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MATERIAL OF CLINICAL RESEARCH IN THE FIELD OF CRIMINOLOGY.¹

DAVID C. PEYTON.²

The character of the finished product in any field depends in a large measure upon two factors, the grade of raw material used and the efficiency of workmanship of the artisan. I would have this suggest to your minds the thought that heredity represents the raw material, and society with its complex organization, including the home, church and school, the workman. I would not materially relieve society of its full measure of responsibility by suggesting that entirely upon heredity must depend the results of society's efforts; but it must be conceded that in some considerable measure at least the results to be obtained from organized efforts on the part of society will depend upon the question of heredity. No sane person with any knowledge in that scientific field will deny that a positive mental pathology in many of our defectives with criminal tendencies renders society's efforts almost if not entirely negative.

Every organized unit of government as represented in the several states has a distinct responsibility in its relation to a better citizenship, and the best possible opportunity to discharge this duty so far as the particular field of criminal defective goes, is to establish within the penal and correctional institutions laboratories of research, thus helping to discover not only the causes of delinquency and the nature of delinquents, but having ultimately in view the minimizing of the number who from year to year shall be sent by the courts to the institutions.

In the summer of 1912 a plan that had long been under consideration took a definite form in the establishment of a Department of Research at the Indiana Reformatory. It was the thought that this new department should not merely confine its activities to the field of investigation but should as far as possible serve in an advisory capa-

¹Read before the American Association of Clinical Criminology, St. Paul, Oct. 7, 1914.

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city in the matter of routine affairs of the inmate life of the institution; thus making practical application of the findings of the laboratories to practical administration.

In order that this might be satisfactorily accomplished, not only were the psychological and sociological departments organized but the medical department was reorganized with a view of correlating the findings of these three branches of the department of research. It was recognized that the mental, social and physical pathology must of necessity determine the final disposition of the young men committed to our control.

Recognizing the scientific truth of the conclusion that the mental condition must necessarily govern in the matter of discipline, an institutional court, consisting of the consulting physician, the psychologist and the superintendent of schools, has been organized, and every inmate reported for infraction of rules is tried before this court and every element of his case carefully considered.

No one actively engaged in the treatment of the criminal class doubts the truthfulness of the statement that they are of very low mentality, and yet the limited results of scientific investigation can scarcely be said to have furnished sufficient data to prove this conclusion entirely. However, the returns from the laboratory investigation are of very valuable significance and justify the statement that at least one-half of the population of our institution are subnormal.

The range and degree of defectiveness extends from a positive psychosis to imbecility; we have the insane, including the alcoholics, drug fiends, epileptics and feeble-minded as well as morons and those of slight subnormality. The reactions of this whole class are not only interesting, but, had opportunity been given, a correct diagnosis by a competent alienist would have been made prior to their commitment. No one who recognizes this complex pathology will fail to understand the importance of individual treatment. Of course, we recognize that in some cases little if anything can be done except training along lines of such co-ordination as shall render them at least slightly less anti-social. Fortunately, however, the number of these more pronounced derelicts is not proportionately large. For the higher grades opportunity for improvement is found in the school of letters and information concerning simpler things in the field of human experience. No one doubts the necessity of making the exercises conform to the results of a careful differential diagnosis. If carefully traced it will be found that a comparatively large number of the special cases is composed of former misfits in the public schools.

The importance of attempting physical improvement in these cases cannot be questioned for their social efficiency is in proportion more or less to their physical improvement.

Besides furnishing for each case a complete medical examination, the medical department has made a valuable investigation as to the physical measurements not only of the arrivals during the year but of the roll of inmates extending back over a considerable period of time. We believe that the report which follows furnishes information of peculiar significance.

The examination included five thousand six hundred and eighty men, and when the figures are analyzed the conclusion is unavoidable that these men are physically inferior to the average young man not in prison and presumably normal. They are below the average in height, in weight, in arm reach, and a very large number have sub-normal temperature. This apparent evidence is quite in line with the present tendency to regard criminals as merely inferior beings—inferior mentally and physically. It seems to have been established in the scientific world that this contention is true.

Because of the positive nature of this group of subnormals it does not particularly challenge our efforts, but the remaining fifty per cent of the institution's population is the real complex problem. Anomalies of intellect, emotion and will are everywhere presenting themselves for analysis.

