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## Police Psychopathic Laboratory

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## A POLICE PSYCHOPATHIC LABORATORY

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LOUIS E. BISCH.<sup>1</sup>

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As a natural result following more scientific methods in the diagnosing, treatment and care of the insane, attention has been centered of late years upon the problem of the feeble-minded, and still more recently, upon the relationship which psychiatry and amentia bear to criminality. Persons interested in crime and criminals have felt for a long time that a very considerable proportion of these individuals are of abnormal mentality—especially as regards recidivists—and that not only are such persons more or less irresponsible for the acts which they commit but that many are suffering from mental deficiencies and maladies which are either congenital, incurable or both.

Nowadays, the custom is to try the prisoner on purely legal grounds—built largely upon precedent of long standing—and only if the individual is strikingly irrational or possesses sufficient means to enable him to, does the question of his mentality receive any consideration. Yet, in last analysis the commission of any act must be the result of some nervous mechanism and it is probably a fact—except in rare cases—that criminal acts with their concomitant purposefulness, result from mechanisms of a higher level than mere spinal reflexes. In other words, a criminal performance involves thinking processes and, therefore, the commission of crime ought never to be considered apart from mentality.

The consideration of guilt or innocence in a court room has always involved the weighing of testimony and facts with a view to establishing the relationship of the prisoner with the crime charged, while in addition motive and causative factors have received some consideration. The doctrine of a “free will”—as if a separate, distinct, logical and neutral entity—dominating the personality and dictating activity, seems to have been a convenient and practical “modus operandi” in judging fellow-man, but the contemplation of mental and motor activity as an evolutionary mechanism influenced by heredity, training and environment is still a new idea.

Enlightened opinion has gone even a step further and the axiomatic fact of any effect being produced by some cause is being prag-

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matically applied. An individual's behavior is regulated by his thinking and his emotions, and that thinking can never follow the ordinary and usual standards if the neurones are diseased or have failed to develop due to some inherent, potential deficiency. To be sure, normality and abnormality are only relative terms and no sharp lines of demarkation can be drawn between them, yet it is strikingly obvious that the behavior produced by a psychotic mind or a defective brain is unfairly judged when evaluated by the standards of behavior resulting from normal mentality.

So much for theoretical consideration. What proof have we that such distinctions actually exist?

Goddard writes,<sup>2</sup> "Although we cannot determine at present just what the proportion is, probably from 25% to 50% of the people in our prisons are mentally defective and incapable of managing their affairs with ordinary prudence. A great deal has been written about the criminal type and its various characteristics. It is interesting to see in the light of modern knowledge of the defectives that these descriptions are almost without exception accurate descriptions of the feeble-minded." For juveniles he presents the following list of reformatories and institutions for delinquents with the estimated percentage of defectives in each, and adds, "A glance will show that the estimate of 50% is well within the limit. From these studies we might conclude that at least 50% of all criminals are mentally defective. Even if a much smaller percentage is defective it is sufficient for our argument that without question one point of attack for the solution of the problem of crime is the problem of feeble-minded."

TABLE I

SHOWING PERCENT OF DEFECTIVES IN REFORMATORIES.

INSTITUTION.	Per Cent Defective.
St. Cloud, Minnesota, Reformatory .....	54
Bedford Reformatory, New York—under 11 years.....	80
Lancaster, Massachusetts, 50 paroled girls.....	82
Lyman School for Boys, Westboro, Massachusetts.....	28
Pentonville, Illinois, Juveniles.....	40
Massachusetts Reformatory, Concord.....	52
Newark, New Jersey, Juvenile Court.....	66
Geneva, Illinois (Tested by Binet scale).....	89
Ohio Boys School (Tested by Binet scale).....	70
Ohio Girls School (Tested by Binet scale).....	70
Virginia, 3 Reformatories (Tested by Binet scale).....	79
Glen Mills Schools, Pennsylvania, Girls' Department, about.....	72

Concerning the mental examination of 500 women at the Massachusetts State Reformatory, Dr. Edith R. Spaulding<sup>3</sup> states that 16%

<sup>2</sup>Goddard, "Feeble-mindedness" p. 7.

