

## THE FEEBLE-MINDED AND DELINQUENT GIRL.

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E. E. JONES.

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It is a signal victory for the cause of education and social service in Indiana that the Indiana Academy of Science has seen fit to place on its program a symposium on "Some of the Scientific and Practical Aspects of the Problem of Feeble-Mindedness." My part in this symposium is to discuss the "Feeble-Minded and Delinquent Girl." She presents a separate and distinct problem in the social and educational development of a State, simply because she is a girl. To her sex belongs the important function of bearing the offspring of the race, and through maternal functionings, mental and physical qualities of the race are propagated. Thus, the feeble minded girl occupies a most strategic position in the problem of race improvement and development, a matter in which scientists have been profoundly interested since 1869, the date when Fances Galton published his wonderful work—Hereditary Genius.

It is fitting that the science of this age devote itself assiduously to the problems of racial improvement, for by no other means than that of science can such a program of civilization be accomplished.

My first problem this evening is to define the feeble-minded girl. What is she? What qualifications, limitations, and possibilities does she possess? What is her type of mind? What is her physical endowment? How much does she know? How far can she be educated? In what sense can she ever become self-sustaining? We must have a comprehension of these facts before we can fully define the feeble-minded girl. At the present time we have numerous scales such as the Binet-Simon Scale for measuring quantitatively and qualitatively general intelligence; and in defining the feeble-minded girl, we must bring into play the use of all such instruments of measurements as will determine her mental and physical endowments. Such scales have been employed in the feeble-minded institutions and with feeble-minded children in the public schools with marked success, and we are looking to a time in the near future when these and other scales will be perfected and refined until it will be possible for us, early in the

life of the individual, to determine the mental and physical defects that produce delinquency and feeble-mindedness.

Feeble-mindedness is a term used to describe individuals who have not attained a normal mental status when compared with individuals of the community. If their mental status is of such a character that they are not able to make the necessary adjustments in a complex social life they are deemed feeble-minded. This does not mean that there are no adjustments that they can make, but that they are able to react only to the simpler situations in life. Some feeble-minded children display remarkable alertness and acute sensitivity, and superficially one would not expect that there is any mental defect; but upon closer examination and study such an individual is found to be deficient in all matters that require complex associations and comparisons. By applying any one of the numerous scales for determining intelligence to such an individual, parts of the scales are answered with very great ease—namely, those parts that pertain to fineness of discrimination in sense impression, either visual or auditory. But when any part of the scale that requires reasoning, associations, comparisons, or complex mental processes is applied to her, she fails miserably. If a child is six years of age and only measures three years in intelligence there is some reason to expect feeble-mindedness. If a child is seven years of age and only measures three years, it becomes quite evident that development is so far retarded that the individual may be very well classified as feeble-minded. Between the ages of seven and sixteen, if the mental age is found to be four years or more below the biological age, there is reason to expect that you are dealing with a feeble-minded person. This is an arbitrary standard that is fairly well adopted by psycho-clinicians in the United States. It is possible, however, to find individuals sixteen years of age who only measure twelve years of age psychologically whose mental retardation is due to disease or other causes than native weakness. Such individuals would form exceptions and should not be regarded as feeble-minded, for there would be a possibility of their very rapid development at a later period; but on the whole we are pretty safe in defining a feeble-minded individual as one whose mental development is as much as four or more years below the normal of a child of his age.

Since having defined the feeble-minded girl, I shall endeavor to treat my topic from three different standpoints. First, how to discover her: second, what are her symptoms? and, third, what shall we do with her?

As to the first question of how we may discover the feeble-minded girl in the elementary schools, and indeed in the homes, I have this to offer. It is my belief that the public schools will have to provide themselves with psycho-educational clinics for the determination early in the life of the child of any sort of mental deficiency. There should be available to every school in the State such a clinic, for no school of a hundred or more children is so fortunate as to be without those whose mental deficiency may be low enough to be designated as feeble-minded. Recent statistics from the New York City schools, Chicago, New Orleans, Omaha and elsewhere, show that about two per cent. of all the children in the public schools are feeble-minded. It is possible that this is too high a percentage, but even if only one child in a hundred is feeble-minded it is extremely important that that fact be determined very early in its life. The psycho-educational clinic will perform the important function in a community of determining, not only all stages of mental deficiency, but also all the stages of mental acceleration; and it is extremely important that those individuals whose rank in intelligence is considerably above the average should also be known and the educational needs adapted to them in a suitable manner. Without such scientific aid in the diagnosis of the child early in her life much energy is wasted in trying to train and educate the child who may be uneducable. Psycho-educational clinics would also serve as a means for determining all grades of mental development in all children and would thus serve as a corrective agency in the proper development of all children. Teachers are generally unskilled in the matter of mental diagnosis of their pupils. They teach upon the assumption that all children have mental capacity about equal. Upon this assumption many a feeble-minded child has suffered punishment and humiliation for laziness, indifference, lack of zeal, inattention, etc., when as a matter of fact the child did not possess more than a third or a half of the mental capacity to do the task assigned. It is my belief that the State should support enough psycho-educational clinics in different parts of the commonwealth as to be available for the use of all teachers and parents. By this agency the feeble-minded girl would be detected early in her life and would be under close observation for a number of years and could finally be disposed of to the best advantage of the public schools, the parents, and the social interests of the State.

