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FOURTH BIENNIAL REPORT
OF THE
SUPERINTENDENT
OF
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

State of Minnesota,

FOR THE

SCHOOL YEARS ENDING JULY 31, 1885 AND 1886.

TWENTY-THIRD REPORT IN THE SERIES.

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REPORT OF THE SUPERINTENDENT
OF
SCHOOL FOR IDIOTS AND IMBECILES.

Hon. D. L. Kiehle, Superintendent of Public Instruction,

SIR: I have the honor to transmit a brief statement concerning the *Minnesota school for idiots and imbeciles*. Deeming that a general review of the *nature, objects and accomplishments* of the school, in consideration of its comparatively short existence, would be of more interest to the readers of your report than a mere rehearsal of the administration for two years, I will first refer briefly to

THE CLASS FOR WHOM THE INSTITUTION IS INTENDED.

To those who have never given the matter a thought, the number of children and youth in the country of feeble, imbecilic or idiotic mind is almost incredible.

The federal census of 1880 gives the number in the United States at 76,895, of which number 792 are assigned to Minnesota, or one to every 986 inhabitants. Upon this basis there would be about 1,412 in Minnesota in 1885. Two varieties are of common observation. An occasional child is recognized in the public schools as being very "stupid;" goes to school for several years, but never makes material progress; leaves at the end of each term to re-enter the next and go over the same work. The best that is ever said of him is, "he is good-natured." The teacher, having exhausted her patience and resources in teaching him, must of course let him drop out, or neglect the remainder of her school. This boy is "feeble minded." Placed at the proper age in a school in which the methods of instruction are adapted to his comprehension, and the hand taught to do as the mind is taught to think, he would develop into a useful (*not brilliant*) man.

NOTE—It is customary to use the terms *idioty, imbecility and feeble-mindedness* as denoting different degrees of mental weakness, *idioty* denoting the lowest or most vegetative form.

Again a naturally bright little child is afflicted by epilepsy until his mind is impaired. He can not be trusted away from the immediate supervision of some member of the family or a hired care-taker for fear he will fall in the fire, or down in the well, or become injured in some other way; or, as is frequently the case, he may develop an irritable and dangerous disposition, the terror of the family and the neighborhood. These two varieties are ones most frequently recognized. There is still another class, composed of children furthest down in the scale of mentality, who are blighting the happiness of hundreds of families. They are indescribable burdens and are bringing, prematurely, wrinkles and gray hairs to the heads of loving mothers, and adding innumerable cares to whole families. These are the cases the world knows the least of; these are the burdens borne the most patiently because all these years no relief has been supposed to exist. No class appeals to the sympathy of mankind with more pitiful voice than this, and none can ask for relief from the State with more assurance that justice will hear and help.

These three types, with their intermediate grades and varieties, represent the class of unfortunates for which the Minnesota training school for idiots and imbeciles has been established, and in brief the following are

ITS OBJECTS.

First—To provide school and industrial training to all children of arrested mental development who are deprived for this reason of the advantages of the common schools, with a view to making them self-supporting, useful, rather than burdensome, members of society.

Second—To provide a home for the helpless idiot where it can receive its share of comfort and happiness, without driving it from the home from which it comes.

Third—To provide an asylum for the epileptic child, not otherwise provided for.

Fourth—To furnish a home and guardianship for adult imbeciles where their work can be utilized to assist in maintaining the institution, where they will not be subject to imposition from unscrupulous persons.

The objects are accomplished according to the following

"THEORY AND PRACTICE."

In considering this topic it must be remembered that in general, a "feeble mind," as the term is used in this connection, is a condition of *arrested development*. It may be that all the faculties are nearly equally affected, but generally the condition is one of mental asymmetry. In one case the perceptive faculties are apparently normal, while the will is weak and consequently there is no continuity of action. In another judgment is absent, power of comparison feeble, with no conception of relation between cause and effect. In another the perceptive faculties are especially deficient, the pupil being inert and indifferent to its surroundings. It is evident, then, the efforts of the teacher must be directed towards *stimulating latent faculties to act, not towards creating new ones* or assuming to originate mind where none exists. To stimulate latent mental powers and at the same time to furnish them with material for occupation, is to do all that can be done by the teacher. *Development* and growth of mind are subjective matters, and follow as the growth of muscle follows and is coexistent with its use.

It is also evident that the methods to be employed must vary as the nature of the cases varies.

