

THE MIND AND HOW IT WORKS. AN ADDRESS TO THE BRITISH COLLEGE OF NURSES.*

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[ABRIDGED.]

I can assume it to be true that the aim of all reasonable human beings is to add to their happiness, by seeking that which is beneficial to their interests and avoiding that which is harmful, and that if we have not realised our goal all of us here to-night wish to succeed, and to rise to positions of dignity or of comfort or to social fame; in other words, to attain full self-realisation.

It is clear that the President of the British College of Nurses, Mrs Bedford Fenwick, has achieved this, and we have here the wonderful house and organisation which her great Mind has brought about, coupled as it is with an official organ of the College, the BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING.

We are privileged to-night to see the Vice-President and some of the Council, the hierarchy of the British College of Nurses. We admire them in their exalted stations, but we are apt to forget the great effort and trouble it has been to them to order their thoughts, to train their minds, and to discipline their activities so as to enable them to secure and to maintain their coveted distinction.

It is claimed that Man is the commander-in-chief of his own mental forces; therefore he should know something about them, and it behoves him also to keep his forces alert and active. Pope said that the proper study of mankind is man, and Sir William Hamilton further added—"On earth (says an ancient philosopher) there is nothing great but man; in man, there is nothing great but mind."

The living body of man has been described as a little world set in the midst of a larger world, and although man is much the same outwardly as he was 5,000 to 6,000 years ago, in the time of Moses, yet his environment has completely changed, which is due to his Mind, and recently the increasing recognition of Mind problems, together with the added interest in psychology, have induced me to ask the question, "How does the Mind work?" and to endeavour to place the answer before you, for to no other persons in the community are facts connected with the Mind of more importance than to the doctor, the nurse and the social worker.

Psychology is not only useful for these, but also for everyday life; for it is through its study that the dullest company can prove to be cheerful and enlivening, that through it the most stupid and conventional novel may be read with pleasure, the study of old age and childhood may reveal a new significance; bores may become interesting specimens, and human personality may provide material for satisfying study and investigation. It is said that there are thousands of people walking the streets in rags and dishonour because they know not their own minds. They had fallen an easy prey to temptation, because resistance was weak and temptation strong, whilst an elementary knowledge of the value of high ideals, of the help of thrift and industry and the power of a strong will might have saved them.

The Senses the Windows of the Mind.

The senses have quite properly been regarded as supplying the necessary material to form the Mind, and for this reason the senses have been called the windows of the Mind. They are undoubtedly the main avenues to the Mind, and it is usually taught that we have five of them; but the number is much more than five. It is probably twenty at least, *i.e.*, if we include those relating to hunger, thirst and the appetites; for in touch we have the four skin sensations of pure touch, heat and cold as well as pain receptors, each provided with a separate end-organ, and

even pure touch may be regarded as of four more kinds, *viz.*: those for the deep muscles, those for the tendons, for the ligaments, and also those for the joints. In the sense of taste we have at least four varieties, *viz.*: sweet and bitter, acid and salt. In hearing we have two, *viz.*: sound and the sense of position, or of static equilibrium through the semi-circular canals. We know how sounds may sometimes make us jump. To neurasthenic persons the ticking of the clock may cause distress, to them the doors shut with a louder bang, the cinders fall on the hearth with a heavier thud, and the cups and plates clatter so that a nervous person hearing them may even jump out of bed. Noises excite and annoy, disturb and distress not so much by sound effects as by their jarring vibrations, which—even when the Mind is subconsciously asleep—are conveyed to the brain by the vestibular nerves. Further, there is the sense of sight, which enables us both to see colours and to appreciate light and shade—*itself thus a double sense.* Moreover there is the power, through pupillary accommodation, to judge distances. There is also the sense of smell, the oldest sense, and called the sense "to get and to beget," which is able to furnish the Mind with much information. If our skins were so delicate as to enable us to receive small vibrations of the air; we should feel sounds as well as hear them. Our senses were given to us to enable us the more readily to receive impressions from the outside world, and so to be in full responsive relationship to our surroundings—in other words, to lower our threshold for receptive stimuli. Some lower animal forms are provided with a thick cuticle or shell so as not to be too sensitive to outward stimuli; but man is provided in his structure and formation with many receptors, *i.e.*, he has many windows into his mind, and as it is impossible for him to add to his windows, it behoves him to keep them clean and bright, for he often sees but does not observe, and he often hears, but does not understand. You may remember Wordsworth's "Peter Bell":

"A primrose by the river's brim

A yellow primrose was to him—and nothing more!"

The Inner Meaning of the Anatomical Landmarks on the Body.

Think of the inner meaning of the anatomical landmarks on the body as seen by the student in comparison with the interpretation of the surgeon, or the meaning of the skiagram to the man in the street as compared with that of the skilled interpreter, or the cleanliness of a room as viewed by the trained nurse in contrast to the idea of the housemaid. Think of the meaning of a landscape to the artist as compared with that to Hodge who may even gaze at it daily. The critic who told Turner that he never saw a sky with colours like that received an apt rejoinder when told "Don't you wish you could?" The botanist enjoys a totally different appreciation of the trees in winter as compared to the woodman; and an astronomer's idea of a midnight walk is vastly different from that of the home-coming reveller. Man misses much because his windows are not clean, yet we have seen a great improvement of recent years in the window-cleaning industry of the Mind, for man can now by means of the periscope see round the corner. He can view the infinitely far by means of the telescope, and the infinitely small by the microscope. He can hear silent sounds with the help of the microphone, and vastly distant ones now become audible and near to him through the wireless.

A sensation from a sense is the simplest and most elementary part of the Mind, indeed a sensation is an unanalysable constituent of the Mind, for it cannot by the most persistent self-examination—described technically as introspection—be split up into anything simpler. A pure sensation is a very fleeting affair and can only be experienced during the earliest phases of infantile life; for this reason

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