

## "ART VERSUS ILLNESS."\*

### A STORY OF ART THERAPY.

By Adrian Hill.

This inspiring work, a welcome incentive to patients whose treatment demands long periods of convalescence and also to those administering to their well-being and recovery, is of extraordinary interest and originality.

Adrian Hill's sympathy with those confined to long convalescence in sanatoria, is the outcome of his own experience as a patient. In his ingenious book, "Art Versus Illness," beautifully illustrated, he evolves a practical scheme of Art Therapy, as a very real aid to recovery; and it is an enthralling story!

Of his own experience he writes: "That I am a professional artist, and that it came natural for me to return to my craft, I readily admit. The point I wish to make here is that rest, physical inactivity was beginning to pall, I was increasingly aware that time which had been 'marking time' for some weeks past was now halted and stood still—very still! and with this dread realisation came the happy discovery of how to set the pendulum in motion again, by the simple act of drawing—drawing the nearest objects to hand.

"While lazily composing my drawing, the hands of my wrist-watch began to move again, silently and unseen round the dial, and half-an-hour, nay, a full hour, winged its way with swallow swiftness. The entrance of my tea tray came for the first time as an unwelcome interruption, when for weeks its arrival had been awaited with exasperation and despair."

So gradually the author's art activity greatly interested other patients, who began to ask for advice on their own efforts, and here this part of the story is related with delightful humour and sympathetic understanding. On his recovery he writes:—

"With a return to health, however, gratitude for my own mental emancipation began to disclose itself, I was now an 'out patient' enjoying the fearful joy of complete liberty."

It so happened in the early days of 1941 that on the introduction of Occupational Therapy for service casualties, the author was approached by the resident Therapist, when, on one occasion, he came up for treatment, with the idea of simple instruction in drawing and painting for her patients, for whom other crafts had no appeal.

In spite of many misgivings, Mr. Adrian Hill consented to act on the suggestion of the Therapist, and so began a great adventure!

Of the variety of pupil patients he says: "Ill health is no respecter of persons, in particular Tuberculosis capsizes the Captain from the bridge of his battleship and confronts him instead with a life of a landlubber. It drags the perspiring young curate from out of his pulpit and tips the bank clerk neatly off his stool. It beckons the barrister, solicits the soldier, and claims the Catholic as well as the Baptist. Doctors cannot dodge it, and the stage and concert platform are both snared and captured. Our crew is complete . . . an odd medley of professions and trades!"

Chapter five on "The Personal Approach" and chapter six on "The Psychological Problem" reveal the author's exquisite skill and sound judgment on how and when lethargic and soul-sick patients can be inspired to embark on creative Art, as a means of self expression; frequently to discover, to their joy, that they possessed surprising talent, until then undreamed of! All types of patients joined in the scheme, from the student starting from scratch, to the professional artist. All to realise that "To be happily occupied is at all times a gift from the gods," and in a period of long convalescence, it is a positive saving grace.

For those non-executants, to whom pictures mean nothing, great pains are taken to make them picture conscious, by weekly lectures on old masters and modern painters, of which prints are shown and hung, that both the "bedder" and "up-patients" may study; prints of good pictures are hung and frequently changed.

In connection with this item of tuition, Mr. Adrian Hill's unflagging zeal won this concession, in spite of administrative and medical prejudice "that no picture may be hung on a wall."

Those who are familiar with Florence Nightingale's "Notes on Nursing, 1860" will once again realise that her ideas on still another subject: "The Healing of the Mind," were many years in advance of her time. She writes:—

"The effect in sickness of beautiful objects, of variety of objects, and especially of brilliancy of colours is hardly at all appreciated . . . People say the effect is only on the mind. It is no such thing. The effect is on the body too. Little as we know about the way in which we are affected by form, by colour and light, we do know this, that they have an actual physical effect. Variety of form and brilliancy of colour in the objects presented to patients is an actual means of recovery.

But it must be slow variety—i.e., if you show a patient ten or twelve engravings successively, ten to one that he does not become cold at first or feverish or even sick, but hang one up opposite him, one on each successive day or week or month, and he will revel in the variety."

"Art Versus Illness" is a mine of information in Art Therapy and no place of healing whether of mind or body can afford to pass it by.

The charming illustrations, by student patients, are indeed convincing of the inspiring uplift its teaching brings to suffering humanity and we sincerely trust will spread far; all his "Future aims" be firmly consolidated for Mr. Adrian Hill in his gracious expression of gratitude for his own recovery bestows on others an inward resource of happiness which nothing can destroy. We strongly recommend that "Art Versus Illness" should be placed in every sanatorium and hospital library, and especially in that for the nurses.

Copies are being secured by the British College of Nurses Ltd., so that members desiring further study of this most instructive work may obtain it.—A. S. B.

## NEW £1,000,000 WOMEN'S HOSPITAL PLANNED.

### TWO LONDON HOSPITALS AMALGAMATE: FAMOUS WOMEN'S INSTITUTIONS.

A new £1,000,000 hospital for women is planned as one result of the announcement of the amalgamation of two of London's oldest and best-known women's hospitals, the Hospital for Women, Soho Square, and the Samaritan Free Hospital for Women, Marylebone.

The Soho Hospital, which celebrated its centenary in 1945, is believed to be the oldest women's hospital in the world. The Samaritan was founded in 1847.

The amalgamated hospitals hope to build the new and completely up-to-date women's hospital on a suitable London site. The hospital will cost about £1,000,000 and will have between 400 and 500 beds.

It is further hoped through the amalgamation, very greatly to increase the rate of research into and treatment of women's diseases; to establish "parenthood" clinics designed to enquire into the causes of unsuccessful births and to institute post-graduate teaching in Gynaecology.

\* George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., Museum Street, London, W.C. Price 10s. 6d.

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