

## SCIENTIFIC BOOKS

*Feeble-mindedness: Its Causes and Consequences.* By H. H. GODDARD. New York, Macmillan Company, 1914. Pp. xii + 599.

Like all of Goddard's writings, this is full of interest for the large number of those who, in these days of prolonged peace at home, have the privilege of considering social problems. If we, too, were at war, with us, also, "social problems" would sink into utter insignificance beside that of national existence.

Goddard's book may be divided into four parts, (1) the definition and scope of feeble-mindedness, (2) family histories of the feeble-minded, (3) "causes of feeble-mindedness"—with special reference to heredity and (4) some practical applications—eugenical and other.

1. The definition of feeble-mindedness accepted by Goddard is "a state of mental defect existing from birth or from an early age and due to incomplete or abnormal development in consequence of which the person affected is incapable of performing his duties as a member of society in the position of life to which he was born." This is a good definition. It follows, at once, as a corollary that feeble-mindedness is not a biological, but a *social* term; that many a person whom we regard as mentally unfit might not be feeble-minded in his native country of Central Africa or even the Adirondack Mountains, for he might be capable of performing the simple duties of the chase and fighting or rough agriculture demanded "in the position of life to which he was born." If we consider separately the higher grades of the feeble-minded, the morons, the non-biological nature of feeble-mindedness is still more obvious; "one . . . *incapable* from mental defect existing from birth . . . (a) of competing on equal terms with his normal fellows or (b) of managing himself and his affairs with ordinary prudence." Accepting this British definition, Goddard discusses the kinds of people to be included in the moron group of feeble-minded and the anti-social acts they perform. Thus, he considers criminality, alcoholism, prostitution, pauperism and truancy and finds that of criminals at least 50 per cent. are "defective"; at the root of much

intemperance "feeble-mindedness" lies; "50 per cent. of prostitutes are feeble-minded"; "50 per cent. of the inmates of our almshouses are feeble-minded," and of truants 80 per cent. are feeble-minded. These are truly striking figures. But as the reviewer has considered this discussion he has felt as if groping in a fog. If feeble-mindedness is a social and relative term how can we seek to find a definite percentage of it in any class by some absolute standard, like the Binet test? Also what is the "mind"; shall we define it as including "intelligence" only, which seems to be the thing measured by the Binet scale, or shall it include "emotional control" which is clearly not measured by the Binet scale? Yet, is it not lack of emotional control that is at the bottom of much so-called crime, alcoholism, sex offense and truancy? And is it not also true that the question of the degree of correlation between "intelligence" and "emotional control" remains largely an academic one?

It seems to the reviewer more significant to inquire more deeply into the causes of any anti-social act than to classify the offender as feeble-minded or not feeble-minded by the Binet or other scale. It seems to the reviewer that anti-social behavior (*i. e.*, offense against the mores) may have the following bases:

(1) Ignorance of the mores, merely through lack of opportunity to learn the mores (the merely improperly taught offender).

(2) Ignorance of the mores through lack of capacity to understand what society expects (the feeble-minded offender, *sensu strictu*).

(3) Knowledge of the mores, accompanied with a social blindness—an inability to have the action controlled by a knowledge of what society expects of one—because of a lack of the gregarious, social or altruistic instinct. Here belong the extreme individualists, including the anarchists, and the others who say: Why should I govern my actions to meet the expectations of society; what right has society over me, anyway?

(4) Knowledge of the mores, with presence of the social instincts, but with inability to meet the expectations of society through insufficient inhibition or self-control. This insufficiency

may be a general constitutional and permanent one, or it may be temporary (often more or less periodic) due to abnormal internal secretions or other causes. Here belong, among others, the hyperkinetic, the hysterical and epileptoid offenders.

It would seem as though future progress in an understanding of conduct would lie less in a classification of people into the feeble-minded and normal than in a study of the individual's early training, mentality, social instincts and inhibitions.

2. The great body of the work (pp. 47 to 434) consists of the descriptions of 327 cases of feeble-minded individuals, with the family history as far as could be obtained. These are grouped under the heads: hereditary, probably hereditary, neuropathic ancestry, accident, no assignable cause, and unclassified. These pages contain many interesting and significant details.

3. In the third section dealing with "causes," the author properly criticizes much of the *post hoc ergo propter hoc* argumentation which is extremely widespread among medical writers. Goddard's conclusion that about 80 per cent. of the cases of feeble-mindedness with which he deals are hereditary, probably hereditary or neuropathic is interesting; yet from the nature of the case so precise a figure based on materials that in their nature are unprecise must be regarded as a rough judgment and one of which too much may readily be made. In this section is discussed the heredity of "feeble-mindedness" and the conclusion is reached that normal mentality is dominant over feeble-mindedness. Goddard confesses to having been prejudiced against the view "that the intelligence even acts like a unit character. But there seems to be no way to escape the conclusion." Now, since feeble-mindedness is a social and not a biological term, it would seem almost absurd to seek to find a law of its inheritance. The case seems to be this, a large proportion of the feeble-minded are such because of general failure of development of the intellectual centers. A "general intelligence" there well may be, as he concludes; but that does not pre-

vent the hypothesis of special talents (or their lack) and special elements of self-control. Thus, there may well be an hereditary basis for many of the mental differences between persons, whether "normal" or "feeble-minded."

4. The practical applications from Goddard's study he finds in applied eugenical procedures, especially the prevention of propagation of the defective stock. While our efforts to segregate must be increased, sterilization is useful in cases that can not be otherwise reached, and many mental defectives may well be cared for at their homes.

In general, the book shows some haste in composition and the latter is in spots defective, but nevertheless, it will be everywhere regarded as a useful piece of work and one that every one who is concerned with the troubles of human society will prize.

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*Handwörterbuch der Naturwissenschaften.*

Herausgegeben von PROF. DR. E. KORSCHULT, Marburg (Zoologie), PROF. DR. G. LINCK, Jena (Mineralogie und Geologie), PROF. DR. F. OLTMANN, Freiburg (Botanik), PROF. DR. K. SCHAUM, Giessen (Chemie), PROF. DR. H. TH. SIMON, Göttingen (Physik), PROF. DR. M. VERWORN, Bonn (Physiologie), DR. E. TEICHMANN, Frankfurt a. M. (Hauptredaktion). Jena, 10 volumes, in 4°, 1912-15. Verlag von Gustav Fischer.

The splendid work issued under the above title and with the editorship indicated is worthy of close inspection from those interested in the various lines of natural science included. The initial *lieferungen* have already been reviewed by Professor Arthur Gordon Webster<sup>1</sup> in these pages and I do not doubt that now on the completion of the work he will favor us with a discussion from the side of the physical sciences. The desirability of having the attention of workers in the natural sciences directed to the "Handwörterbuch" has led to the writing of this review.

<sup>1</sup> SCIENCE, N. S., Vol. XXXVIII., No. 972, pp. 230-233, August 15, 1913.