

stand the bumps and knocks in the world as well as a great many people who have never been in an institution.

The President: Perhaps we have drifted away from the original paper in the discussion, but it seems to me of considerable interest. While there appears to be a difference of view, there is not so very much difference in our thoughts of the matter under discussion. There are children that creep into all large institutions that probably should not be there. These children, as Dr. Fernald says, should be given a chance. I think it is reasonable and safe, I think we all agree to that. But they are a very small percentage of the total number of children that come to us. The class that we want to keep are what we call the high-grade imbeciles, the fairly capable imbeciles, who are, however, imbeciles and always will be such and if there is reproduction, the issue will be imbecile, so that I do not think that we differ very much. The backward child will come to us sometimes. Not very often. As a rule, under our plan, the parents send the child and parents are not very apt to say, "we have a feeble-minded child". In fact they bring their child and tell us there is nothing the matter with it. It is not feeble-minded it is just a little backward or peculiar. So there is our safeguard in receiving, in Iowa at least, these children. We do not receive very many who should not be here. In a number of years of observation I think I could count on the fingers of one hand the children that ought not to have been brought here. So that while we all admit that there may possibly be some children in our institution that should go out, and that we would like to discharge nevertheless, the great majority, the great mass of the children in the institution here are of such mental character that we can feel, indeed we know, that the institution is the best place for them. I think we are all of one opinion in regard to that.

#### THE PSYCHIC TREATMENT OF MENTAL DEFECTIVES.

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**I**F, from the title of my paper, you expect a learned scientific discussion of the abstruse problems of psychology or psychiatry you will be disappointed by the few simple thoughts I shall present under this rather imposing title.

We of the medical profession are proud of the advance which has been made in our field within the last score of years. Research in our own and allied sciences has furnished us with powerful aids by means of which we can make diagnoses of wonderful exactness and call to our aid therapeutic measures hitherto unknown, the curative and more notably the preventive results of which are truly marvelous.

The thyroid treatment of cretinism and the localization of the lesion and surgical treatment of focal brain disease, conditions which particularly interest us, are among the most brilliant triumphs of drug therapy and surgery. Physical means of treatment, such as hydrotherapy, massage, gymnastics and electricity are all powerful instruments used in the cure and prevention of disease and all are of use in preventing and correcting the effects of impaired nutrition, the primal cause of most mental defects.

But the physician of to-day does not confine himself to material or physical aids and it is not by material or physical agencies that we can best aid the mental defective. Whatever our opinion or belief concerning the bond of affinity between the mind and body, there can be no doubt as to the concomitance of cerebration and psychic manifestation. Even in an act of the purest intelligence the psychic manifestation is associated with vibrations in the cerebral cortex. To render these possible there is a flow of blood that is more abundant as intellectual effort is more intense; elevation of temperature results; in short, there is combustion of organic material. Here we see how mental condition depends upon and may be affected by physical agencies; how, by increasing the cerebral blood-supply and improving the condition of the blood the power for mental activity is increased. Here, also, we have the clue for a directly opposite procedure—the acting upon the physical by mental agencies; for, granting the concomitance of mental activity and brain activity, by causing the individual to reason, cerebral or brain activity with the exercise of the cortical cells and the increase of the flow of blood through the cerebral arteries is the inevitable result.

To bring about all the improvement possible in the mental defective we must use both physical and mental agencies. In suggestion we have a mental agency of great value.

According to Holleck, "Suggestion is the introduction within the individual of a practical belief which is spontaneously realized," and the moral art of suggestion he defines as the art of "modifying an individual by persuading him that he is, or may be other than he is. This art is one of the most important appliances in education. Education, indeed, should be directed to this end: To convince the individual that he is capable of good and incapable of evil in order to render him actually so; to persuade him that he can do better in order that he may be better. A mistake is often made in thinking that only hypnotic subjects are controlled by suggestion. All are under its influence. The only reason why motor ideas do not always cause actions in their direction is because inhibition, the result of instinct or

former experience, may hold them in check. Suggestion is specially powerful with the feeble-minded and it is a matter of the greatest importance what ideas we bring to bear upon them and what ideas we exclude.

