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THE PROGRESS IN THE CARE OF THE FEEBLE-MINDED

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A few hundred miles from here a great and modern city is attempting to tell the story of a hundred years of change. Progress is the keynote. It is not only in evidence; it is overwhelming. Even the most informed visitor finds himself much out of date. It is not within the power of any single mind to keep pace with progress. But this great exhibit selects its material. Not all phases of our human existence can present such a glorious record. History has long noted that in the social and political fields we move with a much more uncertain step. Here our total progress over a period of time may be revolutionary, or very little, or nothing, or even represent retrogression.

Our subject today is feeble-mindedness. It is a many-sided one. What changes have a hundred years wrought in our views, and in our reactions toward the feeble-minded? We have not time to present a history. But let us try to look in on the past at approximately quarter century periods, and briefly view the high lights of each.

Let the curtain rise on 1830. The care of the feeble-minded had already passed through some notable history. Even the ancients did not neglect them. They threw them into the river. Then for about eighteen centuries they fared variously, according to whether they were regarded as accursed of the gods, possessed of the Devil, or as special messengers from Heaven, or as just interesting fools designed for the amusement of kings. 1830 found a few gathered into asylums, together with the insane and crippled, by Christian Charities of the time, the first manifestation of the purely custodial idea that we still have with us. Thirty years before, Itard had demonstrated that the idiot was teachable, and thereby laid the foundation for a truly new era. Two years before Bicetra had been organized as a school for idiots, followed by Salpetriere in 1831, and in 1837 Sequin started his private school for educating the idiot. It was the beginning of a new interest in the feeble-minded limited for a while almost entirely to a few physicians and educators, with vision enough to have faith in the correctness and value of Itard's results. The aim was to develop the mind of the idiot, in a word, to cure wholly or in part by a specialized method of training and education. The interest spread. Private schools arose throughout Europe. Details of procedure were elaborated. Results attracted public attention.

We may skip to 1850. News of the success met by private school and some public institutions in Europe in educating the feeble-minded spread to America, where the idea of education all children in public schools was universally accepted and most generally practiced. A few private schools for feeble-minded were in operation in to which the European methods had been transplanted. The first state school for

feeble-minded, established at South Boston, was two years old. New York followed in 1851, after one legislative failure to authorize State expenditure for such a purpose. From this point on, the relative importance of the private schools rapidly fades into the background, and we will limit ourselves to public attempts to care for the feeble-minded. The problem at that time was simple, as conceived even by the savants. They had yet much to learn. It was a problem merely of special education, in special state schools, such as the regular public schools could not furnish. After a brief period of years in the state schools the feeble-minded were to return to their homes, cured in various degrees up to complete restoration to a normal condition by special education. Let us not, however, look down on these pioneers from the magnificent heights of our 1930 perfection. Today we do not always bother to take them into State Schools. We give them a little special training in the public schools, little enough related to their future needs, and then let them go on as though they were quite normal.

In 1850 the feeble-minded were not regarded as a burden to the public. No one suspected their numbers. And the variety of social problems they give rise to had not yet dawned on even the best informed. The plea for State School was made in the interests of the feeble-minded, not for the public interest. And the public objected to state expenditures (somehow this sounds familiar) not so much because of the money to be spent as because it regarded such expenditures as money wasted. At the beginning, as now and perhaps forever, an uninformed public stood in the way of progress. One with a little sense of humor today reads with a smile New York's experience in establishing in 1851 the second State School for feeble-minded in the United States. One gathers that the bill authorizing it was somewhat railroad through the Legislature. Even a member of the Board appointed thereafter by the Legislature to launch it was not convinced. Against the expert testimony of the time, including that of the immortal Sequin, he said: "Do not take it as personal, but I must say I think none but fools would think of teaching fools."

Let us close our eyes to what immediately followed 1850 and look in on 1880. There are now eleven State Schools for the feeble-minded. The total population is 2,429, a little less than the number committed to the care of the Board of Control in Minnesota today. Minnesota's State School is one year old. On the whole, the experimental period is past. The public has come to regard it as proper for the State to train the feeble-minded, with, however, frequent outcrops of adverse opinions. Witness the Governor of progressive Massachusetts when he says in 1883: "When the State shall have sufficiently educated every bright child within its borders, it will be time enough to undertake the education of the idiotic and feeble-minded. I submit that this attempt to reverse the irrevocable decree as to the 'survival of the fittest' is not even kindness to the poor creatures who are at this school." (Referring to the Massachusetts School for Feeble-Minded.) The stated purpose to the State Schools remains the same. It is still improvement or cure by special training with subsequent return to their homes. Faith in the possibility of fulfillment is somewhat shaken, but not nearly as

