

university which does the discovering. Wealthy widows with money to leave to the furthering of education feel that their thousands will do the most good if they are specifically dedicated to the building up of personalities. The trustees know this and act accordingly. The psychology

that results is becoming more and more the typical psychology of America. It may bring happiness to the many whose personalities it seeks to improve. It may help business. But it is certainly not a psychology over whose scientific achievements we can afford to feel superior.

Social Hygiene

THE STERILIZATION OF DEFECTIVES

BY MAYNARD SHIPLEY

IN THE baby ward, where queer misshapen little creatures lay in rows of cots, the attendant lifted from its pillow a tiny bit of flesh that stared with fishy eyes.

"Yes," she said, "once in a while we do have accidents. A year ago one of the boys and one of the girls got away from the cottages and met on the grounds. Here's the result. No, it'll never talk or walk very much. Its grandmother on one side and two of its uncles on the other, beside both its parents, are here in the home. All low-grade imbeciles."

In one recent year it cost California \$3,619,607.81 to support its six insane asylums and the Sonoma State Home for the Feeble-Minded. The budget for prisons and reform schools was equally staggering. At the same time fifty-four private institutions, accommodating from two to 165 patients each, were licensed to care for mental cases. Finally, there was the Federal hospital at Menlo Park which cares for mentally affected war veterans.

The proper American response to such a situation is, "There ought to be a law." In California there is a law. In fact, there are laws in twenty-one States, nine others tried to pass them during the past year, and similar legislation has been passed and then declared unconstitutional in seven more. From Virginia the matter was carried to the United States Supreme Court, which confirmed the measure. But California remains the great national testing-ground of the eugenic and therapeutic sterilization of the insane and imbecile.

In all, up to January, 1928, there had been 8,515 eugenic sterilizations in the United States, of which 5,820 were in California. Of these 5,820, more than a thousand occurred at the Sonoma State Home, where sterilization was begun in 1911, though the present State law did not go into effect until July 27, 1917. The first law was passed in California in 1909. It authorized the superintendent of the State Home, and also the superintendents of hospitals for the insane, to perform on inmates, before release, "an operation which would prevent parenthood." A section of the law applied also to certain recidivists in the State prisons, under rigorous restrictions. The law of 1909 was somewhat changed in 1913, and amended to its present form in 1917. The amended act provides that any person committed to a State hospital for the insane, or to the Sonoma State Home, "who is afflicted with mental disease which may have been inherited and is likely to be transmitted to descendants," may, in the discretion of the State Commission in Lunacy, "after a careful investigation of the case," be asexualized before release or discharge; and that "such asexualization, whether with or without the consent of the patient, shall be lawful and shall not render the said commission, its members or any person participating in the operation liable either civilly or criminally."

The act also provides that any idiot, if a minor, even one who is not an institutional inmate, "may be asexualized by or under the direction of the medical superintendent of any State hospital with the written consent of his or her parent or

guardian, and if an adult, then with the written consent of his or her lawfully appointed guardian." Says Dr. F. O. Butler, medical superintendent of the State Home:

We receive many cases for the purpose of sterilization alone; after being operated on they are permitted to return to their communities. When we learn of a defective mother with many offspring, the majority of whom are defective, . . . it is our policy to try to get her to an institution for the operation in order that she may return and care for the children and not propagate more of her kind. If this is not accomplished, it generally means a yearly increase in the family of the incompetent. In our institution we have many mothers with from one to five children also being cared for. Had these mothers been sterilized years ago, they could probably have been kept out, and surely we would not have the children with us. . . . In our institution we had several inmates from one family. This warranted some research work, and the field worker found the following: In this family were two strains. One strain, the feeble-minded woman and the defective and incompetent man, in four generations yielded twenty-five defectives out of a total of thirty-six in eight matings. The other strain, the normal sister of the above woman, and the normal brother of the above man, has yielded thirty-nine persons in seven matings with only one dull normal.

This, of course, is the old Jukes-Kallikak story, retold many times. Dr. Edward Murray East's "Heredity and Human Affairs" is full of similar examples.

Sterilization, obviously, is a dangerous power to put in the hands of anybody, particularly one made up of politicians. It must be safeguarded to protect the biological sports and "social anticipations" who occasionally fall into the traps of insane asylums and even prisons. Nevertheless, as Dr. East points out, the tendency of defectives is to mate with defectives, and the net result is some 20% of defectives in the American population. Utopia, of course, would not come in if every imbecile in the United States were sterilized tomorrow; too many apparently normal persons are carrying recessive genes of feeble-mindedness, for one thing, but certainly no good is being accomplished by perpetuating markedly imbecilic strains. It is well known that in such tainted families even those who escape imbecility show an unduly high average of epilepsy and insanity.

