

# Royal British Nurses' Association.



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## CIVILIAN MORALE.

On Friday, June 14th, we had a fine lecture from Dr. Burnett Rae on Civilian Morale which dealt chiefly with the subject of Fear. Dr. Rae gave us many new thoughts interesting from a psychological aspect, and his humorous treatment of certain points in his remarks made his lecture the more of a pleasure to what was quite a large audience in these difficult days. He commenced his lecture by referring to St. Paul's admonition to Timothy to "stir up the gifts that were in him." He pictured the latter as a somewhat highly-strung man who suffered from nervous dyspepsia, for Paul counsels him to take "a little wine for his stomach's sake," and reminds him of the spiritual gifts he possesses, gifts to be recognised and developed in order to be effective. God had not given him the spirit of fear but the spirit of power, of love, and of a well-balanced mind.

The fear which the Apostle is referring to should not be confused with that emotion which is a normal reaction to the presence of danger; he was speaking of "funk." Fear has its value, for without it we should be constantly running into danger. The point is that we must be able to control fear, to master it, and not to allow it to master us. Courage is not the absence of fear, but the overcoming of it. If fear is merely repressed it turns inwards on the self or ego and gives rise to morbid symptoms, to anxiety neurosis and different states of tension that express themselves often in curious and abnormal ways. This repressed emotion may attach itself to some trivial physical defect, but the person concerned exaggerates the condition to an enormous degree. On the other hand, the emotion may be projected on to something external and manifest itself in a particular fear—or phobia as it is called—fear of heights or of tubes and dug-outs, open spaces, etc. The conscious mind has failed in its power of adaptation, and the unconscious mind is doing its best to function in a realm which is not its own. The form which the neurosis takes is determined largely by the natural tendency or type of the individual concerned.

The older psychologists did not recognise the very important part which the sub-conscious mind plays in man. Resistance to shock or strain depends on what we are in the depths of ourselves. Many people have within them what one might describe as "explosive materials" liable to blow up on often quite slight provocation, but it is equally true that we may have within us that which shall react well and help us to stand in the evil day or in the hour of trial.

The first step towards overcoming fear is to learn to think rightly about the danger. We should not ignore or underestimate it, but neither should we exaggerate it. In the Spanish War, Barcelona was bombed on an average twice a week, and yet the resulting casualties were no greater than those which occurred in normal times with their ordinary street traffic. It has been estimated that our chances of being struck in an air raid are about the same

as would be the chance of our winning a prize in the Irish sweepstake! We must endeavour to see things in their right proportion, and remember the many means that exist and that we can use for our protection. There is a motto, said Dr. Rae, to this effect—"Don't worry, it may never happen." He could not imagine how that could help in relieving anxiety, for it leaves the future quite untouched. We cannot avoid the possibility of danger, but we can bring certain things to our aid in the event of it. We must be confident to meet the trouble if it should happen. That is why we ought to employ well the present and not worry about the future. Great forces of evil are at work to-day, and many of the terrible deeds of the present time, although they appear deliberate, are often brought about by fear. Ultimately they imply the negation of God; they leave Him out of count. To combat fear we must have some form of faith. There are those who have faith in evil things rather than in good, who employ the forces of fear and evil to forward their purposes. What we want is a change in the direction of our faith. We must look for the good and the true and refuse to be hypnotised by danger. To explain his point Dr. Burnett Rae told how he took a friend to his golf course and offered (as his friend did not know the course) to indicate where the bunkers and other hazards lay. This he proceeded to do with the result that his friend's ball went, invariably, into the place against which warning had been given. Attention must be on the right things, not the wrong, for evil is overcome by good.

Dr. Burnett Rae concluded by drawing attention to imagination in the wider sense of the meaning of that word and indicated how imagination could become vision, vision to see that the issue of this war lies in stronger hands than ours, that an infinite mind is at work. In view of this we could get on quietly and resolutely with our task, taking no anxious thought for tomorrow: when it comes we shall be ready.

Dr. Burnett Rae was very warmly thanked for his address, which unfortunately we have had to curtail considerably.

## OBITUARY.

MISS JOANNA HUSBAND.

It was with very sincere regret that we received intimation of the death of Miss Joanna Husband, who was held in deep regard by many members of the Association who knew her. She has always taken a most friendly interest in it and its members and was a very lovable character with high professional ideals. She stayed at the club frequently in the early years of its establishment and we shall always have pleasant recollections of her pleasing ways and gentle presence in those days of nearly twenty years ago. Miss Husband was trained at the Royal Infirmary, Edinburgh, and was a founder member of the R.B.N.A.

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