<sup>3</sup>Spaulding, "Boston Medical and Surgical Journal" October 7, 1915.

showed marked feeble-mindedness, while 29% showed slight mental defect, thereby making a total of 45% showing mental defect in some degree.

In the studies made by Dr. Paul E. Bowers<sup>4</sup> in the Indiana Hospital for the Insane Criminals he concluded that 23% of the criminals were feeble-minded.

TABLE II.

SHOWING APPROXIMATE PERCENT OF FEEBLE-MINDEDNESS IN OTHER INSTITUTIONS FOR JUVENILES.

INSTITUTION.	Per Cent Defective
New York State Reformatory, Elmira.....	about 37
New Jersey State Reformatory, Rahway.....	about 33
New York Reformatory for Women, Bedford.....	about 37
Massachusetts Industrial School for Girls, Lancaster.....	about 50
Maryland Industrial School for Girls, Baltimore.....	about 60
New Jersey State Home for Girls, Trenton.....	about 33
Illinois State School for Boys, St. Charles.....	about 20

Investigations made at the Massachusetts State Prison<sup>5</sup> on 300 cases showed that 22% of the subjects were feeble-minded, 9.6% border-line cases and 3.3% probably psychotic.

Dr. Augusta F. Bronner<sup>6</sup> states, "On the basis of a study of more than 500 cases in a group as little selected as is possible to obtain, we find the percentage of feeble-minded to be less than 10%, while the group of those normal in ability exceeds 90%."

It is to be noted that the proportion of mental abnormals found differ in the various investigations made but, aside from the fact that the percentages obtained depends largely upon the psychological or psychiatric methods adopted, together with the question of cases selected with a special purpose, or collected at random, it still is an undeniable fact that a considerable proportion of all criminals have been found to be defective beyond question. Healy<sup>7</sup> has had similar results in his investigations, and in foreign countries Thompson, Ellis, Maudsley, Sichard, Gruhel, and others, have come to the same conclusion.

Up to date, most of the studies have been made upon juveniles, but it is to be remembered that the repeated offender's career usually begins in childhood or early youth and statistics applying to reformatories are just as suggestive regarding the adult criminal population.

In New York City the problem of the criminal of abnormal mentality has been recently attacked from another and rather new

<sup>4</sup>Bowers "Clinical Studies in Relationship of Insanity to Crime," p. 81.

<sup>5</sup>"Bulletin No. 17 of the Massachusetts State Board of Insanity, January, 1916.

<sup>6</sup>Bronner, "Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology," November, 1914.

<sup>7</sup>Healy, "The Individual Delinquent," p. 10.

standpoint. After studying the situation, Police Commissioner, Arthur H. Woods became convinced that a number of persons are being arrested daily who are suffering from some form of mental malady which could not be discovered by casual observation, and that these individuals are passing through the courts undiagnosed and being sent to penal institutions like ordinary criminals. To determine whether this was so the writer was invited to carry on an investigation, and accordingly, for a period of two months, certain cases were chosen from the daily "line-up" at Police Headquarters to which persons committing felonies are sent.

TABLE III.

## THE RESULT OF THE PRELIMINARY STUDY OF THE "LINE-UP."

Total number at "line-up".....	409 cases	
Feeble-minded.....	9 cases	
Feeble-minded (doubtful).....	5 cases	
Insane.....	1 case	
Psychic Constitutional Inferiors.....	2 cases	
Drug Habitues.....	2 cases	
Sexual Perverts.....	1 case	
Alcoholics.....	1 case	
Normal.....	8 cases	
Total number examined.....	29 cases	29 cases
Total number with abnormal mentality.....	21 cases	21 cases
Per cent of "line-up" examined.....		7%
Per cent abnormal at "line-up".....		5%

During the same period the number of arrests throughout Greater New York were 30,530 making an approximate number of daily arrests 623. Classified according to crime they were:

Felonies.....	2,811
Misdemeanors.....	14,285
Juveniles.....	1,124
Summonses.....	12,310

