

# Alcoholic Insanity on Increase

Psychiatry

Since prohibition there has been a continuous increase in the number of patients, insane from excessive use of alcohol, admitted for the first time to hospitals in New York State, Dr. William C. Garvin, medical superintendent of the Binghamton, N. Y., State Hospital, declared before the American Psychiatric Association. The lowest admission rate occurred in the year ending June 30, 1920, the year prohibition went into effect. The peak was reached in 1927.

Dr. Garvin also stated that the patients entering recently have been more acutely ill than were those coming to the hospital before prohibition. He said that patients, owing to the character and quantity of the liquor imbibed, appear more poisoned, there is a greater degree of prostrated

tion than formerly, confusion of the mind is more often present, and patients are more often delirious. Recovery is slower, but is also more complete.

"I am of the opinion," said Dr. Garvin, "that the changes are due to the fact that there is not so much continuous and excessive drinking among alcoholics as formerly, as it is too costly; moreover, the quality has deteriorated and is more poisonous in character. The chronic alcoholic does not drink beer any more, as this fails to have the requisite 'kick.' He drinks what he has the funds to purchase and this is chiefly the cheap so-called whiskey and gin.

"Government analyses show that the most of the hard liquors furnished by the bootleggers are obtained

from re-distilling methyl spirits, and that it is practically impossible for the ordinary bootleggers who distill to remove all the noxious ingredients.

"A surprising number of recoveries take place despite the quality of the liquor drunk. This is probably due to the fact that they are not able to drink liquor continuously as chronic alcoholics did in former days, and therefore, they are not so chronically poisoned."

Dr. Garvin expressed the belief that prohibition will never abolish the liquor traffic. He said:

"As a people, we are inclined to emotional crises, sentimentality, and to believe that the passage of a law is all that is necessary to remedy conditions and (*Turn to next page*)

## Temperament of T. B Patients Change

Hygiene

Tuberculosis patients are inclined to prefer solitary amusements and pursuits, particularly in early stages of the disease. Those who have become bed-ridden are more generally eager for social contacts. This new angle on the mental tendencies that link with physical disease was presented before the American Psychiatric Association by Dr. Clarence A. Neymann, of Chicago.

It has been a general presumption among physicians that patients suffering from pulmonary tuberculosis in its various manifestations were happy, cheerful, and if anything rather elated individuals, the psychiatrist said. This would place them in the personality class known to psychiatrists as ex-

trovert or social-minded. Dr. Neymann gave 300 tuberculosis patients in a sanitarium a test, including such questions as: Do you like excitement, like to be alone a great deal, enjoy social gatherings just to be with people, like to do the things you dream about? The test showed that 46 per cent. of the patients were introverts; that is, they preferred being alone and were more absorbed in themselves than in the world about them. Thirty-nine per cent. were classified as extroverts, the remainder were in the neutral class, in which social and solitary traits are fairly balanced.

*Science News-Letter, May 25, 1929*

## City Children Lose Idealism

Hygiene

Children of the present day who live in crowded conditions in the cities are losing a good many traits that make for happiness and strength of character, according to observations of Dr. J. S. Plant, director of the Essex County Juvenile Clinic, in New Jersey. Speaking before specialists in mental and nervous diseases, attending the American Psychiatric Association, Dr. Plant said that children who live in apartments and other crowded quarters are so closely tied to people that they cannot escape their foibles. Hence it is difficult for the coming generation to build up any hero idealism or parent idealism.

"We find very few children in these crowded families who are planning to follow their father's footsteps. This is usually ascribed to their desire to better themselves, but we wonder whether there is not this factor of having lived so closely to the father that it is difficult to identify with any satisfaction."

Crowded conditions are also stunting the child's development as a self-contained, self-sufficient individual, the psychiatrist has found.

"Where the youngster lives in rooms and neighborhoods so crowded that he is rarely alone, he does not easily develop an attitude of looking to himself for the real satisfaction of life," he said. "One sees this preserved in adult persons who seem almost afraid to be alone."

The mental strain of constantly having to "get (*Turn to next page*)

## Glands vs. Behavior

Psychiatry

The troublesome child, who makes life miserable for his family, his school teacher, the dog, and the neighbors, may be the unfortunate victim of a disordered gland system. This new explanation to account for the behavior of problem children was presented before the American Psychiatric Association at Atlanta by Dr. Louis A. Lurie, of Cincinnati. Out of five hundred cases of children with behavior disorders, fifty were found to be due to endocrine gland disturbances. The percentage is sufficiently large, he pointed out, to make it clear that every child with behavior disorder should have his

endocrine glandular system examined before he is pronounced a delinquent who is likely to come to no good end.

