

Visiting the Faribault school for the Feeble-Minded - A.C. Rogers

RETYPED FROM THE ORIGINAL

Dr. Dow: There is one thing in connection with these institution schools, like the blind and deaf, which perhaps doesn't appear in the other institutions. The inmates of the other institutions, most of them, are persons who are sent there by authority, and are detained there until they are released from those institutions by authority. In the institutions for the blind and the deaf the inmates are there voluntarily, that is, they are sent there by their parents' voluntary action, and all the inmates of those institutions come in that way. Now it happens, unfortunately that parents don't know much about such institutions, and it is very desirable that as wide an idea as possible of what is being done in these institutions should be extended over the state, in order that this information may come to the ears of those upon whom it depends whether their children shall be educated or not. For that reason it has seemed to me very desirable that as wide privileges of visitation of such institutions as possible be given. It often happens that through such visitations blind children and deaf children are sent to the proper institution, and are lifted up from a condition of degradation and helplessness, to one of independence and self support. People write me; "My neighbor has a blind girl or a blind boy. I visited your institution, and think that that boy or that girl, ought to be there. I would like to have you send him (the neighbor) some information. I will speak to them about it". Such letters are a common thing with us, and I presume with Mr. Tate. In a great many cases such results occur, which do not directly come to my knowledge.

Dr. Rogers: There is one other limitation that I perhaps might mention with regard to visiting the School for the Feeble Minded. It has always been our custom to refuse to allow a visitor to see a particular child, unless we are satisfied that the parents have requested him to see that child, or unless we find he is related and we are satisfied that the parents would be glad to have him see the child. There is a feeling of sensitiveness on the part of a great many parents concerning the fact of feeble-mindedness in the family and it is not uncommon for acquaintances to want to see and find out all about a child that they have no authority to see. We feel that professional confidence is necessary in a case of that kind to protect family interest.

Dr. Kilbourne: We follow that out. The nurses are now allowed to give the name of any inmate. Visitors will often ask, who that is, and the nurses are never allowed to tell.

Dr. Rogers: We have the same regulation.

Dr. Kilbourne: Nor are they allowed to see an inmate unless they bring a letter from a friend or the inmate, or prove they are relatives.

Mr. Leavett: What effect do visitors have upon inmates?

Mr. Wolfer: so far as the effect upon the inmates of the prison is concerned I have never seen anything detrimental. In fact I believe that upon the whole it is beneficial. There has been a good deal of objection to visitors in different states. The matter was called forth and discussed at the last National Prison congress. There were a number of men who had had long experience in prison work, who objected to visitors upon the ground that it was detrimental, not only to the inmates, but it satisfied a certain morbid longing that they had to visit such places, for the purpose of curiosity, and to see what a criminal looked like, and all that sort of thing. I don't believe that the average person who visits an institution of that kind has as much of that in his mind as a great many see to think. I believe that if an institution presents the right kind of appearance, and the right kind of influences are apparently to be seen, and there is sufficient evidence, so that the ordinarily intelligent person can judge of the conditions, that the effect must be good. It stimulates frequenter inquiries into what is being accomplished, on what is sought to be accomplished, and in that way information as to the methods and conduct of the institution, and the different features of the management, become know. I believe it is helpful. I believe too, that with visitors passing through the institution every hour of the day, as they do at our institution, that it isn't without some good. . . .