

Nordau says, "All these increased activities, however, even the simplest, involve an effort of the nervous system, a wearing of the tissues. Every line we read or write, every human face we see, every conversation we carry on, every scene we perceive through the window of the flying express sets in activity our sensory nerves and our brain centres." The logical outcome of this cerebration carried to an abnormal degree is neurasthenia, with which all observers associate the psychopathic basis of epilepsy and insanity and predominantly feeble-mindedness, since Tredgold expresses the absolute view that environment directly impresses itself upon germ plasma, affecting it in one or more determinants, which if increased by mal-environment in the first generation extended to the second or third is cumulative in a degeneracy, increasing till idiocy is the result. The anatomical basis is, as Tredgold states, that of an inherited instability, defective metabolism and tendency to premature degeneration of nerve cells, the actual exciting cause of disease being supplied by toxins or by any of the numerous forms of stress and strain incident to modern life. What some of these are is sufficiently indicated by subjects dealt with in the many papers presented in the different sections of this annual Public Health Congress. Reverting, however, to the question of the origin, education and development of the mind and will as growing out of its experiences it will be apparent that we have forces inimical to the evolution of mind operating from two opposite poles. The one is where external impressions are wholly wanting, and the other where their impulses succeed each other so rapidly upon the eye, the ear, the nose, skin and so on as to prevent any well defined and conscious image being stamped upon the central nerve cells and so result in an insensibility to impressions almost as unfortunate as where no impres-

sion, whatever is present. It is idle, indeed, to expect conscious perceptions, ideation or thought if either no distinct perceptions rise into consciousness or, even if developed, no time for linking up associated groups of ideas in thought is given owing to constantly fresh and new external impulses too rapidly impinging on some special sense. But oddly enough while on the one side these multiplied sensations too often result in an inattention and even an unconsciousness of them,—a necessity, indeed, to prevent the brain from absolute exhaustion through attempting too long to co-ordinate multiplied sensations—there results on the other hand through an abnormal hyperaesthesia often developed when such environment as just mentioned is maintained, an unhealthy, clamant demand for something to tickle or temporarily satisfy the irritable, unstable, automatic brain centres, often approaching the state of the exhaustion of dementia. This is illustrated in the case of many feeble-minded children, who move almost constantly when awake in a purposeless manner from one thing to another and whose attention it is impossible to fix for more than a moment.

When we consider the numerous variations of the mental objective or purpose in the millions of individuals in great cities it seems hopeless to analyze the activating forces at work in them; but they resolve themselves as a matter of fact, into a few main groups whose effects we may study. For instance the home environment of a purely physical character is much the same for hundreds of thousands, differing perhaps mostly in the size of rooms and the amount of air space, in the amount and extent of warmth and sunshine. To this we may add the degree of cleanliness and the amount and character of the food supply. The sights impressed on the eye are the same for most, being chiefly walls and rows of houses often in shadow, defect-