

# The Training School

Devoted to the Interests of those whose minds have not developed normally  
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Method and Aim of Field Work at the Vineland Training School

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Social self-consciousness is the distinctive note of the age. This, by many, is looked upon as a hopeful sign, ensuring better conditions for the future than have existed in the past while others see in it a symptom of our social disease, our consciousness proving that socially we are not functioning properly. - However, the case may be, for the past few years there has been an ever-increasing tendency to examine present conditions, with a hope if we are sick to correctly diagnose our malady, so that a proper remedy may be applied. For this social examination the doctors and alienists had no time; it therefore became necessary to send workers into the field to collect the necessary data. In the Training School for Feeble-Minded at Vineland, the idea of a field worker was the natural outcome of two compelling forces: the application by scientists of the Mendelian law of heredity to human beings and the methods of applied psychology which in the past few years have revolutionized our ideas in regard to social problems.

It is by no means my intention, interesting as it would be, to go into an analysis of the work of the great scientist, Alfred Binet, whose premature death last autumn robbed the world of one of its most indefatigable investigators as well as of one of its most brilliant minds, but simply to touch upon it sufficiently to show its effect upon the development of the field work of our particular Institution. Some explanation of our methods seems at this time necessary, for the charts which Dr. Goddard publishes, as well as the statements which he makes, are both calculated to excite wonder and criticism in the minds of those unacquainted with the problem he presents. Either feeble-mindedness is far more prevalent than has been dreamed, or else the field workers, who have reported the cases, are incapable of determining mental defect.

An article recently published in a prominent social journal brought out this particular criticism: "Was man in Walde himein ruft, schallt heraus"; implying that having feeble-mindedness on the brain, the field workers for the Vineland Training School see it reflected in the faces of all whom they meet. The few

normal individuals who appear on the charts have evidently been indiscriminately sprinkled in, to give a semblance of the particular case having been studied. Now we are free to admit that we are capable of error, and doubtless many errors do exist on our charts, but they are not often the ones of which we are suspected, for they consist, for the most part, in failing to recognize, and consequently to mark the highest borderline states of feeble-mindedness. To these cases near the borderline of deficiency, Dr. Goddard has given the collective term of Moron. It is in determining these states that our greatest difficulty lies. It must not be forgotten that the great work of Dr. Goddard and Professor Johnstone, of the Training School, is to have described and emphasized these high grade defective states, attributing to them a large percentage of our in curable social evils. It was by no means an a priori theory devised to hide their ignorance of things, but came as the result of years of devoted study and patient working with boys and girls representing these types. Not until every known and devisable method for mind improvement had failed did they arrive at their conclusion that feeble-mindedness is in itself a type, presenting indeed, in different individuals, variations as great as the individuals themselves, but being one in this fundamental characteristic that the mentality slows down and stops developing before the age when normally the higher function of manhood and womanhood demand the higher functions of mind to guide and direct them. Physically such subjects may become perfect human specimens so far as outward appearances go, but mentally they remain permanently children of not more than ten or twelve years' growth.

It scarcely needs to be stated that no great skill is required to detect pronounced subnormal mentality. No one is long deceived by an idiot or an imbecile or even by a low-grade feeble-minded person, and since it is but a very small proportion of these which get into the schools, they do not present the most profound of our social problems. It is the high-grade Moron type that it is the chief business of our field workers to discover.

Of this type Binet says: "It is the high-grade feeble-minded who constitute the majority; it is the high-grade feeble-minded that we must learn to recognize in the schools when they are confounded with normals; it is they which cause the greatest difficulty to the work of education. The diagnosis of the high-grade feeble-minded is at the same time the most important and the most difficult of all. Let us therefore examine the methods to be employed to facilitate their diagnosis." (*L'annee psychologique*. Vol. II, page 231.) There are three ways, which Binet characterizes in the following way:

First.—The Medical method, which reveals possible signs of defect.  
Second.—The Pedagogical method, which reveals probable signs of defect.  
Third.—The Psychological method, which reveals certain signs of defect.  
(*L'annee Psycholo.* Vol. II, pages 194 and 244.)

The Medical method has for its end the appreciation of anatomical, physiological and pathological signs of defect. These include the stigmata, such as deformation of the cranium, size of the head (as micro-cephalic or macro-cephalic) deformed palate, peculiar formation of the ear, sub normal temperature of the body, expression of the face, etc. These stig mata are not positive signs of sub-normal mentality altho they frequently accompany it.