The total number of persons liable to sterilization under the law in California runs to tens of thousands. It is estimated that there are considerably more than 20,000 of the feeble-minded in the State. By far the greater number of them are not in the over-crowded State institutions, which have room only for those from broken homes or without means of support, but are mixed with the general population, busily engaged in reproducing their kind. Dr. Butler thinks that "there are perhaps 16,000 defectives in California who are being cared for [or not cared for] outside of State institutions."

Probably the two men who know most about eugenic sterilization of the insane and imbecile are E. S. Gosney, an attorney, financier, and philanthropist of Pasadena, and Paul Popenoe, of Coachella, author of four standard text-books on heredity and eugenics. For many years they have worked together in the study of the problem, Mr. Gosney supplying the financial support and direction, Mr. Popenoe doing the actual investigation. Mr. Gosney said recently that while there are 50,000 feeble-minded persons in the institutions of the country, there would be at least 500,000 if the institutions were large enough to care for all who are eligible to enter them. The Sonoma Home has a capacity of approximately 2,200, with at least 500 in addition always out on parole, and a waiting list of more than 700. This is the usual situation in such institutions. Says Mr. Gosney:

It is the height of cruelty to these people to let them go ahead producing children, when it is virtually certain that these children will also be defective. They grow up only to be a burden to themselves, their parents, and the State. Men will differ as to what class and degree of deficiency should be sterilized. But there is always a line below which all will agree that sterilization is a humane protection to every one concerned.

And Mr. Popenoe adds:

There is a large number of feeble-minded of much higher grade, who because of temperamental or emotional traits are a much greater problem in the community, and possibly a greater menace to future generations as well as to themselves. This group often shows symptoms of mental disease as well as of mental defect, and the former may outweigh the latter. . . . The Sonoma population

does not constitute a fair sample of the feeble-minded, not even of the low-grade feeble-minded, of California. It comprises to a marked degree only the most acute and troublesome cases that come before the juvenile courts.

The sterilization operation performed by California and other States having sterilization laws is not castration. It does not in any way interfere with the sexual lives of the patients, except to make them incapable of procreation. The males undergo vasectomy (the so-called Steinach operation, for which large numbers of normal men voluntarily pay good fees), and the females, salpingectomy. Vasectomy is so minor an operation that it is usually performed under a local anæsthetic; salpingectomy, since it involves a laparotomy, calls for a general anæsthetic and a few days of subsequent hospital care. But neither operation is dangerous, and the patient suffers no pain; in fact, most of these insane and feeble-minded subjects have no idea of what is being done to them. Some of them have learned of their sterilization for the first time, years after parole, when a questionnaire was sent out to them.

About a year ago, Mr. Gosney sent a questionnaire to all the secretaries of Associated Charities in California, the probation and parole officers, and the social workers who keep in touch with paroled patients and their families, asking, among other things, "Have you known of any cases where the fact of sterilization seems to have been resented by the individual, to the extent of making him or her bitter, humiliated, revengeful, or otherwise impaired in character?"

The answers covered 1,094 cases, with a length of observation averaging a little more than five years. Only one affirmative answer was received. A psychiatric parole officer, who had observed 1,000 sterilized women and twenty-five sterilized men in a period of nine years, reported: "One Italian woman of an extremely low order of intelligence made considerable trouble over the fact that she was unable to reproduce. The matter was then taken up with the superintendent of the hospital where the

operation was performed, and she was told that the function could be restored. That satisfied her; she never made any effort to have such restoration made."

Mr. Popenoe states that a special effort was made to learn of unfavorable cases by addressing persons who had publicly opposed the sterilization law, and also by appealing to those in attendance at the State Conference of Social Work, in June, 1927.

In spite of these efforts, no further instances were discovered. Our own investigations, dealing with many phases of sterilization, have not uncovered any cases to be added to the above mentioned [the Italian woman]. There is often a sentimental regret at the inability to have children, but in most cases in which the individual is able to understand the situation at all, he or she feels satisfaction at the thought that there will be no further complications through the arrival of children, possibly defective and in any event beyond the capacity of the parent to care for successfully.

Of 173 persons who were sterilized in State hospitals for mental disease, and who expressed themselves by letter in reference to the results of their sterilization, nineteen were not satisfied (though in only one case was any rational cause given), twenty-two were indifferent, and 132 were pleased with the results. No inquiries were made among the paroled feeble-minded, for obvious reasons. Prospective husbands and wives of paroled feeble-minded persons are informed of the sterilization, and there are no cases on record where this information prevented the marriage.

It must be remembered that no one may be legally sterilized in California on the unsupported judgment of any one official, even though the sterilization is compulsory under the law. The medical superintendent's judgment must be ratified by the director of the State Department of Institutions and also by the director of the State Department of Public Health. Even so, in actual practice, few operations have been performed without the written consent of the nearest relatives, when any such were to be found. In 75% of the cases such written consent was obtained; in 15% no rela-

tives could be located. As for the remaining 10%, Mr. Popenoe comments, in one of his papers, that "in some instances the nearest relative of an insane person would tell the superintendent to go ahead and sterilize, but would refuse to sign a formal consent because he did not know how the patient would react to it later, and he did not wish the relative to hold enmity against him." The common sense of this attitude is self-evident.

