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MENTAL HYGIENE

NATIONAL COUNCIL FORMED.

Hopes of World-wide League.

At a largely-attended and representative meeting of medical men and laymen interested in mental hygiene, held at the Royal Society of Medicine, 1, Wimpole Street, yesterday, the National Council for Mental Hygiene was inaugurated, with Sir Courtauld Thomson as its first president.

Sir Courtauld Thomson, who presided, said a most cordial and sympathetic message of welcome had been received from the National Committee of Mental Hygiene of America, and he trusted that as a result of these proceedings Great Britain would for the first time be able to take her place in the international conferences on mental hygiene, which, it was hoped, would take place in the near future. He had also seen that morning the Minister of Health, who had assured him of his sympathy and support. The National Council would direct its energies to the benefit of the whole country, but all the skill, devotion, and energy of the medical profession would be of small avail if they had not the whole-hearted support of their fellow-countrymen.

They must see to it that their fellow-countrymen lived in conditions of mental hygiene which were not inferior to the standard of physical hygiene which prevailed throughout the country. It was for that reason that he appealed to laymen to join the movement. He made the appeal without apology or hesitation, because he thought it was an honour and a privilege that they should be allowed to co-operate with the medical profession in their great and patriotic endeavour to improve the health of the people and increase the efficiency of the nation and of the world at large.

(Cheers).

Sir Humphry Rolleston, President of the Royal College of Physicians, said one was always inclined to think that medicine had reached a pitch which it would be difficult to surpass. We could, no doubt, flatter ourselves that medicine had advanced very far. The aim and object of medicine at the present time was the prevention of disease, and to that end study was now directed to the detection of very early symptoms, such as functional disorders which preceded any organic change in the body. It was with the detection of early functional disturbances that mental hygiene was closely occupied. It was often said that we were all more or less on the way to being mad. At all events we must not look on mental disorder as being something rare or, if it affected ourselves, feel any shame on that account.

Since 1908 there had been a Council of Mental Hygiene in America, which had done a great deal of work; four years ago Canada started, and about a year and a half ago a league was founded in France. There were thus three national leagues which were able to meet together and pool their knowledge. About five or six weeks ago Sir Courtauld Thomson addressed a letter to The Times, in which he pointed out the importance of this National Council.