

"Such is a very brief outline of venereal disease, a rough sketch without colour; every medical man will be able to fill in the colour from his own experience.

"The task of estimating the present position, and of suggesting how to deal with it, falls naturally into two divisions, military and civil. As regards the military side, we are in possession of statistics, and the plan of campaign is definite. On the civil side, we have no statistics and no plan of action."

It is hopeful to learn that the admission rate for venereal disease in our army has fallen greatly in the last twenty-five years, that for syphilis having decreased by four-fifths. Hope for the future lies in the direction of strengthening the soldier's moral character by education, in affording his physical energies free outlet in some form of sport, and in the provision of rational evening amusements.

PSYCHO-THERAPY.

II.

THE SUB-CONSCIOUS MIND.

By MISS GLADYS TATHAM.

The sub-conscious mind has also been described as the subjective, or subliminal mind. It is that part of us which lies beneath the threshold of ordinary consciousness, which appears to be independent of time or space, and which registers accurately and for all time every impression we receive and every tendency we inherit. The sub-conscious mind controls, through the brain, our nervous, muscular, vasomotor and circulatory systems. The ancients referred all emotions to the heart, but the scientist of to-day knows they originate in the grey cortex or surface of the brain. No mental operation can take place without the medium of the brain; we are joyful, sorrowful, suspicious, etc., only by the agency of the brain-cortex. Besides being the organ of the mind, the brain is also the controller of the body. It is like the centre of a telephone exchange—a message of pain, on touching something hot for example, is conveyed by the sensory (or centripetal) nerves to the grey matter of the brain, which immediately "connects" the pain-message with a motor (or centrifugal) nerve and the hand is withdrawn. The pain is only felt through the agency of the brain; if the sensory nerves were paralysed by the use of an anæsthetic there would be no pain and no corresponding motion of withdrawal. An instance of this is seen when an unconscious patient is burnt by allowing uncovered foot-warmers to remain in the bed! We can easily understand

then how every bodily function can be affected by a mental act, *e.g.*, indigestion by worry, and *vice versa*, how our mental functions may be influenced by the condition of the body. As long as our brain and our body are acting harmoniously we are unconscious of their interaction, but when one of them becomes deranged a message of pain or discomfort is telephoned to the brain, and we get our internal sensations more or less forced on our notice.

Psycho-therapy aims at restoring the bodily sensations to their proper sphere, *i.e.*, the sub-conscious mind. It is well known that the more one concentrates on the subject in hand, the less one notes one's internal sensations. In a moment of great stress severe wounds will be received unconsciously, it is after the battle has ended that the soldier begins to suffer. If we were always *conscious* of all our actions and sensations we could accomplish little. We put by our experiences in the storehouse of our minds. Many things long forgotten, *if ever* consciously noted, past experiences, memories and influences of people who perhaps never attracted our attention, all remain in the sub-conscious mind and assist in shaping our character. We all have our distinct sub-conscious individualities in contra-distinction to our conscious uniformity.

Psychology then proves that the human mind is largely sub-conscious — that the sub-conscious mind can only be reached when the consciousness is inactive or concentrated on a fixed subject, also that the sub-conscious mind is distinct from the objective or conscious mind and can retain separate memories, and lastly, that the sub-conscious mind is *amenable to suggestions*. It can give out suggestions for the guidance of the conscious mind, either from hereditary experiences or its more immediate memories, and it can receive suggestions from external sources, or from the consciousness by auto-suggestion.

This receptivity is found in persons of all ages and both sexes to a greater or less degree, but children being highly subjective usually prove excellent subjects for suggestion; one has only to watch their faithful imitation of their elders to realise this! A bad nursemaid may unhinge a child's mind by the suggestion that a policeman (*e.g.*) is a bogey-man, and the influence of this sub-conscious idea will persist long after the consciousness has banished all memory of the incident. Suggestions of a curative or educative effect are usually acted upon by the sub-consciousness with great benefit to the subject. The usual methods of making these suggestions will be considered in the next paper.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)