

Have You a Phobia?

By Geoffrey Shawcross

MANY PEOPLE TODAY, as in the past, have an irrational fear or phobia which robs them of much contentment in life and should, in the interests of their mental health and well-being be banished forever. Unfortunately, as this article will show, phobias are not confined to the unlettered.

Nearly every young child dreads the dark and thus has nyctophobia.

That peculiar feminine phobia—a fear of mice—known as myophobia—also causes elephants to trumpet in terror when they see a mouse as they fear it may get in one of their ears.

Fear of heights—Acrophobia—causes top apartment flats to be in less demand than lower ones; while dread of the number thirteen—triskaidekaphobia—has compelled many boardinghouse keepers, hotels, and property owners to use the symbol 12a instead. So deep-rooted is the No. 13 phobia that very few bathers will undress in a cubicle so numbered, moreover, most folk would never think of getting married on the thirteenth of the month.

That rare phobia—fear of death (thanatophobia) often saddened the life of the great Dr. Johnson who, of all people, ought to have known better.

Mussolini, largely as a result of his jail sentences when he was a socialist agitator, developed a fear of confined spaces—claustrophobia—which caused him, when a dictator and thus able to afford it—to live in unusually large rooms. Thus, whoever went to see him in his study had a thirty minute walk from the door to the desk.

The reluctance of some young men to take up coal-mining as a career, despite the much improved prospects, is due to fear of being buried alive taphephobia.

Some housewives, servants, and others, have a fear of causing fire by neglect and investigate unnecessarily. They have pyrophobia.

Those folk who are scared of being in any empty space, and simply must walk round it, most certainly never cross the empty centre—have algophobia.

There are, of course, many other phobias such as fear of germs or disease (Pathophobia), and fear of dirt (Myophobia). But lest the reader should be wearied the article will be concluded with just one more irrational fear—the dread of having a phobia, namely phobophobia.

European Soroptimists to See How Britain Cares for Old People.

THE BRITISH COUNCIL, at the request of the Soroptimist Clubs of Great Britain and Ireland, arranged a programme for a group of nine specialists in geriatrics, who are members of Soroptimist Clubs in Western European countries. They were due in London on May 11th for two weeks. Six came from the Netherlands and one each from Austria, Denmark and Norway.

Their programme began on May 12th with a talk which surveyed British practice in the care of old people given by Mr. John Moss, Chairman of the National Old Peoples Welfare Committee. In the afternoon they visited Highbury to see Church Army housing schemes for old people.

Other visits arranged for the first week were: Isleden House, Islington (May 13th), the Home Help Department at Hammersmith Town Hall (May 13th), University College Hospital (May 14th), Lansbury Lodge, Poplar (May 15th), Old Peoples Welfare Committee and a voluntary home arranged by Wimbledon Guild of Social Welfare (May 15th) and St John's Hospital, S.W.11. (May 16th).

After spending the weekend at Stratford-on-Avon, the group visited Birmingham (May 19th to 21st) and Oxford (May 21st to 22nd). The visit ended on May 24th.

Members of the group were:—

Miss Andrea Klinge, Trondheim, Norway: a member of

the Town Council and of the Board of Trondheim Municipal Old People's Home;

Miss Gerda Nielsen, Roskilde, Denmark: Chief dietician of a Copenhagen municipal mental hospital;

Dr. Anna Eleisch Rainert, Vienna, Austria: A general practitioner and lecturer;

Netherlands:—

Miss A. J. van Nienes, Leiden: Manageress of the Free Christian Federation House and a member of the Leiden Council for care of old people;

Mrs. A. P. van Rood, The Hague: Chief of the Housing Department of the Netherlands Ministry of Home Affairs;

Miss M. Serton, Utrecht: a nurse;

Dr. Wilhelmina Smidt, The Hague: A general practitioner;

Mrs. Tonken Harders, Groningen: Member of the teaching staff of Groningen School for Social Work and a member of the Board of the Netherlands Women's Institutes;

Mrs. Rubbens Franka, Helvoirt: A member for 17 years of the Rotterdam Soroptimists Club, who is writing a book on the housing problems of old people.

Alice in Wonderland.

MAY 4TH MARKED THE centenary of the birth of Alice Liddell, the original "Alice in Wonderland." The Alice of the story was the second of three sisters who later became Mrs. Reginald Hargreaves.

Her father, Dr. Henry George Liddell, was then Headmaster of Westminster School; later he became Dean of Christ Church. "Alice" was born at 15, Deans Yard and was christened in Westminster Abbey on June 17th.

Alice Liddell's great-grandfather was brother of the Ninth Earl of Strathmore, from whom Queen Elizabeth II is a direct descendant.

In connection with this link between the Bowes-Lyons and Liddells I came across a curious piece of prophetic writing. In 1908 Messrs. Longmans Green published a book entitled "Princes and Princesses." Edited by Mrs. Andrew Lang, it was dedicated to Lady Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon—at the time the Queen Mother would be eight years of age.

Visitors to Westminster Abbey may not know that here is the grave of the Queen's ancestress, Mary Eleanor Bowes. After her marriage to John Lyon, Ninth Earl of Strathmore, the family name was changed to Bowes-Lyon. Two of her direct descendants, Lady Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon and the Princess Elizabeth were married in this building. The Queen and Alice are related by blood. Alice Liddell was married in Westminster Abbey on September 15th, 1880.

One childhood delight in this beloved "Alice" come dancing through the glades of memory and as we return to the "Wonderland" and the "Looking Glass" in adult years we realise more fully the richness of the magic in this wondrous fairy tale.

"And, though the shadow of a sigh
May tumble through the story,
For happy summer days gone by,
And vanished summer glory—
It shall not touch with breath of bale,
The pleasure of our fairy tale." A. R. B.

A Thought for the Month.

Conversation—To converse is sweeter than to write. It is more natural than to proclaim formally from the platform. Conversation is an effusion from writing. It cannot be cut and dried. Our own secret will is the guide. We can go with a hop, skip and a jump through pleasing rather than peculiar channels.

The occasion gives the cue. To divine the points of sympathy between your friends and yourself. A very great charm of conversation lies in the fact that it is personality kindling personality. A. R. B.

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