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THE SECONDARY FORMS OF MENTAL DEFICIENCY.

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MENTAL defect may properly be regarded as a disorder of the mind, and in approaching its study we find the making of a satisfactory classification just as difficult as in the wider domain of psychiatry. In the early part of last century mental defectives were classified largely on a physical basis, their anatomical defects or stigmata being used for the invention of racial types—the Kalmuck, Aztec, Papuan, and so on. At a somewhat later date a new classification was attempted on the basis of pathological

anatomy, and this in its turn has been superseded by a scheme evolved from the standpoint of causation, which divides amentia into two classes: the primary forms, determined by neuropathic inheritance; and the secondary forms, determined by acquired factors operating before, at, or after birth. The former are said to account for 90 per cent. and the latter 10 per cent. of all cases, but in my experience too much emphasis has been placed on a history of mental defect in the parents or near ancestors, and I believe that future research will show that more than a quarter of all cases of mental defect are due to acquired factors.

In actual practice it is not always easy, or even possible, to determine whether mental defect is innate or acquired, and doubtless in the causation of some cases both groups