It was estimated roughly that about 5% of persons arrested daily in New York ought to receive a mental examination. This percentage considered by itself may seem small, but when estimated in numbers for a year the sum is quite astonishing. Accordingly, the Psychopathic Laboratory was definitely established by Commissioner Woods and the proper scientific and office equipment was installed at Police Headquarters. The necessity and usefulness of such a Laboratory was considered carefully from many standpoints, and

consultations were held with judges and others interested in the problem. The staff consists of a psychiatrist, a psychologist and a special investigator, together with stenographers, etc. The object has been not to examine all the cases requiring diagnosis, but rather to examine representative cases of various types gathered from different sources. It is hoped that in this way valuable data will be accumulated which will throw additional light on the problem of criminality and, in general, tend toward prevention.

Among the cases examined are many repeated offenders and if they are feeble-minded at their fifth conviction they were surely just as feeble-minded at their first. So far as the psychoses go, persons whose derangement would ordinarily be overlooked have been diagnosed as incurable. The same applies to other mental maladies brought about by habit-forming drugs, syphilis, alcoholism, etc. Many cases of mental deterioration have been found due to such causes while, in addition, other cases have been discovered where immediate hospital care and treatment might cure the underlying condition and so prevent further criminal offenses.

At the time of writing, although only three months in existence, the advantages of a psychopathic laboratory in connection with the Police Department have been proved definitely. It is more desirable to examine a prisoner before arraignment in Court than to examine him after conviction, especially when, at the time of trial, the question of his mentality and consequent responsibility has not been taken into consideration. Again, the whole police system comes in closest contact with every-day activities and so, virtually, every patrolman becomes a field worker. Furthermore, persons of abnormal mentality who are incurable and have committed crimes because of their derangement, should be placed permanently in institutions where they may be among peers, given proper employment suitable to their capacity, and so live their existence as happily as possible. To sentence a feeble-minded or insane individual for a prison term is neither fair to the criminal nor wise for society. After a longer or shorter sentence such an individual is again turned out as a free agent no better—perhaps even worse—than when he entered the penal institution—a prey for habitual criminals of superior intellect. When once it has been demonstrated that the line of least resistance in any feeble or enfeebled mind is criminality, that individual will always remain a constant menace to himself and society. The actual saving of time and money to any community which will eventually result, if prisoners are given the benefit of mental examination whenever necessary and in consequence placed in proper institutions, goes without saying. At the

present time the method of dealing with defective criminals is an expensive, cumbersome and vicious circle without end.

Following are a few cases taken at random which have been examined at the Psychopathic Laboratory. For obvious reasons they have been condensed as much as possible.

CASE 1. A boy of 19 was arrested for having forced the front of a store and stealing clothing valued at \$150. He was selected from the "line-up" and sent to the Laboratory for examination. His mental age was found to measure 10.6 years according to the Stanford Revision of the Binet-Simon test. A report of these findings was sent to the presiding magistrate and the boy was committed to an institution for the feeble-minded. During the course of our examination we learned that this boy had been examined at another clinic and diagnosed as feeble-minded a year previously. He had been subsequently committed to an institution for mental defectives but had been taken out by his father after two months residence. His father had him married to a girl of 19, whom we found, through investigation to be of inferior mentality also. At the time of the boy's arrest his wife was six months pregnant and it is more than probable that this off-spring will be feeble-minded.

CASE 2. A young man of 18 in company with another, entered an apartment for the purpose of robbing. There was a blind old man living in this apartment and the prisoner struck him on the head with a hammer. This act was absolutely unnecessary for the accomplishment of the robbery since the old man was helpless. He was selected from the "line-up" as a proper case for examination at the Laboratory. He was found to measure only 6 years; according to our tests.

CASE 3. A middle-aged man was found unconscious on the street. An ambulance was called and the surgeon diagnosed the case as one of insanity. The officer on whose post this incident occurred, notified his Lieutenant who advised that the man be brought to the Laboratory for examination. He was sufficiently revived upon his arrival here to undergo the usual procedure. Our examination revealed that this man was not suffering from any form of insanity whatsoever, but from epilepsy. He was sent home to receive medical attention.

