

Res Judicatae

FEEBLE-MINDEDNESS AND THE STATE

ON page 405 of this issue will be found the results of eighty-seven mental tests carried out by Dr. Mundie at the Boys' Farm, Shawbridge. Dr. Mundie's paper is sufficient in itself to indicate the gravity of the situation, but some further statistics may be of interest, particularly just now when questions bearing on the future of the race assume an additional importance. According to a conservative estimate, there are in Canada at least 25,000 mental defectives; in the province of Ontario there are at least 5,000, and in Quebec no less than 6,000. In the latter province it is difficult to make a correct estimate as, in the absence of compulsory education, psychological clinics, or other means of detecting cases, it is impossible to obtain reliable information and, in the case of children, those who obviously are defective are usually kept at home. Dr. Helen McMurchy, inspector of the auxiliary classes recently established in Ontario, estimates that there are at least 2,000 feeble-minded children in the ordinary schools of the province, and that thirty-three per cent of those in the industrial schools and fifteen per cent. of those brought before the Juvenile Court of Toronto are mentally defective. In April, 1914, scientific tests of the mentality of eight inmates of the Girls' Cottage Industrial School at St. Lambert, P. Q., were made by Dr. Tait, professor of psychology at McGill University. All were morons, that is, mental defectives of the higher grade. Seven of the eight had been born in the Old World. Dr. Tait also examined thirty-seven children selected at random at another institution in Montreal; of these only fifteen were normal. In another case thirteen out of twenty children examined showed two or three years retardation and were, presumably, feeble-minded. In Great Britain things are even worse. In the report of the Royal Commission, published in 1908, it is stated that at least 120,000 persons in England and Wales are mental defectives and that 66,000 were in urgent need of proper care. This estimate was considered too low by Dr. Tredgold, a member of the Commission, who thought that there were at least 150,000 feeble-minded persons in England and Wales alone. In the *Journal of Heredity*, January, 1915, Dr. Goddard states that there must be between

300,000 and 400,000 feeble-minded persons in the United States, with many more in whom mental defect is latent, and it is believed that in the State of New York alone there are 30,000 feeble-minded persons. The results of tests made by the Binet-Simon and other approved methods have made it sufficiently clear that mental deficiency is associated with criminal tendencies. The first Ontario census of the feeble-minded was taken in 1906 and revealed the existence of 1,000 mental defectives supported by public charity. Mr. Chadwick, superintendent of dependent and delinquent children in Alberta, in March, 1915, stated that 200 children ranging from idiots to morons had come under his notice, and Mr. Page, superintendent of neglected and dependent children in Saskatchewan, at the present time has under his care at least twelve boys suffering from extreme mental defects. In the United States Goddard estimates that from 25 per cent. to 50 per cent. of all classes of criminals in that country are mental defectives, and his findings are corroborated by the work of Fernald and others. In England the reports of the Royal Commissions show that paupers, drunkards, prostitutes and criminals are recruited from the ranks of the feeble-minded. Until quite recently the prevailing opinion was that feeble-mindedness was the result of other evils, but in the light of recent research, the picture is reversed and evidence points rather to the fact that excesses and crime are the result of low mentality, and that mental deficiency in all its stages is directly inherited and incurable. In a work entitled "Feeble-mindedness," Dr. Goddard has recently published the family histories of the inmates of the institution at Vineland, New Jersey. He gives genealogies of 327 families, including 11,389 individuals and finds that 54 per cent. had inherited feeble-mindedness directly from their parents and that 73 per cent. belonged to families with marked hereditary neuropathic tendencies. No geniuses were discovered in any of these families and the majority of the so-called normal members were of a low grade of intelligence. All doubtful individuals were classed as normal. It is unnecessary here to enumerate further instances, but to illustrate the expense incurred by the state, mention may be made of the famous Jukes family studied by Dugdale, which has already cost the State of New York over \$1,250,000.

Studies have been made of the effect of immigration on the proportion of feeble-minded people, both in Canada and in the United States, and it has been found that the increase in crime, as a whole, and in offences against the person have been in proportion

to the increase in immigration. Obviously, redress lies here in stricter immigration laws.

Human nature is always prone to procrastination, and the segregation of defectives, the only effective measure, involves the expenditure of large sums of money which at this juncture can ill be afforded. The advantages of segregation have been proved by the success obtained in Northern Italy, where in the valley of Aosta cretins have almost disappeared. For centuries the goitrous cretin had been an object of charity and the number had increased until the neighbourhood was infested with them. In 1890 the sexes were segregated in separate colonies and in 1910 they had practically disappeared.

The question of feeble-mindedness is not one that can be adequately dealt with by any one province; the efforts of one province may be nullified by the carelessness of another. It is a matter that should be dealt with by the Federal Government. The National Council of Women of Canada have realized this and on March 12th, last, a delegation from the Council waited upon the Premier with the request that a Royal Commission be appointed to consider the matter of mental deficiency. Sir Robert Borden promised that the request should receive consideration. A similar appeal was made to Sir Lomer Gouin, premier of the province of Quebec, by the Montreal Local Council of Women, supported by many other societies both Protestant and Roman Catholic.