

THE PUBLIC HEALTH.

THE EUROPEAN MENTAL HYGIENE REUNION.

Mental Hygiene and Film Control.

During the fourth European Mental Hygiene Reunion, held recently at the Ministry of Health, and opened by His Royal Highness the Duke of Kent, the proceedings on the first day were occupied in discussing the influence of the cinema, especially upon children. Dissatisfaction was expressed with the working of the film censorship in all countries, and it was unanimously agreed that next year's Mental Hygiene Congress should be invited to urge the appointment of a psychologist on film boards of control in every country.

The discussion was opened with a paper by Dr. J. Billström, the Swedish Government Film Censor, who said that it was often argued against those who dealt with film control from the standpoint of mental hygiene that harm was done only to a few psychopaths, but not to healthy persons. The fact was that preventive measures against health disturbance were of value both for the healthy public and the psychopath. The general sense of right and the sense of values in life were susceptible to influence in many ways, and here the film should be a factor of considerable importance.

Dr. A. Repond said that his own experience had shown that those who might be called "cinema addicts"—those who used to excess the escape-opportunities of the cinema—were, in general, unstable and ill-adjusted persons. They were persons incapable of handling circumstances, and whom boredom or difficult circumstances or laziness drove to this easy method of escape from actuality.

Mr. W. Farr regarded the cinema as a serious influence on modern life with potentialities for great harm and great good. It must in some way be controlled, if not for adults certainly for children, and it would be better if the control of the cinema were in the hands of the practitioners of mental hygiene rather than in the hands of some of the people who to-day controlled the censorship.

Mental Hygiene and the Nurse.

At the second day's session of the Reunion an interesting and important session, at which Lord Feversham presided, was devoted to "Mental Hygiene and the Nurse." We quote from *The Times* report.

The Psychological Co-operation of the Nurse of Special Importance.

The discussion was opened by Dr. H. Roemer, Secretary of the German Committee for Mental Hygiene. Dr. Roemer said that the psychological co-operation of the nurse was of special importance in neurological and psychiatric clinics. Experience in institutes for neurotics during the War had shown how successfully the nurse could back up the physician if she were endowed with knowledge of mankind, intelligence, and insight. The environmental treatment of accident and business neurotics which had been introduced in Germany was built up on the influence which the whole hospital environment exerted on the patient, and here success depended above everything on the capacity of the nurse. The work of the nurse in mental hospitals was at once the most difficult and the most important.

In Germany some legal obligation fell on the nurse to prevent the procreation of a dysgenic posterity. The nurse must help the physician in explaining to the patient and his legal guardian the meaning of the sterilisation law. She must enable him as far as possible to see the object of sterilisation and to comprehend the sacrifice which the hereditarily afflicted were asked to make for the common

good. It had been shown that where the nurse was instructed in the legal requirements, and in the facts of heredity on which these were based, she could render valuable services in this direction.

Social Welfare Work.

Dr. V. Wigert, Stockholm, said that the labour of the nurse was, with justice, being demanded more and more for tasks connected with social welfare. For the care of children and of the poor, in police work, the care of cripples, and other branches of public interest, ever growing claims were made on her. In Sweden doctors were of the opinion that the fundamental training for the social worker should be that of the nurse, and that this should be succeeded by instruction given at the special institution for social work.

The mental hygiene movement had every reason to greet with pleasure the newly awakened interest of the nursing world in the care of the mentally sick. The co-operation of the nurse was necessary, not only to bring about the realisation of the mental hygiene conception in nursing proper, but to ensure that these ideas should become part and parcel of the popular consciousness.

Dr. H. Kogerer, Vienna, laid special stress upon the need of creating a feeling of confidence in the patient, particularly in the mentally sick. He said that in this the nurse, who stood between the patient and the physician, had a great part to play.

MORE PRECIOUS THAN RADIUM.

Speaking at a meeting of the British Hospitals Contributory Schemes Association at Norwich on September 18th on "Science, Industry and Health," Dr. Howard E. Collier, a member of the staff of the Department of Industrial Hygiene and Medicine in Birmingham University, made a strong plea for the preservation in hospitals of the motives of sympathy and tender pity which prompted their founders.

He might, he said, be asked how they were to get and preserve a combination of scientific efficiency and a deep human sympathy into a hospital. The answer lay in the hands of that association. They had great power and real and grave responsibilities to the hospitals they supported. If nurses were ill-fed and ill-paid or overworked there might be an outward efficiency, but there would not be preserved the spirit of quiet sympathy which was more precious than radium and much more difficult to buy. They must be sure therefore that they were not asking the staff—medical, nursing, and clerical—to make bricks in an ice-house without straw. If they decided to obtain the fullest measure of healing from the hospitals they must first consider how they could increase within them the harmonious spirit of understanding, sympathy, and true charity. That spirit was more important than science, and when it was gained the contribution which science could make would be fully felt.

The increasing complexity of modern civilisation and the constant advances in scientific knowledge had made people realise that the contribution which industrial hygiene could make to the health of the industrial community had not been fully appreciated. The health of the industrial worker formed only one part of the great work which hospitals had to undertake, but he was convinced that it was an important and neglected part of the work of modern hospitals.

As to the future, a new effort should be made to co-ordinate the State and the voluntary contributory hospital services in such a way that part of the basic cost of the voluntary system would be borne by the State, and the State service should be so altered that those patients who entered a State hospital and were also contributors to the hospital contributory schemes should have the right of free specialist consultation service.

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