

Vol. VIII
1908-1907

GS-CSA-ACR
Prior to 1920-JPA
State Inst Gen-Rogers

Dr. Carson: Very many children are born defective and one cannot build up the normal mental qualities from a defective beginning. I fear Dr. Smith did not take into account these particular cases and these are the cases we have to deal with very largely in institutions for the feeble-minded.

Dr. Murdoch: My idea is that getting degenerates into institutions and segregating them is the best way to head off this trouble at its source. We know from statistics something of the number of degenerates in the communities. We know, for instance, that in New York state you have something over eight or ten thousand mentally defective, feeble-minded, imbeciles and idiots and but a very small portion of them are in the institutions. You ought to have them all in institutions and take care of them and I believe we are working that way. I do not believe the time will ever come when there will be no feeble-minded, but I believe we can separate the sexes and prevent increase along that line. There will always be cases from other causes. I do not think we have any data which indicate that there are more feeble-minded to-day, in proportion to the population, than there were fifty years ago. It is surprising how statistics, taken throughout the world, will show about one in every 500 to be mentally defective. This ratio seems to continue about the same, year after year.

Dr. Rogers: Mr. Chairman, I am afraid I have nothing new to add. Segregation I am thoroughly in sympathy with and I think the teaching of the age is toward more careful differentiation. I have always felt that asexualization is wrong at least as to the frequently proposed application. The next movement, it seems to me, towards intelligent segregation would be the indeterminate sentence for the habitual, the chronic, the really criminal. A very large percentage, I am not prepared to say what percentage, but a very large percentage of defectives comes from the recognized criminal classes, and yet to-day—it may seem very revolutionary to make this statement—it seems to me that we are treating the criminal in the most irrational manner. The professional criminal looks forward to the time when his sentence will permit him to be returned to society. He is the good-conduct man of our prisons. His time becomes the minimum because of his good conduct. He has nothing in view but to return to society and repeat his crimes and we permit him to do that. Many people are criminals

by pure accident and many others—real criminals—are not under sentence. We all recognize these facts.

Now this differentiation would occur in the case of the criminal classes by the study of the criminal himself and his history. When the criminal is sent to the penitentiary the jury is not in a position, and the judge is not in a position, to go into his real history. They can determine the facts in regard to the particular crime as they do now. When he gets to the penitentiary the commission or the management of the institution may go into his history, and, if he is a criminal, he will remain under permanent custody until his supervisors are satisfied that his actual intention is, not to return to society to become a criminal or to continue the criminal life, but to be an honest, virtuous citizen. Acting on that principle hope is never entirely out of his reach. He can always look forward to a time when he may be free; but after he is free he will always have a string to him until that determination is thoroughly tested and if the registration were so carefully made under the Bertillon system that it would be impossible for him ever to escape if the authorities wished to return him, there would be very few instances, indeed, where he would escape; he has every reason to become a good citizen, if it is possible, and if it is not possible his fate would be perpetual isolation from society.

The field for surgical interference, if any, is with certain criminal types including possibly borderline defectives. I believe, so far as the defectives are concerned, however, we are working along about the right lines. We have also learned, through the experience of many years, that we may overdo in individual cases in the matter of segregation in regard to defectives. I think we often retain in public institutions people we should not retain; that is, we have in the past. I refer to individual cases that are perfectly capable of going out and becoming, not high-grade citizens, but fairly capable citizens, safe citizens. So far as a perpetual segregation is concerned, it is a pretty hard proposition to put up to any class of men or women to decide who shall be segregated except as they will study an individual, and in a great many cases, after a little study, a man reverses his first judgment. I think we must make progress very slowly and very carefully but I think we are going in the right direction.

Professor Johnstone: I feel, with Dr. Wilmarth, that we have