EUPATHICS—A PROGRAM FOR MENTAL HYGIENE

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THE professional observers of their fellowmen have always aligned themselves in one of two opposing groups. The first group, fiercely insistent upon focusing its glance upon the possibilities of human culture, has fought for an equalization of environmental conditions. This group claims the bulk of the radicals, for since these view the successful mainly as monopolists of opportunity, they clamor for a change in order to equalize conditions. The other group, impressed by the extraordinary advantages of being well born, has leaned to an aristocratic view of life, creating kings, noble families, and the whole paraphernalia of congenitally dominant classes. Here, belong the conservatives who see in the established order of things, the supremacy of the best and, therefore, sternly resist change.

In a very large measure these two view points divide up Psychiatry and Neurology. Corresponding to the environmentalists is a group that lays emphasis, as causes of the psychoses and neuroses, upon bad training, poverty, sickness, and especially following Freud, upon vicious circles in the emotional and intellectual life arising through conflicts between personal desire and the social-ethical organization. The other group, larger in number, controlling as yet the institutions and the colleges, places the blame upon inheritance and seeks to mend matters by substituting a responsible system of mating for the present irresponsible giving and taking in marriage. Society, these workers say, must step in, forbid the marriage of the unfit, sterilize them, if necessary, and thus prevent the growth of

human weeds. From these ideas was born the goddess of right mating, Eugenia, who severely frowns on Venus, and whose followers call themselves Eugenists.

Now I have no quarrel with Eugenics and indeed am greatly interested that its work of introducing genuine good breeding into society shall go on, but I quarrel with the Eugenists who make it the whole of a program of Mental Hygiene. My objections arise on two grounds: the one, logical; the second and more important, practical. Logically because the part is not equal to the whole. Practically, because the field of Mental Hygiene which I desire to emphasize has for its aim the *well being of the normal*, while Eugenics largely simmers down to a program for the elimination of the unfit. *Eugenics* points out in charts and figures the cost of maintaining Insane Hospitals, Feeble-Minded Schools and Jails. *Eupathics*¹, its more gracious sister speaks of means by which the mood of Mankind may be elevated. Essentially, it is a democratic program seeking to irradiate throughout Society the tone and mood that now graces the lives of very few.

One must at this point meet the objection of those who are quick to take alarm at any program that savors of sentimentality. No alarm need be felt on this score for *Eupathics* is a scientific conception based on the fact that Mood, the dynamo of the psyche, can be reached and elevated in a perfectly definite manner. This entails at least a short analysis of the present day conception of Mood or feeling, for *Eupathics* holds that the problem of *Mental Hygiene* should be very largely a problem of *Mood Hygiene*.

Mood is a real source of the energy and happiness of the individual. Mind faces the world, adjusts Man to it, but Mood gives to Mind the strength and the desire to go on living or else brings about apathy and the wish to die. Mood arises from two sources. The first is the resultant of the combined functioning of the organs. Today we can correlate Mood, in part at least, with the secretion of adrenalin, the reaction of the enzymes, the oxygenation of the tissues,

¹I owe the coinage of this word to my friend, Professor Charles St. Clair Wade. I think it conveys what I mean better than any word that is used. Eudaemonism means too nearly happiness to give the idea of mood in general.

the tone of the arteries. But always Man has known that the glasses through which he viewed the world were colored by the state of his digestion, and spoke of melancholia as arising literally from retained bile, spoke of anger as splenic, etc. One is here reminded of the famous story that concerns the suicide pact made by Voltaire and the Englishman who had agreed with the sage that Life was not worth living. On the morning of the day appointed for the exit from Life, the Englishman, arriving at Voltaire's house, found that worthy busily engaged in doing away with a good meal, at the same time enjoying a risqué story. The Englishman expostulated and reminded the philosopher of his agreement. But the latter waved him aside. "Aujourd'hui," "dit il" "J'ai bien opéré."

The difference between the old and the young is largely one of mood, and could we join the sad experiences of the aged to the vigorous tissues of youth, we would still find the gay exuberance that no intellectual perception of the futility of life can check. Behind the interest we can summon for our tasks, the zeal and sureness of our actions, the consciousness of power and courage is a silent reservoir, a pressure of energy whose dimly conscious manifestation is the mood created by the unconscious organs. We have then in the general health conservation, in all programs that look to a better physical Mankind, a true Mental Hygiene program, one that gives a rationale for Health as a foundation for the Happiness of Man.

The dependence of mood upon health and energetic organs is most easily studied in the very young child. Here are no definite purposes to steady the conduct, or to obscure the change in mood, as is the case in adults. Fatigue changes the sweetest natured child of two or three into a restless, querulous, unsociable, uninterested, little creature, whose main characteristic becomes a decided negativism. And sickness plays upon the mood of a child as an organist plays on his instrument, so that every change is reflected in the child's conduct. Changes in the mood of children are really temporary psychoses and constitute a much neglected field for the study of the genesis of mental diseases.

But this is not all. Other things than the personal

bodily health create mood. The social health breeds a social mood that varies with the state of its cause. That these moods are racial in a biological sense is probably true only in very limited measure for the various ethnic strains in any large community usually have moods corresponding to their social position rather than to their racial origin. Nothing is so contagious as mood,—the preventible misery of the world acts as a tragic destroyer of buoyant mood even for those who are not actually touched thereby. The story of Buddha and his reaction to the poverty, old age, sickness and death around him is the story of us all, even though we react without definite consciousness of cause, by a cynicism and a hardness that is, after all, an armor for our too delicate souls. Though we had not an enormous machinery for diffusing social moods, in the newspaper, book, moving picture and theatre, personal contact alone bringing to us the misery of our fellows brings a toned down despair, an ever simmering discontent. The "insolence of accidents," the bitterness of injustice, every case of merit disregarded and of vice rewarded adds to a mood which takes zest from living, energy from action and graciousness from conduct. A society in which most men and women live continuously on the brink of disaster is a society whose mood is poisoned by an insidious auto-intoxication. And to preach "Don't worry" to the clear-sighted person continually foreseeing really imminent economic and social ruin is as futile as it is unsympathetic.

Eupathics looms suddenly very large. A program for promoting the health of the individual and the health of society in order that a better basic mood may arise—what then is left out? The answer is, nothing of consequence. For essentially a better basic mood is the condition of happiness and efficiency, these given their largest application. And he who steps in to conquer a disease, or who solves municipal housing problems, or prevents by a device the avoidable accident, or releases man from boredom or fatiguing drudgery, or who creates new beauty—all such are workers in Mental Hygiene, workers in the field of Eupathics. Who can measure the uplift in the mood of Man by the conquering of hookworm disease, and who can

measure the value of the vacuum cleaner to the housewife? And if a Charlie Chaplin brings the comfort and blessing of solid laughter to those not easily reached otherwise, then we must class him as a benefactor, a force working in Mental Hygiene, whatever we may think of his art.