

## CHAPTER XXVI.—PUBLIC HEALTH AND BENEVOLENCE.

The rapid increase in the numbers committed to our various institutions, such as mental hospitals for the insane, feeble-minded and epileptic; the alleged increase in juvenile crime and the extension of social work in this field; the increasing number of institutions for the care of the aged and incurable, as well as for the care of dependent, neglected and handicapped children, have been a marked feature of the twentieth century. In this new and important field statistical data are collected and results analyzed and published in leading countries. Although the difficulties encountered in building up statistics on a uniform basis in Canada have been many, owing to the fact that most of these institutions are under provincial jurisdiction with overlapping fiscal years and different methods of administration, a definite effort has now been made (see Section 3 of this chapter) to correlate these statistics on a Dominion-wide basis.

The problems that confront social workers are largely problems of dependency, and a great many may be regarded as the resultants or by-products of industrial and economic changes. Among these problems may be considered ill-health, unemployment, mental strain and kindred situations in which the family or the individual finds it impossible to get along without assistance from the Government and the community.

In any comprehensive study of the situation it is essential that, besides health and hospitalization records, social statistics should also receive attention. Statistics regarding the number of children placed in foster homes, free family homes, number of children adopted, number of children cared for in day nurseries, the institutional care of juvenile delinquents, the numbers of dependent, neglected and handicapped children receiving institutional care, fuller and more accurate data concerning inmates in our mental institutions, institutions for the feeble-minded, county asylums, county almshouses, poorhouses, etc., are becoming absolutely necessary to the proper drafting of social legislation and in order to deal with the problems of civilization, growing more complex day by day.

As public and private charity work together for the amelioration of conditions covering the dependent and neglected, the proper treatment of defectives and the reclamation of the delinquent, the problem is made more difficult of statistical measurement, although the tendency to-day in most parts of Canada is to remove the responsibility of social work from the shoulders of individuals and private agencies and to regard it as more in the nature of a public responsibility. The growth in recent years of the most cordial relationships between governmental bodies and social welfare workers in the fields of school care and child welfare movements is manifested in the number of Child Welfare Acts in force in the various provinces of Canada.