

the feeble-mindedness of their children and of this ailment having then been passed on to their descendants by heredity. The evidence is not enough, however, to make it possible to say for certain that any one of these things either does or does not have this effect. If feeble-mindedness did first come into the world as a direct result of these social evils, in fighting against them we should be helping to prevent the appearance of these sad mental troubles in the future. But, on the other hand, if bad social conditions really have no harmful hereditary effects on posterity, we are nevertheless bound to fight against these social evils because of their immediate harmful influences. Our practical policy in regard to drunkenness, for example, ought to be the same whether it does or does not give rise to mental troubles amongst the descendants of the drunkard.

Feeble-mindedness is sometimes described as being hereditary; though, as a fact, no very clear line of demarcation can be drawn separating off such cases from those described as not being hereditary.

Dealing first with the cases described as not hereditary, this means that, if a person so afflicted is married, the children resulting from the marriage will be no more likely to be defective in mind than will be the children of their neighbours. Here it should be noted that the duties to be performed by a mother in rearing a child are amongst the most important of all human duties, and that a feeble-minded woman is quite unfit to perform them. It follows, therefore, that children ought to be taken away from feeble-minded mothers. But even if this were done, these children would grow up without a mother's care, which would be an incalculable loss to them. And all this applies, though in a less degree, to the father. In short, nothing can prevent parenthood being harmful in the case of feeble-minded persons. Moreover, we can never be quite sure that the feeble-mindedness is not hereditary, and that the descendants of the feeble in mind would not be of inferior stock. Consequently, we may conclude that no feeble-minded person should be allowed to become a parent, even

CHAPTER X

Feeble-mindedness

RELIABLE estimates shew that out of every 1000 persons in this country there are between four and five who may be described as feeble in mind, imbeciles, or idiots. The total number in England and Wales of those who are so poorly endowed by nature as to have been incapable of profiting by ordinary education when of school age is about 350,000 in all. These facts are appalling, especially when we call to mind the suffering of parents when discovering that their child is feeble-minded or worse and utterly different from the being so hopefully pictured in advance. As to actual idiots, after visiting an institution where numbers of these creatures are being dragged through a useless and senseless existence, everyone must wish that something more might be done to prevent all such as these from entering the world.

It is certain that the number of persons who are duly certified as being feeble in mind has been increasing in recent years. There is no doubt, moreover, that this increase is largely due to more care having been taken in searching them out. Nevertheless, it seems on the whole probable that a real increase in their numbers is slowly taking place. And this possibility or probability makes it all the more necessary to try to wipe away this stain on our race.

The question may here be asked, What was it which first brought this trouble into the world? The answer is simple enough—We do not know. Many guesses have been made. The drunkenness, disease, overwork, bad housing conditions, etc., of parents have all been suggested as causes of

if it seems unlikely that the trouble would reappear in future generations.

Turning to what is called hereditary feeble-mindedness, what does this mean? A dose of harmful heredity, if it may be so described, may come into existence in a child, we know not why. This dose may either lie quite hidden in that child for all his life, apparently doing him no harm; or it may make him stupid, ill-tempered, nervous, epileptic, criminal, or with a tendency to drink. In all circumstances the dose will be passed on to many of the descendants of the child in which it first came into existence. Now, if several such doses are passed on to the same child, some coming from one ancestor and some from another, that child will be actually feeble-minded. And something like this, only a good deal more complicated, is how this ailment generally originates; when it may be called hereditary.

When such a feeble-minded person marries, some or all of these doses of evil heredity will be passed on to his children. If the child gets as many doses as the parent had, it will be feeble-minded also. If only some of the doses are received by the child, it may show any of the harmful qualities above mentioned. Or a dose may lie hidden and unsuspected in the child, though ready to be passed on to its descendants, in whom any of these harmful qualities may, therefore, reappear.

Somewhere about nine-tenths of all feeble-minded persons probably may be described as suffering from an hereditary disease in this sense. In such cases, some of their descendants, if they have any, will be classed as actually feeble-minded, whilst many more will show some marks of inferiority. It follows that, if all the feeble in mind were to be prevented from having children, much would thus be done to gradually lessen all these evils as the generations succeeded each other. Moreover, no child could then suffer all the harm due to being brought up by a feeble-minded mother.

