

### Feeble-mindedness in New Zealand in relation to our immigration.

With the view to obtaining some definite information with regard to the prevalent opinion that a fairly large percentage of our mental defectives have come to us from other countries, particularly the British Isles, I have endeavoured to obtain from the parents of our children the place of birth of each mentally feeble child as well as the birthplace of the parents themselves. The list is incomplete, inasmuch as I have a considerable number of children who have come to me from other institutions in New Zealand where no record of parentage and place of birth had been kept, or where it has been impossible to trace the family history. The number of cases in which I have been able to obtain reliable information is roughly between sixty and seventy, and, as I have approximately about 250 cases of feeble-minded boys and girls of all ages under consideration, the figures I herewith append relate to about 25 per cent. of the total number of cases at present under review. I hope to continue these investigations in all the known cases, so that in my next annual report I may be in a position to inform you fully as to how far, if any, our immigration system has been responsible for the presence of mental defectives in the Dominion.

Total number of boys and girls under control	..	..	..	..	76
Born in New Zealand	..	..	..	..	61
Born in England	..	..	..	..	6
Born in Australia	..	..	..	..	1
Place of birth unknown	..	..	..	..	8

It will be seen from the above figures that approximately 8 per cent. of the feeble-minded children under the control of this school were born in England.

It is interesting to compare the above with an investigation on a much larger scale which was carried out recently in America. Sixteen American institutions reported a total number of feeble-minded inmates of 11,292. Of these the birthplace was known in all the cases except 263. Of the 11,000 inmates whose birthplaces were known, the total number who were born outside America was 508, or about 4½ per cent. It is to be hoped that when our investigations on the whole of our cases are completed the percentage of our imported feeble-minded children will be reduced even below that which is found in America.

In connexion with the question of our feeble-minded population in New Zealand and our immigrants, it may be well to record here the results of an investigation which was carried out in America towards the end of 1912. The problems dealt with in America a few months back were—(1.) What percentage of immigrants are feeble-minded? (2.) Can anything be done to prevent the landing of such immigrants?

In May, 1912, the officer in charge of the Research Department of the New Jersey Training School for the Feeble-minded, in company with two assistants from the same institution, visited Ellis Island, the landing-place of the immigrants. An opportunity was given these officials to test the immigrants passing through. In the course of the day twelve immigrants were selected either as cases mentally defective or as control cases. In every case the selectors proved by testing that their judgment was correct.

In September, 1912, a further and more extensive test was undertaken at Ellis Island by the same officials of the New Jersey Training School, in conjunction with the regular medical inspectors of the Immigration Department. Forty-four immigrants were tested. Thirty-three of these were selected by the regular medical inspectors of the Immigration Department. Of these thirty-three cases fifteen proved to be defective, while eighteen were normal. Eleven cases were selected by the New Jersey Training School experts, and of the eleven only two were not defective, and one of the two had been selected for comparison with a feeble-minded sister, rather than on the ground that the girl was defective. The September, 1912, experiment lasted for one week, and on the last day of the experiment the New Jersey experts stood in line and simply tallied each defective that passed without calling them out of line. The regular immigration doctors called out such as they thought defective. The results were as follows: Out of about 1,260 immigrants who passed in line the officials from New Jersey School recorded eighty-three cases as defective; the immigration doctors selected eighteen. If the above ratio of correct selection holds, then there were about seventy-two defectives in that line of whom the immigration doctors recognized about eight or nine—approximately, about 10 per cent. I mention this to show that experts on feeble-mindedness—those who are always dealing and working with them—should be able to recognize quite easily those unfortunate people who through no fault of their own are allowed to come in unnoticed and so swell the numbers of our defective population. The officers of the Immigration Department do not pretend to be experts on feeble-mindedness, but it is a question which needs serious consideration if we are to check the importation of persons who are mentally defective, and as such are a menace to the well-being of our people.

### GENERAL HEALTH.

I am glad to be able to again report that the health of the children has been excellent. Only one child has been seriously ill during the year. The children's diet is liberal and varied. In every case of sickness, even with the small minor ailments, the child is immediately put on to a special diet suitable to his case. A day or two in bed with suitable food generally puts our children well again.

The staff generally are very kind, attentive, and sympathetic towards the children, and promptly inform me or the Matron of any ailment in the children. The whole of the children are seen and carefully scrutinized at least three times daily by myself or the Matron.

We have four epileptic boys in residence. One of these epileptic boys was admitted nearly three years ago. For some months the fits occurred regularly almost every week, generally during Sunday. By careful dieting, and a very small quantity of meat daily, plenty of outdoor exercise, mostly garden-