Occasional Notes.

The Study of Man.

Pope long ago enunciated the doctrine that "the proper study of mankind is man," and although this has not been ignored completely, it has not been placed in the forefront of human activities, as Pope's luminous intelligence indicated.

Dr. Arthur MacDonald has recently advocated the formation in every country and district of laboratories for the study of social defectives of all kinds, and a Bill to effect this object has been before the House of Representatives in Washington. As yet, however, this has not become law, although endorsed by the approval of many medical, legal, and religious associations throughout America.

There can be no doubt that studies and careful records of the abnormal physical characters and of the unfavourable social environments of the defective classes, whether insane, criminal, immoral, or pauper, would give valuable information which would greatly help to the knowledge of means to prevent the development of these failures. It must, however, be recognised that these social defectives are merely results—end-products—of very complex social conditions, and that, valuable as such study is, it is less important than the knowledge of the conditions out of which such results have developed. These unfavourable conditions, to a very great extent, are those which obtain during the first five years of life, when children are most completely exposed to the ignorance and mismanagement of their parents.

The frightful mortality of children in the first year of life, the result, as inquiry has shown, of the most terrible ignorance, is an evidence of the amount of injury inflicted on those who survive; but evils, similar and equally injurious, are suffered during the next few years of life. During this period the predisposition to some form of social failure is already formed before the child comes under the observation of the state school.

Humanitarianism, however, has so concerned itself with the end-products of our defective civilisation, that these will long continue to absorb and attract attention, to the neglect of the

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more vital matters. The study of these social failures is, however, of great importance for their own welfare and for the light, however dim, which they may cast on the true nature of their origin, and it is the manifest duty of every state to derive as much knowledge as it can from the scientific study of its defectives. In relation to insanity this is already done to a very great extent, although there is still scope for very considerable improvement. In regard to criminals, paupers, etc., very little has been done, and the problem how these should be dealt with and the results co-ordinated is an open one.

The foundation of district laboratories for the study of the whole of these classes would probably be the best solution, but the hope of such institutions being established is indeed faint in a country hag-ridden by the spirit of party.

The National Insurance Bill.

The National Insurance Bill, although not directly affecting the members of the Medico-Psychological Association as medical men, is necessarily of interest in many aspects, but more particularly in regard to its probable effect on national morality, which in its turn must of necessity have an important influence in the national mental health.

The article in the *Zeitschrift für Politik*, by Herr Friedenberg, on "The Practice of German Labour Insurance," is of great interest and value from this point of view.

Privy Councillor Herr Friedenberg, the writer of this article, has lately retired from the position of President of the Senate of the Imperial Insurance office, after twenty years of service in this state department. His conclusions are, briefly stated, that this system has not only failed to fulfil its specific aims, but has proved a costly and inefficient failure, and has spread all over Germany the poison of popular demoralisation. State insurance he describes as a monstrous fosterer of fraud. "Parasitical lawyers," developed as a class by the system, invent baseless claims, provincial doctors are boycotted and ruined if they refuse to back them with false evidence, and the most astonishing untruths and sophisms are sworn to by the workmen claimants. These latter artificially aggravate trifling

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