

**A** WARNING against intemperance in the use of the radio, which it was suggested would produce mental indigestion comparable to the physical indigestion resulting from intemperate consumption of food, was issued by Dr. R. Sommer, professor of psychiatry at the University of Giessen and chairman of the German Association for Mental Hygiene, at the First International Congress on Mental Hygiene.

"We must take a stand in regard to the modern invention of the radio, which allows the individual to expose himself to a great number of impressions," Dr. Sommer said. "To be sure there is much exaggeration here, just as in the case of overeating. But if these technical achievements are sensibly used, if people are temperate in listening to music and lectures, and do not, as often occurs, try to take in in a short time an international mixture from all sorts of cities, the radio can also be used in the problems of mental hygiene."

Dr. Sommer spoke on the meaning of recreation and avocation in mental hygiene. In a wide sense, suitable nourishment and sleep must be called recreation, since this term means a rebuilding of exhausted forces, both physical and mental.

Too much food is harmful, rather than beneficial, medical and physiological investigations have shown, and Dr. Sommer suggested that too heavy a program of other types of recreation might also be harmful.

Speaking of sports as means of recreation, he said their value must always be decided for the individual case, and that sports and exercise as recreation for women should be chosen carefully with due regard for the physical make-up of women.

"I have seen often that a well-regulated and intellectually interesting avocation saves people from premature petrification and, physically, from senility," Dr. Sommer remarked in discussing the advantages of avocations as a form of recreation.

"Of course, there are various kinds of preoccupation with one or more of the arts. For me, for example, it is a source of recreation to look at a picture or statue, considering all its details; for others, the same is perhaps true in the realm of music, or they may find it in reproducing great works by playing the piano.

"It is no mere chance that a whole list of famous physicians have become known through their avocations—music, literature, etc."

# Radio Seen As Cause Of

## Heritage

**T**HE laws of heredity, working relentlessly, keep alive from generation to generation some of the most serious mental diseases, Prof. E. Rudin, eminent German psychiatrist, declared.

Prof. Rudin, who has conducted genealogical studies at the German Research Institute for Psychiatry in Munich, reported that if one parent is afflicted with manic-depressive insanity, at least 33 per cent. of the children of the family will suffer from this malady, and in addition another 33 per cent. of the children will be mentally abnormal in some other fashion.

If one of the parents suffers from Huntington's chorea, which is a severe form of St. Vitus dance, then about 50 per cent. of the children will have the same hereditary disease, he has found. Among parents who have dementia praecox, about 50 per cent. of the children are mentally defective.

Voluntary sterilization of the hereditarily diseased or hereditarily defective was advocated by Prof. Rudin, as the most suitable measure to lessen the suffering caused by these diseases.

"Eugenics means an enormous saving of useless, or partially unsatisfactory mental hygiene," Prof. Rudin emphasized.

## Prevention

**T**HERE would be just as much sense in sending the case of scarlet fever to a reformatory as in sending a delinquent schoolboy to jail."

So declared Dr. Haven Emerson, professor of public health administration at the College of Physicians and Surgeons in New York City, before the opening meeting of the First International Congress on Mental Hygiene.

Public health work can no longer be limited to the control of communicable disease, correction of physical defects in children or safeguarding the lives of mothers and children in childbirth. It must also include prevention of mental disease and correction of defects in nervous and emotional control, Dr. Emerson said.

"The health officer must begin to ask himself such questions as: Will the psychiatrist get to the mean, lazy ne'er-do-well before the policeman does? Will the bully, the fearful child, the miserable man meet a wise social

## Mental Hygienists to Modern

worker before he is forced into an institution?" Dr. Emerson continued.

"Is it not at least as important that the suicide rate has risen from 4.9 to 19.7 per 100,000 of our people in seventy years as that the diabetes death rate has done about the same?" he asked. "Is there a greater need to report upon a rising death rate from appendicitis or to analyze, publish, teach, and if possible prevent the conditions that have brought about a rise in the divorce rate from 26 per 100,000 to 68 per 100,000 in less than fifty years?"

If the Traveller's Aid stations at our city railroad terminals can show the number of runaway children, unwholesome homes, misunderstood wayward children, the too-heavy hand of discipline, they are as important to public health as collecting depots for diphtheria smears and typhoid cultures at our drug stores and hospitals, Dr. Emerson suggested.

It is just as much the province of the doctor of public health to concern himself with occurrence of temper tantrums as with the prevalence of rickets in a community. Perhaps the probabilities of truancy can be estimated on the basis of today's records of boys who have motherless homes or breakfastless mornings.

Much improvement in the field of mental health may be hoped for through preventive measures, Dr. Emerson observed. Only about one-tenth of retarded school children owe their difficulties to such causes as heredity, mental disease or epilepsy, Dr. Emerson pointed this out as an encouraging fact when considering the possibilities of prevention.

"Betterment of social, emotional and material surroundings and in particular of the parental conduct of the child's life prior to school age may result in as great benefits as we have seen among babies from the almost universal use in our cities of safe water and pasteurized milk," he declared.