If subject to no control, feeble-minded persons would have large families and many descendants. This is because they

have little power of looking into the future, or of foreseeing the consequence of their own acts. They do not well remember past warnings, and are often in some respects devoid of a sense of shame. And the fact that they would multiply rapidly if left at liberty makes the prevention of parenthood especially necessary in their case.

Then as to the ways in which parenthood should be prevented, some of the feeble in mind are endowed with strong sexual impulses, and are a danger to the public when at liberty. All of them, if unaided, are incapable of looking after themselves properly. As to those without natural protectors, many must, therefore, be sent to institutions, whilst far more ought thus to be cared for than is the case at present. This is, in fact, generally the best way of preventing parenthood.

To have to shut up any one is of course very distasteful to us all, for we all advocate freedom. But can we call the feeble-minded person "free," even when he is at liberty? A boy so afflicted may be jeered at in the streets, and when grown up he will not be treated as an equal by his companions. Is this freedom? When sent to an institution he will for the first time in his life be surrounded by his equals; with the result that he will generally be more contented than when out in the world. Those who visit such an institution, and who watch the faces of its inmates, will realize that they are not as a rule to be pitied on account of their own feelings. No doubt a few do fret, but not many. At such places the feeble in mind can learn better than anywhere else to pass their time in a useful and not disagreeable manner, and consequently to send them there is generally the kindest thing to do for them.

If the parents are neither feeble in mind nor living uncivilised lives, or if suitable guardians can be found, it is often a good plan to leave the feeble-minded person under supervision at home or elsewhere. In nearly all cases the possibility that they will have illegitimate children has to be considered; but, as remarked in the last chapter, this risk could always be avoided by sterilization. This policy

of sterilizing the feeble in mind has no doubt been condemned on grounds which will now be considered.

The cheapest way of dealing with the feeble in mind would at first sight appear to be to sterilize them all, and then to turn them all adrift to look after themselves. And there are some who fear that our Local Authorities cannot be trusted not to adopt such a policy. No doubt to house all the feeble in mind in a proper manner would be a costly business. But every other way of dealing with them would often be cruel, and would in some cases throw risk on the public. Moreover, the expense of maintaining all feeble-minded persons in institutions would not be so great as it would appear on paper. For against the costs as thus incurred there ought to be reckoned as an offset the heavy expenditure which would otherwise fall on private individuals, together with the additional public expenditure on prisons, workhouses, and hospitals into which many mental defectives would inevitably drift if not retained in other institutions. Lastly, the feeble in mind can often do more towards supporting themselves when in institutions than when at large. Local Authorities will learn to take these considerations into account; and they ought in this matter of sterilization to be trusted to do what is for the good of the nation to the same extent as in regard to many other duties. When it is seen that they cannot thus be trusted, all power should be taken away from them.

Another objection urged against sterilization, which was mentioned in the last chapter, is that it would facilitate promiscuous intercourse. Certainly it ought always to be possible to recall any certified mentally defective person to an institution on receipt of an unsatisfactory report. With a well-organised system of guardianship thus safeguarded, sterilization ought to add little to the risk of sexual troubles arising. Experience alone could show how many persons could safely be allowed more liberty because of sterilization; for on this point the evidence is contradictory. But thus to add to the happiness of even a few is well worth striving for.

Marriage might sometimes be the best thing for high-grade feeble-minded persons, and at all events after sterilization it would be harmless to the race. Without this precaution, the marriage of certified mental defectives adds greatly to the difficulty of preventing parenthood, and it ought to be made illegal, except in cases when parenthood is impossible.

To sum up, the right policy for feeble-minded persons is to send them to institutions; or, in selected cases, to place them under guardianship, the probability of parenthood always being held in view. This would result in a slow but continuous decrease both of this grievous malady and of many other evils associated with it.

The Mental Deficiency Acts were mainly designed to safe guard all mentally defective persons, whilst they have had a beneficial effect in lessening parenthood. Though imperfect, they have done much good in certain districts, whilst in other places they have not been properly carried out. It is easy, from the figures already given, to get some idea of the number of mentally defective persons in your county or borough. Ask your representative what accommodation his Council has available for them, and you may find that it is miserably deficient. In that case, if you will suggest that your vote at the next election will be decided by the way in which the candidates regard this matter, you will have done something practical both for the feeble in mind and the future of your country.

the harmful conditions added together which decides whether the trigger of crime will or will not be pulled. The criminal is a man of the same kind as his neighbours, differing from them only in degree or in luck.

