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Editorial.

THE CARE OF THE FEEBLE-MINDED.

The members of the Royal Commission on the Care and Control of the Feeble-minded, who visited the United States for the purpose of investigating the methods employed in the institutions of that country for the mentally defective, have issued an interesting report as the result of their investigations, which included institutions in the States of New York, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Maryland, New Jersey and Washington.

The report states that the principle which underlies American practice in this matter, is that no person who is mentally deficient should be left without care and supervision. If such care cannot be provided by the family, the State undertakes the duty. This is justified on the grounds—firstly, that the community owes protection to its weakest members, and, secondly, that the community itself suffers by the irresponsible actions of the feeble-minded, who fall into dependence, destitution, and crime, particularly in the case of women. This particular phase of the problem, namely, the control of feeble-minded women of child-bearing age has received much attention in the United States. The Commissioners found this dealt with in two ways—by the provision of special institutions and by enactments prohibiting marriage.

The share taken by women in the management of the State institutions where women are received, seems to have impressed the Commissioners. Thus, at Newark the regulations laid down by the State of New York provide that the board of management shall consist of nine persons, three of whom must be women. The resi-

dent medical officer in this institution is a woman, and it is obligatory by law in the State of New York to include a woman doctor on the staff of any State institution in which women lunatics are received. The institution for feeble-minded women at Vineland, New Jersey, has a medical woman as Superintendent and three women on the board of management.

The Commissioners have arrived at the conclusion that in their methods of treatment, administration and finance, the American institutions are "examples that in many respects may be imitated in our own country with advantage," though they do not consider that they meet all the requirements of the case.

We have always held that in asylums for the care of the insane, homes for the mentally defective, and in our prisons, the need that the management should be shared by women is an urgent one. Especially, also, should these helpless and dependent members of the community have the oversight and attention of highly trained nurses. No other women can in the same degree understand, interpret and meet their needs, and render them the attention which their condition requires.

For nurses the care of the feeble-minded and allied problems are subjects of great importance, as they are constantly confronted with them in their work, and they should make a point of acquainting themselves with the report of the Commissioners above referred to. The more that we, as a profession, keep in touch with the problems of the day the better shall we be equipped for the service of the community whom it is our pride and pleasure to serve. Nurses should make a point of being well informed on social and health questions, concerning which their opinion is frequently asked and accepted.

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