Varieties of object lessons, color and peg apparatus, form boards, puzzles and other similar devices, gain the attention and stimulate the perceptions; exercises with dumb bells, wands, rings, ladders and steps are useful in strengthening the will; while music, calisthenics and dancing accomplish both objects and add a great degree of happiness to the school life.

Modifications of the kindergarten methods develop the imaginative and inventive faculties, train the fingers to obey the will and constitute the natural preparatory training to industrial work, by which the child must eventually in part, or altogether, become self-supporting.

Development of character is of supreme importance, and the most potent influence to this end is the constant association with cultivated and refined teachers.

"Example rather than precept" must always be borne in mind by all who are intrusted with the care of feeble minds.

HISTORY OF THE SCHOOL.

The school has been in active operation since July 25, 1879; and there have been 231 applications received since that time for admission, 151 of which were for males and 80 for females.

By years they have been received as follows:

In 1879.....	21
In 1880.....	4
In 1881.....	27
In 1882.....	35
In 1883.....	29
In 1884.....	29
In 1885.....	44
In 1886.....	42
Total.....	231

It will be at once recognized that applications are received continually in excess of accommodations provided for them. Out of the number of applications received there have been only one hundred and sixty-one *admissions*, principally from lack of room. There are ninety-five children enrolled at this time.

Practical results of education are seen in all but a few cases in the school, but a definite statement of percentage rendered self-supporting, and reaching other definite degrees of improvement, can only be made from careful records kept over a considerable length of time.

Three boys have been discharged, able to earn a living; several have become partially self-supporting and quite a number have been kept at home by their parents at the close of vacation because they have found them helpful and useful, though they should have received the training of the school for a much longer period.

An analysis of the school and industrial work performed by the ninety-five children in attendance at this time shows the following:

SCHOOL.

49 read some, of which number —

- 17 know words only;
- 9 know simple sentences;
- 13 read in primer;
- 10 read in school readers.

56 write some, of which number —

- 19 copy words or simple forms on slate or blackboard;
- 21 write words;

- 6 copy sentences or write some from dictation;
- 3 write letters from dictation;
- 7 compose and write letters alone.

65 know something of numbers.

- 18 only distinguish one from more than one;
- 13 count under 10;
- 17 count under 25;
- 7 count under 100;
- 5 add two digits and carry;
- 5 indefinitely;
- 2 subtract;
- 4 count time on clock.

37 know something of geography—

- 19 know points of compass;
- 18 know town, county and State, and other rudiments.

49 know colors—

- 20 recognize primary ones;
- 11 know names of one or more;
- 18 know names of all the primary colors.

INDUSTRIAL DEPARTMENT.

27 hammer brass (boys and girls)—

- 2 very well and work alone;
- 4 very well under supervision;
- 14 fairly well under supervision;
- 7 do some.

8 run scroll saw (boys)—

- 3 very well;
- 2 fairly well;
- 3 some.

2 boys do laundry work.

Of the 14 who are in the regular sewing class—

- 1 runs a machine;
- 5 hem well;
- 5 hem some;
- 13 sew "over and over;"
- 4 "gather;"
- 2 do fancy work well;
- 2 do fancy work some.

9 Girls are detailed regularly to do house work, being engaged at different kinds of work, at different times in the day.

- 2 Do chamber work well;
- 5 Assist to do chamber work;
- 4 Assist in dining room;
- 7 Assist in the kitchen;
- 1 Assists in bakery.

The farm will become the leading summer industry for the boys as the school becomes older. As our boys, who have no homes grow up they will find their most suitable occupation in assisting to raise produce for the support of the school, and in this way their work will be of great value. Under a competent supervisor, the farm work can *all* be done by them.

During the school year but little can be done on the farm by the school class of boys, though, during the spring and autumn, we have employed a detail of from ten to fifteen, during two hours in the afternoon after school, planting, hoeing and gathering crops. The boys did all the husking of our little crop of nine acres of corn this year. One boy works with a team during the whole farming season.

There are some of the epileptics who are deprived of the regular school drill but who are capable of doing some work and who are made much happier by being employed. These are assigned employment to suit individual cases, and those who, under medical treatment improve sufficiently, are transferred to the school department. Two of this class have been transferred this year. The next important step which should be taken is the complete separation of the unimprovables and epileptics from the school classes. They should be in a separate building designed for their especial care, but near enough the school to have the benefit of its entertainments.

The next legislature will be asked to provide such a building.

Respectfully submitted,

A. C. ROGERS, *Superintendent.*