There are some persons who think that natural pre-dispositions need not be considered, and that attention should be concentrated on the surroundings either of the child when at home or of the man later in life. Those who look on the matter thus may believe that, if all children were taken away from bad homes, all the bad effects of the bad home might be wiped out. One of the consequences certain to result from the adoption of such a policy is, however, generally overlooked; and that is that it would result in more children issuing from bad homes. There are several reasons why this would be the case. Both birth control and abortion are practised because the family is big enough already. Take away a child, and these ways of preventing parenthood will be less likely to be used and more children will be born. Again, the fewer children there are at home, the more care they will get, and the fewer will die from want of attention. This is a good result in itself; but it does follow that the removal of children from bad homes will increase the number coming out of them. Children cannot be taken from their parents, however undesirable, without some harm as well as some good being done.

It is, moreover, impossible to deny that many natural qualities that help to promote crime are often passed on by parents to their descendants. No one who has studied the subject doubts that this is true of feeble-mindedness. And, when criminals are examined, a number are invariably found to be feeble-minded. There have been considerable differences of opinion as to the proportion of those who on first conviction should thus be described. In America the proportion is said to be much higher than the figures given for this country; this being because the term "feeble-minded" is there held to cover many comparatively mild ailments. In any case, the experts in England agree that, besides the feeble in mind, a very large proportion of young

CHAPTER XI

The Habitual Criminal

THERE are three things which make a person likely to commit a crime. These are, in the first place, a bad home; in the second place, subsequent temptation; and, lastly, bad natural qualities. We are bound to mitigate all these causes to the best of our abilities.

Endeavours to wipe out the effects of harmful early surroundings, or to lessen temptation later in life, do not come within the scope of eugenics. This makes them none the less important; but it is a reason why they should not be discussed in a book on that subject.

It is true, no doubt, that it is practically impossible to disentangle the effects of these three causes of crime. It has been said on good authority that the son of a criminal is ten times as likely to commit a crime as is the son of honest parents. But with our present knowledge we cannot divide out this result and say that so much is due to bad early environment, so much to meeting the devil in the path of life, and so much to bad inborn predispositions. We may conclude, however, from such facts as this that if criminals had fewer children there would be less crime in the coming generation.

The following is the way in which criminals are separated out from the rest of the community. A lad who has a very bad home, or very bad natural qualities, or both, will go astray under almost all conditions. Another lad, with a better home or with better qualities, will commit his first breach of the law only if actually tempted; if shown by a relative, for example, when hard up how he can benefit himself at little risk by pilfering. It is the strength of all

criminals may be described as not quite normal. Now all these mental troubles, whether mild or severe, are often transmitted to future generations by natural inheritance. It is possible to do much to ward off the harm likely to result from all such harmful predispositions; but they are a force which has to be reckoned with when once the child is born.

The ideal plan would be for every young person, when accused of a crime, to be examined as regards his mental powers before being brought into court. Those found to be definitely feeble-minded should be certified as such and the criminal proceedings at once abandoned. Here is a direction in which reforms are much needed. The milder cases of mental trouble constitute a more difficult and possibly a more important problem. It is, however, one which we are not yet ready to touch.

It has just been suggested that the powers which human beings possess of overcoming their evil propensities are strictly limited; and this view will doubtless be resented by many. But we must look facts in the face. A boy from a very bad home commits a crime with no excuse, and in consequence he is sent to a reformatory, where he is well cared for. Another boy does not fall so readily, but when somewhat older and when more tempted he does become a criminal. Now, those who put everything down to the influence of home surroundings must assume that the home of this second boy was bad, though not so bad as that of the first boy. This second boy remained later in his presumably bad home, and had for a shorter time the advantage of reformatory training; that is, in comparison with the first boy, coming from the even worse home. Let those who look only to surroundings consider which boy will be most likely to commit a crime after having finished his reformatory training.

As a fact, it is those boys who have been longest in reformatories who are found to be most likely to become habitual criminals. Properly regarded this does not, however, throw any discredit on reformatory training. The

explanation is that it was the boys with worst natural qualities who on the whole committed offences against the law earlier in life. They had in consequence the longest reformatory training; but, when coming out, their bad qualities began to tell once again and soon led them to a life of crime. No doubt many who have been led astray mainly by the force of bad example can be and are put on the right road by care and training; and this fact amply justifies the existence of institutions for this purpose. But here we have a proof of the existence of hereditary qualities tending to promote crime which cannot be denied.

