

National Institute of Child Psychology

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It has been a common complaint of Continental and American visitors that there is no provision for the study of medical psychology in London. Especially is this true for those wishing to study child psychology. The medical profession in England has sometimes been criticized for its reluctance to accept new ideas; but in no profession, perhaps, is a conservative attitude more to be desired. Yet while this attitude sources a certain margin of safety it may at times, by its rigidity, impede progress. It is, however, now being gradually realised that the mind of the child, as well as this body, has its disorders—disorders which cannot be lightly dismissed by parental admonition, but which demand the patient investigation and experiment so fruitful in their results in other departments of clinical medicine. The need for machinery and personnel to provide adequate treatment for "the difficult child" has long been sent by physicians working in this out-patient departments of children's hospitals. To meet this, need the Children's Clinic for the Treatment and Study of Nervous and Delicate Children was started three years ago. So successful has been its work, Carried out in the face of exceptional material difficulties, that it has now been possible to reorganize the children's clinic under the ambitious title of the National Institute of Child Psychology.

What might be called the "clinical policy" is the Institute is admirable in its conception. It has been widely recognised that the "difficult child" must be investigated from this physical and the social aspect, as well as from this psychological, if any true solution of its problems is to be found. The child is studied as its living organic unit reacting to its environment. Play is an important method of self-expression for the child. In play its attitude to the world is unconsciously revealed. Its behaviour during play is therefore the starting point of the psychological investigation, which is carried out by the medical director, Dr. Margaret Lowenfeld. The social background of the child is explored by a trained social worker. On admission to the clinic each patient is medically examined by Dr. Leonard Lindsay, and a staff of specialists in this sector of medicine and surgery are the consultants of the clinic. It was decided at its conscience to be held in July of this year that the Institute should be not only a therapeutic centre, but also a training centre for social workers, teachers, and doctors who need or wish for special knowledge of the emotional difficulties of children. A provisional syllabus has been drawn up for a training course of one year; there it is a shorter course for medically qualified men and women.

The importance of this work cannot be too strongly emphasised. That it should continue, and increase is essential. For this, more money and accommodation are needed— if needs which we will be satisfied when the Institute's activities are more

widely known in medical and lay circles. Anyone wishing for additional information can obtain it from the medical director, Robert Browning's House, 19, Warwick Crescent, W.2, which is the Institute's present headquarters.