taken to deal with the question of mental deficiency in the South African Union, the necessity for such action having arisen out of the fact that the work of the institutions under the departments of Education, Prisons, etc., was found to be much hampered by the numbers of the mental defectives who were accumulating in them. Thus in one industrial school 12 per cent of the girls were feebleminded and 17 per cent were on the border line, in one reformatory 25 per cent of the boys were defective, while in a prison for older habitual offenders more than 10 per cent of the inmates were found to be seriously defective.

The author emphasizes the importance of recognizing the fact that the problem could only be solved by identifying the defective at the earliest possible school age, and indicates how the difficulty is being surmounted, the onus being thrown upon the principal of the school for calling the attention of the school medical officer to the child who is backward for longer than a certain period without a reasonable cause, while the Director of Education is made responsible for notifying the Commissioner in Mental Disorder of all defective children whether attending school or not.

The Commissioner is then required to keep a register of all mentally disordered and defective individuals, and to see that they are under proper guardianship and care, this latter duty being carried out by the medical superintendents and officers of the various mental hospitals, whose sphere of activity is not confined to the attending on the inmates of the hospitals to which they are attached, but is extended to include the area in which the hospital is situated.

These measures, apparently, do not affect the native population. The author mentions the difficulty of applying any definite standard to the intelligence of the native. He points out that, though the native has been living in close association with the European for some years, he has made little or no change in the extreme simplicity of his life. Such a persistence of custom would indicate a lack of intelligence, and the author adduces various arguments to support his view that the native is of a markedly low grade of intelligence, and that no amount of education would effect any improvement in his mental state.

Apart from the deficiency problem, reference is made to the very broad-minded and modern legislation in the matter of mental disorder. Any term, such as the word 'lunacy' or 'lunatic', which might offend susceptibilities, has been omitted, central reception houses have been established, while one section of the special Act provides for the treatment of suitable cases in the wards of the general hospitals.

T. R.

PSYCHOPATHOLOGY.


The author points out that a drunkard is not the same as an alcoholic. When he is not drunk a drunkard is normal; an alcoholic is never normal and seldom if ever is drunk. Indeed, under the influence of alcohol his
mental abnormalities are obscured, and it may be said that he is only well when he has taken his poison. Hence the craving of the alcoholic for his drink. The alcoholic practically always shows a bad family history and exhibits other nervous and mental symptoms such as obsessions, phobias, etc. There is generally abulia, with other signs of poor powers of will and attention. A definite incident can usually be found to have determined the origin of taking alcohol. This may be a fever or other illness, a period of overwork, or a psychic shock. Such events produce the characteristic 'angoisse' and 'sentiment d'incompletude'. Alcohol is only one method of combating this. It acts in the same way as a grave danger of any sort and 'mobilizes the forces' of the individual; but if the danger goes on too long, or too much drink is taken, then the reserves are used up and the depression gets worse than ever; then more alcohol is taken to cure this, and so the process goes on. The more difficult life is for an alcoholic the more will he take to drink, while if life is quite simple he may do with very little; but gradually the craving for drink becomes a definite impulsive action which becomes more and more fixed, so that everything is sacrificed to appease the craving. So far as treatment is concerned, the essential is to prevent, if possible, the development of mental depressions and to find stimuli other than alcohol to relieve them. As to the mental depressions, Professor Janet believes that they are often due to the over-education of minds not capable of undertaking the work expected of them.

R. G. Gordon.


Reasons given for suicide are either subjective—physical or emotional; or are objective, such as domestic, financial, etc. Can a death desire occur in a so-called normal person? How can we predict that such constitutes a danger in any particular individual? This latter problem is not of easy solution. Ring thinks that there are many persons who are born with a sense of inadequacy, to whom life easily becomes a burden, who are peculiarly sensitive and crave for love and sympathy. In the face of friction, such a type, with the instinctive feeling-tone of self-depreciation and abasement, is often potentially suicidal. Suggestion by example is not infrequently brought into play. It is thought that a definite suicide obsession may thus be often present in the mind, though only in the fringe of consciousness when stress is absent. The philosophy adopted towards life and future life, and McDougall's negative self-feeling instinct, play an important part. In depressed states, however, physical factors, such as faulty action of the sympathetic and autonomic systems, may be primary. Those who have repressed excessive sexual desire are frequently candidates for suicide. The antithesis of the wish to beget life is to destroy it. According to Swan, of Cambridge, an atrophied testicle is frequently found in those who commit suicide. Sexual perversions, especially homosexuality, are predisposing in sensitive natures. Both sadism and masochism may lead to suicide. Manic-depressive cases we know are always potentially
suicidal, and the author regards acute hallucinosis as also dangerous in this respect. Syphilis of the cerebrospinal type is thought to lead to self-destruction, and arteriosclerotic men occasionally kill themselves. That hysterics sometimes are suicidal is shown by an illustrative case. Psychasthenics rarely carry out a suicidal act, because of their indecision, but they occasionally make attempts.

