

PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS.

By DR. GEO. H. KNIGHT, Lakeville, Connecticut.

Read at the Orillia Meeting, 1888.

It is with a feeling not only of appreciation, but of hesitancy, that I assume the duties of presiding officer at the twelfth annual session of this Association.

Meeting as it does for the first time outside of the States, it would seem fitting that the honor of your chief office should have been given to one older than I am, and more experienced in our special work.

In acting as your chairman I trust that the papers presented shall provoke such earnest and thorough discussion as shall make this meeting as valuable as it is sure to be interesting and pleasant.

The status of our work to-day is one of encouragement.

The thinking public no longer consider our efforts experimental.

Two more States have fallen into line, making a total number of fifteen that are now caring for their children in institutions, and our special work has come to be recognized, not only as a public benefit, but as necessary as the caring for our deaf and dumb and blind.

Public sentiment is with us; and this is largely due to the members of this Association, who for so many years have met together, and in carefully-prepared papers given to the people the results of their labor and study.

Our work, too, is broadening. The special methods which are being followed in our various institutions show this.

The change in the policy of some of our States during the past few years has been quite marked, the idea being to care for all grades, for only by so doing can the greatest amount of good be accomplished.

Massachusetts, which seemed for a long time to have been at a standstill, after doing valuable pioneer work has made up for lost time, and appears once more in the front ranks of those who are doing their utmost to secure thorough and complete provision for the feeble-minded.

Not only has she changed her charter and provided for all grades of the feeble-minded, but she has made effective effort and a thorough classification possible, by an appropriation so generous that the question will be one of ways and not of means.

Minnesota was fortunate in being able to profit by the experience of older States, and start on a broad basis, incorporating a clause in her charter authorizing her directors to receive the custodial and the epileptic just so soon as buildings should be erected for them.

And that she was in full sympathy with the course, and meant every word written in that charter, has been fully demonstrated by the noble way in which she has responded to the call for the various buildings as they have been needed.

In the limits of so short a paper as this I can make but brief mention of the work that is being done by the different States.

Pennsylvania, with her hill-side homes, takes the lead in the care of the custodial class of the feeble-minded, and has already taken steps towards erecting a special building for epileptics.

Ohio, with her large farm, demonstrates beyond any question what an important factor the tilling of land is in the education of this class.

We have learned a valuable lesson from Kentucky in watching her progress in proving the possibilities and advantages of a more thorough industrial training than we have hitherto considered possible in our methods.

New York, in providing special care and protection for her adult girls, has taken a step forward whose influence, even considered simply as a preventive measure, we cannot overestimate; for we owe it not only to the adult imbecile herself, but to humanity and the world at large, to guard in every possible way against the abuse and increase of this class.

One forgets in looking at Iowa, and noting her rapid progress in every direction, that she is still young in this work. Every step she takes is a step in advance, made possible by the broad policy pursued towards the institution by the State.

Illinois, with its magnificent buildings and its remarkably successful and efficient management, is doing a tremendous work for good in the right direction.

Nebraska, if I rightly understand her charter, provides simply for all teachable imbecile children between the ages of five and eighteen, and demands that they be furnished "with such agricultural and mechanical education as they may be capable of receiving."

While we consider the charter of the Nebraska school a good one, it cannot be considered complete until it shall embrace a clause providing just as amply for the custodial as she now does for the educable class. For I think the time has come when we must advocate organizing our work in the broadest manner, so that the ideal institution in the future may combine in herself the hill-side homes of Pennsylvania, the agricultural edu-

cation of Ohio, the industrial pursuits of Kentucky, the special protective care of New York, and all the enthusiasm which marks the work in our younger institutions.

There is one other point which seems to me to be of the greatest importance, and if we are to prosecute our work among the feeble-minded intelligently and successfully, we must zealously and faithfully foster and extend it.

I refer to pathological research, for only by such research can we ever expect to find the great underlying cause of mental deficiency.

The grand work that is being done in this line by Dr. Wilmarth at the Pennsylvania institution is worthy of imitation in all our institutions; and though at present few of us are often able to obtain an autopsy, we should continually advocate the benefits of such a course, and in this way help to hasten on the time when no one of our institutions shall be fully equipped without its autopsical room and laboratory.

I am certain that a careful and complete study of the brain, extending over a series of years, would shed light where now there is darkness; and nowhere, I believe, would it bring more surprising results than in the treatment of the epileptic imbecile.

Some of you may perhaps think that I am too sanguine in the views I hold in regard to this class, but when we consider how much more is being done for the epileptic to-day than was thought possible a decade since, and how much better results are being obtained by simple experimental treatment, I feel I am not asserting too much when I say that the time is coming when we shall know epilepsy in its various degrees as thoroughly as we now know the changes that take place in the intestine in typhoid fever.

My successor at our next meeting will be able to speak more fully of the work here in Canada. From our pleasant associations from year to year with the able men having your interests in charge, we have been led to believe that when you shall have completed your organization you will have combined the best that has been done in the States with the results of your own well-known thoroughness and efficiency in public works.

Surely, from our own experience of Canada's capability of providing a safe refuge for a certain class of our defectives, we are justified in believing that when she shall turn her attention to those within her own borders she will outdo the world in her care and provision for the feeble-minded!