

THE FEEBLE MINDED, BLIND AND DEAF*

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The Minnesota State Board of Control conducts eighteen State Institutions for the mentally ill (insane), the mentally defective (feeble minded), the epileptic blind, deaf, delinquent, tuberculous and crippled. The total population of these institutions is about 15,000.

The Journal of the American Medical Association in its hospital number, issued March 29, 1930, in tabulating the number of beds and patients in hospitals, reports as follows:

GENERAL HOSPITALS			
	Number of Hospitals	Beds	Patients
Minnesota	164	10,796	7,080
United States.....	4,268	357,034	234,009
NERVOUS AND MENTAL HOSPITALS			
	Number of Hospitals	Beds	Patients
Minnesota	15	10,627	10,281
United States.....	572	414,386	395,407

There are more patients in hospitals for mental and nervous disorders than in all the general and other special hospitals combined.

The hospitals for mental and nervous disorders, including the feeble minded and epileptic, are crowded to capacity, and their population is increasing at a rate much faster than the increase in the general population.

In the United States today, at least 1,000,000 people are social liabilities because of mental disorders. Seventy-five thousand people are walking the streets today who will be in institutions for mental patients within a year, and of these, 1,500 are in Minnesota, and will be seen by physicians of this State.

There are 67,000 feeble minded under training and treatment in institutions in the United States. Of these 2,050 are in the Minnesota School.

These statistical findings are conclusive evidence that our handicapped citizens constitute a tremendously important medical, social and economic problem.

THE FEEBLE MINDED

The Minnesota School for the Feeble Minded, situated in Faribault, was established in 1879. It has accommodations for 2,050, and is always filled to capacity. The institution, as its name implies, is primarily a school—a school for the training of children who, on account of mental defect, are unable to receive appropriate instruction in the public schools.

By the use of psychological test criteria, it is possible to select these children with a considerable degree of confidence and plan for their future training.

It is unjust to compel these handicapped children to compete intellectually in schools designed for those who possess normal mental endowment.

Where the child is definitely feeble minded and cannot receive adequate care and supervision in the home,

or where a special class is not available in the public schools, the child should be sent to the institutional school when six or seven years of age.

At present, far too many feeble minded children, particularly girls, are not sent to the institutional school until quite grown up, and then only after they have acquired anti-social habits, difficult or impossible of eradication. For these the possibility of successful social adjustment for life outside of the institution is materially lessened.

However, children sent to the institutional school, should be a selected group. This group should consist of those who exhibit symptoms of social maladjustment in which the environmental influences are difficult to modify, and are fostering the development of unfortunate personal reactions.

With an intelligence quotient above .50, where home conditions are satisfactory, and a special class in the public school is available, the child should not be sent to the institutional school unless he gives evidence of anti-social conduct which cannot be controlled at home. The extremely helpless child (with an intelligence quotient below .25) can frequently be cared for quite as well at home as in the institution.

On admission each child is given a thorough mental and physical examination.

In school he is assigned to tasks well within his capacity. Instruction is of practical type, proceeding at a speed commensurate with ability. Periods of study are short, with frequent intermissions for recreation. Industrial work predominates, as it is in manual training these children do best. Much individual attention is necessary, requiring instruction in small groups.

The task is fitted to the child, and not the child to the task. Girls are taught all branches of house work. Many become experts with the needle. Boys are trained for simple industrial work in the shop or on the farm.

Every pupil is given an opportunity to go as far in academic school work as his capacity permits. However, few go beyond the fourth grade. Good social and industrial habits are formed.

Pupils in the higher grades who have a mental development over eight years are trained for life outside of the institution. After appropriate training, many of these become stable in their habits and are successfully employed at manual labor on farms or in simple industrial operations.

Where the condition is due to hereditary defect, a sterilization operation is performed, after which the child may be returned to the home, or where home conditions are not satisfactory girls are sent to club houses, maintained by the State Board of Control. These club houses are home-like, attractively furnished, each caring for from twenty to twenty-five girls, who live under the supervision of a matron, going out to work by the day. These girls are self supporting, and after paying for board, clothing and other incidentals they are en-

*This and the following articles compose a symposium on Our State Institutions, presented before the annual meeting of the Minnesota State Medical Association, Duluth, Minnesota, July 14, 1930.

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couraged to deposit any surplus money they may earn in a savings account.

Plans for the establishing of similar clubs for boys are being considered.