A report on the careers of one hundred fifty children who have had sleeping sickness in the past ten years and have changed from normal children into youthful offenders against society was made by Dr. Charles E. Gibbs, of Kings Park, New York. These survivors of sleeping sickness who have the compulsion to run wild, steal, lie, fight, or destroy following a stormy and prolonged course of mental disorder, the duration of which is not yet known, the psychiatrist said. *Science News-Letter, May 25, 1929*

## Alcoholic Insanity—Continued

to bring about human betterment. More drastic laws have recently been promulgated in order to punish more effectively violators of the national enactments. Whether they will prove successful remains to be seen, but it is highly probable that those individuals who have been accustomed to drink and have the price to purchase it, will, for the most part, continue to do so. When the profit is sufficiently attractive the illegal seller of illicit liquor will take a chance, and the purchaser will salve his conscience, if he has any scruples, by various methods of rationalization familiar to all."

Dr. Garvin mentioned that the patients first entering the State Hospitals with alcoholic psychoses come principally from the city, and there

## Lose Idealism—Continued

along" with other people is telling on the children of these families, Dr. Plant also pointed out. Adults often feel the strain of having to adjust themselves to others if they are persistently in a group for a period of time, and in present city living conditions there are children who have never known any other situation.

*Science News-Letter, May 25, 1929*

## Brain Disorders Probed

*Psychiatry*

Fundamental progress in understanding certain abnormal brain conditions, the first step toward their prevention, was reported at the meeting of the American Psychiatric Association in Atlanta, by Dr. Temple Fay and Dr. N. W. Winkelman, of Philadelphia, as a result of investigations at the new institution known as the D. J. McCarthy Foundation for Study and Prevention of Nervous Diseases. This foundation has been working for two years on problems of epilepsy and mental deficiency. It has been found that in certain mental cases there is pressure on the brain due to excessive accumulation of the cerebro-spinal fluid. The pressure causes the brain to atrophy. Tracing back the vicious chain of consequences, the investigators have found evidence that the root of the trouble may lie in the impairment of obscure structures in the brain, known as Pacchionian bodies. Further researches are in progress, it was stated.

*Science News-Letter, May 25, 1929*

The government of Australia has bought ten grams of radium, at \$500,000.

are a greater number of foreign born than native whites. The rate is relatively higher among Negroes than native whites.

The two races in which alcoholic psychoses are most prevalent are the Irish and the Slavonic, Dr. Garvin said. Of a total of 4,544 alcoholic patients admitted during the last ten years, 1,692 were Irish and 491 Slavonic. On the other hand, the number of Hebrews suffering from alcoholic psychoses is surprisingly small, totalling only 44 for the ten years.

Alcoholic insanity, as a rule, occurs principally in middle age following years of intemperate use of alcohol, but the acute phase generally develops in connection with recent excesses. *Science News-Letter, May 25, 1929*

## Unhappy Marriages

*Psychiatry*

The greatest single cause of unhappy marriage today is emotional immaturity, Dr. George Pratt, of New York, declared in a paper read before the American Psychiatric Association in Atlanta. This same emotional immaturity causes friction in the homes of taxi drivers and judges, shop girls and society matrons. It has such well-known symptoms as selfishness, intolerance, and uncontrolled impulsiveness.

"Psychiatrists are not yet ready to say that before a marriage license is granted a couple should take an examination to show whether they are mentally and nervously fit," Dr. Pratt said. "That may come a century from now. But we are ready to point out that marital friction has symptoms that the psychiatrist can often nip in the bud."

The psychiatrist can often show a husband and wife how to reconcile clashing wills or how to direct a desire for power into safer and more useful channels, he continued. Intelligence has comparatively little to do with these emotional adjustments. They are the result of home and school training, and one of the great needs of today is more parents and teachers who are emotionally mature.

*Science News-Letter, May 25, 1929*

Forest Service records show that some trees have been struck by lightning as many as seven or eight times.

A new electric machine that reknits runs in silk stockings can repair a run the entire length of a stocking in about two minutes.

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