

either because these persons have shared the same faulty environment, or the characteristics may have descended from a branch unrelated to the patient. We have, however, examples of heredity being denied in cases where there are other members of the family already in one or other of the mental hospitals, and it is clear that the percentage above is too small.

One cannot leave this subject without calling attention to the burden of misery and cost which present-day humanitarianism is piling up for the future. That civilization should leave the destiny of the unfit to a ruthless struggle for existence is unthinkable. We are not going back to the laws of Lycurgus, but forward, even if it be from the Koran, wherein it is written, "Give not unto those who are weak of understanding the substance which God hath appointed you to preserve for them; but maintain them thereout, and clothe them, and speak kindly unto them." The truest kindness is to reduce as far as in our power lies the number of unfit persons brought into being without proceeding to drastic remedies, which are all very well when considered academically, but which would in application defeat their object. In former reports I have dealt with different solutions of this problem, and have pointed out their difficulties and dangers, and need not now repeat the arguments.

One strongly feels that the real need is for education in these matters, a slow process, but one which in the end is more likely to effect its purpose, and it should always be remembered that legislative hindrances to marriage, often suggested, do not settle the question of procreation. Undoubtedly, a material and lasting good would result if legislation could be framed to include a section of feeble-minded women, who do not come within the definition in the Mental Defectives Act, among persons to be segregated and rationally provided for.

Our Act can include those alone in whom there is a recognizable degree of mental deficiency, necessitating their being placed under oversight, care, or control; but there are others who, among those with whom they habitually associate, would hardly be regarded as feeble-minded, and, having a blunting of the moral sense and a decided pliancy under temptation, are a manifest danger in the community, and should be placed out of harm's way until they become harmless. By the courtesy of the Education Department I am supplied with the following information:—

"There are many cases of feeble-minded or morally degenerate single women who give birth to children the paternity of whom they are utterly unable to establish. To quote instances, one in Dunedin has six children of different men; another in the Waikato is the mother of eight, nearly all, if not all, of whom have inherited her mental deficiency, some in a marked degree; in South Canterbury are two sisters, one with three and the other with two illegitimate children. All these cases came into our hands [Education Department], as the mothers were again about to be confined. Further, there is a family in the Wellington District of whom nearly all are feeble-minded or otherwise degenerate, and the known outlay of public funds in their behalf is £2,000, not counting two adults who are chargeable and probably will be to the end of their lives, one in a refuge, and one in a mental hospital."

With respect to the critical periods, there is no avoiding them, but in our relation towards them they furnish an example of what gradual public enlightenment is doing in the way of prophylaxis. Though not included in the list as a critical period, it should be borne in mind that proper nourishment in infancy and a permitting of the mind to naturally expand and not to force or excite the developing brain is the foundation of the *mens sana in corpore sano*. Apart from mental deficiency showing itself at this period, there are special neuroses, such as convulsions, night terrors, stammering, &c., which are the danger-signals of neurotic inheritance, indicating the necessity for careful upbringing. In the period of puberty, insanity is comparatively rare, but neurotic inheritance early shows itself in sleep-walking, St Vitus's dance, and later in epilepsy and hysteria. There is great disturbance in the recording brain during this period of unusual growth which, especially in the predisposed, finds a morbid outlet if not directed into a healthy channel. To force the brain now is to injure the life-history of the individual, and it may be of the offspring, in the case of women who are not rendered barren. It would appear sometimes that persons with an insane or strong neurotic inheritance cannot, if circumstances are unfavourable, complete their developmental intention, and the commencement of mental disease shows itself in puberty and adolescence. To be solitary and self-contained at this period is a distinct evil.

Even a casual observer must appreciate a marked difference, mental and physical, between a boy or girl at puberty and the adolescent; and it goes without saying that the mental accommodation for so profound a change means stress, and a stress which has to be combated with open-air exercise, regular habits and good nourishment, or it may prove too great.

In "Morals and Brain," one of the "New Tracts for the Times," Sir Thomas Clouston issues this warning to adolescents: "By far the largest number of the men and women who become dipsomaniacs . . . are persons under twenty-five years of age. It is therefore of especial importance that the age of adolescence should be studied and guarded, and prevention applied in regard to drink. The intense desire of this period of life to obtain pleasure in some way or other, its irresponsibility, its impulsiveness, and the fact that it is during this age that many weaknesses and hysterical conditions prevail, are all strong arguments for especially looking after our adolescents. Even the good points of adolescence are sometimes its dangers."

The next critical period is that of the climacteric. Here again there are outward and visible signs, both mental and physical, of the unaccustomed stimuli of alterations taking place, and the resulting stress has contributed its quota.

With respect to old age, it should be remembered that man is not built like the "one-horse shay," and that life does not run an even course, and thus towards the end of the journey some parts are worn out more than others. There are changes in the vascular system, and chemical and structural changes in the brain, which are part and parcel of senility. Heredity is particularly difficult to trace, and presumably is not very marked or it would have made its presence felt before. On the other hand, it