CASE 4. A twenty-year-old youth was arrested on the charge of assault and robbery. He was a self-confessed user of Heroin for four years, and when examined at the Laboratory showed the typical suffering which these people undergo when deprived of the drug. On the way to the Court he became so crazed that he lost control of himself and attacked another prisoner in the police patrol wagon.

The report from the Laboratory suggested to the presiding magistrate that the prisoner first be treated for his drug addiction. He was, accordingly, sent to a hospital for treatment. It is to be noted that had this prisoner been taken to court without examination, he might have been sentenced immediately for the crime with no consideration given for his drug condition.

CASE 5. On the charge of grand larceny, a twenty-one-year-old man was arrested. He was examined at the Laboratory and his mental age was found to be 7.2 years. His conversation was rambling, his memory was very poor and he did not apparently realize the difference between right and wrong. He was found to be occasionally suggestive. A report of the result of our examination was sent to the judge and the prisoner was committed to an institution for the feeble-minded.

CASE 6. A man thirty years old was arrested on the charge of selling narcotics. His dull, apathetic expression at the "line-up" roused suspicion of his abnormality and he was examined. The prisoner had taken Heroin eight hours previously and a mental examination under these conditions would have been unfair to him. However, he was questioned closely regarding his past life, and it was learned that he was an epileptic. Further questioning revealed that the man worked in lead for years and this may have been a causative factor for his beginning the use of drugs. In addition, the medical examination proved this man to be suffering from syphilis. Our report to the Judge included these findings and hospital treatment was recommended.

CASE 7. A man thirty-four years old was arrested on the charge of committing rape on two girls—one 8 and the other 9 years old. The nature of the crime made it suspicious that the prisoner was not normal mentally, and he was sent to the Laboratory for examination. According to the Stanford Revision of the Binet-Simon test this man measured 8 years and 4 months. All his reactions were of the simplest order and his general grasp of knowledge was very limited. He was able to read, but only very slowly. He presented many co-called "stigmata of degeneracy." The result of our examination was reported to the Judge with a recommendation that he be kept under observation for a time.

CASE 8. A woman of forty-six years came from a suburb to complain to the Police Commissioner that she was being hounded by the police of her town. She was referred to the Laboratory for investigation. She told a relevant and logical story about her troubles, and to the layman it would have seemed plausible enough. Examina-

tion, however, showed that she was suffering from hallucinations and delusions which dominated her conduct. She was committed to a hospital for the insane.

CASE 9. A man thirty-eight years old was arrested on the charge of disorderly conduct,—threatening letters to a former employer. This case was not taken to the "line-up" but taken direct to court. The letters when read by the magistrate, caused him to send the prisoner to the Laboratory for examination. The magistrate postponed the case several days to allow a thorough investigation to be made. The prisoner's wife was asked to call at the Laboratory and it was learned from her that the prisoner had been acting queerly for the past several months. Our examination showed he was suffering from an insanity which probably had been existing several years. (Dementia Praecox). A report to the judge was made and it was recommended that he be sent to a hospital for the insane.

CASE 10. A boy of seventeen years had been arrested for disorderly conduct and sent to the Reformatory. He had served part of his sentence when he was referred to the Parole Commission for investigation. The Parole Commission referred the case to the Laboratory because the boy had had a previous mental examination. Investigation of the boy's personal history showed that he had been always troublesome since the age of 11 years. Numerous efforts had been made to rehabilitate him but all had failed. It was also learned that this boy had been examined at another clinic and had been diagnosed as possibly a kleptomaniac or a moral imbecile. No gross psychological defects were noted throughout our examination but it was evident that this boy was developing a fairly definite gang spirit which would make it increasingly difficult to reform him. A report was sent to the Parole Commission and the prisoner was accordingly given special treatment and attention in the institution.

CASE 11. A fugitive from justice was arrested charged with burglary in New Jersey. He was twenty-four years of age and had a record in 1913 of serving 2 months for assault in Paterson, N. J. and in 1914 of having been sentenced a year on Blackwell's Island for abduction and rape. Mental examination at the Laboratory showed this individual to be a high-grade Imbecile, his mental age being 7.4 years. All his mental processes were very sluggish and only occasionally did he seem to reason. His range of ideas was very limited. A case like this is incurable and unless permanently segregated it is certain that each time he comes out of prison he will simply return again to a life of crime.