much as it is going to be soon. Let us listen to Sequin at about this time. "Not one in a thousand has been entirely refractory to treatment; not one in a hundred who has not been made more happy and healthy; more than thirty percent have been taught to conform to social and moral law, and rendered capable of order, of good feeling, and of working like the third of a man; more than forty percent have become capable of the ordinary transactions of life under friendly control, of understand moral and social abstractions, of working like two-thirds of a man, and twenty-five to thirty percent come nearer and nearer to the standards of manhood, till some of them will defy the scrutiny of good judges when compared with ordinary young men and women." The original procedure of sensory and motor training by more or less formal exercises is being supplemented more by industrial or occupational training. This innovation is dictated by the increasing recognition that it is needed if they are really to be successfully returned to society, and by the immediate needs in the State Schools. The development of intelligence by functional training is thus to some extent superceded by the development of skill by training. Important as this distinction is, it was to take another quarter century before the difference was really recognized. And it is interesting to note that in 1878 Connecticut objects to the innovation. Says Knight of the Connecticut school: "We attempt no trades at our institution - many of our patrons would object to their children being placed at work." Notice that he says "Institution". The big school house of the previous generations was beginning to change into something else. Besides new admissions, old pupils lingered after their school age had passed, because their training had not accomplished the hoped-for improvement that would enable them to return home, or because they had no home to which to return. Additions were built on to the school. Dormitories in separate buildings came next. Some shops for occupational training were added. The school of yesterday was changing into the institutions of tomorrow. The yesterday had known only "school pupils." The tomorrow was to have also "custodial inmates." Compulsory, permanent commitment, that sinister monster for many a grieving parent since, was looming on the horizon. Let us here draw the curtain until 1900. When we look in again we shall see a different picture.

In 1900 the number of State Schools, or institutions, as we may now call them, had increased to twenty-five. Most of the pupils had now turned into inmates, and they numbered something over 15,000. The original single large building had grown into a group of buildings, and we called it a "Colony." A large farm acreage was a part of the plan. It admitted adults as well as children, and both of all grades of mental deficiency. The idea of admitting only trainable, improvable children had been given up. The colony was admittedly a custodial institution as well as training school. The ideal and fully developed colony included an administration building, a school plant, separate dormitories for inmates classified and grouped according to sex, age, and grade of deficiency. It had shops for industrial training and manufacturing of articles needed by the institution. It had land for general farming, dairies, and vegetable farming, likewise used for farm training and for

producing food supply needed by the institution. It had its own power, light, and heating plant, its own kitchen, bakery, and laundry. It had its own hospital, and training courses for attendants and nurses. All this called for a great variety of different kinds of work. It had been learned long before this that the feeble-minded could be taught to do most of it under supervision. Their training became training for life within the institution—in a double sense, "for life within the Institution." For the next decade or more the "colony plan" of providing and caring for the feeble-minded was almost universally accepted as about the only one that was feasible and satisfactory.

To understand this radical, although far from abrupt, change we must consider what had been learned about the potency of special training for curing or improving the feeble-minded and about the ability of the feeble-minded so trained to take their place in society as normal citizens. A few quotations will tell the story. In an editorial in the *Journal of Psycho-Asthenics* of 1887 we read: "To those who have been led to believe that the feeble-minded can become normal and go out into the world as full citizens, the results of their training do not justify their expectations—It should be distinctly understood that a feeble-minded child never becomes normal." In 1902 Barr writes: "As one by one our institutions become patriarchal, having received successive generations of defectives, we find growing upon the pages of their reports a clearly implied interrogation: 'We have trained for—what?'—'Cutting loose from early traditions, we need to build upon the experience which has demonstrated the impossibility of training for the idiot.' (The term 'idiot' is used here for all grades of feeble-mindedness) This conviction was based on the observation of the feeble-minded in training, when they did not respond as at one time it was thought they would. But that observation was dramatically verified by the continual failure of the feeble-minded after training when returned to their community. 'Everyone, here' says Johnson of Indiana in addressing Superintendents of institutions in 1900, 'is convinced that the proportion of the feeble-minded who are fit to go out from our schools at twenty-one to take a common man's or common woman's place in the great world, with all that that implies, is so small that it may be safely disregarded in adopting a policy.'