My second point is, "What are the symptoms of feeble-mindedness?"

It is safe to say that there are no two cases precisely alike, and it is rare that we find mental conditions that are strikingly the same in different individuals; however, it is possible to name some of the more general characteristics. One of the most prominent characteristics of the feeble-minded girl is mental stupor. She apparently dreams, sits in the presence of certain powerful stimuli unmoved. She is lethargic, inactive and apparently mentally depressed. My own experiments show that the sense organs of feeble-minded girls are about normal, their eyes may be deficient and they may have defective hearing, but this does not seem to be any more a characteristic of the feeble-minded girl than the average high school girl. My data show that the percentage of such defects are about the same for the two classes of girls. It should be said, too, that many feeble-minded girls are supersensitive; their vision is very sharp, their hearing is extremely acute and other senses seem to be abnormally developed. It is only in the organization of this sense material in the higher brain centers that their mental weakness is discovered. The feeble-minded girl normally does not like to play; complex games are difficult for her to comprehend and she can only be taught them with very great patience and much repetition. By the use of the Bergstrom krouscope, I have secured the reactions of several hundred feeble-minded children. These reactions are both slow and irregular. There is no reliability in the response to a stimulus. Reactions may not be slow in some instances, but they are invariably inconsistent and show great mean variations. I also have the records of several hundred girls as to their vital index which is found by dividing the weight by the vital capacity. The median of the vital index of these feeble-minded girls is several points lower than the median for high school girls. Feeble-minded girls are usually below normal in height and weight. The feeble-minded girl is irresponsible morally, she is not mentally capable of knowing the nature of crime or its ultimate results. She sees in her own acts, which may be immoral, no social significance whatever. She is in no sense responsible for her acts of immorality. Feeble-minded girls are subject to fits of anger and lack of control. This seems to be merely a phase of retardation in her development and is the line of least resistance through which she reacts upon an unfavorable environment. Her acts are nearly all upon the low level of response to sense stimuli. The feeble-minded girl is only educable to a very small degree; she may learn to read, but she can not comprehend

very well what is read; she simply pronounces the words and they are for her the names of peculiar visual stimuli closely akin to the names of persons whom she knows; but these words as groups of words have really no meaning for her.

It frequently happens in feeble-minded girls that there is some special line of action or work in which they can excel; this frequently offers possibilities for education which may be fruitful. These possibilities are easily discovered by the psycho-clinician who may have the girl under observation for a considerable length of time. Frequently feeble-minded girls can do simple sewing, cooking, cleaning, occasionally manifest talent in art or industrial work to a certain extent. Feeble-minded girls are usually strongly sexed. For this reason they are easily brought under the influence of lewd men and are led into immorality. It should be said, however, that in the cases of this kind that have come under my own observation the girl has not comprehended at all the nature of her crime. For her the immorality has been a mere species of play, and she is not at all responsible for her act. Juvenile courts, however, rarely take this into consideration in disposing of the feeble-minded girl. Such girls are usually spoken of in the juvenile courts as sexual perverts. This characterization, however, is a sample of the looseness with which many courts exhibit scientific knowledge in their ministration of justice. It is my belief that many of the girls of this character who are sent to corrective institutions as sexual criminals possess only the normal sex development of the race, and are in no sense abnormal. They have been led into their immorality by men of low character who are ever ready to take advantage of mental weakness, and such girls are so constituted that they cannot possibly comprehend the ulterior results of the sexual act. It is considered no more seriously by them than the gratification of any other sensual pleasure. It must be borne in mind, too, that mere response to sense stimuli is one of the predominant characteristics of the feeble-minded girl, which fact places her far down in the scale of human intelligence, more nearly in the category of the lower animals than that of human beings, who respond to complex situations with judgment and high discriminative powers. The latter she cannot do, because she has not the cerebral connections for such reactions.