CASE 12. A waiter, 34 years old, was arrested charged with

attempting blackmail. He had sent a threatening letter to a company demanding the sum of \$5,000,000. He willingly and readily talked about his efforts to obtain this sum and believed that the company owed him money for back pay. He had absolutely no insight into his own mental condition. The Laboratory examination of this prisoner proved him to be suffering from Paresis. The only treatment for a case of this kind is commitment to a State institution for the insane.

CASE 13. A man was arrested charged with stealing \$225 from his employer, a saloon keeper. He had been employed there as a bartender. Mental tests showed the prisoner to be imbecile, his mental age being about 7.2 years although actually 21 years old. Following the recommendation from the Laboratory, the Presiding Magistrate committed the man to a home for the feeble-minded. This seemed to be the best disposition to make of his case although it is hardly desirable to mingle the criminal feeble-minded with those of the ordinary types.

Cases are selected each morning from the "line-up" and in addition Desk Lieutenants have been instructed to send for special examination all persons brought before them who seem to be peculiar. By this procedure misdemeanants are also examined. It may be added, however, that the nature of the crime is often largely a matter of accident. An individual may deliberately strike another with no intent to kill yet, if the blow falls upon a vital part he is guilty of homicide.

In addition to the cases collected by the Police themselves, Judges and others have voluntarily sent individuals for examination and report. Among these are City Magistrates, Court of Special Sessions, Court of General Sessions, Parole Board, Commissioner of Corrections, etc.

Before examination an attempt is made to make the prisoner feel as much at ease as is possible. Psychological tests are then given and after that a psychiatric, neurological and physical examination. The arresting officer is interviewed in each case and frequently also, friends or relatives of the person under arrest. Upon occasion careful investigation of witnesses and home conditions are made by the special investigator.

Great care is exercised not to make hasty generalizations and as many tests as it seems necessary for a diagnosis are given. Both tests of intelligence and "tests of doing" are employed and some thirty are at hand to choose from. How the prisoner reacts, his general emotional make-up, etc., is perhaps even more important than what he actually does. If, after careful examination from

various standpoints, a diagnosis can be reached, a detailed report of the findings accompany the prisoner when he is arraigned before the Presiding Judge.

TABLE IV.

## DIAGNOSES OF THE FIRST 293 CASES EXAMINED.

Normal.....	145
Feeble-minded.....	48
Insane.....	40
Psychic Constitutional Inferiority.....	30
Syphilis.....	9
Mental Deterioration (Other causes).....	8
Drug Addiction (Alone).....	5
Alcoholism (True).....	3
Epilepsy.....	2
Perverts (True).....	1
Hyperthyroidism.....	1
Illiterate.....	1
Grand Total.....	293
Number of cases examined found to be "Normal".....	145
Number of cases examined found to be "Abnormal".....	148
Total.....	293

It is to be noted that the percentage of prisoners with abnormal mentality according to the second survey thus far is about 50%. It must be remembered, however, that in this latter group the selection has been more refined.

TABLE V

## SHOWING THE DISPOSITIONS MADE OF THE ABOVE CASES.

Sent to Penal Institutions.....	45
Sent to Institutions for proper treatment.....	31
Taken into custody by their people.....	9
Fined by Court.....	2
Discharged by Court.....	44
Sentence suspended by Court.....	7
Deported.....	2
Delivered to other authorities.....	3
Awaiting disposition.....	130

273

(The other 20 cases are those sent by the Parole Commission and these cases have been segregated to receive special attention.)

What is most urgently needed at the present time is an institution for feeble-minded criminals. These individuals should neither be mingled with the ordinary criminals, nor should they be associated with the ordinary types of amentia. As Commissioner Woods has so aptly said, "The machinery of law-enforcement—Police Department, District Attorney's Office and the Courts—can do little in protecting the public against these types of criminals unless they have adequate means of detecting them in the first place and proper facilities for their treatment afterwards."