The Pedagogical method seeks to judge of the intelligence thru the amount of acquired knowledge. This knowledge is of two kinds: that gained in school and that acquired from life. Naturally, the latter bears a closer relation to the amount of intelligence than does the former.

The Psychological method makes direct observations upon the degree of intelligence.

The monumental work of Binet consists in having conceived of the possibility of measuring the human intelligence and then to have laid down a basis upon which this measurement could be effected. Years before this concept formulated itself, Binet had been engaged in a profound study of the normal order of development of the human intelligence as manifested in the unfolding mentality of his two little girls. These studies supplemented by extended investigation among normal children in the public schools formed the basis for his work among defectives. We have innumerable studies superintended by him, giving measurements of the power of memory, of attention, of visual and auditory acuity, of tactile memory, of size, height and weight, etc. These studies, valuable as they are, served him but little in the formation of his "scale," for he clearly saw that none of them touched upon the fundamental basis of the intelligence. While on the whole, children of superior intelligence measured by groups higher in each particular than those of less intelligence, yet when taken individually, the deduction did not always apply. Thus (*L'annee Psy.* Vol. II, page 197) he says: "What difference, for instance, if the organs of sense function normally? What difference if certain ones are overly acute, or others respond to no stimulus or only weakly so? Laura Bridgeman, Helen Kellar, and their unfortunate rivals, were blind as well as deaf mutes, which did not in the least prevent their being very intelligent.

The same is true of memory. . . . One can have good sense and lack memory. The reverse is also frequent. We are observing at this moment a girl who develops, before our astonished eyes, a memory very much greater than our own; we have measured it, that memory, and we are dupes of no illusion on the subject. Nevertheless, that poor girl presents the most perfect type of classic imbecility."

Before putting his "Echelle métrique de l'intelligence," before the public, Binet demands that we come to an understanding of what is meant by that very

comprehensive word “the intelligence.” To quote direct (L'annee Psychologique. Vol. II, page 196):

“Nearly all phenomena of which psychology treats are manifestations of intelligence; a sensation, a perception, are intellectual manifestations just as much as reasoning. Must we then put on test all psychology?

“A little reflection has shown us that this would indeed be lost time. There is in the intelligence, it seems to us, a fundamental organ, one whose lack or whose alteration is of very great import for practical life, and that is the judgment, otherwise called, good sense, the practical sense, initiative, the faculty of adaptation. Judge well, understand well, here lies the essential force of the intelligence. A person may either be feeble-minded or an imbecile if they lack judgment; with good judgment they could never be either. The rest of the intellectual psychology seems of comparatively small importance by the side of judgment. . . . It results from all this that in the scale which we present, we accord the first place to judgment.”

Armed with this central thought the Vineland field worker goes forth. The test against which each individual is to be measured is primarily a social test. Does the man or woman exercise judgment in his relationships in life? If not, is this lack due to unfortunate environment or it is inherent and incapable of being completely overcome? These are the questions which the field worker must decide, and it is here that her responsibility lies; for in the field it is impossible to apply Binet's precise scientific scale to every case. Subjective appreciation of mental states in spite of the fact that Binet rigorously opposes, and in season and out of season reiterates his antagonism to this method—does enter into the diagnosis of most cases. Nevertheless, we of the Training School, having had an insight into the problem guided by Binet's definite lines of demarcation, feel that our diagnoses rest upon a comparatively solid basis of fact.

As far as possible all the children of school age who appear on the charts are given the Binet tests in their class. It might be said in passing that care is always taken to prevent the child from realizing that he is the object of special investigation. After permission has been obtained from the proper authorities, the teacher is asked to send out, one by one, some of the brighter children of the class, followed by duller ones, in whose number the particular case loses itself. In this way hundreds of children have been examined without rousing the least antagonism.

Scientific training, however, is only a part of the essential equipment of a field worker. The human mind is so sensitive an organism that it requires great tact for a stranger to induce it to unfold. Without this unfolding no correct analysis is possible. True as this is with normal subjects, it is even truer with sub-normals.

