

PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS, FRANKFORT MEETING, 1891.

THE President, DR. J. T. ARMSTRONG, delivered a short address on assuming the chair, on the second day of the fifteenth session, the manuscript of which failed to reach the editor in season for publication.

The principal point raised was the importance of a uniform name by which to designate State institutions, which was somewhat fully discussed, as follows:

DISCUSSION.

DR. ROGERS said that he favored selecting a common and correct name for the institutions represented in this Association. Calling an institution an "asylum for idiots" conveys an incorrect impression of the work. If these institutions were schools for the training and development of the feeble-minded he would call them so.

DR. FISH.—The authorities in Minnesota have to a certain extent solved that problem by calling theirs an institution for defectives. I have learned with a great deal of pleasure that Dr. Carson has succeeded in changing the title of the institution at Syracuse from "Asylum for Idiots" to "Institution for Feeble-Minded Children." There is no doubt that the word idiot has a bad effect upon those who contemplate placing children in an institution.

DR. ROGERS.—The institution for defectives in Minnesota includes the schools for the deaf and the blind as well as the feeble-minded. Our brethren at Faribault object to calling the deaf and blind children defective. I have never been able to see the logic of their argument.

DR. STEWART.—The members of the Legislature of Kentucky have discussed with me the shortening of the name of this institution, but they have never been able to do so. I do not believe the term feeble-minded can be set aside or abolished as descriptive of our class of children.

DR. ROGERS.—I hope our Committee on Classification will make this matter a study. Of course the epileptic class would not come under the generic term, except so far as these persons are or become feeble-minded. But we certainly need a term that will apply to imbeciles, idio-imbeciles, and idiots.

DR. KNIGHT.—I do not think there is any term that expresses this better than feeble-minded. We get no epileptics that are not already feeble-minded. The small number of epileptics whose minds have not

deteriorated by this disease almost never get into your institutions. All epileptics that I have ever seen in state institutions are feeble-minded, and are such because of this terrible disease. I think the name "Institution for the Feeble-Minded" is the proper name.

DR. KERLIN.—Dr. Knight has straightened this whole thing out. Seventy-five per cent. of our applications for admission are for children epileptic either in genesis or becoming so as a consequence of some infantile disease. No general term covers all grades so well as "Institution for the Feeble-Minded." Several States have recently adopted that term. Twenty-eight years ago I ventured to criticise the name of the institution at Syracuse on the ground that since it was claimed to be essentially an educational institution, it should not have had such an opprobrious title as "Asylum for Idiots." I brought before our own Board at that time the inconsistency of our own name. I think the title suggested by Dr. Knight will yet come to Elwyn, retaining the name "training-school" to designate a department only of a general Institution for the Feeble-Minded.

DR. ROGERS.—Since Dr. Knight was in Minnesota our law has been modified and our institution is open to all epileptics, no matter what their age or mental characteristics. We have a department of training and a custodial department, using for the latter the term "custodia."

DR. ARMSTRONG.—There is a tendency to change names. Our prisons have been changed to reformatories; reform schools are now called industrial schools, and almshouses county houses. We have in all of our training-schools a class of imbeciles not covered by any general name. I think we should find a name embracing all.

MRS. BROWN.—Dr. Wilbur's motive in giving the title "Asylum for Idiots" to the New York institution was to face the full opprobrium of the condition he proposed to treat. Society thought that idiots were incapable of being improved,—the class was then called idiots,—and he was bold in the matter of giving the name that he thought would apply. Our institution at Barre had its name changed. I do not know how any one could object to the term "Institution for Feeble-Minded Children."

DR. KNIGHT.—My idea was not to attach the word children to this title. When in Minnesota I found that people had no idea of what we call an imbecile. They thought that all these children were idiots. I remember one member of the Legislature said, "You talk about educating these idiots; you cannot do anything for them. They are just as well off in poor-houses and insane asylums." The result of it was when the Legislature first visited us as they were all surprised. Even the governor expressed his surprise at this class of children who come under the title of imbecile children. As a result we were able to get the vote of every

man in that Legislature, not only in the House but in the Senate, simply because we proposed to take care of all these classes. It was a revelation to the people in Minnesota that there was an imbecile child capable of being improved and brought to a state of self-support.

DR. ARMSTRONG.—Do not many people confound our work for this class with the care of the insane?

DR. POWELL.—I not unfrequently find visitors who suffer from such mental confusion. They are surprised to find children with the degree of intelligence they have classed as imbecile. I have sometimes asked them to select from general observation the brightest children, but in the majority of instances they fail. For the first time they come to recognize the fact that a child may be apparently bright and well developed physically but be deficient mentally. Such children may have been normal at first and afterwards have become feeble-minded from accidental causes or disease. Whatever name we select it should be a correct one. While it is proper to guard the feelings of parents so far as possible, yet we want a proper name that will embrace all the children that we find in our institutions. I agree with Dr. Knight that the name should take in all classes and ages.

DR. CARSON.—It has been a rare thing in my experience to have any one fail to see the difference between an institution for the feeble-minded and one for the insane. The question is sometimes asked whether the feeble-minded person is not an insane person,—whether idiots and imbeciles are not classified as insane. I think in a legal sense they may be, but not in a medical sense. In casting about for a new name in Syracuse the question came up, What shall we call the "Asylum for Idiots." Some said, Why not call it a school? It seemed to me if it was called a school rather too much would be expected.

The word institution seemed rather more comprehensive than any other name. Our corporate title is "Syracuse State Institution for Feeble-Minded Children." The word children was not originally suggested, but was added by the Legislature.

MRS. BROWN.—If the feeble-minded are legally considered insane it is no wonder that common people should think them so.

DR. KNIGHT.—They are not so legally recognized in my State.

DR. KERLIN.—Apprehending that the time might come when trouble would arise from our retaining under restraint feeble-minded *adults*, an amendatory supplement was enacted, defining that "the objects of our corporation shall extend to and embrace the training and 'care in asylum' of idiotic and feeble-minded persons without regard to age," so that the word "children" applies to feeble-minded persons irrespective of age.

Indeed, there is no thought of age at Elwyn. They are all children legally and in fact, and we do not desire to drop the designating word children or child as applicable to every inmate of our institution. We would therefore prefer that the corporate title of Elwyn should be "The Pennsylvania Institution for Feeble-Minded Children," and that the old and questionable title of "Training-School" should be retained in connection with the educational department, as contrasted with the Hillside or "Asylum Department."

DR. CARSON.—They are all children in intellect, and I can see no objection to giving a name to an institution to correspond to the class of inmates.

DR. FISH.—I am perfectly willing to accept the term feeble-minded as being the best designation that we can have for our institutions.