With this as the accepted view the policy of permanent commitment, commitment for life to the institution was turned to as the only alternative. Indeed this is what was in effect being practiced in a large measure, as the automatic result of the feeble-minded remaining what they were in spite of years of special training. Of necessity they accumulated in the institutions and remained indefinitely. Thus for many years superintendents of institutions pleaded for life commitments as a state policy. "I think" says Carlson in 1903, "most of the superintendents are in favor of some stringent law which would give us the power to hold cases permanently in institutions." Johnson of Nebraska in 1906, in addressing the American Association for the Study of the Feeble-Minded, says: "I believe that every member will agree that the segregation and even permanent detention of at least a great majority, if not all of the feeble-minded is the proper procedure." And Rogers

of Minnesota: "The very condition that renders the existence of institutions for feeble-minded, necessary, as custodial homes in the broad general sense, contra-indicate the probability of placing out mental defective, successfully."

Into such an atmosphere of opinion held almost universally by the best informed of the time was born the special class for mental defectives in the public school. These special classes began with an understanding, a generation of two behind the times. They took the feeble-minded and called him something else. They proposed by special training to make him normal in school achievement. They did not even question his ability to function as a normal citizen when he reached maturity. They saw him in no other connection than as a school child. What superintendents of State institutions thought of this new move may safely be left to your imagination to fill in. The special class was destined to outstrip the State institution in number of feeble-minded children coming under its influence.

This period marks the awakening of observers to a phase of feeble-mindedness of which we had heard as yet relatively little. The accumulation of feeble-minded who had passed through the institution and back again into the community gave opportunity to observe them as citizens. Of course, other feeble-minded, a hundred times as many as had gone to institutions, had remained in the community unrecognized. But because of this very fact that they were unrecognized they taught us nothing. The known feeble-minded returned from institutions were beginning to function as our instructors. They taught us that many of our social ills originated in a large measure with them. They hampered the schools by this inability to make progress, by their truancy and all other forms of school misbehavior. They were incorrigible at home. They were sexually promiscuous. They lied, they stole, and they robbed. They were never economically independent. They received most of charity's contributions. They married young, raised large families, mostly of more feeble-minded children. By such lessons as these we learned that the feeble-minded were a burden to society. It created a change in attitude. Before, the feeble-minded merited only our sympathies and endeavors to help them. Now many began to feel that society rather than the feeble-minded was most in need of protection. This change, however, need not be and has not been detrimental to the interests of the feeble-minded. Providing for their needs and protecting society are almost entirely two aspects of one and the same process.

Our next stop should be 1930. But so much seems to have happened during the last thirty years that I shall change the procedure a little and try to select the outstanding contribution in order instead of attempt a cross-section view at 1930. One is struck by the variety of things that are new and by their possibly far-reaching consequences. Perhaps this is because events are yet too near in time and to one's own personal experience to be properly evaluated in the light of history. It is customary for the Present to think well of itself.

In 1900 there was at least another decade ahead in which the conviction grew that permanent commitment and the colony plan was the

only satisfactory method. "For nearly two decades," wrote Fernald in 1924, "all our knowledge of the feeble-minded indicated that the obvious and logical remedy was life-long segregation, and this became the policy in nearly every state." Naturally such a deep-rooted idea, be it right or wrong, is discarded slowly. But apparently we are in the process of doing so. By 1910 there were obvious signs of a break. The institutions were more than ever lagging behind in keeping down the waiting list. There was a better understanding of the large number outside, and it was beginning to dawn on many that the colony plan was doomed to fail as a method of caring for more than almost a negligible percentage of the existing feeble-minded. New ideas and methods were appearing. Fernald investigated the after careers of cases returned from the institution to the community. He found a considerable number with at least acceptable records over a number of years. Farrell made a similar study of the careers of special class children after leaving the public schools, and found similar results. Others repeated these observations, with no substantial difference in the findings. Although these studies had no control observations to show how the records of these feeble-minded compared with the records of similar groups of normals in the same communities, they revealed at least that previous conceptions about the inability of the feeble-minded to get along satisfactorily without aid from the state needed to be revised. State supervision of cases paroled from the institution was the logical next step. The "period of pessimism," placed by Fernald at 1911, had been passed. By 1917 Wallace was able to write about "The type of feeble-minded who can be cared for in the community." In this article we find that: "It cannot be considered a practical solution of the problem to segregate all of them in institutions. In fact, such a course, if it were practical from a financial standpoint would be neither necessary or desirable. The institution, important as it is, must be considered but a factor in the solution of this problem." V. V. Anderson in 1922, after studying the careers of former special class children, says: "We are convinced that a large proportion of feeble-minded persons can be handled economically and safely out in the community if properly trained and adequately supervised." And Fernald, originator of the idea, I believe, and pioneer in its application, says in 1924: "We now know that not all feeble-minded can be permanently segregated in institutions. We believe that the vast majority will never need such provision but will adjust themselves at home as they have always done in the past." Thus we see that opinion has changed in the course of relatively few years from the colony plan with life-long commitment for all to supervision in the community for the majority. This is not, of course, a return to the beginning of state schools in 1850, which returned the feeble-minded to the community without supervision. We are not forgetting what we have learned about the incurability of feeble-mindedness. In this new plan permanent supervision is retained, and it is pointed out by the exponents of the idea that its success depends as much on the supervisor as the supervised. "In considering what class of feeble-minded individuals may safely remain in the community," observes Wallace, "it is of more importance to study what communities are safe for the feeble-minded."