Like children, they feel far more than they understand, and are swayed by impulses instead of by reason. To approach a sub-normal group in the spirit of criticism or of commiseration is to bar the way to any understanding of the problem they present. In a certain sense they are not to be pitied, for they are quite unconscious of being different from other people. Since they are lacking in judgment, they have no power of forming ideals and are therefore incapable of appreciating differences. Their sense of perspective is very slight as is also that of relative values; this tends to make them suspicious and all the more sensitive to the spirit which animates the investigator. Confidence once established they give themselves without reserve, blossoming like flowers in the warm Sun.

The field worker must never forget that she is neither a missionary nor a reformer—her sole business is to do a work of science, which, in this particular case, is the appreciation of mental states. “Try to leave every family a little happier for your having visited them” has been the keynote of the instruction given us before starting out. “If you can make a subject happy you have gone a long way towards the understanding of his particular case.” Nothing could be truer, and in the power to do this lies the whole secret of success in our line of work. “Is not information often refused”? we have been asked. “No ; because we do not ask a question which the subject before us could object to answer; our first object is to get en rapport with the people we visit; failing in this, we wait for a more opportune time.”

When it is question of near relatives of the child whose case is under consideration, no difficulty has ever been experienced. They are always glad to have direct information regarding the child. When they are only distantly connected, it requires more tact to bring about a friendly relation. It can be easily understood that results of field work in the country are far more satisfactory than in the cities. Rural communities are comparatively fixed, traditions are retained, while the native confidence of man for man has not suffered alteration, as is the case in our congested city districts. In going to a city home one must have a definite mission, while in the country it is often possible to come and go without in any way betraying the real object of our visit. Dropping in on a hot day and asking for a glass of milk or water, at once rouses friendly interest. Still better is to ask shelter from an approaching storm, or the opportunity to dry one's drenched clothing. The great fundamental human needs form a bond that unites all classes. Even the most ignorant understand this. Spontaneous human sympathy brings out the very best that is in one, so that even the defective has experienced the truth of the saying that it is more blessed to give than to receive.

This leads up to another question that has been asked: “Do you ever give money or bring gifts of any kind?” For answer: “Absolutely never. We give nothing that could rouse the cupidity or selfish interest of a subject. We often send copies of photographs in return for the courtesy of allowing themselves to be taken or give

the relatives a picture of the child at our school, but we never depart from the attitude of being there to receive and not to give, and we try to make them feel that they are giving us a great deal."

Again, it has been asked: "How can you decide that a subject who died fifty years ago was feeble-minded?" Surely you cannot give the Binet test to him!

The answer to this is long, but we will make it as short as possible. It can best be told in the way of illustration:

In 1861 the great-great grandfather of one of our girls died. He is marked feeble-minded on the chart. Before the case was made public more than a year and a half of intensive work was done upon that girl's family tree. Large cities and mountain districts, small towns and rural communities were repeatedly visited; church, family and county records were carefully studied, as well as every available genealogy and local history that bore upon the subject. Graveyards and their inscriptions were studied and more than a hundred individuals visited outside the many hundreds that appear on the chart. This by way of giving some idea of the work that was done in securing information; now for our reason in passing the judgment.

It was fifty-one years ago that the subject here cited died. Needless to say many persons now living remember him well, among them a long list of his grandchildren. When this investigation started, two of his own children were still living. The field worker became intimately acquainted with most of these people, and it was from them that she learned of the deep impression which the old man had made in the community. The fact of the existence of this profound impression has been taken by some as proving that he was not feeble minded.

This deduction does not necessarily follow, but the fact of his having stamped himself so indelibly upon people's minds, added greatly to the interest which he aroused in us and first caused us to suspect what was afterward proven, that he was the degenerate offshoot of a good family. But why degenerate you still ask? Because we cannot judge otherwise from the stories which have come in from so many sources.

One credible witness relates how, when a girl, she was taken to drive that she might see the hut where the "Old Horror," as she called him, lived with his daughters, "Old Moll," "Old Sal" and Jemima. How the windows bulged with rags and the whole atmosphere of the place was one of squalor. How others told of the way unscrupulous persons would buy the simple old fellow's vote for a drink, how another would give him cider till he fell intoxicated off the porch, etc.

Thus always, when definite memories exist in a locality of persons long since dead, we take the consensus of opinion of credible witnesses. When we can add

to this a careful study of living descendants, who can be given the Binet test, and find similar characteristics marking them, we feel the case has been as good as scientifically proven.

