

- (21) Menzies, "Some Points Connected with Tuberculosis in Asylums," *Journ. of Ment. Sci.*, July, 1905.
- (22) Mickle, *On General Paralysis of the Insane*.
- (23) Savage, *Insanity and Allied Neuroses*.
- (24) Urwick, "Observations on the Opsonic Power of People suffering from Tuberculosis," *Brit. Med. Journ.*, July 22nd, 1905.
- (25) Wright, "Notes on the Treatment of Furunculosis, Sycosis and Acne by the Inoculation of a Staphylococcus Vaccine," *Lancet*, March 29th, 1902.
- (26) Wright, "A Lecture on the Therapeutic Inoculation of Bacterial Vaccines and their Practical Exploitation in the Treatment of Disease," *Brit. Med. Journ.*, May 9th, 1903.
- (27) Wright and Douglas, "An Experimental Investigation of the Rôle of the Blood Fluids in connection with Phagocytosis," *Proc. Roy. Soc.*, 1903, vol. lxxvii.
- (28) Wright and Douglas, "Further Observations on the Rôle of the Blood Fluids in connection with Phagocytosis," *ibid.*, 1904, vol. lxxviii.
- (29) Wright and Douglas, "On the Action exerted upon the Tubercle Bacillus by Human Blood Fluids, and on the Elaboration of Protective Elements in the Human Organism in response to Inoculations of a Tubercle Vaccine," *ibid.*, 1904, vol. lxxiv.
- (30) Wright, "On the General Principles of the Therapeutic Inoculation of Bacterial Vaccines as applied to the Treatment of Tuberculous Infection," *Lancet*, December 2nd and 9th, 1905.

The Care of Children in County and Borough Asylums.

By CHARLES H. FENNELL, M.D.Oxon., M.R.C.P., Senior Assistant Medical Officer, East Sussex County Asylum.

THE normal English child has thriven apace of recent years, as the result of a healthy popular tendency to foster his mental and physical well-being as thoroughly as may be. But there exists among the poor a race of unfortunates—happily a small one—whose interests have rarely met with adequate recognition. It consists of the imbeciles who find their way into pauper lunatic asylums—the children legally certifiable as idiots. They cannot, I admit, pay a dividend in hard cash on the money sunk in their education, and their appeal for special attention mainly rests on their helplessness. My aim is to speak briefly of the measures already taken in their interest elsewhere, and to describe in a little more detail those adopted with success at Hellingly. Lastly, I propose to discuss the

cost of our scheme, and to attempt to analyse the benefits derived therefrom.

In order to gain a rough idea of the number of children in rate-supported asylums, I have taken at random thirty of last year's annual reports. These dealt with institutions of every size, from Ipswich with 290 inmates to Prestwich with 2682. The total number of patients returned as being less than sixteen years of age was 229, giving an average for each asylum of about 8. In ten cases there were no children, and only three asylums had more than 20. Thus in most institutions the small numbers form a discouragement to any endeavour to cater specially for them, and it is to this condition that we must probably ascribe the comparative lack of initiative hitherto shown.

It results further from their sparseness that as a rule children must needs be housed in adult wards, structural causes preventing their accommodation apart. The best-behaved adults usually find their way into non-observation wards, which require only a small staff and are practically empty while their inmates are at work in kitchen, laundry, and shops. Hence the children are drafted on admission into blocks containing a lower grade of adult patient, and spend their idle days in the society of the restless senile dement, the epileptic, and the ill-assorted mixture which peoples the infirmaries. The effect is bad, both on children and on the rest. I do not suggest that the hopeless idiot of the former class can be much influenced for good or bad by any surroundings, but with the tractable and plastic child it is different. Herded with adult lunatics, children are exposed to the influence of, and rapidly acquire, almost every degrading vice. I am far from denying that nurses and attendants can everywhere be found who will unselfishly devote time and labour to the attempt to instil habits of decency and self-control into the imbecile. But such efforts are severely handicapped when the example of ineradicable faults in its elders is always before a child's eyes. Too often the personal influence of the nurse is baffled by the poisonous moral atmosphere which the patient breathes day and night. The staff of an adult ward containing two or three children cannot spare anything like adequate time for the special benefit of the latter.

Again, the interests of the adults concerned—often senile cases—call for consideration. I think it will be agreed that in

any block, while two or three patients show a kindly interest in the ward child the feelings of the rest are about equally divided between indifference and active dislike. Old people in asylums are often fidgety and exacting. They are apt to regard the continual presence of children as an intolerable nuisance, and to especially resent their natural instinct to play about and make a noise. Hence neither side quite gets justice. In fact, it may be said that in lunatic asylums children and adults are incompatibles, and as a general rule react most unfavourably on one another.

In the interests of the asylum community, then, we must first segregate the children. Further, segregation is an almost essential preliminary to any attempt to educate them.