At present many of the higher grade boys are finding employment on farms. Sterilization has made it possible for many to be placed outside of the institution where this otherwise would not be considered.

For the lower grades, even after the training given at the school, few homes are able to give the constant supervision and the protection required. These remain in the institution where they live, happy and contented in their limited environment, at work and play with congenial companions of their own mental level, and supervised by attendants who appreciate their limitations.

As to the causes of mental defect, our records show that about one-half of those admitted have near relatives similarly afflicted. We have nine brothers and sisters from one family, and many family groups of three, four and five.

As to the other one-half, where there is no history of mental defect in the family, a large number are the end-results of infection, and trauma. Encephalitic and meningitic involvement may be complications of infectious diseases including those not primarily affecting the central nervous system. That encephalitis may be a complication of measles and other exanthemata has been conclusively demonstrated at autopsy. Microcephalus may follow the irradiation of the pregnant uterus. Obstetrical accidents, and accidents later in childhood, resulting in severe head trauma, make their contribution.

Syphilitic parentage frequently is antecedent to a low grade encephalitis resulting in feeble-mindedness.

Sterilization as carried on at the Minnesota School for the Feeble Minded is more than a eugenic measure.

Feeble minded persons do not make good parents, regardless of the mentality of their offspring. Sterilization is useful as a measure for insuring a better social adjustment and is of constructive value in the rehabilitation of the trained defective.

Under the parole plan, subjects deemed suitable for life outside of the institution are sent out on trial, remaining under the continuing supervision of the State Board of Control.

The Minnesota School for the Feeble Minded is always filled to capacity, and new cases are admitted as rapidly as possible from the waiting list of those committed by a Probate Court to the guardianship of the State Board of Control.

Before a feeble minded person can be admitted to the institution, he must first be committed as a feeble minded person to the guardianship of the State Board of Control.

THE BLIND

The Minnesota School for the Blind is maintained by the State, under the direction of the State Board of Control. The superintendent is Professor J. E. Vance.

The school is attractively located in a park on a high bluff, overlooking the city of Faribault. Its opportunities are free of charge to all blind persons in Minnesota between the ages of six and twenty-one, who are capable of profiting by instruction. Forms for making application for admission may be obtained by address-

ing the superintendent.

By a blind person is meant one who has not sufficient sight to receive satisfactory instruction in the public schools.

Eight years is the regular period of instruction, but at the expiration of that time an additional period of four or five years may be granted.

The work of the school is conducted in three departments, the literary, music and industrial.

There is very little formality for the admission of a pupil to the School for the Blind. After the first admission the child returns to the school year after year in the same way he would return to the public school, continuing in the school, year after year until he completes the course and leaves upon graduation.

The Literary Department, or school proper, has a primary course of four years, an intermediate course of four years, and a higher course of four or five years. The instruction includes kindergarten training and the branches usually pursued in the graded and high schools for normal pupils.

In the Music Department, instruction is given upon the piano, the pipe organ, the violin, and other orchestral instruments; in individual and class singing and in the theory and history of music.

In the Industrial Department the boys are taught piano tuning, and repair and adjustment of piano players, and broom making. Both boys and girls are taught weaving, chair-caning and various forms of manual training, including cabinet work, basketry, hand and machine sewing.

The graduates from the school are well equipped to become self-supporting citizens.

THE DEAF

The Minnesota School for the Deaf is maintained by the State, under the direction of the State Board of Control. The superintendent is Mr. Victor O. Skyberg.

This school is beautifully located in Faribault. The buildings are attractive in appearance and well equipped. Its facilities are free to all the deaf children within the State between the ages of seven and twenty. Forms for making application for admission may be obtained from the superintendent of the school.

This school, as is the school for the blind, is a part of the general educational system of the State. The purpose of the school is to give the deaf children, mental, moral, physical and industrial training, that will make of them useful and productive citizens. At the present time there are 275 pupils in attendance.

A deaf child allowed to grow up without an education is a most pitiful object and unhappy burden upon society. The same child given the education this school provides becomes a happy and useful citizen. The child should enter the school at the age of seven years. That the instruction and training given at this school are successful is borne out by the results obtained.

The graduates of this school are all, without exception, self-supporting citizens. They are found in eighty-five different occupations which cover the professional and commercial field, and the skilled occupations of industry.

The trained deaf person has a salable service.

No blind or deaf child should be permitted to grow up in this State without having the advantages freely provided at these most excellent schools.