

**MENTALLY
DEFECTIVE
CHILDREN**

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Mentally defective children by Alfred Binet & Th. Simon

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BY
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AUTHORISED TRANSLATION
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"AN INTRODUCTION TO CHILD STUDY," ETC.

WITH AN APPENDIX CONTAINING THE BINET-SIMON TESTS
OF INTELLIGENCE BY

MARGARET DRUMMOND, M.A.

AND AN INTRODUCTION BY
PROFESSOR ALEXANDER DARROCH

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INTRODUCTION

THE Binet-Simon tests of children's intelligence have been the subject of much discussion during the past few years, both in this country and in America. Much of this discussion seems to have been carried on, at times, without any knowledge of the original aim or purpose for which these tests were devised, and as if, so to speak, they were invented as a means for ascertaining the relative intellectual powers of all children, and so of affording to the teacher a ready and sure means of accurately classifying and grading the children under his charge. As a consequence, there is a tendency, in some quarters, to search for and to endeavour to establish some absolute standard or criterion of intelligence which shall be valid, irrespective of the nationality, or the class, or the particular environment of the child.

It is hoped that the publication in translation of the work of Binet and Simon in which these tests first appeared, along with the complete series of tests as extended and revised during the lifetime of the former, will tend to remove this twofold misapprehension, and make the educationalist, as well as the wider public interested in social questions, acquainted with the real purpose which underlay the devisal or invention of the tests, and so enable all to perceive that their relative value, as measuring stages of intelligence, must be judged by the purpose for which they were devised.

Now, the main purpose of the authors in the devisal of

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these tests is to furnish to the teacher a *first* means by which he may single out mentally backward children, who, upon further examination, may also be found to have some mental defect or peculiarity which prevents them from fully profiting by the education of the ordinary school, and who probably would benefit more by being educated in a special school or in a special class. But the final selection, it is contended, of defective children for special education demands the experience of the doctor and of the psychologist, as well as the knowledge of the teacher, and the aid of all three is necessary in the devisal of courses of study for the mentally defective. Especially important is the division of mentally defectives into two main classes—the feeble-minded and the ill-balanced. The latter, as a rule, are easily marked out from the normal child, and, if not specially looked after, may in later life become a menace to society. The feeble-minded, on the other hand, may easily escape the notice of the teacher, and may pass through the ordinary school unaffected and unimproved, enter into society, and propagate their kind. Both classes require the special care of the community, and their proper education and training are of the gravest importance for the welfare and stability of society. In this selection and education of mentally defective children, three positions of Binet and Simon are worthy of consideration. In the first place, it is contended that a physical examination alone can never allow us to dispense with a direct examination of the intelligence, and that “anthropometry, stigmata, and physical appearance must take a second place as means of discovering in school the feeble-minded and the ill-balanced.” Again, “mental deficiency and want of balance are peculiar mental conditions which it is often impossible to connect with definite pathological changes.” Hence the examination of the medical man is not decisive.

It must be accompanied and reinforced by that of the psychologist. In the second place, it is affirmed that in the devisal of schemes of training for mental defectives, we must take into account that the dominant features in their life are the "senses, the concrete perceptions, and motor ability," and that "in the education of defectives the workshop ought to become a more important place of instruction than the class-room." In the third place, the position is strongly emphasised that "every class, every school for defectives, ought to aim at rendering the pupils socially useful. It is not a question of enriching their minds, but of giving them the means of working for their living."

Hence, the utility of special schools or special classes for such children depends ultimately upon their success in making their pupils, according to the measure of their intelligence, efficient workers. These two problems—viz., (1) the method of selecting abnormal or defective children who are not sufficiently good for the ordinary school, nor yet sufficiently bad to be classed as idiots or imbeciles; and (2) the devisal of courses of education and training which may tend to make them hereafter useful workers and citizens—are of first-rate importance to us at the present time. Under recent legislation, public local authorities have been entrusted with the devisal of the means for the proper selection and the proper education of defective children, and the utmost wisdom and care should be taken in the beginning of this new movement. The many errors that administrators may fall into are fully set forth in this little volume (*cf.* p. 78 *et seq.*), and the concluding chapter on the utility of special schools should be read by all who have to do with the administration of the new Act.

The importance of the work of Binet and Simon to teachers and inspectors is without question, and were the

duties of the teacher and inspector carried out as set forth in this volume (*cf.* p. 86) throughout the whole school, a much-needed improvement in our ordinary school education would soon result.

Lastly, the volume is important as marking a new attitude towards educational problems, and as indicating the newer spirit in which we should undertake the training of all teachers. This new attitude and spirit are clearly set forth in the concluding words of the volume: "The essential thing is for all the world to understand that empiricism has had its day, and that methods of scientific precision must be introduced into all educational work, to carry everywhere good sense and light."

ALEXANDER DARROCH

UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH,

July, 1914