

THE PUBLIC HEALTH.

THE MENTAL STRAIN OF UNEMPLOYMENT.

"Happy is the man who has work and enjoys working."

Prince George, President of the National Council for Mental Hygiene, who took the chair at the inaugural session of the third biennial Conference on Mental Health, said some wise things in an address on "The Place of Mental Health in the Life of the Nation."

His Royal Highness said:—

"No one can go about the world to-day and fail to observe the great mental strain that so many persons have to endure, and to recognise how important it must be that they, and those who can help them, should know how best to meet this strain. In industrial life alone at the present time, it is sad, but true, that it is no uncommon experience to meet men and women who for years have held positions of varying degrees of responsibility, who are now out of employment through no fault of their own. To know that one's work, at any rate for the time being, has gone, to see one's wife and children on short rations, and to have to part with one's household furniture, much of which is necessary, in order to pay one's rent, must be, as I know it often is, a terrible strain on the minds of such a family. This picture is no effort of the imagination, but only too true, for I have seen it in my own experience. Many of these previously had stout hearts, but even the stoutest can bend or break provided the strain is great enough.

"It is a matter of no small satisfaction to me to know that your executive committee is in touch with some of the committees who are dealing with the great problem of unemployment, with a view to discovering in what ways you might be able to help them.

"Man is a creature who must have something to do. Happy is the man who has work and enjoys working, but in that 'all work and no play' may exact a penalty. Happier still must be the man whose life can rightly be balanced between work and leisure. To deprive a man of either is to give, shall I say, a lopsidedness to life, but to deprive a man of both may enshroud him in gloom."

Professor W. Langdon Brown (Regius Professor of Physic at Cambridge) said that in recent years we had been much impressed by the influence of the ductless gland on the character and mental outlook. Disorders of the pituitary glands might make for boastfulness, lying, thieving, and an incredible craving for the limelight. Too little thyroid gland might render a man melancholy and suspicious, too much might make a woman excitable, intransigent, and even frankly insane. To try to make sharp division between body and mind was a relic of medieval thought; they were interacting all the time.

AN ISSUE RELEVANT TO RESPONSIBILITY.

Sir E. Tindal Atkinson, Director of Public Prosecutions, in an address read in his absence, said that between the extreme types of crime lay an uncharted sea in which in almost infinitely varying degrees mental health was in fact, if not in law, an issue relevant to responsibility.

It is a hopeful augury when the holder of this position recognises the influence of mental health on criminals.

THE ANTI-NOISE CAMPAIGN.

We learn that an Anti-noise Bill is being introduced into the House of Commons by Sir John Withers, and if good wishes will help it on its way it should have speedy success.

Mr. Oliver Stanley (Minister of Transport), says a special correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph*, is engaged on a novel inquiry that may have remarkable consequences. He is closely studying the noise-producing characteristics of various types of motor horns, and the extent to which they interfere with the comfort of the community.

In one well-informed quarter there is a confident belief that the investigation will result in drastic official action. The introduction of a standardised type of horn is anticipated, and possibly even an order prohibiting the sounding of motor horns in crowded areas between midnight and seven a.m.

Mr. Stanley has not yet made up his mind, but, like many members of the Government, he has been strongly impressed by the volume of protest against unnecessary noise.

The prohibition of motor horns during hours when most people want to sleep has met with remarkable success in Paris, Brussels, Helsingfors, and other places on the Continent, and a strong plea has been made by the Anti-Noise League for its introduction in this country.

BLIND CONDEMN CHEAP SPECTACLES.

The National Institute for the Blind, 224, Great Portland Street, W.1, has endorsed a resolution passed by the National Association of Blind Workers, deprecating the sale of cheap spectacles by departmental stores. The resolution urges that action should be taken by the Ministry of Health.

An official of the National Institute states that the blind themselves take a keen interest in any measure tending to prevent blindness among the sighted community. "We are a select people," said a blind man recently, "and we have no desire that our numbers should be increased."

A THREE YEARS' SURVEY OF THE WORK OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF THE L.C.C.

As more than three years have now elapsed since the transfer under the Local Government Act, 1929, of the hospital and allied medical services in the County of London to the London County Council from the late authorities, the Central Public Health Committee charged with the administration of these services presented to the Council, at its meeting on December 5th, an extremely interesting Survey of the work with which they are entrusted—the treatment of the sick poor in hospital, the district (domiciliary) medical service and the institutional care of children under the age of three years separated from their parents. Their duties, they state, include the provision, classification and management of hospitals, their visitation and inspection, consultation with representatives of the voluntary hospitals, conveyance of cases to and from hospitals, laboratory services, training of nurses and midwives in connection with hospitals, and the direction of a very large staff, approaching a total of 18,500. They have at the present time under their management 74 hospitals (including institutions allocated for use as hospitals) in which all types of cases are treated. The annual cost of maintenance, including staffing, minor improvements and repairs, etc., is not far short of £4,500,000. We hope to refer further to this valuable Survey in our next issue.

Lord Moynihan has accepted the presidency of the Chartered Society of Massage and Medical Gymnastics.

BRITISH POSTGRADUATE MEDICAL SCHOOL.

The Governing Body of the British Postgraduate Medical School have appointed, as Dean of the School, Dr. M. H. MacKeith, Fellow of Magdalen College and Dean of the Medical School, Oxford University. Dr. MacKeith will take up his duties in the new year.

It will be recalled that the foundation stone of the new School, which will adjoin and be associated with the London County Council Hospital at Ducane Road, Hammersmith, was laid by the Chancellor of the Exchequer (the Right Hon. Neville Chamberlain, M.P.), on July 17th last.

It is hoped that the School will be open to students towards the end of 1934.

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