
Some Psychological Aspects of Synthetic Protoplasm.

We have been told quite frankly how insufferably dull the Bulletin has been this fall, and we are grateful for the implied compliment that it has sometimes been otherwise. We have this much to say in defense of the Bulletin, however: the squirrel page of the newspapers has contained little material for the sort of discussion our readers seem to like. Reduced income has suppressed educational fads, starved out sensational preachers, and sobered the thought of the nation.

However, the American College of Surgeons is meeting in Chicago this week, and since among the most eminent of these men you will find the inevitable five per cent who will go out of their field to philosophize, we have looked for - and found - Bulletin material in reported proceedings of the convention.

"The number of commitments to institutions for mental diseases almost parallels the increase in matriculation at colleges."

This statement, attributed to Dr. Walter Bierring, President of the American Medical Association, in a speech at the convention, has nothing in itself with which we can quarrel. Dr. Bierring has stated a sad truth of contemporary civilization; the comparison he uses has more than one signification. But taking his statement in connection with a few others made at the convention, we have plenty of material for comment.

Dr. Crile, hailed a few years ago as the inventor of synthetic protoplasm, or the creator of life, is quoted as stating that the physician of the future will have to be a psychologist (although his "psyche" is not a "soul" but a brain or a "manifestation of energy"), "for this will be made necessary by the increased nervous strain and resultant nervous exhaustion encountered in the life of the ordinary individual."

For Dr. Crile, we take it, man is nothing more than a sum total of his mechanistic protoplasms; he is awaiting the "development of such exact knowledge of the organic molecule that the chemist will be able to control the mechanism we call protoplasm in the same way that an internal combustion engine is controlled."

As long as physicians regard man simply as a machine, we can expect matriculation at insane asylums to keep pace with the growth of colleges. As long as mortal sin is regarded as hyperactivity of a ductless gland, to be treated by an injection, mental diseases will extend their ravages. Nerves and brains snap if they are asked to carry a load intended for the soul. And souls crack if they have no outlet for their sorrows.

"When the mechanism that operates the brain is understood, then there will be an accurate knowledge as to what patterns of action should be placed in the brain," continues Dr. Crile. "It will be understood that the brain itself and the character and mentality and the emotional life of the child and of man are constructed by environment - by parents, by teachers, and by society."

Perhaps there is something in Catholic protoplasm that protects it from the ravages of mental disease. By Dr. Crile's thesis there would have to be some such explanation of the fact that Catholics, in proportion to their percentage of our population, form a very small part of the insane population of the country. In our own old-fashioned way, we prefer to think that the Sacrament of Penance offers a better antidote to worry than all the extracts in the Pharmacopoeia. And until Dr. Crile upsets our thesis, we are willing to go on using the Ten Commandments as a "pattern of action" in our education.

FOLLOWER'S DAY; No Mass in the church. Masses in the hall chapels at 7:30; breakfast at 8:00.