Investigations which go to make up the mental examination are in the following fields: perception, association, memory, reason, orientation, fatigue, mental activity, motor control, moral appreciation, ability to profit by experience, attention, general information, general interest and ability to plan. Each subject is given the Binet-Simon test, while observations are made as to the results of formal educational experience, ability to carry on conversation and the nature of the reaction to natural and artificial environment.

In addition to this, inquiry is made into the social condition of the parents; their religious tendencies and habits, together with their nativity, occupation and economic condition. The medical examination furnishes the second factor in the case while the final element is determined by the outcome of the psychological tests and observations. Not only is it necessary to attempt to discover the chief cause of the criminal activity but the contributing causes as well is sought in these defectives, and a rather careful diagnosis is attempted.

A statistical study of the eight hundred and eighty-five inmates who entered the institution during the first twenty-three months following the establishment of the laboratory brings out a number of

significant facts. It will be noticed that sixty-three per cent of these men come from disorganized homes—homes broken up because of death or because of divorce. Nine per cent are illiterate and another twenty-five per cent passed no farther than the third grade in school. Sixteen per cent completed the common school course and of these only twenty-three men out of eight hundred and eighty-five did a year or more in high school, and only five attended college. Twenty-one per cent suffered previous commitments because of violations of the law and forty-five per cent had been previously convicted. Thirty-nine per cent were idle at the time the crime was committed. Nineteen per cent of these men were colored, and nineteen per cent were foreign born. Seventy per cent of these men claim affiliation with or membership in some church. The remainder disclaim religious affiliation or preference. Thirty-three per cent confess to have had bad associations and only twenty-four per cent claim to have kept good associates. Five per cent of this number were at the time of entrance either divorced or separated from their wives and another twenty per cent were married. Thus seventy-five per cent of those entering were single.

The physical condition of fifty-three per cent is good, of forty per cent fair and of seven per cent bad.

Twelve per cent of these men upon entrance were under eighteen, while thirty per cent were eighteen to twenty; thirty per cent were twenty-one to twenty-three, and twenty-eight per cent were twenty-four or over.

The average age of those committed during these twenty-three months is twenty-two and 98/100 years, twenty-nine per cent of whom had left home for various reasons before sixteen years of age, and seventy-one per cent before the age of twenty-one.

A tabulation of the reasons given for leaving their homes by the men who entered during the first twelve months shows that twenty-eight per cent left on account of employment; of these twenty-one per cent left before the age of sixteen; eight per cent left the home ties at the time of their marriage and the same per cent were forced to leave by the breaking up of the home. Of this last class a large part falls prior to the age of sixteen. Four per cent were taken from their homes before the age of seventeen and placed in reform schools, while thirty-one per cent stated that they were living at home when committed to the institution. The reasons for leaving home on the part of the remainder are varied and include approximately six per cent each trouble with step-parents and the desire to see the world, the remaining reasons being scattered.

The importance of the individual interview cannot be overstated. Our hope in the field of criminology bears a distinct relationship to the accuracy of our diagnosis, and to the trained clinician in the field of criminal pathology the interview serves very much the same purpose as the physical examination does in the field of medicine.

Observation of the men under various situations in their life in the institution gives continuous and important information on subjects relating to adaptability, emotion, will, judgment and other fields which can be more correctly analyzed in this manner than in the laboratory.

There is a distinct absence of a uniform classification, and while each institution laboratory makes up its classification from its own viewpoint, it has been thought that from the kinds of criminal activity the following classification is sufficient for the distribution of our entire population:

- The habitual criminal;
- The born criminal;
- The criminal through passion;
- The criminal of positive psychosis;
- The weak-minded subject of suggestion or criminal by chance;
- The accidental criminal or the criminal by mischance.

It is only after a most careful diagnosis in the different branches of pathology that we attempt to classify our inmates as above. The grade of mentality of the individuals of this classification is the determining factor not only in the matter of their reaction or environment under legal restrictions but equally responsible for the reactions manifested by these inmates during their institutional life.

The exact nature of their anti-social action, whether prior to or subsequent to their incarceration, depends wholly upon their environment. The criminal himself cannot know beforehand what his specific criminal reaction will be. He must await the exact or specific environmental stimulus to his special defect.

Specific cases illustrating this classification will be of interest.

