

Delinquent, Defective, and Dependent Classes in the United States

II.—Defective Classes¹

By F. W. Hewes

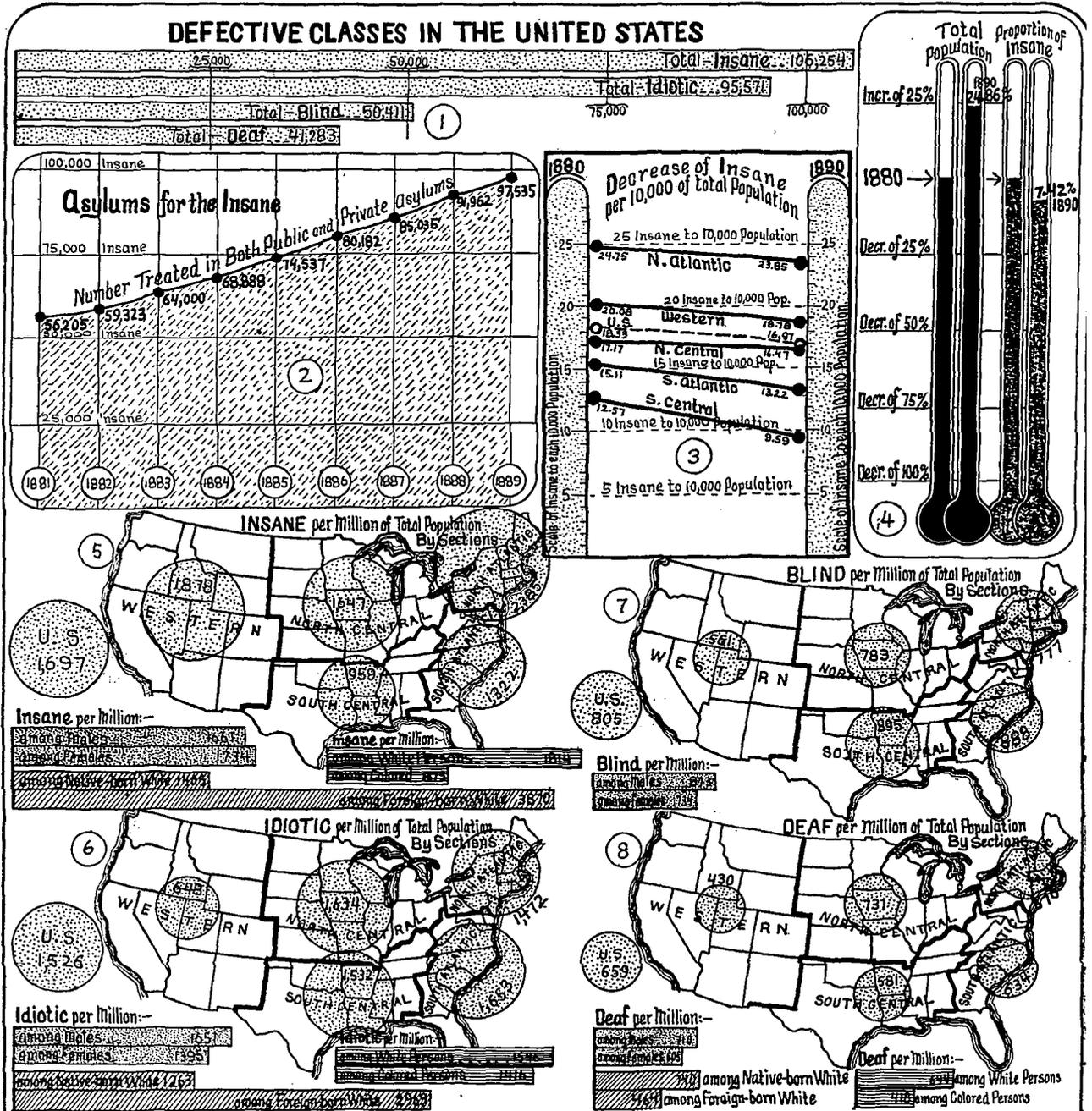
The several exhibits given below portray the distribution and graphically present many other interesting facts relative to the defective population of our country. The previous paper in The Outlook of March 7 showed how large an element (that of criminal population) calls for the repressive forces of society. This study invites attention to one division: (Defectives) of the greatly larger element which calls for the exercise of the sympathetic and ameliorating forces of civilization.

It will be noted by the measuring-bars (exhibit No. 1) that the insane considerably outnumber the feeble-minded (idiotic); and readers who recall the preceding paper (on Delinquents) will notice that the insane also outnumber, by more than twenty thousand, the total criminals in all the jails, prisons, and penitentiaries of the country.

¹ The first paper (on Delinquent Classes) was published in The Outlook for March 7.

It is, therefore, a wise charity that provides asylums for the care and cure of this large class of afflicted persons. It is also encouraging to know that public sentiment is responding to this provision. Twenty years ago there was a strong prejudice against placing insane persons in asylums. Even in 1880 the census found only about half of the insane in asylums; while that of 1890 found nine-tenths of them under asylum treatment, and nearly all of these (over 90 per cent.) were in public institutions. This response is graphically shown in exhibit No. 2.

Another gratifying report of the census of 1890 is presented in exhibit No. 3, which shows—considering the two censuses equally reliable—that in all sections of the United States the proportion of insane is less than in 1880. This phase of the count is emphasized by exhibit No. 4, which presents the increase in population alongside of the decrease in the proportion of insane for the whole country.



While the mercury stands much higher in the 1890 tube of the population thermometers, it made an acceptable drop in the 1890 tube of the insanity thermometers.

The geographical distribution of the insane is shown by means of the circles on the map of exhibit No. 5. The large circle covering the North Atlantic section shows where the largest proportion of insane are found. The differences in the proportions represented by the circles are still better measured by the varying heights of the slant lines in exhibit No. 3—taking the distance of each slant line from the foot of the diagram up.

The exceedingly long bar underneath the map, in exhibit No. 5, shows that the foreign-born element of our white population contributes a much larger proportion of insane than the native-born. [This is probably due, in large measure, to the age of the foreign-born. Nearly all the children in the country are enrolled as native-born, and children are rarely insane.—THE EDITORS.] The greater proportion of white than colored insane (exhibit No. 5) is probably due, in part, to the excessive insanity of the foreign element just referred to, and also, in part, to the easy-going nature of the colored people. This comparison is in marked contrast to the similar one in the study of criminals, where, the reader will remember, the colored element furnished the extreme contribution to the convict population.

Space forbids more than a bare reference to the three other **defective** classes. The general distributions and other relations are shown by the map circles and measuring-bars, which are all drawn to the same scales used in exhibit No. 5. One of the striking features of each of the three maps (6, 7, 8) is the small size of the Western circle and the nearly uniform sizes of the other four circles of each map. Another striking feature is that the proportion of idiotic is so great in the foreign-born element (No. 6). Does the Government permit the immigration of idiots? If not, why is the ratio of the foreign-born idiotic so large, and that of foreign-born deaf and dumb so small?

The many other interesting and instructive comparisons must be left for the reader to search out unaided except by the general suggestions already made.