

## INSTITUTION SERVICE—PERSONNEL.

G. C. Hanna, Superintendent Minnesota School for Feeble-Minded and Colony for Epileptics.

There are many angles from which it is possible to make life more livable for the inmates of our state institutions. This paper is concerned with one of them, the raising of the character and intelligence level of the employes. There will be general agreement that all state institutions have come into being to care for law violators, certain classes of unfortunates who are unable to look after themselves, and children and others who require at least temporary help or treatment for disease. Society may be selfish in establishing and maintaining its institutions because there will always be the consideration of self-protection and self-improvement, but after the institutions are established and turned over to their managers for operation, then surely their main object is the happiness and welfare of their inmates. It has taken nearly 2,000 years for the Spartan idea of protection to the state to combine with the Christian conception of duty to the helpless and lay the foundation for the modern institution. Shakespeare's England had not begun to think either in terms of protection or care in dealing with its insane and other unfortunates. When Edgar, in that most terrible of all tragedies, King Lear, disguised himself as poor Tom, the madman, these were his words:

"\* \* \* Whiles I may 'scape,  
I will preserve myself: and am bethought  
To take the basest and most poorest shape  
That ever penury, in contempt of man,  
Brought near to beast: my face I'll grime with filth;  
Blanket my loins; elf all my hair in knots;  
And with presented nakedness out-face  
The winds and persecutions of the sky.  
The country gives me proof and precedent  
Of Bedlam beggars, who, with roaring voices,  
Strike in their numb'd and mortified bare arms  
Pins, wooden pricks, nails, sprigs of rosemary;  
And with this horrible object, from low farms,  
Poor pelting villages, sheep-cotes, and mills,  
Sometime with lunatic bans, sometime with prayers,  
Enforce their charity. Poor Turlygod! poor Tom!"

In that dark and stormy night on the heath even King Lear was touched by the misery of this fellow creature. Broken in spirit, bent with physical infirmities, his skin drenched, and helpless in the face of the tempest, the old king felt a kinship between himself, now the real madman, and the poor lunatic in the hovel:

"Why, thou wert better in thy grave than to answer with thy uncovered body this extremity of the skies. Is man no more than this?

Consider him well. Thou owest the worm no silk, the beast no hide, the sheep no wool, the cat no perfume. Ha! here's three on's are sophisticated! Thou art the thing itself: unaccommodated man is no more but such a poor, bare, forked animal as thou art. Off, off, you lendings! Come, unbutton here."

And Lear, now realizing for the first time in his life how thin the partitions may be between the king and his most wretched subject, was restrained only by the fool from giving his clothes to the lunatic. Poor Tom's vagaries had struck a responsive chord. The king's answer to Kent's "How fares your grace?" was "What's he?" The lunatic answered for himself:

"Poor Tom; that eats the swimming frog, the toad, the tadpole, the wall-newt and the water; that in the fury of his heart, when the foul fiend rages, eats cow-dung for sallets; swallows the old rat and the ditch-dog; drinks the green mantle of the standing pool; who is whipped from tithing to tithing, and stock-punished, and imprisoned; who hath had three suits to his back, six shirts to his body, horse to ride, and weapon to wear;

But mice and rats, and such small deer,

Have been Tom's food for seven long year.

Beware my followers. Peace, Smulkin; peace, thou fiend!"

This unhappy condition of the insane and other outcasts from society continued through one of the most brilliant periods of English history. Failure to take constructive action arose perhaps from two reasons. One was the foolish religious superstition that the mentally deficient were the children of the Lord, and the other was the utter failure to recognize any obligation to unfortunates. It was left for Charles Dickens to arouse his countrymen to a sense of this obligation as we recognize it today. This big-hearted man turned his enormous energy and brain power into the problem, and nearly all his books touch it at some point. The feeble-minded Barnaby Rudge is one of the principal characters in and his name the title of one of the novelist's greatest works. Newgate and Bedlam are names familiar to his readers.

But it is not the purpose of this paper to trace the history of institutional growth and development. Society has recognized that poor Tom's diet is not a proper diet for a madman, and that it is better to place him in an institution maintained by the state than to allow him to roam the heath and sleep in pigstys and sheep-cotes. As managing officers we wish to see him comfortably housed, properly clad and fed, and his general welfare promoted. This is not an easy task, and many elements necessarily enter into it. It is important to have good buildings and equipment. It is important to be well located. It is important to have proper laws. But the factor of greatest importance is the individual employe. It is the employe of an institution, and by employe I mean every person in the service, who comes in contact with the wards of the state and determines what sort of life they are to lead and what progress, if any, they are to make. As a college with the most magnificent physical equipment fails if it has a poor faculty, just so must a state institution fail in its duty to its wards if it cannot secure and keep the right kind of help.