We may return now to a plan that lies intermediate between the old colony idea and community supervision. This is the temporary mobile colony or group plan of Bernstein. Since Superintendent Bernstein himself has been here to tell you about this, it would be more than superfluous for me to try to add anything more. You should be reminded, however, that while many others were marking time for want of a new idea or for courage to experiment, Bernstein forged ahead. Already in 1906 his new colony idea was under way, and before anything else had been even seriously attempted, the practicability of Bernstein's plan had been well tested.

Within this last thirty-year period there were a number of happenings that have resulted in fundamental changes in our views about the feeble-minded. The causes of feeble-mindedness had been under investigation for over a century. Surprisingly little progress had been made in the establishment of definite facts. In 1900 Mendel's law of inheritance was re-discovered. A few years later Goddard had completed a study which concludes that the inheritance of feeble-mindedness follows Mendel's law. Biologists soon found Mendel's explanation and interpretation inadequate, but apparently it did not effect the statistical law governing results. Goddard's data has been severely criticized as unreliable, but Meyerson, after telling us that his own data is free from this fault, ends with Goddard's conclusion. It seems established at any rate, that Mendel's law is a most practical rule to follow in the control of matings of human beings. The value of this in the care of the feeble-minded is too obvious to need further comment.

In 1908 the Binet-Simon mental tests were published. Their first application and immediate development took place in their use with the feeble-minded. Fernald describes their importance as follows: "The theory and practice of mental testing and the discovery of the concept of mental age did more to explain feeble-mindedness, to simplify its diagnosis, and to furnish accurate data for training and education than all the previous study and research from the time of Sequin. This is rather strong language. Coming from the acknowledged leader for almost two generations in the care of the feeble-minded, gives it unusual weight. We may quote further in the elaboration of this view. "Think of the tragedy of the fruitless efforts of the devoted teachers in our institutions who for nearly forty years tried to teach first grade work to a defective child with a three or four year mind. . . . The concept of the intelligence quotient was another brilliant discovery, which enabled us to predict accurately the adult mental age and adult scholastic level of a given feeble-minded child. . . . This dramatic fulfillment of the prophecy and hope of Dr. Wilbur enormously simplified the whole program of the feeble-minded. Not the least of its benefits was its revelation that we could not, as we had previously hoped and believed, increase the intelligence of a defective person. . . . The immediate popular understanding and acceptance of the principle of intelligence testing enormously increased the interest of the public in the feeble-minded." There is little or nothing that the psychologist of today could wish to add to Fernald's account of the role of the mental test in the care of the feeble-minded. Note that we drifted for a hundred years thinking that the

natural slow mental development in the feeble-minded and associated increase in ability to do more things was all the result of the special training given him. Another major contribution that mental testing has made to our program for the care of the feeble-minded, which is implied at least in Fernald's remarks, is the entirely revolutionized idea about the number of existing feeble-minded. Until mental tests appeared, we thought that only a fraction of one percent of the general population was feeble-minded. We now know that it is several percent, so much larger than previous estimates that few even now have the courage to accept the facts. If we have ten cases where we thought we had only one it obviously must make a vast difference in the general program.

Closely related to this are new developments that result in the earlier recognition of cases of feeble-mindedness, and in increasing numbers. Social agencies of all sorts have multiplied. Largely under the influence of the National Committee for Mental Hygiene hundreds of psychiatric and child guidance clinics have been organized. Social and child welfare organizations have been established by cities, schools, counties, States, and Federal Government in ever increasing numbers. A thousand psychologists are engaged in mental examining. A million mental tests is a low estimate for the annual output. The feeble-minded have been found guilty of so large a share of our social ills that many have apparently come to believe that all feeble-minded are delinquent, and that all delinquents are feeble-minded. The public is learning who is feeble-minded faster than was ever true in our history. The forgotten link in our program is being forged.