There is, however, no wholesale sterilization of the insane. Only one patient in twelve in the State hospitals has been sterilized during the life of the law, and during the past few years, when sterilizations have increased, only one in five or six has been sterilized. A great many of these operations are performed on patients for therapeutic reasons; there is no expectation of their ever being paroled or released, but frequently the sterilization itself causes amelioration of the mental symptoms. At the Home for the Feeble-Minded, on the other hand, where almost all patients admitted are of child-bearing age or under, no one is allowed to leave the institution, even for a short vacation, unless sterilized. In cases where the relatives, too ignorant to comprehend the situation, or unduly sentimental, refuse permission for sterilization, no compulsion is used. The patient is simply kept in segregation indefinitely. Thus his own best

interests and those of the State are equally conserved.

The benefit derived from sterilization is no longer questioned by those in a position to form a competent judgment. Dr. Fred P. Clark, Medical Superintendent of the Stockton State Hospital for the Insane, says:

Many male patients who have had the operation, say that in about two weeks they begin to feel better; that is, their mentality improves and they feel stronger both mentally and physically. I have had a number of men at the hospital ask me to sterilize them after they have seen the beneficial effects of the operation on other patients. In cases of women we have no direct beneficial effects [partly because the types of psychosis most affected by sterilization are more usual among men], excepting the fact that their minds are relieved from the fear of future pregnancy. Many of our patients who have had a psychosis following childbirth refuse to leave until they have been sterilized, feeling that another pregnancy would mean a recurrence of the psychosis.

California is so far the only State which has given an adequate test to the asexualization (a misused word, since the patients are not asexualized, but merely sterilized) of the insane and the feeble-minded. The results seem to show that—though of course such a measure can be only partial in its effects on mental deficiency and abnormality, in the population as a whole—it is a valuable therapeutic and eugenic agent. Continued long enough, and properly applied, it cannot fail to lower the incidence of inherited psychosis.

SIMPLE ANNALS

BY CATHARINE BRODY

THEY sat around a table from which supper had been cleared, drinking tea without cream and speaking of their beginnings. The children of the house drifted through, caught by a raised sentence perhaps, or drawn by the rich light, in which wisps of smoke floated and bearded heads were like hoary trees reflected in a yellow lake.

One old man, small, lean, better dressed than the rest, had, as a boy, run away from his home in Russia to come to America, of which he knew only the name. He had been alone, he had been hungry among the most removed and fearful of all strangers, those who speak an incomprehensible language. All this he told in a dry, gray voice, which minimized everything—the voice of the buyer of many things, giving names and dates and places and costs.

The one at the head of the table, more darkly bearded than the rest, countered with his own story. It was simple, without very harrowing difficulties. But, by the vital, rippling accompaniment of his eyes, by a quaint turn of expression, a wave of his hands, by the sonorous rhythm of his voice, he painted his narrative with light and shade like a picture, and stretched each simple incident across a universal background. All the events of his life had been commonplace—that is, common to all—but he had lived them as a hero would live a saga. And the fortitude with which he had eaten zwieback and herring, brought from home, for two weeks on a crowded boat, became like the fortitude with which a brave man munches dry bread in prison. And the unknown subur-

ban road on which he had set forth to seek his living became like an unknown sea which waits to swallow up a dauntless adventurer seeking a new land.

He had stolen off from his town, his family, his appointed niche, in order to avoid conscription in the Russo-Japanese war. The terrors of night, silence, stealing over the frontier, were nothing compared to the lost sensation with which he found himself on a small, barnlike boat, sliding over the oily, gray water of New York Bay. Fog hid the shore. A cloudy sun tore through it at intervals and then disappeared. It was a mild day in December. He had relatives in the city, some cousins in Harlem with whom he was to stay, but no one had come to meet him. He was a man, was he not? Certainly, he was a man of thirty, in the full prime of his years, deep planted in life now, the husband of a wife, the father of children, the head of a household. From his body and from his hands and brain must flow the nourishment for his dependents.

Over his shoulder he had slung a bundle tied in a sheet, and in one hand he carried a straw suitcase tied with rope. In the other hand he held a slip with instructions in Yiddish and in painful English on how to reach his cousin's house. He sidled up to passers-by, pointing to the English writing on his slip and watching their lips with wistfulness. They waved with their hands, pointed with their fingers. In this way he got to the Elevated station.

His cousins lived in a red-brick tenement house which had all gone to rust. When he knocked, an old-country knock, penetrating and rude, his cousin's wife's