An example of the habitual criminal is one who is a native of a neighboring state, whose mother committed suicide at the age of thirty-nine. She was a nervous wreck and separated from her husband. The son never saw nor heard of his father after the separation, at which time the boy was seven years of age. After the death of his mother he fell into the hands of an aunt and attended the public schools more or less regularly. He failed of promotion twice because of lack of attention to his work, and finally left school at the seventh grade. His associates were bad and he drank moderately and smoked

cigarettes, and early suffered from a venereal disease. His first arrest was at the instance of his aunt who, no longer able to control him, hoped by this means to keep him off the streets at night. His second arrest was for petit larceny; he took money from the cash drawer of a pool room at night. He with others next broke into a store, stealing knives and revolvers. Again, with companions, he attempted to burglarize for the purpose of securing money with which to secure a room in a hotel for immoral purposes. The crime for which he was sent to the reformatory was the theft of a motorcycle.

His physical condition is fairly good. He is small in stature, fairly well developed. He is not lacking in general intelligence. The Binet test classifies him as an adult and he grades of high order in information and other tests. In general, however, there is revealed an unsettled condition of mind. The question is, did all this social and mental pathology of the mother serve to react upon him in such a way as to impress him for life with the lack of normal nervous organization, and to stamp his subconsciousness with a character conducive to instability and consequent immorality? The corrective of judgment has never been furnished. For him the easiest way is the best way. Some worthy ideal of boyhood may have prevented criminal activity earlier in life but after the tension was relieved by the first offense others of the same nature followed in quick succession. When once an action has begun in him the power of inhibition is paralyzed.

An example of the born criminal is found in a young man about twenty-one years of age, serving a sentence of from two to fourteen years for assault and battery with intent to kill. He is of Polish parents and his father was a common laborer up to the time of his death by accident. This young man had no formal schooling prior to the age of eight years when he was arrested and sent to a private reform school. There he remained for six years. After his release he was arrested many times until he was finally sent to a reformatory in the East for burglary. He was paroled but violated the conditions, and he with three companions worked his way west to Indiana as a common tramp. On being ordered out of a box car the gang opened fire on the train conductor, severely wounding him. From an early age his companions were bad, and he used both liquor and tobacco, contracting the habits when a mere boy. His jail and reform school surroundings probably only accentuated his disregard for the rights of others. His physical condition is fair although there are present certain physical stigmata. His mental tests were marked by a general spirit of indifference on his part; he cared not at all to make a

creditable record for himself. Attention and application were out of the question with him, although he did not so seriously lack in the point of general information. He was not interested by those motives which usually govern action. He confessed that he had never worked and did not care to earn money by labor. Thoroughly selfish, he has no regard for ideals of honor and no respect for law and order. He furnishes a splendid example of those in whom there is an entire absence of the normal development of the instinctive tendencies in the ethical sphere.

A type of the criminal of passion is found in a young man twenty years of age, son of temperate law-abiding American parents, both living and living together. He remained in school through the eighth grade, where he failed in grammar because, as he says, he liked arithmetic so much better that he put his best efforts on that branch. After leaving school he purchased a car and opened a taxicab business, which he conducted for three years. After bankruptcy he became an instructor in a school for automobile drivers. He smokes cigars but confessed to no other bad habits. He is both honest and industrious. His single crime consisted in stealing an automobile of an old gentleman who employed him through two weeks to overhaul his machine and then refused to pay him a fair wage, taking an advantage of the fact that no contract had been made at the time of the engagement. Enraged beyond control at this perfidy, the young man ran the car away to be revenged. His only motive was to get even. He was arrested, convicted and sentenced for grand larceny.

Physically he is none too strong. He has suffered from hernia from childhood and has had venereal disease. His mentality, in general, is of high order. He easily grades adult with no marked deficiencies in the tests applied, and yet, brooding over a wrong so accentuated his anger at his unfair treatment as to cause him to lose control of himself. Here, too, as in the second case, the power of inhibition under severe strain was not sufficiently operative to support good judgment by strong will.

A type of the criminal by chance is a young negro of Alabama who was born of native Alabama parents. He knows nothing of his grandparents and little of his parents beyond the fact that they both lived to be of considerable age. He at this time is twenty-nine years of age and is entirely illiterate. He remembers little or nothing of his boyhood but confesses to bad associates in later years. He is a moderate drinker and has used tobacco for chewing and smoking for a long time.

