

RETYPE FROM THE ORIGINAL

QUARTERLY CONFERENCE OF EXECUTIVE OFFICERS OF STATE
INSTITUTIONS OF MINNESOTA with the BOARD OF CONTROL
MAY 5, 1903

SYMPOSIUM
SCIENTIFIC WORK IN THE PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS, AND THE
DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION.

Dr. A. C. Rogers, School for Feeble-Minded: I think it is much easier, as the law stands, to see the impossibility, than the possibility, of doing very much. However, as has already been suggested, there is work that can be done along the right line, that will at least lay the foundation of better work later, and I think that should be encouraged. Reference has already been made to keeping careful records of clinical cases; also to the efforts that have been made, from time to time, to secure pathological investigations and reports. Now one thing that is very often overlooked is the importance of having thoroughly and accurately kept clinical records of all kinds to accompany pathological work later. I presume that all of our institutions are keeping pretty fairly accurate records of cases. It is exceedingly important in the study of sociological problems to know just as far as possible, the family histories of all the cases that are received in our public institutions. I refer particularly to the insane, the feeble-minded and the delinquents, and I think the same is true of the blind and deaf to a large extent. Then, in addition it is very important that we have careful life histories of these people while they are under the observation of experts who study their habits, their symptoms of disease, and their peculiarities generally. As to the question of anything like serious pathological work I think as Dr. Kilbourne has already said, it is practically out of the question, except occasionally where an institution can pick up an expert. This an old problem and I presume there are many hospitals in the country that have a good microscope, a microtome and a few other laboratory instruments that have been used by someone for a few months and then stored away simply because there was no one who was competent to use them. Now the interpretation of scientific investigations depends upon trained and competent experts. They must be enthusiastic, competent, and trained in the technique of the work. If it were possible to have in any one state a laboratory devoted to the kind of work I refer to, I think success at a minimum cost might be realized. It has occurred to me in this connection that it might be possible in the near future to have some such an organization as the Carnegie Institute, which is filling in so many blank places, take up just this kind of work. Pathological specimens can be preserved, transmitted and examined at a distance. It is worth thinking about and I believe would be a practical thing. The thing that the institutions can do I have already mentioned. I believe thoroughly in the suggestion Dr. Welch gave us, to keep in touch with the outside-outside profession and outside layman, who are interested in or will make an effort to study along our lines, or lines that are collateral. I believe it would be a splendid thing for these conferences if the board could find experts in any of the lines of work in which the

institutions are interested, especially scientific ones, who would come in and give addresses on such subjects. Although the field is very well covered in our literature, yet that literature does not reach all people that could be reached through these conferences who ought to have the benefit of it. Another thing might be done. If we could find the right person or persons in our institutions, or could secure them, translating of foreign literature could be secured. They would often give us a great many suggestions in our practical work. But that again, is another rather difficult problem, because there is an immense amount of literature bearing upon these specialties that is valueless and a person would need to sift out much to get what is of real practical value. A great deal of it can be obtained from translations which already exist and which are published in various journals in this country.

It seems to me, that the making of our records and case histories and presenting from them available data at these conferences, together with notes of observations, experience, and deductions by the workers and the addresses of outside specialists, represent the work we can do now and with the means at hand.

Dr. Rogers: the findings or conclusions from the study of these records would be matters of public interest. We cannot very well obtain family histories and publish those family histories, but it is a well recognized fact that the experts who are dealing with defectives of all kinds are entitled to all knowledge possible concerning the family histories of dependents and it is part of their duty to make studies of these histories and deduce such conclusions as they can from them. The public is entitled to the benefit of these conclusions. Of course, I intended to say that they should be published

RETYPE FROM THE ORIGINAL