

DECLARES INSANITY CAN BE EXTIRPATED

Chicago Justice Tells How
Psychopathic Laboratory
Sorts Criminals.

15 PER CENT. DEMENTED

Honor System Dangerous in Prison
Where Sane and Those with
Mental Diseases Are Placed.

The establishment of a psychopathic laboratory in Chicago to make an individual study of the mentality of criminals brought before the courts there has proved that more than 15 per cent. of the crimes are committed by persons suffering from dementia praecox. Chief Justice Harry Olson of the Municipal Court of Chicago, who spoke yesterday at the annual meeting of the New York Probation and Protective Association in the Russell Sage Foundation Building at 130 East Twenty-second Street, told this and many other interesting facts about the laboratory.

A great part of the children arrested for serious offenses, he said, had been found by tests to be suffering from mental diseases, the chief types of which were dementia praecox, and feeble-mindedness with dementia praecox grafted upon it. Between 60 and 80 per cent. of the women arrested, he said, were found to be suffering from some mental affliction.

The psychopathic laboratory in Chicago, he said, had proved to be of such value in determining the treatment of offenders, especially children, that judges who had had experience with the system in Chicago and Pittsburgh would not hear of returning to the old ways.

Discover Insanity in Time.

One great advantage of the examination of youthful offenders, he said, was that it made it possible to identify insanity before it had progressed so far as to cause the victims to commit murder or other serious crimes. He predicted that New York City would before long institute a system under which criminals, especially youthful criminals, would be subjected to mental tests. An extension of the system all over the country, he said, would in time enable society to recognize practically all who were suffering from mental disease and finally to extirpate it.

He said that Charles Benedict Davenport of the Eugenics Record Office of Cold Spring Harbor, L. I., had said to him recently:

"If we had the power we need to deal with the subject, we could abolish insanity in this country in thirty years."

The insane men who suddenly commit murders could all have been identified as dangerously insane many years before their outbreaks, he said, and the mental tests, if universally applied to all offenders when they first get into difficulties, usually of a minor nature, would enable society to protect itself by preventing the individual from committing insane acts and by preventing the reproduction of insane stock.

"This is one of the newest sciences," he said, "the study of human activity itself. In Chicago, now, we have the

greatest institution of its kind in the world for the study of mental diseases and their development. It is the greatest because of the amount of human material which is presented for study.

Draw a Scroll From Memory.

Judge Olson explained how developments had been made upon the Binet-Simon and other systems of testing intelligence by short-cut methods which enabled the psychologists in the Chicago clinic to diagnose quickly and precisely the various types of mental diseases.

The most useful method of obtaining a clue to the mental state of persons has been found to be to have them gaze for ten seconds at a drawing of a scroll and a box and asking them to draw it from memory. The drawing by persons having a similar type of disease always show the same kind of faults and mannerisms, and according to the style of their work the subjects are quickly classified as sufferers from dementia praecox, drug users, alcoholics, &c.

Many of the youths taken to the laboratory for examination had at first all the appearances of normal intelligence, until signs of lower mentality began to develop as certain tests were applied, he said. Judge Olson told how a Bishop who visited the laboratory was at first thoroughly convinced that a young man was sane and intelligent. As one test after another was applied, however, the Bishop shook his head and said, "He's falling down."

Danger in Honor System.

The proper treatment for mental disease, he said, was to place the victim under medical treatment on a farm colony or a similar institution, not in a prison. The old type of prison management, in which politics determined the personnel of the prison employes, was a disgraceful evil, he said. Then he added:

"Progress is made in the wrong direction when a mere sentimentalist is put in charge of a prison. The honor system, for instance, has no place in a penitentiary in which sane men and men with various types of mental disease have been indiscriminately placed. When you give comparative freedom to a sufferer from dementia praecox under the honor system, he will kill. We had an example of it in our prison in Illinois, where one such prisoner killed the wife of the Warden.

"After the intelligence of the prisoners has been tested and those who are suffering from dementia praecox and other mental diseases have been segregated upon farm colonies, it would be very well to place the others on the honor system, but it should not be applied except to men who have been examined by competent psychologists and approved as mentally fit to live under the honor system."

Judge Olson said he hoped that intelligence tests would soon be adopted in New York City, for the reason that the study could at present be properly pursued only in large cities. He added that there were at present scant sources of compensation for psychologists except by the public and by private philanthropy, and that the number of young scientists who would take up this important study and the progress in the science would be determined for some years by the amount of the private endowments for such work.

Enormous Cost to Nation.

"At present," he said, "more than 25 per cent. of the public expenditure of the country is in dealing with criminals and the insane. The cost is increasing. If it keeps on at the present rate it will grow to one-third of the total expenditure and in time to one-half. But there is a prospect of preventing the increase and in time of eliminating a large part of this cost. Now is the time that action should be taken.

George Gordon Battle spoke on the value of a more complete understanding of the individual in probation and protective work. Supreme Court Justice Alfred R. Page, President of the association, and Miss Maude E. Miner, Secretary, made their annual reports.