In conclusion, we cannot but reiterate that while a certain amount of scientific training is absolutely necessary for the field worker to be able to form a just appreciation of mental states, yet for the whole problem of feeble-mindedness the essential is not to approach it simply in an attitude of cold science, but rather in that of warm human interest in the poor curtailed human beings who, through no fault of theirs, are distributed amongst us. It is only when they are approached in this spirit that the field worker can obtain real results.

How Did Feeble-Mindedness Originate in the First Instance?

*We are so often asked this question that we are glad to quote the following answer from Popular Science Monthly for January 1912. It will be understood that this refers only to the hereditary cases. Editors.*

Before we can answer the question as to the "cause" of feeble-mindedness it is desirable to get a clear definition of the term. As a matter of fact, very diverse definitions have been offered. An old legal formula is as follows: "He that shall be said to be a sot and idiot from his birth is such a person who cannot count or number twenty pence, not tell who was his father or mother, nor how old he is, so it may appear that he hath no understanding or reason what shall be for his profit or what for his loss; but, if he have sufficient understanding to know and understand his letters, and to read by teaching or information, then it seems he is not an idiot." While this definition lacks in completeness and scope, it has a more philosophical basis than many that are more recent. Of late the Binet-Simon tests of mental grade have aroused new enthusiasm and have been thought to give an exact, quantitative measurement and definition of the different classes of mental backwardness. The method is simply that of establishing a series of mental standards (questions, exercises, mental feats, and so on) for each year of school life, grading a given subject by these standards and finding the difference between the actual age of the subject and the standard age of the highest test passed by him. This method of defining feeble-mindedness seems to assume that there is a greater mental resemblance between two persons deficient three years than there is between one who is deficient three years and one who is deficient four years. And that, it seems to me, is fundamentally erroneous. For the modern biologist is coming to rely less on the idea of races or groups and to realize that, in nature, we have only individuals, made up of collections of traits that are, for the most part, separately inheritable. Not individuals, but their transmittable characters, are the units of heredity. From this point of view we may say that feeble minded persons are such as lack one or more mental traits that

are socially important.

From this definition it follows that mental defectives differ quantitatively in the number of socially important traits that they lack and qualitatively in the kind of traits and the degree of their social importance. Defectiveness in one important trait only may be called uni-defectiveness; in two traits, di-defectiveness, and so we may have tri-defectiveness up to multi defectiveness. For example, cases are well known of number-defectiveness, attention-defectiveness, memory-defectiveness, imagination-defectiveness, emotion-defectiveness, inhibition-defectiveness, moral-defectiveness, occurring quite without other defects. Well-known unit defects are word-blindness, figure-blindness, word-deafness, tone-deafness and color-blindness. Any of the defects may occur isolated or two or more of them together in one individual. Such defectives are often not recognized as such, if the missing trait or traits have little social importance; but if gentleness gives way to cruelty or self-restraint to self-indulgence the uni-defective becomes a "moral imbecile," and such a moral imbecile may be good at his school work and bright and active in most ways. It is, however, the multi defectives that constitute the main problem of the feeble-minded; for they are fairly common and are a constant drag on that school system which is not adapted to their capacities. Yet among such may be good mathematicians, musicians, mechanics, etc. It is clear, then, that "feeble-mindedness" is not a simple trait, but a convenient group in which to put all of the socially inadequate.

Can we, in the midst of this heterogeneity, find any general "cause" of defectiveness in its varied manifestations? It seems to me we can discover such a cause by attending to various features of defectiveness. First of all, we have to recognize that these defects are in general hereditary. There are family strains with color-blindness, stuttering, word-blindness, number-blindness, and so on. The deficiency of the uni-defective comes from a defect in the germ-plasm of one or both of his parents. In a multi-defective, likewise, all the absent traits are the result of corresponding defects in the germ-plasm of the parents. And if both parents be multi defectives that combination of germ-cells will be rare indeed that results in anything but a feeble-minded child.

