

THE PROFESSIONAL CLASSES WAR RELIEF COUNCIL.

A MEETING in support of the objects of the Professional Classes War Relief Council was held in the Egyptian Hall of the Mansion House, London, on February 16th, when the Lord Mayor presided over a large and distinguished assembly.

The War Relief Council is formed of representatives of a great number of professional societies and professional benevolent funds. Its objects are to find out the extent of the distress amongst the professional classes arising from the war, to co-operate with existing organizations in the work of relief, and to provide centralized assistance in directions in which it appears more economical so to do. The chief forms of assistance arranged are in matters of education, training, emigration, maternity aid and temporary employment, and in helping the families of professional men who have enlisted. It is recognized that the benevolent funds of professional societies are, and must remain, quite independent.

The Royal Medical Benevolent Fund is represented upon the War Relief Council by its President, Sir John Tweedy, and its Treasurer, Dr. Samuel West, who is also Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Council. Cases from the medical profession that are discovered by the council to be in need of assistance will be referred to the Royal Medical Benevolent Fund, and will, no doubt, receive all the help that is necessary or possible. In the case of members of some professions, however, the burden of relief measures—in the absence of adequate benevolent funds—will fall mainly, if not entirely, upon the central council. It is hoped that, to some extent, the resources of professions unaffected, or but slightly affected by the war, may be placed at the disposal of professions less fortunately situated. Thus, Sir Herbert Tree and Sir George Alexander indicated that the theatrical profession had been able to raise all the money needed so far for its own benevolent purposes, and was fully prepared to use its special facilities for raising money in aid of professional distress generally.

It was not found possible to include in the programme of the Mansion House meeting a statement as to the effects of the war upon the medical profession, but it may be pointed out that these are by no means negligible. As indicated in the report of the annual meeting of the Royal Medical Benevolent Fund, published in the last issue of the JOURNAL, members of the R.A.M.C. have been killed while carrying out their duties at the firing line, and many leave dependants in need of assistance. Other cases of need arising from this source must be expected. General practitioners, though not experiencing any slackening in the demands upon them, are likely to meet with greater difficulty in securing payment of their accounts. Practitioners on the panel find their remittances from the Insurance Committees reduced owing to the withdrawal from benefit of those who have joined the forces, while owing to the higher average incidence of sickness among the population remaining, there is no corresponding diminution in the calls upon the practitioner.

The principal speaker at the meeting was the Archbishop of Canterbury, who dealt sympathetically with the difficulties of the middle class worker as compared with the artisan receiving a similar rate of remuneration. He also indicated the effect upon architects and draughtsmen of the curtailment of building enterprises. Sir John McClure, head master of Mill Hill School, described the aims of the War Relief Council in the direction of helping members of the professional classes to continue the education of their children. He also appealed for contributions to a loan fund, and for offers of hospitality.

A resolution approving the objects of the Council was carried unanimously, and a vote of thanks was accorded to the Lord Mayor on the proposition of Major Leonard Darwin, seconded by Dr. Samuel West. Sir Edward Clarke, K.C., who was prevented by illness from attending, sent a contribution of 100 guineas.

THE late Brigade Surgeon Henry Atkins left estate valued at £29,655.

OUR BELGIAN COLLEAGUES AT HOME AND ABROAD.

DR. TACQUIN'S REPORT.

THE *Field* published last week a special supplement containing a long and striking article by Dr. Arthur Tacquin, Physician-in-Ordinary to the King of the Belgians, and formerly head of the Belgian Red Cross Hospital in the Royal Palace in Brussels. His article contains a circumstantial account of what he saw during a journey through his devastated country. The publication is a courageous act on Dr. Tacquin's part, for he recognizes that what is left to him of home and property will pay the full penalty. Not only does the article tell us what he saw but his photographs show us what he saw. There have been many photographs in many newspapers and periodicals of towns and villages systematically destroyed, but never such an assemblage as this. As page after page is turned, the meaning of the doctrine of *terrorisimus* and the miserable pettiness of the spirit of the nation which can applaud the commission of such abominations by its soldiers is brought home to us. "I have seen," Dr. Tacquin writes, "Pompeii and Herculaneum, but though 2,000 years have passed since their destruction, both these towns are in a better state of preservation than, for instance, Dinant a few weeks after the German armies had passed through it." The Germans have forbidden photographs of the results of their savagery to be taken, but Dr. Tacquin managed to avoid the vigilance of the sentinels and took the photographs, with which he appeals not only to the Allies but to the neutral nations.

But, after all, the destruction of buildings, however beautiful and however great their historic interest, is one of the lesser of the evils which Belgium has suffered. Dr. Tacquin tells of a local doctor who, by a lucky chance, escaped with his life, although hit by several bullets. He had undertaken the exhumation of the bodies of hundreds of civilians who had been shot, and who had been buried in a common grave—men, women, and children—along with scourgings from the animal slaughter house. The bodies were reburied with respect, and lists of the dead were printed and sent to relatives; but the German authorities feared such official proofs of their brutality, and compelled those who had such lists to give them up.

But mere murder, again, is one of the lesser evils Belgium has had to suffer. "No amount of money can compensate, no pity can console, those miserable women who have not only had to suffer the horrors of violation, but will, in some cases, see their agony prolonged in the reproduction of the detested barbarian; or will, in others, suffer all their lives from the loathsome contagion thus incurred." Again Dr. Tacquin tells how "in a country house near Antwerp the owner had done all he could to serve his hosts with what they wanted. At dinner he was lashed to a chair while his two daughters were stripped and made to serve the dinner naked. When the officers had done with them the wretched girls were thrown to the troops. One committed suicide and the other went mad. Now it is easier, perhaps, to understand why so many husbands and fathers fled to England with their woman-kind, fled anywhere to escape the brutalities of these apostles of Culture." "Remember," he adds, "all you Englishmen, that if the Germans ever can invade your country, this is what they will do to English women." They still hope, they have told us recently, to dictate peace in London next July.

The editor of the *Field* has written a spirited and eloquent introduction to Dr. Tacquin's article. In it he makes the very true observation that when all allowances are made for the letting loose of the brute in man, "no army in the world can be compelled continuously to carry out orders which it abhors." The supplement, we are told, is published not to stimulate reprisals, but that public opinion in this country and in neutral countries may reach a stern appreciation of the facts, for the facts have been hotly denied in Germany by men who bear names that once were as respected as any in the world. It is essential that such denials should be contradicted and given their true value. The authenticity of every photograph is guaranteed by the editor of the *Field*, and in addition to Dr. Tacquin's article the evidence brought together includes that guaranteed by the responsible Governments