

REMARKS OF HON. R. A. MOTT,

FARIBAULT MEETING, 1890.

R. A. MOTT, of Faribault, for many years a director of the Minnesota Institute for Defectives, embracing the School for the Deaf, the School for the Blind, and the School for Imbeciles, being introduced by the President, said,—

I have looked forward to this meeting for many weeks with great interest. I love to look the workers for helpless and defective classes of our humankind squarely in the face. I have heard of you, and have studied your work, and am very glad to meet you.

It is very embarrassing to a layman to talk to so many doctors, but I shall be careful not to tread upon your domain. I shall not attempt to teach the prophets.

We doubtless agree to classify, generally, the objects aimed at in the work of these institutions as follows:

1. To give such as are simply *weak-minded* better opportunities for training, improvement, and development,—physical, mental, and moral,—than can practicably be given in the public schools.

It is argued with apparent reason that this alone would hardly justify the expense of establishing and maintaining these institutions. "Once imbeciles always imbeciles." If this be true, we can only lift our pupils from one stage of imbecility to a higher one, without being sure of securing any real good.

2. To relieve our homes of such cases as are helpless, hopeless, and unimprovable, and incidentally to give them better care under trained attendants than is otherwise possible.

This purpose meets a response in the heart of every citizen who gives it consideration. No duty is more heartily and warmly discharged by the American voter than the protection and relief of the American home.

3. To keep the persons intrusted to our care until they are past the reproducing age, and reduce hereditary epilepsy and imbecility, within the lines of our republic, to the minimum. Upon this plain lies the field of battle. We in this State have organized our work with this end in view; but what can we do, what can even a half-dozen States do, unless all of the States conjoin? For example, take Minnesota. On the east

lies Wisconsin, on the west the two Dakotas, on the north Manitoba, none of which make any provision for imbeciles or epileptics. They are drifting in upon us, and these States are industriously adding to the supply. The fecundity of the feeble-minded is proverbial.

We have some missionary work to do, and we ask you to join us in urging each and every commonwealth in the Union to make a persistent and earnest effort to curtail the future supply, and even then a fiercer conflict is before us: we must move on the general government to shut down the flood-gates through which rushes upon us the torrent of impure blood from the east and from the west. If we are to remain the dumping-ground of all nations, we cannot build prisons, insane hospitals, and retreats for the defectives classes fast enough to supply the demand.

And now a few words as to our several relations to the work. You are the superintendents of the institutions which you represent. You are *necessarily* responsible for their domestic, educational, industrial, and sanitary condition. In this department you must be well equipped and work solely for results. You may or may not be architects, landscape artists, financiers, or effective lobbyists in securing legislation. If you are, your advice and assistance in these matters will be solicited and will have their due weight; but I hold that you have no primary responsibility in such matters, and if you would retain your positions free from embarrassment and do the best possible work for your charges, you should not assume any jurisdiction in regard to them. Let the State authorities build and equip the nests and you adapt yourselves to them as best you may.

The Board of Directors of this Institute—embracing the deaf, the blind, and the feeble-minded—has always assumed that its functions were distinct and special, and loaded with grave responsibilities. A special fiduciary trust is reposed in us, one which we cannot avoid or delegate. True, we may act through agents, but the acts are in law ours. It is the responsibility for these acts that we cannot delegate. We have a double duty: one to the State, to see that the contributions which the people so generously make are wisely and economically expended for the very purpose for which they were contributed, and another to the beneficiaries of the trust, to secure to them the greatest possible security and happiness, and so it comes that in matters of building, legislation, and in pecuniary and business affairs the board assumes and exercises large jurisdiction, and has a fiscal agent and superintendent of construction, who is an officer of the board, leaving large and unquestioned power in the hands of the several superintendents to carry on their own departments of the work and select their agents, employés, and helpers therein.

We think this arrangement relieves our superintendents of much worry and vexation and has contributed largely to the excellence of their work, and I desire here to testify with emphasis to the entire harmony and splendid enthusiasm that exists among us. Our superintendents are noble workers, not casuists or grumblers.

And now, gentlemen, may the Great Father bless you in your several fields. Take to your homes the benediction of an old man who prays that your labors may be crowned with perennial success.