It is obvious that this can be most simply effected by the grouping of juveniles from various counties and boroughs in a few asylums where special attention can be given them. This can either be done by the system of boarding out under contract, or by the provision of a separate district institution for children. The latter method, as yet imperfect, claims special mention.

In February, 1905, mainly through the advocacy of a prominent alienist in Warwickshire, a definite effort was set on foot to cope with the problem as it affected the Midland counties. The plan was adopted of inviting the various lunacy authorities concerned to join in acquiring a house and land suitable for a district institution, with a view to the reception of the idiot and imbecile children from the existing Midland asylums. Unfortunately, after the project had been thoroughly discussed and many difficulties overcome, it was found impossible to carry it through. Owing to a technical difficulty in connection with the lease the Lunacy Commissioners were unable to sanction the acquisition of a building which was in other respects suitable.

The enforced abandonment of a scheme which, after long and careful ventilation had appeared distinctly auspicious, was a disappointing set-back to the interests of the defective class. That the proposed measures were soundly and practically based can hardly be doubted, and I think we may assume that future organisation will be on the same principle of combined action. It is satisfactory, however, to know that the importance of the subject was fully impressed on the lunacy authorities of the Midlands. Those responsible for the Sandwell Hall project can scarcely feel that a year's extremely arduous work was

entirely wasted when it is realised that the special care of imbeciles was at least placed on a new footing of recognition.

The alternative arrangement—that of boarding out under contract in accordance with the provisions of section 26g of the Lunacy Act, 1890—has been employed both here and at the Middlesex County Asylum, Wandsworth. At the latter institution an annexe for imbeciles, containing 100 beds, was opened in 1897, and since that year children have been received and educated from the counties of Surrey, Herts and Norfolk, and from Sunderland and Derby boroughs.

At Hellingly we have a separate block specially designed to accommodate ninety imbecile and idiot children. This fortunately allows for the inevitable steady increase in their numbers, a condition which has already caused the Middlesex asylum to exclude out-county patients. At present a certain number of beds are filled by quiet adults. Structurally the block is on the lines of the modern “acute hospital” rather than on those of the average villa. It is two-storied, the upper floor being occupied by dormitories, while the lower contains a dining gallery with side rooms, two day rooms, a room for the cripples and a schoolroom; adjoining it is a playground. The staff includes six day nurses, with one for night duty.

Systematic education was begun in April, 1905, with the engagement of a non-resident schoolmistress at an annual salary of £50, rising £2 10s. yearly, and emoluments valued at £13. The lady appointed had had no previous experience of the feeble-minded, but was well versed in kindergarden detail, and had been employed for some years at an elementary school. She has proved a most capable and energetic teacher, taking a keen interest in her work and adapting her methods skilfully to the special needs of her charges. The instruction has followed the usual lines recognised as suitable to imbeciles—cultivation of the senses and of co-ordinative power, encouragement of observation, and, finally, more or less definite manual occupations of a useful kind, such as needlework and the making of baskets and rugs. No less important is the physical culture. In order to organise this arrangements were made for the schoolmistress to pass through a course of Swedish drill at Eastbourne, and the system has been found very satisfactory in its application, slightly modified, to the children. The exercises now form a part of the regular daily routine, and

their effect on the physique and bearing of the classes has been pronounced.

With regard to expense, the outlay may be summarised as follows :

Initial.

Fitting up schoolroom with blackboard,			
desks, and slates	£5	13	5
Clubs, etc., for drill	1	10	5
			<hr/>
	£7	3	10

Upkeep per Year.

Wools and other material for rug making	£ 8	17	2
Cane for baskets	5	6	0
Sundries for various other occupations .	6	6	8
Salary and emoluments of teacher .	64	5	0
			<hr/>
	£84	14	10

This may be regarded as the total cost of teaching the twenty-seven children on the school list, and I do not think that any economy could be effected.

I would emphasise the fact that, although the provision of a special block is in practice found to be a great convenience and benefit, there is no reason why a course of education similar to ours should not be efficiently carried out in any asylum without the need of building alterations. All that is necessary is a single room of moderate size.

The question naturally arises, what resulting advantages are to be set off against the expenditure? These may be classed under three headings :

(1) Value of goods made. This naturally depends on the market which can be secured. It may be at once admitted that but little direct return is to be expected from this source. The mentally deficient can never enter into competition on equal terms with normal labour. But their energies can be guided into certain directly profitable grooves, in so far as needlework, rug and basket making, etc., are concerned, since the institution can buy such products at the standard price. The value of goods made in the Hellingly school in twenty-

two months was £12 10s. 9d. Those who have studied the accounts of large imbecile institutions, where the sale of school products has been developed through many years, will be aware that the output of our Sussex patients is above the average in value.

We must clearly recognise that many children need careful elementary training for months and even years before they can produce work which will command any rebate.