The legislature of 1919 gave the state a law fixing eight hours as the standard of a day's work in institutions. I take it this law was passed on the theory that the benefits bestowed on the workers of the state would react to the advantage of the institution populations, and I feel sure such is already the case. The law is proving most beneficial in its effects, and was one of the steps necessary to secure better and more contented help. The liberal construction of the Board of Control, giving one day off each week, and the salary increases granted from time to time, have also had their effect. The state cannot expect to compete with industry and pay from 20 to 50 per cent under prevailing wages. We can get and keep good help only by meeting squarely industrial competition.

There are other factors, however, besides hours of duty and rate of wages, that come in for consideration. Caesar said that people usually believed what they wished to believe. This may be modified into, "people usually see what they wish to see;" or, putting it in the vernacular, "we usually get what we are looking for." If an institution management takes the position that those who are willing to work directly with the patients are the scum of the earth, then that is the type of help one may expect to find in the institution. If the management expects employes to be wasteful, careless, and indifferent, are they to blame if they try to meet fully that expectation? I believe that an institution organization should be democratic, and that the lowest paid help should be credited with the same motive for employment that applies to the management.

Some one has defined an aristocrat as one who wishes the good things of the world for himself, and a democrat as one who wishes good things but is willing to have them divided around. Sometimes it happens that the management, or rings or cliques that grow up around the management, are inclined to gather in all the privileges of an institution for themselves. This will always result in a what's-the-use spirit from those not so favored. Privileges should be open on equal terms to all, and passed around, if a good spirit is to prevail. Nothing is so disorganizing in any kind of a working force as to have inner circles. They do not stop at hogging privileges. They invariably transfer to themselves authority that belongs to the management, and lord it over the other employes with a high hand. Any employe is willing to recognize rightful authority, but is reluctant to bend the knee to a counterfeit. After a time the self-respecting quit the service and undesirables remain. The work of every employe is important to the aims and purposes of the institution, no matter how humble it may seem, and due recognition of this fact by the management tends to dignify both the worker and his task.

The selection of departmental managers is very important in any kind of an organization. The state of the labor market is such that help will not be hectored and badgered by those who would show their authority. Working conditions during the past two or three years have taught a valuable lesson in this respect. Many a manager learned humility by doing himself what he had had others to do. A little authority ought not to cause undue inflation. A schoolboy who had to be prodded along a good deal was reminded by his teacher that when George Washington was his age he was a surveyor. "And," rejoined the boy, "when he was your age he was president of the United States." As a matter of fact, Washington, who was one

of the oldest of the Revolutionary fathers, was only forty-three when he took command of the American forces. Thomas Jefferson was thirty-three when he wrote the Declaration of Independence. Lafayette was a youth of nineteen when he offered his services to the Colonies, and was a general in the American army at twenty. Napoleon was thirty-five when he had won his successes and had placed himself at the head of the French nation. Shakespeare died at fifty-two; and Alexander the Great, at thirty-three. It would seem, then, that the little successes attained by ordinary mortals would not confer the right of large command. Those charged with the management of various enterprises will be most successful who can enter into sympathetic relations with their employes, and guide, lead, and instruct them. An employe often fails and becomes disheartened to the point of quitting the service because no one has shown him how.

Sometimes it is said that institution employes are wont to roam from place to place, and that they are so poor in ideas that they will not know what to do with their idle time on an eight-hour basis of employment. I do not believe that either one of these indictments may be properly lodged against them. Are they not rather the result of a failure in institution management? The institution of the future will have to do many things for its employes that have not been done universally in the past. This does not refer to the employment of professional uplifters to come to the institutions with various forms of uplifting schemes. Since the war there are many of these loose in the world, and they are on the alert to find places and persons to work on.

During the war, at one of the big mobilization camps in this country, there was an average of one camp mother to every twelve soldiers. The agents of the dozens of organizations about the camp could not understand why a group of soldiers preferred a game of poker of their own to a game of drop the handkerchief organized by one of the uplift societies. This is not to say that no good was or could be done by these well-intentioned persons, but some seemed to forget that the army was made up almost exclusively of sane men from twenty-one to thirty-one years of age and not of boys, or the feeble-minded, or others requiring guardianship.

Likewise the institution employe needs no guardian. He is entitled to be treated as a man and given a chance to do something for himself. In the old days, when institution employes were kept on duty twelve to fourteen hours a day, with days off few and far between, there is little wonder that they sought change by circulating from one institution to another. It was their only means of obtaining variety.

In the institution of the future there will be opportunity for recreation, further education, and amusement, outside of working hours. Every institution should have a gymnasium equipped with a good floor, swimming pool, and all accessories needed for indoor games and systematic physical training. The same gymnasium would answer for both inmates, and employes. At least one night each week might be set off for its exclusive use by the women employes. Outdoor games, such as baseball, tennis, and golf, should be provided for and the sports encouraged. A dance once a week the year around, with music and occasional lunches furnished by the institution, will prove an amusement feature worth while. Such dances or parties would be open free to all persons in the service and their families, but to no others.