

IS YOUR MIND IN FOCUS?

BY MISS M. M. SIM, S.R.N., F.B.C.N.

Some time ago a friend of mine told me, "I once spent several weeks in a nerve home where the doctor used to give a talk to his patients every Sunday night. He would say: 'Almost everyone who comes here suffering from nervous exhaustion claims to be completely run down; all of you are wound up. Until I can persuade you to unwind and run down I can do nothing for you.'" His whole course of treatment was built upon the idea of inward relaxation, and he was highly successful when he could persuade his patients actually to relax.

The problem this lady describes is familiar to us all. We realise that we ought to keep at the centre of our being a core of quietness. The question is how can we maintain this inner serenity in an environment of uproar and confusion.

The secret lies in deliberately limiting the load that falls on the mind. If you and I permit all the burdens and anxieties which emerge in our world to crowd in upon us, we soon find ourselves overwhelmed. But if we learn to restrict our mental and spiritual load, adjusting it to the strength we possess, we discover that we can not only make our way through days of heavy pressure, but also maintain an unflinching inward poise. How, then, can we limit the load on the mind?

One rule is obvious: Never permit yourself to carry two sets of burdens at the same time. Numberless people fall into this fatal habit. Some of them attempt to drag about with them not only the disappointment of to-day, but also of a thousand yesterdays; others make the mistake of carrying responsibilities of a long future. This habit of carrying yesterday, to-day and to-morrow at the same time is a source of strain. How can we break the habit? Remind yourself that the past is utterly beyond your control. Not all the tears, prayers and regrets on earth can change the slightest part of it. There the past must go! Then as you turn towards the present, remind yourself that no matter how busy life may become, you will never have to face more than one problem at a time; and by learning to manage our duties "one by one" we gain the power to manage our entire life, however complicated it may be.

A second rule is: Stop watching the results of your work, or ask our neighbours, "Have you noticed how well we did?" Will we receive recognition and promotion?

These are the mental habits of hundreds of people about us. Can such individuals ever attain inward peace? Not possibly. Their minds are overloaded. They are burdened with concern over work that must be done, and also with concern over what people will say about that work when it is finished.

What ought our attitude to be? All of us must learn to do our best and then let results take care of themselves. This is not easy, yet it is the price of abiding peace. Success, in any endeavour, is not an aim. It is a result, the result of work well done over a long period of time, but remember that no matter what we do or how we do it, some people are sure to criticise. A few are sure to commend us—others (perhaps the majority) are sure to miss the significance of our efforts; only when we put jealous rivals and incompetent critics out of our minds can we attain the inward quietness we seek.

Yet another rule is: Stop trying to explain life. Take life confidently as it is. Sooner or later we encounter disappointments which we are unable to explain. We must regard life not as a problem, but as a succession of situations to be met bravely, confidently, hopefully, and with no trace of self pity.

A final suggestion may be the most helpful of all. If

you want to live and work under pressure, "Stop being afraid." Many people are desperately afraid they will not be able to do the work expected of them, afraid they will go to pieces, afraid they are doomed to ultimate defeat. If these people could be convinced they can not only manage life, but manage it easily, their problem would be solved.

How can we gain mental concentration? There is only one way; by determined and long-continued practice. Fortunately for all of us, we can begin practising at any time and in any place. Here and now we can begin thrusting out of the mind regrets over yesterday and fears for to-morrow. Here and now we can undertake the stifling of our worry over situations we cannot control. We can practise focussing our attention on the one task immediately before us and thus gradually gain the power to concentrate all our energy on the responsibility of the moment. You and I do not need an extraordinary mind in order to live quietly, easily and effectively. All we need is an ordinary mind that can be focussed.

FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE INTERNATIONAL FOUNDATION.

The fourth meeting of the Provisional Committee for the proposed Florence Nightingale International Foundation was held at 14, Grosvenor Place, London, W.1, on March 9th. Sir Arthur Stanley was in the Chair. Miss Lloyd Still, President, Mrs. Bedford Fenwick, Chairman of the Florence Nightingale Memorial Committee of the International Council of Nurses, and Miss Musson, Treasurer, represented the International Council of Nurses. Mr. Swift, Secretary-General, and Mrs. Carter, Chief, Division of Nursing, represented the League.

The arrangements made by the League for the termination of the International Courses for the session 1933-34 were approved by the Committee.

The steps taken for the organisation of the Courses for the session 1934-35 were also approved.

It was reported that scholarships for the Courses for that session have been offered by the League (4), the National Committee of France (1), South Africa (1), Great Britain (3), including scholarships from the National Council of Nurses, the Nightingale Fellowship of St. Thomas's Hospital and the British Red Cross Society. Applications from nurses paying their own expenses have been received from Canada, South Africa and France.

Mrs. Bedford Fenwick reported that national committees have been formed in Czechoslovakia, the Irish Free State and Denmark, making a total of thirteen national committees now working for the Foundation.

The draft of the Trust Deed for the Foundation was before the meeting for discussion, and was amended and approved. It was decided to hold the inaugural meeting of the Foundation on July 5th at 3 p.m. at 15, Manchester Square. Invitations, with copies of the agenda and the draft of the Trust Deed, will be sent to the President of the International Council of Nurses, the Secretary-General of the League and to the President of the National Committees which have been formed, to appoint delegates to attend the meeting.

The next meeting of the Provisional Committee will be held in May.

VERSE.

I have seen dawn and sunset on moors and windy hills,
Coming in solemn beauty, like slow old tunes of Spain.
I have seen the lady April bringing the daffodils,
Bringing the springing grass and the soft warm April
rain.

MASEFIELD.

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