And, secondly, it is to be observed that "defects" are not pathological conditions; they are merely deviations from the normal condition of the adult. For every person shows these defects at some stage of his life and only gradually overcomes them. My nine-months-old son cannot talk, nor dress himself, nor attend to his animal needs. He is word-blind and figure-blind. He is cruel to the cat, appropriates to his own use the property of others, and insists vehemently upon having what he wants at whatever inconvenience to another. He is now a low-grade imbecile without moral ideas. He will prove himself not to be "feeble-minded" if, as he approaches puberty, all of these and the other socially important undeveloped conditions prove, under fair culture, capable of



development up to the corresponding “normal” conditions. Defectiveness is thus a persistent infantile condition of one or more characteristics; a failure of certain socially important traits to develop.

Now there is a well-known biological principle that “ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny”—that the child in his development passes through the same series of physical and mental stages that the adults did in the successive generations of the race's development. So we may infer that man's remote ancestors did not go in their adult stage beyond the point where this infant man is now. Indeed, the adult apes, nearest allies of our ancestors, show the same inability to talk, to dress, to regard property right and to be gentle and considerate toward others that the infant shows. And we cannot escape the conclusion that the gradual acquisition of social traits by the normal child follows much the same road as the evolution of social man from non-gregarious apes. But, there are men who never develop these social traits. And if we study the pedigrees of such men carefully (and many of them have been studied for six or seven generations) we trace back a continuous trail of the defects until the conclusion is forced upon us that the defects of this germ plasm have surely come all the way down from man's ape-like ancestors, through 200 generations or more. This germ plasm that we are tracing remains relatively simple; it has never gained (or only temporarily, at most) the one or the many characteristics whose absence we call, quite inadequately, defects. Feeble-mindedness is, thus, an uninterrupted transmission from our animal ancestry. It is not reversion; it is direct inheritance.

To summarize: Man is evolving and in that evolution he has lost some physical traits and gained some mental ones. But neither in their losses nor in their gains have all strains evolved to the same extent. Some races have lost the skin pigment, but others have made little progress in this direction. We are getting rid of our body coat of hair, but the Akkas of the Upper Nile and special smaller strains have a very hairy body, and so appendix and tail (coccyx) show variations that run in families. Likewise in the acquisition of mental traits, whole races differ in their ability to speak, to count, to foresee. The Ethiopian has no more need for thrift than the tropical monkey and has not acquired it. It is not surprising that there are strains, even such as have a white, hairless skin, that have never acquired an appreciation of cause and effect, of the importance of controlling the sex-passion, of the necessity of regarding the rights and feelings of others. The marvel is not that these strains still persist, but rather that they have been so nearly exterminated.

This brings us to the subject of the control of mental defectiveness. We see at once that there must have been at work, even in prehistoric times, a sort of natural control by the elimination of those incapable of meeting the ever-increasing complexities of “advancing civilization.” As man spread to the north those strains that had not acquired the trait of hoarding for the winter mostly

perished of cold and hunger; those strains that had not acquired the sense of property rights and tended to invade the stores of others were always in danger of being cut off. In England, less than a century ago, there were 223 classes of offences punishable by death. Under such rigid selection “defective ancestral strains tended to be eliminated.

To-day, in our most highly civilized countries, the process of elimination of the unfit animal strains is largely reversed. We protect, in an institution, the members of a weak strain up to the period of reproduction and then let them free upon the community and encourage them to leave a large progeny of “feeble-minded”; which, in turn, protected from infantile mortality and carefully nurtured up to the reproductive period, are again set free to reproduce, and so the the stupid work goes on of preserving and increasing our socially unfit strains.

But a reaction is setting in. The legislatures of eight of the United States have already voted to permit the sterilization of defective persons. But it is doubtful if the “more advanced” public is altogether ready for such operations. A less drastic, but not less effective, method is the segregation of the defective strains during the entire reproductive period. However, the method is not so important, but in some way or other society must end these animalistic blood-lines or they will end society. Dr. C. B. Davenport.

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*By the splendid legislation of last session (the Mental Defectives Act) New Zealand now possesses that for which Eugenists in England have for years battled in vain, namely, provision for the permanent care and control of the feeble-minded. Since the average number of the family of the above type of persons is 7.3, the benefit to the Dominion of such legislation is abundantly evident. We are indebted for illustrations to the Eugenics Education Society (New Zealand branch), whose aims are well defined in the words of Prof. Karl Pearson, of the Galton Eugenics Laboratory, University College, London: “Eugenics is the study of agencies under social control that may improve or impair the racial qualities of future generations— physically or mentally.”—New Zealand Weekly Press.*