C. Stanford Read.

[68] The causes and treatment of juvenile delinquency (continued—see May No.).—Cyril Burt. Psyche, 1922, ii, 339.

In continuing his discussion of intellectual conditions, the author finds that 4 per cent of his cases are distinctly above the average in general intelligence. The intellectual delinquent is a serious menace to society if his tendencies are not checked in youth. The writer considers that the emotional factors are far more important than the intellectual, more than half of his cases being congenitally unstable in temperament.

He classifies the commoner forms of juvenile offence, and finds that they correspond to the current psychological classification of the primitive instincts. He suggests that, at any rate with juvenile criminals, the actual offence is, in its immediate result, the natural manifestation of some primitive instinct (such as sex, anger, acquisitiveness, wandering, and so forth), with but slight modification. He considers, however, that this simple explanation is by itself adequate only for the rarer instances of delinquency in either very young or very dull and defective offenders. As a rule, in the older cases, whose intelligence is normal or nearly normal, there is in the background a highly complicated psychological mechanism.

There can be no such thing as a special and distinct condition to be named inborn criminality; almost every native impulse may, in a civilized community, become criminal. Sexual vice and crime are the clearest illustration of the author’s view, and he thinks that Freud underestimates the importance of the sex instinct during the period of latency corresponding with the elementary school career. Any of the partial and subordinate sexual tendencies may lead to a direct misdemeanor.

The writer cannot quite agree with McDougall that anger is wholly a secondary instinct, although he thinks it is advisable to explore for a primary obstructed desire as a cause of the outburst. The instinctive angry displays of the infant may take a criminal turn at an early age.

In dealing with acquisitiveness, the author believes that many young defectives show an almost reflex tendency in their petty thefts, and steal for the sake of the pretty, glittering, pocketable coins rather than for their actual value. It is commoner, however, for the child to have a desire for the object to be purchased with the stolen cash. The stolen article may be symbolic of something else which is desired. Stealing may commence as a substitutional reaction for a baulked impulse. As an explanation for the prevalence of theft appearing as a substituted safety-valve for the baulked outlet, it is suggested that acquisition, like anger, is essentially an instinct for coping with an obstacle. Acquisition differs from the
other instincts in being a cumulative process, and touches no limit. This
conspires to make it responsible for 90 per cent of crime. Diagnostic
importance is attached to the type of theft as indicating the progression
of the criminal propensities.

ROBERT M. RIGGALL.

TREATMENT.


RIVERS, considering that the conditions under which dreams are recorded
and analyzed have a great influence upon the results obtained in the analysis,
seeks a procedure whereby these factors shall be reduced to as small pro-
portions as possible. He explains the procedure which he himself has
adopted to this end, and invites criticism with a view to improving it.
Rivers holds that the thoughts associated with a dream are the more likely
to lead back to those by which the dream was determined, the more influ-
ences of other kinds can be excluded and the less the degree in which
witting processes are allowed to intervene. On the assumption that the
latent thoughts which have determined the dream during sleep continue
to be active in the half-waking period which follows it, this time and state
are ideal for its analysis. Rivers has subjected his own dreams to self-
analysis in this way, and has thus also eliminated any error which might
be introduced by a foreign analyst. In spite of all his precautions, Rivers
admits that his method is not of universal application or infallible, but
claims that it is free from certain sources of error which must accompany
the usual procedure. The matter is one of scientific rather than practical
interest.

ALFRED CARVER.