

The Care of the Insane Pending Commitment: As one of the first steps in its work for the improvement in methods of dealing with the mentally unsound, the Illinois Society for Mental Hygiene has published a pamphlet prepared under its direction by Dr. Addison Bybee, entitled "The Care of the Insane Pending Commitment." The study deals with conditions in Cook county, Illinois.

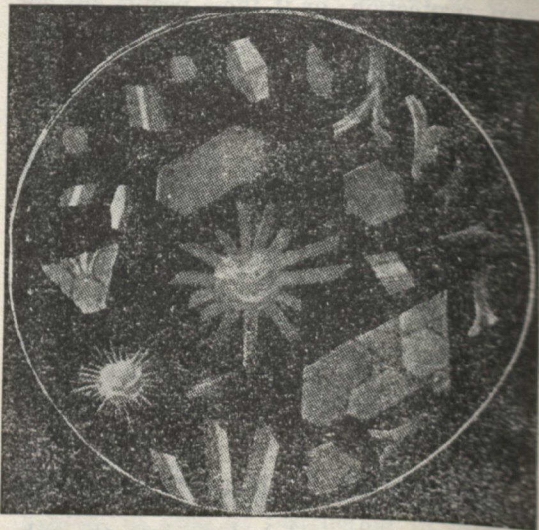
Of the 2,000 patients judged insane last year in Cook county, Illinois, 1,259 were brought in by the police and 597 had been confined in police stations. In all these cases, Dr. Bybee indicates, the patient was dealt with by machinery created for criminals, not for sick persons. The accommodation in most of the police stations were found to be repulsive and unsuited to the care of the insane.

Dr. Bybee, besides pointing out special deficiencies in the treatment accorded the mentally unsound during the process of commitment, contends that the entire theory underlying the process is absurd. "It is surely unscientific," he says, "for legal authorities to diagnose mental disease. There will always be the legal side to commitments, as there is to quarantine and other safeguards to public health, yet we do not subject the man who has smallpox or the bubonic plague to the ordeal of having a judge and jury pass upon him as to whether he is suffering from noxious disease and should have proper care. We would not dare to submit the care of the public health to laymen, and yet we allow a judge and jury unskilled in the science of medicine to pass upon a man's sanity."

Dr. Bybee cites several cases in which the court's disposition, from the medical point of view, revealed bad management. These were cases in the early stages, in which stages hospital care has its best results. The patients were subjected to the methods used in disposing of offenders against the law, and it was evident that their dismissal was regarded by judge, bystanders and friends as acts of clemency. "It was not realized," says Dr. Bybee, "that the best chance of recovery was be-

ing withheld from these sufferers, several of whom were sent back to the custody of improper persons and in some cases to become a nuisance to themselves and others."

The Boric Acid Danger: James Scott, in *The Sanitary Record*, points out that the professional controversies at present raging round the subject of boric acid as a food preservative have practically assumed the dimensions of an intellectual warfare. Outsiders must look on, he says, and wonder what are the merits and demerits of this remarkable boric or boracic acid—the two names signify the same substance—the manifestations of which, one would excusably think, ought not to so strangely puzzle the doctors and analysts.



No. 1—A solution of boric acid develops several transparent crystalline figures as the above $\frac{1}{8}$ in. magnified pinhole.

In view of this agitation and its importance in a dietetic direction, it will be worth while to make a direct acquaintance with the characteristics and composition of boric acid. It has its origin in a dull green powder called boron, which when heated burns and leaves behind it an oxide of boron—that is boric acid. The oxygen of the air combines with the residue to form this oxide.