## A Greater Problem

**F**OR every mentally ill patient so diseased that he is a menace to those about him, there are a hundred persons who are merely queer.

These masses of unhappy, socially

# Serious Mental Indigestion

## Consider World Menaces Sane Living

inefficient people are a greater problem than the comparatively few who commit murder or suicide or become legally "insane," Dr. Douglas A. Thom, of the Massachusetts Department of Mental Diseases, indicated in a discussion of his work to prevent children's personalities from becoming warped and twisted.

Dr. Thom showed that it is frequently the child's environment that is pathological, or abnormal, and not the child himself. Habit clinics for little children of pre-school years are working to set these children right with life so that they will grow up able to make a living and get on with other people effectively.

The clinic cannot do more than the parents will give it a chance to do, he said, for without the parents' cooperation the clinic doctor's guidance cannot be carried out.

Few of the children who are in danger of becoming anti-social individuals can be studied by psychiatrists at clinics. So, if mental hygiene is to be of practical value it must be reduced to such terms that its general principles can be applied by intelligent physicians, nurses, parents, and teachers, Dr. Thom said.

### *Childish*

**W**HEN the machine age in which we live gets to be too much for men to endure, some of them take to tobacco, chewing gum or the movies, while others take to crime, said Dr. Franz Alexander, noted Berlin psychoanalyst.

Crime, in Dr. Alexander's opinion, is essentially childish, an attempt at gratifying instinctive desires for pleasure. An economic motive may be present also, but Dr. Alexander, who follows the famous Viennese Professor Freud, believes that the instinctive, childish desire for pleasure is the fundamental factor in all crime. In some types of crime, as in kleptomania, it is obviously paramount. In other types of crime, which we are accustomed to think of as more normal, it is overlaid with the economic idea.

We should not ask why some men are criminals but why all men are not criminals, Dr. Alexander stated. He gave as his opinion that all chil-

dren start out with these criminal tendencies, but as they grow up some of them are able to satisfy their craving for pleasure in non-criminal ways.

However, our present highly organized society forces men to grow up faster and further than they are able to, and neglects their childish demands. These are apt to find an outlet in criminal acts of one sort or another.

Fortunately, the same machine age that has taken away so much of man's chance to express his individuality and to gratify his pleasure-loving instincts has given him other outlets for them in movies, chewing gum, tobacco, and our great sport spectacles.

These latter are not unlike the great circuses which wise old Caesars provided for the Roman masses. We must take a lesson from the Caesars and find a scientific substitute for their circuses, Dr. Alexander advised.

"Caesar grasped the social significance of the circus and developed it systematically. He saw in it a great chance for relief from the inner pressure into which the members of an over-organized society are forced," Dr. Alexander stated.

The most important social problem of mental hygiene in the future is to find a more satisfactory outlet for man than any we now have, he said.

"Our highly organized civilization, which repeats in intensified form the problems of older civilizations, can replace the political insight of a Caesar only by measures that rest on conscious scientific views."

### *Specialists*

**W**HETHER they know it or not, the modern father and mother are specialists in bringing up children, not because they do it so well but because their home activities are now limited to that one main task.

This sharp narrowing down of the functions of home life in America was brought to the attention of the International Congress on Mental Hygiene by Mrs. Sidonie M. Gruenberg, of Teachers College, Columbia University.

When a home was a workshop and a busy place of many activities, a housewife could maintain her status and perhaps also her self-respect if

she proved to be rather an incompetent guide for her children, said Mrs. Gruenberg. Today, if she fails as a mother, she cannot fall back upon compensating virtues as cook or laundress.

It was once considered enough if the father was a good citizen and provider. In the home today, parents are coming more and more to be judged by their success in maintaining good relationships between the members of the family.

Deploring routine and artificial conditions of the American child's life at home and at school, Mrs. Gruenberg said that growing boys and girls are appallingly unaware of alternatives, almost totally innocent of experience in the making of choices. This fact that they are not allowed to make decisions for themselves explains why modern youth is accused of being immature and irresponsible, she stated.

The opportunity to earn should be part of every child's experience, Mrs. Gruenberg also urged.

Fathers and mothers should realize that their social strivings, their money strivings, their love strivings all too often impose on their children false standards and expectations, she said. The tensions that result from these home dramas are stumbling blocks to normal growth in the littlest children, but it is in adolescence that the unfortunate home conditions take their most visible toll.

### *Teach Psychiatry*

**M**ORE than three-fourths of the patients of the general practitioner during the first ten years of his practice need psychiatric treatment, declared Dr. Edward A. Strecker of Jefferson Medical College, Philadelphia.

To meet this condition successfully, the physician should be given more training in psychiatry during his days in the medical school, Dr. Strecker advised.

The large group of patients mentioned by Dr. Strecker as needing psychiatric treatment includes those suffering from chronic organic disease, such as kidney or heart trouble, those convalescing from serious illness, and children who suffer as much from behavior problems as from physical ails. Also there is a large group suffering from functional disorders of the nervous system.

Dr. Strecker urged that the medical student be taught how to treat the mental disturbances of these patients as well as their physical disorders.