, do not absolve the male offender against immorality while condemning to social infamy the female offender. And while the tendency of the age is to magnify motherhood and minimize fatherhood, magnify both.

I know the clergy and the educators stand in awe at the thought of imparting to our young women and young men, a knowledge of the hygiene of the reproductive functions.

Social prophylaxis must be the pass word.

We must pass laws preventing marriage of

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feeble-minded, especially those who are such by heredity.

Twenty-three states and three territories have what is so called Eugenic marriage laws, under which marriage is denied being as follows: Insane 24, idiot or imbecile 23, epileptic 9, feeble-minded 8, pauper 4, drunkard 3, physically incapable 3, venereally diseased 3, and habitual criminal 1.

Along with marriage regulation marches the sterilization of extreme cases of defectives, California, Connecticut, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Nevada, New Jersey, New York and North Dakota have passed laws permitting the operations of fallocotomy and vasectomy in accord with state regulations.

I fully realize, that we are likely to, and may have already, called down the wrath and denunciation of our theological brethren upon our views and eugenic ideas, and the only argument I have to quote is Mr. Hall's words, verbatim, which are as follows:

“The slogan of eugenics, a new religion, the religion of this world, not of another, has caught the imagination and won the applause of many who are critical if not hostile to Christianity. But why call it a new religion? Is not all of it simply a legitimate new interpretation of our Christianity? Is it not all latent in our Scriptures? Was anything more characteristic of the ancient Hebrews of Old Testament days than their purity and to keep the purity of their blood, then duties of parents to children and vice versa, and is there any trait more peculiar to the Jews in our day than that they excel all races save perhaps one in fecundity? The very covenant of Jehovah with Abraham was that if he kept God's law his seed should be as the stars of heaven for multitude, as if that were indeed the chief human felicity. This means, according to the newest and highest psycho-genetic criticism simply that Jehovah's laws are at bottom those of eugenics.

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The supreme criterion of virtue indeed is living in every item for the interests of posterity. The world is for the chosen, the best. It belongs to those who come after us, who will be in number like the grains of sand upon the shore. That their seed fail not is the supreme blessing.

The entire Old Testament, from the myth of Eden to the latest prophets needs a new eugenic exegesis, while the dominant theme of the New Testament is love, the strongest thing in the soul of man, centered upon service and welfare of the race.

Love and serve God and man; that is the quintessence of our religion. We only need to turn a little larger portion of the love and service we have directed toward God, who does not need it, to man who does, and we have eugenics, for who serves mankind so much as he who transmits the sacred torch of heredity, which is the most precious of all wreaths and worths, undimmed to later generations by bringing more and better men and women into the world and rearing them to the fullest possible maturity?

Read in this field and you will see only what has so long lain concealed in Christianity standing forth here revealed. The beatitudes are full of it. The meek inherit the earth on the simple biological law that over-individuation is at the expense of the genesis and beyond a certain point inversely as it . . . Christianity has never said all it meant. It is not yet all revealed to man."

Ancient Greece gave us the heritage of an intellectual, moral and political education. For the pure life, the health of the body and soul, we point to Plato, the Athenian, the pupil of Socrates, whose works remain to this day the great models of Athenian genius, elegance and urbanity, and whose philosophy has been the admiration of all ages.

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The scientific physician is entrusted with the lives of his fellowmen; his life is spent in nearest communion with the sick and dying, in sight of the very gates of eternity.

From a sociobiological point of view, he is the most potent of all factors in emancipating from the social evil.

To the most modest woman, without offending her most delicate sensibilities, he can speak of sexual life and its diseases, and how often he can forestall the shadow that has fallen over many a home and blighted lives with wrecked nerves and tortured mentality. The highest type of the physician today is the moralist as well as the hygienist.

Now gentlemen, let us strive the harder to enlighten the public and assist the legislature and the advocates of eugenics along such lines as tend to, or will relieve, or prevent the undesirable.

Then we shall be like the coral insect, helping to rear an edifice, which emerging from the vexed ocean of conflicting credence, shall be first stable and secure and at last cover itself with verdure, flowers and fruits and bloom beautiful in the face of heaven.

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