(2) Education of the child with a view to make him eventually useful in the workshops. Here we are dealing with a more remote but a far more practical return. It has been found at Darenth that the school course with its attendant handiness, method, and self-control, has been stamped clearly on such of the adult workers as have been through it, and that the best hands in the tailor's and carpenter's shops, the most skilful laundry-women and sempstresses owe very much of their value to early training in the imbecile schools. Education in childhood discovers and develops special aptitudes in the weak-minded no less than in the normal subject.

(3) The routine of school life, as might be expected, has an important function in building up and strengthening such character as an imbecile may be capable of developing. Here, again, we attain a tangible result. The child of faulty habits, the pickle, and the potential hooligan of the refractory wards are often strikingly amenable to the discipline of the school-mistress. Companionship in work, a spirit of mild emulation, and the realization of progress combine to mould favourably a disposition not yet entirely ruined by its environment. And lastly, the infinite gratification to a child who realises that he is a responsible human being with a value of his own, instead of a contemptible loafer, may possibly be held to outweigh any other advantages which I have tried to attribute to our teaching system.

DISCUSSION

At the Meeting of the South-Eastern Division at Hellingly on April 17th, 1907.

The PRESIDENT (Dr. ROBERT JONES) stated that the time was long past when the teaching of the imbecile and weak-minded was looked upon as a useless occupation, for, as the reader of the paper had stated, by patient teaching of a special kind a response was elicited which enabled the persons taught to become, if not completely self-supporting, at any rate in a great measure contributory to their own support. This was generally recognised with those grades of weak-minded persons whose deficiency was "mild," and the legislature had recognised the value of such training

by giving local authorities optional powers to provide educational facilities through the Epileptic and Defectives Act of 1899 and the Blind and Deaf Act of 1903. The President related his own experience at the Earlswood Asylum, which agreed with that of Dr. Fennell, and some of those under his care had become completely self-supporting under special tuition, whereas others had ceased to be a burden upon their friends or upon the ratepayers. He had noticed the figures in the Blue-book as to the admission of those of youthful age, and noticed that there was a decided increase in insanity from this class, and unless these defectives were specially trained they tended to become the inhabitants of our workhouses, gaols, and asylums. He believed that Dr. Richard Greene, of Berry Wood, was among the first superintendents of public asylums who had segregated the defectives in county asylums from those suffering from other forms of insanity, and he asked Dr. Fennell if he could confirm this statement. The paper was an exceedingly interesting one, for it placed definite information of a practical character before the Association as to the financial results of training, and it was satisfactory to find that imbeciles so trained could by their labours help to bring down the maintenance rate of those not so employed. He was interested to learn that physical drill had been used for this class, and he asked Dr. Fennell if this adjunct to treatment had been extended to other classes of the insane, as at Claybury the assistant-matron and a nurse had attended Macpherson's Classes in Sloane Street, and their special experience of the drill had been applied with excellent results to some of the insane. He was delighted to see in the asylum—which, through the courtesy of the committee, they were privileged to visit to-day—the special accommodation for all varieties of mental disease prepared through the wise counsels of their treasurer (Dr. H. H. Newington), who was a member of the committee. It must, he thought, be a great satisfaction for him to see the specialised departments working with such good results, and it should be an encouragement for other public bodies to erect suitable places for this class, which could only deteriorate by the compulsory association with adult lunatics, whose habits and conduct were often a very bad example for imitation. He would like to ask Dr. Taylor if the children admitted as defectives were received as lunatics, or under the provisions of the Idiots Act of 1886. He felt sure there were many present who were capable from personal experience of appreciating and discussing Dr. Fennell's paper, who was cordially thanked.

Dr. H. H. NEWINGTON referred to the assistance which the Visiting Committee had received from Dr. Worthington, who kindly allowed a deputation to look over the special block at the Hants County Asylum, and who had given them many valuable hints which they had acted upon. The Visiting Committee were very pleased with the results so far attained. He directed the attention of the meeting to the special provisions which had been made should an outbreak of fire occur in the idiot block. The attendants' rooms had been so arranged as to afford an exit from the dormitories.

Dr. WORTHINGTON, in the course of a few remarks, recorded his indebtedness to Dr. Greene, of Northampton, for the idea of segregating children in a separate block.

Dr. TAYLOR said that there was another point which had not yet been mentioned in favour of the establishment of a separate block for children with the accompanying training, and it was that when parents knew that their children were going to receive instruction they were not so loth to part with them. He had noticed the difficulty there was in a county asylum of obtaining the services of suitable tradesmen, and he had hopes that the best workers among the children would gradually develop into the best tradesmen in the several shops of the asylum.

Dr. H. A. KIDD stated that several children from West Sussex had been received into the idiot block at Hellingly, and he was pleased to note the very satisfactory condition in which he found them.

Dr. FENNEL replied.