Those criminals who have the worst predispositions will do most harm to posterity by having children. We should, therefore, ascertain as well as we can which classes of criminals have the worst natural qualities. The men who receive heavy punishments have often committed crime requiring at all events skill, intelligence, and courage. Habitual criminals, who commit many trifling offences against the law, need have only courage enough to face a trivial punishment and the attendant disgrace. Moreover, they are found as a rule to be very stupid, and often lazy, bad-tempered, thoughtless, and decidedly inferior in strength and other bodily qualities. They take to crime early in life, and they far outnumber what are generally called the worst offenders. For all these reasons it is the habitual offender—that is, the person often convicted of petty offences—to whom most attention should be paid when considering how to diminish crime in the future.

We see, therefore, that it is on all accounts desirable that habitual criminals should have few children. But how is this result to be brought about, whilst at the same time giving a fair chance to all who have failed through bad surroundings to get on their legs again? It is now generally admitted that prison does no good to the criminal himself; for the more often he is shut up, the more certain he seems to be to commit another crime. Short imprisonments do nothing, moreover, to lessen the size of the family. The best plan would be to treat the habitual criminal in three

different ways or stages, each with a somewhat different end in view.

The aim at the first stage, immediately after the first offence, should be to get rid as far as possible of the after-effects of the bad home. The young offender, if not kept under probation, should be sent immediately to some institution to be trained; and he should be kept there as long as any useful purpose would be served. Life at such places should be made pleasant rather than unpleasant; for that would lessen the opposition to such detention. Many will be saved, and excellent work will be accomplished. On the other hand, failures will be frequent; for innate stupidity cannot be stamped out by the schoolmaster.

During the second stage the aim should be to make young offenders more afraid of coming within the grasp of the law. Short and sharp imprisonments should be given when crimes are committed by those who have had adequate reformatory training. The punishment should be sufficiently unpleasant to make it feared; for if this is the case it will deter a few from crime. Those endowed with very bad predispositions will, however, drift back to prison time after time; and, when convicted four or five times, further liberty is practically certain to mean further crime. Then the public has the right to demand adequate protection, both against this intolerable nuisance and against the social contagion springing from the criminal himself.

It would only be in the proposed third stage that the families of criminals would be reduced in numbers, and that the eugenic aim would be in any degree attained. After it had appeared certain that further short imprisonments would be useless, detention after each conviction should be for longer and longer periods; until finally the detention should be permanent. Such long detentions should be made pleasant rather than unpleasant, the sexes, however, being kept apart. Habitual criminals at this stage are to be pitied rather than blamed; because it has become evident that they are persons incapable of managing their own affairs.

Even during what would be regarded as permanent detention, holidays might at times and under favourable conditions be arranged. When this was permitted, the question of sterilization by consent should be considered.

To sum up, every effort should be made by probation and training to give the young first offender a fresh start. Imprisonment benefits no one, and will not frighten those with bad predispositions. Short punishments are, however, useful in sorting out the more hopeless cases as quickly as possible. Liberty is the only reliable test as to fitness to be at liberty; but when this test has failed often, the claims of the public for protection must be considered. Long periods of detention must then be enforced, when nothing will be gained by making life uncomfortable. The result would be the birth of fewer children in criminal homes, something thus being done to stamp out crime in future generations. Various bad qualities associated with crime would thus also be somewhat lessened; including stupidity, sexual profligacy, bad temper, idleness, epilepsy, alcoholism, and bodily weakness and inefficiency. It is in the directions indicated by the second and third stages of this suggested method of dealing with habitual criminals that reform is most needed.

Later we shall be considering whether our race is improving or deteriorating as time goes on. In this connection we are naturally led to enquire what the statistics of crime could tell us. Fewer persons are now being sent to prison; but this may be merely because wiser methods of dealing with young offenders have been adopted. Indeed, statistics indicate that indictable—that is, the more serious—offences known to the police have increased since 1913. But even if this be so, it may be the result of punishments being less severe, and therefore less feared. Crime might increase without any deterioration taking place in the natural qualities of the nation. In fact, existing criminal records can tell us but little as to whether the nation is going uphill or down in inborn qualities.