This brings us to some closing remarks. History is of little value unless made the basis for guiding future progress. Even the syncopated sketch presented here reveals that in our understanding of the feeble-minded and in the methods of caring for them we have made progress. In no phase of this do we remain where we started. Viewed, however, from the standpoint of the relative number of feeble-minded we are reaching, our record could not be much worse. At the rate we have been going in this field it apparently will take several centuries more before all feeble-minded will receive any special supervision outside of what their own relatives and friends will on their own initiative give them. Not over five percent are at present reached even in the States most advanced in the work. State and other public officials may do ever so good a job in handling those who are committed to their charge, it will not help much towards reaching our goal unless we can speed up the rate of commitments. Past experience should have taught us by this time what has prevented commitments. To my mind there have been three outstanding factors. The first is the natural repugnance, on the part of both the higher grade feeble-minded, and the normal relatives, of being committed, especially permanently committed, to an institution. This is rooted deep in human nature, and we cannot hope to ever change it. We must find our way around it, and that way is outside supervision. This comes nearest to offering the feeble-minded an opportunity to live a natural normal life. It comes nearest to removing the objections of relatives to commitment to state guardianship. We must develop our methods of outside supervision so that they will give that degree

of control more easily obtained by the institution and temporary colony plan, without arousing the resistance to commitment that the latter have created.

The second factor is the objection to the costs. The remedy for this is reduction of the costs by use of cheaper methods, which outside supervision already supplies, and the education of the public to an understanding that the most costly way is to cut necessary costs for effective supervision.

The third factor is early identification of all existing feeble-minded. For over a century we have gone on the absurd assumption that the first essential step will take care of itself. The need and importance of providing for taking this first step has been repeatedly pointed out during the past twenty years. So far only Massachusetts and South Dakota have made legal provisions for getting this early identification. Let us hope that Minnesota will be next. And that brings me to the conclusion. I have not taken time to keep track of Minnesota in the march through the century. Be assured, however, that "History records" that Minnesota, relative to its age, began very young to provide for its feeble-minded. It led all other states for a time in the relative number of feeble-minded under State care, and never fell below second or third in rank in this respect. It is still the most "lavish" in expenditures for the special classes in the public schools. It was never outdistanced in speedy discarding of outworn methods of care and in the adaption of promising new ones. Time has marched on, and Minnesota has kept the step.

PROBATION AND PAROLE IN RURAL COMMUNITIES

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We Americans are a sentimental people. We mildly sneer at the traditions of other folks and at the same time, we build traditions, customs, and trends of thought among ourselves which we worship with an almost Eastern devotion. Lest you are inclined to be startled at that remark, witness what we, as a nation, are doing year after year with the great problems of crime and delinquency which confront us. We have been told for years that severity of punishment does not cure crime, and yet we stubbornly persist in out-worn methods. Let a prison administrator develop a socially-minded attitude toward his charges, and attempt rehabilitative measures by other means than the cell, the lock-step, and the silent march, and he is immediately pounced upon by that section of the public which gives voice to the ideal past. For many years, the ideals of probationary treatment in suitable cases have been kept before us; and while we are ready in our private discussions to give an intellectual consent to the promise which this method holds forth, yet when it comes to action, we grow timid and cautious.

When we consider the history of probation, starting as it did with the efforts of a single kindly shoemaker in Boston, half a century ago, who pleaded with the Court for an opportunity to try to reform certain defendants without sending them to prison, it is not strange that the first probationary experiments evolved as activities of the Court. Neither is it strange that later, when these experiments came to be clothed with legal authority, that probation naturally remained in the public mind a function of the Court. And so we find the literature of probation filled with references to the Court's responsibility and administrative duty, and we find that with very few exceptions the states which have developed probation to any extent still cling to the tradition that the already over-burdened Judge must be further crushed with an added responsibility as soon as a person is placed on probation, while there is no thought at all that such a burden should be placed on him should his decision be to commit the defendant to a penal or correctional institution.

In our discussion today I shall take it for granted that we are all agreed on the generally accepted definition of probation; namely, that it is primarily a process of treatment rather than an exercise of either leniency or punishment, and that this treatment must be appropriate to the ills it aims to cure, paralleling, if you will, the processes followed by a physician with reference to his patient. I am assuming also that we are all agreed on the usually accepted standards of probation; namely, —First: that power to be lodged in every Court to place offenders on probation;