

attract model nurses. But, so far as I could tell, they were not doing anything to bring that pious hope to fruition.

Oporto has also a baby welfare organisation in which 38 per cent. of the babies born in the city are voluntarily registered. Their mothers either bring them to the baby welfare or receive visits in their homes from visiting nurses who, besides seeing registered babies, do much propaganda work, that is, they visit all sorts of families and invite them to make use of the welfare.

A new crèche, all very bright and gay, receives about 100 children from a few weeks old until four, when they can go to school. Children are brought by their mothers in the morning and are given their mid-day meal free. The ground floor is used for play-rooms and the upper floor is provided with cots and cradles where the infants sleep all day and the older children have their after-dinner siesta. For fine weather there are also stretchers to sleep on in the garden.

Garden is perhaps not the right word. It is a gravelled playground well set up with swings and other playthings and having a pretty splashing pool reached from the playroom by steps under a pretty pergola.

MENTAL HYGIENE FOR CHILDREN.

In every field of activity, the first beneficiaries of Red Cross endeavour are the children. May it be the same for mental hygiene; for defects and weakness of the nervous system become manifest at a very early age, whether they result from circumstances surrounding birth, from accidents during infancy or from family antecedents.

Now, while the doctor is notified by parents or teachers of definitely abnormal or backward children, he is rarely brought into contact with less obvious cases. By combining pedagogical (examinations), psychological (tests) and medical measures, it would be possible to identify in the school—which is the normal social environment of the child—intellectual weaklings whose apparent indolence is often the outcome of pathological causes, talented but delicate children, unbalanced and perverted children from whose ranks so many psychopaths and juvenile delinquents are drawn. An investigation, carried out at the Petite-Roquette Prison in Paris, has shown that some 75 per cent. of young criminals are psychically abnormal.

The most numerous are the "difficult children," who are more or less normal from the point of view of intelligence, but present troublesome symptoms ranging from waywardness to grave defects of character, such as theft or cruelty, against which reprimands and corporal punishment are ineffectual. It is for such as these that Child Guidance Clinics were established twenty years ago in Northern America. To these clinics are referred all children whose conduct at school shows signs of becoming simply abnormal, that is to say, before they have a chance of developing into anti-social elements. Here they are examined by mental specialists who, with the assistance of social workers who give them details as to the family environment, endeavour to trace the anomalies to their origin. Of the 370 children examined in the Montreal Clinic in one year, nearly one-half were physically sub-normal; they were found to be suffering from defects of sight and hearing, nasal obstructions, morbid enlargement of the tonsils, dental caries and under-nourishment. Only 17 per cent. betrayed characteristic symptoms of mental degeneracy; 14 per cent. were nervous cases, and 18 per cent. were suffering from mental debility. Encouraging results are often achieved by the clinics; change of environment, and especially the removal of the subject from the family atmosphere, have been found particularly effective.

In the case of these "difficult children," at least 50 per cent. of whom can be restored to a normal and well-balanced existence through appropriate treatment, the task of the health bodies is clearly defined; they must have a staff of social workers to seek out cases in school and in the home and—what is perhaps even more important—to educate parents, who often fail to understand the influence of family environment on the future development of their children; they must have clinics for remedying character defects, special classes, schools and colonies for backward children, vocational institutions for unbalanced but intelligent children who can work providing they are kept under constant supervision; they must concentrate more on vocational guidance so as to diminish the number of false starts.

In primary schools, vocational guidance offers no great difficulty; experiments made during the last ten years by the Paris Committee of "l'Ecole à l'Atelier" (the School in the Workshop), in collaboration with the teacher, the doctor and a psycho-technical expert, have given excellent results. In secondary schools, which turn out intellectual rather than manual workers, the problem is less simple. Europe might do well to follow the lead of America by introducing guidance committees into the schools whereby children showing little aptitude for higher studies can be eliminated before it is too late.

The most difficult of all is the professional orientation of abnormal children whose employable value is practically nil. Yet their numbers are sufficiently high to warrant special measures on their behalf. In France, where the National Committee for the Education and Welfare of Abnormal Children has already set up forty neuro-psychiatric clinics for child defectives, a census has revealed that there are 80,000 abnormal children (exclusive of deaf-mutes and other victims of infirmities), 2,000 of whom are backward. In 1932 there were 96,000 abnormal children in the U.S.A., 68,000 in Germany and 5,700 in Switzerland. It is not enough to swell the numbers of special schools and institutions if, for lack of employment, these children must lead a miserable existence at the expense of others. What they need is a form of work adapted to their condition, and, to protect them against the inevitable competition of their healthier brethren and encourage them in their career, they should be afforded a share in the solicitude which so many admirable private bodies are extending to other types of misfortune.

The magnitude of this task in itself shows how necessary it is to preserve children against the dual menace of heredity and the anti-hygienic existence which is so often imposed upon them. If we are not careful, if we let life absorb more force than we can recuperate, progress for our children will be no more than the disastrous consequences of the general and especially nervous wear and tear which are its price. Fresh air, sunshine, rational diet, and satisfactory hygiene conditions in a peaceful family atmosphere; instead of caring for the sick, let us help all children to become strong and well-balanced men and women.

(Communicated by the Secretariat of the League of Red Cross Societies.)

THE MACALISTER ANNUAL LECTURE.

The Twelfth Annual Macalister Lecture will be delivered at the National Temperance Hospital by Sir Arthur MacNalty, K.C.B., M.D., F.R.C.P., on "The Doctor in Politics and Diplomacy," on Thursday, 24th June, at 9 p.m. Major Richard Rigg, O.B.E., T.D., J.P., M.A., F.S.A., will be in the chair. All Medical Practitioners are invited to be present, and may bring friends (ladies or gentlemen). It is an opportunity not to be missed as the occasion is sure to be a very interesting one.

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