My third question is: "What shall we do with her?" This can be answered only in the light of her diagnosis. We must know her mental

and physical possibilities, her powers to respond intelligently to complex situations, such as we find in our own civilization, and whether or no she is able to be self-conservative in a social mechanism such as our State affords. We have already answered this question negatively. We know positively that the feeble-minded girl cannot survive intelligently in the State of Indiana. She will fall if left to herself. She will end in prostitution and crime unless she is protected. The State cannot afford to turn her loose upon society, for obvious reasons. Then what shall we do for her? My statement of the case will be straightforward and above board. First of all she should not be allowed to attend the public school. As soon as she is discovered by the psycho-clinician, when all the expert evidence is in with reference to her and it is positively determined that she comes well within the class of feeble-minded, she should be taken from the public school and placed in a school which is equipped for the careful treatment of such cases. This school should be centrally located for a large territory in the community, and every means should be employed to protect such children to and from school. Parents should be warned of the dangers to which the feeble-minded girl is subjected on the streets, on the playground, in alleys, outhouses and barns and on vacations; and in cases where there is any possibility that parents will not adequately protect the feeble-minded girl from immorality, she should be taken from them and placed in an institution for such mental delinquents for life. She should never marry, for under no circumstances should she be allowed to propagate her kind. In my judgment, as a perfect safeguard to society, she should be sterilized at the pubescent period.

Her education should proceed in such an institution according to lines of her interests. She should be made happy in the work that her likes demand, and should remain protected throughout her lifetime. The State of Indiana probably has at the present time several hundred feeble-minded girls at large, attending no school, under poor parental supervision, running the streets, responding to sense stimuli, gradually going into prostitution, giving birth to illegitimate children, and placing upon society some of her heaviest burdens. It is the duty of the State to bring them under control and save them from the life of social degeneracy which inevitably awaits them if they are allowed to mingle freely with licentious men and are afforded no protection from their sexual suggestions. Her only salva-

tion is in protection from the State, and that protection should continue throughout her whole lifetime.

The question is frequently asked if feeble-minded girls should ever be allowed to marry. In my judgment no feeble-minded girl should ever marry, even though she has been sterilized at pubescence. For the danger lies in the fact that she has not the intelligence adequately to comprehend the meaning of the nuptial tie. The obligations of this relationship would mean nothing to her, and she could not be held responsible for violations of those obligations. If she were free from state control, and should be permitted to marry, even though she had been sterilized at puberty, there would still be the tendency to fall into prostitution and crime which would be unavoidable. It would afford the means of spreading venereal disease and stimulating prostitution, which I feel no State can afford to permit.

One of the greatest social problems of the day for Indiana and all other States is the proper control and education of the feeble-minded delinquent girl. If she is not brought under control, she will propagate her kind, and it is probable that the percentage of feeble-mindedness will increase. With its increase comes added expenditure for state institutions, juvenile courts, medical aid, and waste in education, etc., which increases with leaps and bounds. But if the State takes under its protection and care all feeble-minded girls and boys, there will soon be a great decline in many of the social wastes which at present are sapping the resources of the State. It is difficult to estimate the whole cost to the State of the offspring from one degenerate woman. Fortunately we have a few statistics on this point. The Germans have studied with care the long line of descendants from a few degenerate women, and have calculated their cost to the state. For example, a Margaret Siler, who is characterized as a weak-minded prostitute, was the mother of six children. After 180 years the history of her progeny is as follows: She had 1,286 descendants; of these there were 200 criminals, 280 adult paupers, 300 died of congenital diseases, there were 50 tramps, and she cost Germany \$150,000,000 in legal proceedings alone. Another instance is that of Ada Joirk, a feeble-minded prostitute and drunkard. Seven hundred nine of her descendants have been accounted for. There were 141 beggars, 64 in the poorhouse, 287 vagabonds, and 76 sexual criminals. She cost Switzerland \$1,250,000 in 120 years, and through the lines of con-

genital heredity the terrible work of this one deficient and diseased woman is still going on. It gives us a new phase of the problem of eternal life, and makes it an educational and social problem, rather than a theological one.

Compare such statistics with that of the descendants of Jonathan Edwards, the great New England theologian. One thousand three hundred ninety-four of his descendants were identified in 1900, of whom 295 were college graduates; 13 presidents of our greatest colleges; 65 professors in colleges, besides many principals of other important educational institutions; 60 physicians, many of whom were eminent; 100 or more clergymen, missionaries, or theological professors; 75 were officers in the army and navy; 60 prominent authors and writers; 100 or more were lawyers of whom one was our most eminent professor of law; 30 were judges; 80 held public office, of whom one was a vice-President of the United States; 3 were United States senators; several were governors, members of congress, framers of state constitutions, mayors of cities, and ministers to foreign courts; one was president of the Pacific Mail Steamship Company; railroads, banks, insurance companies, and large industrial enterprises have been indebted to their management. Almost if not every department of social and intellectual progress has felt the impulse of this healthy and long-lived family. It is not known that any of them ever committed a crime, or died in a poorhouse.

Let us protect for life every feeble-minded girl in the commonwealth, and thus cut off one of the most potent influences for social corruption which now embarrasses the State.