5. Sociology.

The Awkward Age. (*Lancet, March*, 1925.) *Potts, W. A.*

Dr. Potts discusses certain difficulties which are met with in the training of adolescents between the ages of 14 and 21 years. He points out the strong tendency, which all persons have, to attempt a return to that state in which all wants are supplied by the mother. And he sounds a warning against undue indulgence of this tendency in children by parents—an indulgence which is really most selfish, although often masquerading under the guise of supreme unselfishness. Illustrative cases are quoted, which indicate the many evils which may result from imperfect development in this respect. All who deal with mal-adjusted adolescents know well how much trouble is caused by undue attachment to the mother. Dr. Potts's paper is not only a scientific contribution, but is also an attempt at advice to parents, and was delivered at a meeting of the Parents' National Educational Union. The paper admirably fulfils its intention. It has often been said that parenthood is the only profession for which no training is supposed to be required. And there is a lack of provision for the necessary training, even in the case of parents who desire instruction. We think that this paper might be most usefully expanded into a small book, which should aim at providing a not unduly technical guide to parents in the psychological training of their children. Perhaps Dr. Potts will consider this suggestion. Indeed, such a book might go further, and might point out the evil influence of undue dependence which is apparent in other departments of life. For life is, as Dr. Potts well says, a great and glorious adventure. Undue emphasis of the principle of " safety first " has many drawbacks.

M. Hamblin Smith.

Incendiarism in Adult Males. (*Lancet, June*, 1925.) *Young, H. T. P.*

Dr. Young deals with this subject mainly in the light of his experience when a medical officer at Brixton Prison. During a period of three years 36 persons were received at that prison under a charge of arson. There are also 8 other cases included, making a total of 44. This number would be too small to justify any sweeping conclusions. But Dr. Young's findings amply confirm those of other workers as regards the high percentage of mental abnormality which occurs amongst persons who commit this kind of offence, and indicate the necessity of making careful psychological investigation in every case of this particular form of crime. In the present series there were 14 cases of mental disease, and 12 cases of mental deficiency or subnormality. Some illustrative case-histories are given. And Dr. Young provides an interesting discussion of the various motives which may actuate the crime of fire-raising. He points out that arson differs from other forms of malicious damage to property, in that arson rarely follows the alleged cause as rapidly

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