The only previous arrest which he recalls and the only one which the records substantiate took place about ten years ago when he was sent to a state prison in the middle west, convicted of malicious cutting. He claims to have engaged in a fight for the purpose of retaining his money which his antagonist was attempting to steal. One other arrest on suspicion is probable. The present sentence is being served on conviction of petit larceny, he having been caught with railroad brass on his person. He insists that he took it at the instance of a companion who escaped at that time. He was on his way to a northern point where he was going to look for work. He was not without money at the time.

His physical condition in general is poor. He bears numerous stigmata of degeneracy and is crippled in one foot.

Mentally he is a high-grade imbecile. He passed the sixth year Binet test with scattered credit enough to warrant the classification of seven years. He fails quite completely on anything involving memory; perception is everywhere defective and judgment is entirely lacking. General information is very poor.

The fact that this subject has not a long history of crime is merely a matter of accident. He could easily have been made the subject of suggestion since he is so pronouncedly lacking in judgment. The lack of inhibitory power makes him the tool of whomever might wish to make use of him. In general he is harmless and a good worker, but a dangerous member of society because of the readiness with which he could be led to do the bidding of others within a vicious environment. His good nature and his superstition only serve to make him the more easily controlled for good or evil.

A good example of the criminal by accident or mischance is a young man whose parents are of an eastern state and whose birth was of high order, both having been teachers in earlier life. The father, later moving to the state of Michigan, became a successful farmer and enjoyed the confidence and respect of the community in which he conducted his business. The subject was the oldest of three children and at the death of his father this lad, ten years of age, seems to have been strongly impressed with the responsibility of his position as oldest child. The family moved to a large manufacturing center where he was given a high school education and later commercial training in a business college of high rank. From the time of his graduation he worked steadily as a stenographer, bookkeeper and advertising manager with various business concerns, earning a sufficient sum not only to support himself but to assist his mother, send his younger brother through business college and educate a younger sis-

ter. At twenty years of age he married and notwithstanding this additional burden of expense he continued to help out in the demands upon his mother's resources. In the hope of bettering his conditions he removed to another city in order to accept a responsible position with a commission firm. Always accustomed to good but not extravagant living, he soon found himself living beyond his means and struggling under an ever-increasing debt. The climax finally came in the demand of certain creditors for payment. About this time he had been strongly impressed with the looseness of the checking system used in the office of the firm for which he worked. The opportunity suggested seemed just the solution of his trying situation. Accordingly he "anticipated his salary," forging checks upon his employer. At the time of his trial his employer stated that he was the last one of the entire office force to be suspected, and they refused to believe in his guilt until forced to do so by the evidence produced. The indebtedness was made good by the mother. The boy's associates were good, the social interest of himself and his wife being those of the church and business circles.

Physically he is small but well developed. Mentally he is not only of normal grade but possesses unusual alertness and sagacity. The force of circumstances, however, and the promise of an opportunity to relieve himself of a fearful embarrassment and "get by," were too strong to withstand the temptation. His institution record was a splendid one, he occupied a trusted position as secretary in one of the administrative offices. He made good on parole. Even now he has an offer of a position as secretary to the manager of one of the shorter railway systems of the north.

The cases of criminals of positive psychosis are readily recognized on the basis of accepted symptomatology, the peculiarities of each case suggesting the nature of the treatment and the chances of alleviation or complete recovery.

To quote Professor von Kleinsmid in the matter of prognostications: "It is upon the basis of this careful classification in view of the type of mentality or the kind of criminal activity that prognostications are made.

"There are those, who, in the light of their defects should be transferred to some other institution whose organization and methods of procedure are more nearly suited to their peculiar needs. There are those, who, after a season of corrective life in the institution may well be sent back to their former environment with a fair expectancy of being able to lead lives of honor and integrity: Others may well be released when the possibility of surrounding them with a picked

or controlled environment offers itself; such may not be able to stand long against severe temptations, but at the same time may make good citizens under the encouragement and influence of selected surroundings. On the other hand, there are those who, both for their own good and for the protection of society, should remain permanently the wards of the state."

It must be understood, however, that the establishment of scientific laboratories is not alone for the purposes of scientific research. Such organizations are to justify themselves immediately by furnishing such data as will indicate the nature of the control of the individual inmate while in the custody of the institution. Information from these laboratories will doubtless dictate the details of the organization of the institution to suit the needs of the various classes and kinds of material discovered through their operation in the various fields. These results will make it necessary to reorganize the school of letters, the library, the trade schools, physical training, recreation and discipline in all penal and reformatory institutions attempting work in the field of scientific investigation and training of its class of "Nature Disinherited."