No superintendent, physician or teacher in an institution for children, and this includes institutions for feeble minded children, is suitable for his position if he has not this power of impressing upon the minds of the children, by precept and example encouraging suggestion which will direct the mental activity of the child in proper paths; which will build up character, not destroy hope; which will set up active cerebral vibrations that awaken cerebral areas which sleep in what seems to be a deathlike slumber, causing the mind to unfold and develop, not shrivel up and wither as may be the result of improper suggestion.

I fear we have ascribed too much importance to bad heredity and have taken a too pessimistic view as to the development of feeble-minded children. Let us remember that there is no marked dividing line between so-called normal and feeble-minded children or between the various subdivisions of feeble-mindedness. There is no such line and since all, or at least all the higher grades of the feeble-minded are susceptible of more or less development there must be the possibility of developing many of the children who come to us to such a degree as to make permanent custody unnecessary. In order to bring about the best results in the development of the children under our charge we must be hopeful of improving them. We must see that all who come in contact with the children give out encouraging suggestions, encouraging them to greater mental activity. What is of as great importance is to avoid discouraging suggestions which destroy hope? A discouraging suggestion may be a remark made to a child, or about a child in its bearing; it may be the exhibition of, or calling the attention of others to some mental or physical defect within the hearing of the subject.

Dr. Bu Boise, of Berne, in speaking of the great hospitals in Paris states: "At the command of the chief of the staff or of the internes, they (the patients) begin to act like marionettes, or like circus horses accustomed to repeat the same evolutions. The dream or suggested fancy of these poor patients has been respected, and the exhibition given to physicians who are strangers always follows the same program. The regularities of the phenomena observed is due to the suggestion which the physician, either voluntarily or involuntarily, exercises."

The child with the pernicious habit of "Dervish spinning," echolalia, mirror writing, or who emits a noise which bears a fancied resemblance to the call of some animal, or who repeatedly goes from one grotesque gesticulation to another, is not only on exhibition in the side-show or cheap museum but too often in the hospital, institution or school. If these faulty habits are to be corrected they must be ignored not encouraged and the suggestion of more correct habits impressed upon the subject. Improvement is not to be brought about by calling attention to the defect but by suggesting something better to take its place. Do not permit the child who

makes a noise resembling the bark of a dog to be nicknamed "poodle," or permit any nickname which in any way calls to mind any physical or mental defect.

Parents with the best of intentions will tell the physician in the presence of the defective child of all his shortcomings; what a trial he has been at school and at home; the discouraging statements his teacher has made about him; how different he is from his clever brothers and sisters and how they have tried in vain to correct his faulty habits, talking before the child in such a manner as to destroy all his self-respect and suggest the utter hopelessness of any effort he might put forth.

By making discouraging remarks in regard to the children under their charge and within their hearing, many ignorant attendants, nurses, and I fear, some teachers and physicians give rise to discouraging suggestions which destroy hope, retard progress and actually produce a shrivelling up of the nerve-cells within the cerebral cortex. Impress upon all who have to do with the care of the children that they should never make a discouraging remark in regard to a child within hearing. If nothing encouraging can be said say nothing within the child's hearing even if the child is so defective we do not think he will understand.

The higher and middle grades of the feeble-minded are wonderfully influenced by the suggestions of those who have gained their confidence and in whom they recognize mental superiority. It is almost pathetic the confidence and faith with which they accept the statements of those in whom they trust.

The child should, and can easily be made to feel that the physician or teacher or attendant does not regard him only as an inmate or pupil but as a friend whom he desires to help. We should make the child feel that we are so anxious to see him improve that it would be very unkind of him not to do so. When the child feels this bond of sympathy he is already well on the way toward a higher development. Where, between teacher and pupil or nurse and child, there exists this bond of sympathy the child, instead of feeling that he is shut up in an asylum, has a true pride in the institution or school and though, on account of the degree of mental defect, he may not take a place in the great outside world he will at least be lifted up to a higher degree of mentality and self-respect and be made infinitely more happy and useful by the encouraging suggestions imparted to him by those he recognizes as his friends.

#### DISCUSSION

Dr. Rogers: Mr. Chairman, I think one matter brought out by this paper can not be emphasized too much. We all understand the detrimental effect of discussing the merits or demerits of a child in its presence—the development of self-consciousness. And I think it is perhaps particularly true in our very large institutions that we in a