

## CIVILIAN MORALE: MEDICAL ASPECTS

A meeting of the Paddington Medical Society was held on February 11, when Dr. A. BALDIE gave an address on some medical aspects of civilian morale and crime in wartime.

Dealing first with crime, Dr. Baldie said that in spite of new wartime offences and of the opportunities for looting and disorder which black-out and raid conditions presented, there had been less crime during the past winter. Crimes of violence in particular had diminished, owing to the inhibition of social activity as a result of air raids. The evacuation of large numbers of children seemed to have lessened juvenile delinquency, although the occurrence of child neuroses was more noticeable among the children who had been evacuated than among those who remained in the cities. Another factor to be considered was the drafting of large numbers of young persons of both sexes from civilian into Service life, a factor which at present had led to a reduction in sexual and other offences, though ultimately the effect might be the other way. Kleptomania was more prevalent than the reported proceedings in police courts might lead the public to believe.

Turning to a wider field, Dr. Baldie said that doctors were faced at present with many problems of group and communal life, the solution of which depended upon the application of medical and ancillary sciences; these were problems touching on nutrition, adequacy of rest, personal and social hygiene, and occupational efficiency. Such matters as sanitation and medical inspection lost a great deal of their value so long as people in industry were wrongly placed, had insufficient hours of sleep, and had to travel long distances to work. Mass anxiety was one social danger which could be avoided if it could be foreseen, or controlled if it occurred. Among the defences against such anxiety a return to religious belief might be one of the most effective for some people. The influences of ideologies of one kind or another had been somewhat demodded by the war. No doubt education in the fullest sense of the term was called for if the people were to have an understanding and appreciation of what was at stake. The stoic endurance of Londoners during the period of intensive air bombardment was a matter for pride. Dr. Baldie gave an analysis of mass anxiety, its successive phases, its possible development into panic, and its remote effects, such as the persistence of the hiding and shelter habit. There were many who were immune from the habit of going underground, though perhaps in some cases this was due to a previous claustrophobia, but there were others who at the first alarm resorted to the shelters, persistently returning there in spite of a series of quiet nights, and suggested the attitude of the escapist whose only use for life was to avoid it.

In all these conditions where there was an aggregation of people in small spaces in various conditions of emotional tension the doctor had the opportunity of serving his patients by persuasion and suggestion as well as by more peremptory action. It was important that he and all those who had to deal with groups should understand the nature and significance of habit and behaviour in an abnormal environment, and particularly the morbid reactions of one individual upon another. Such understanding might prevent in many cases months and years of neurotic disability. It was well to remember, too, that even acute panic reactions were not major diseases and did not require removal beyond the range of immediate danger. The value of activity as an antidote to fear had been confirmed in practice. Fear and pessimism were more likely to affect those who were doing nothing.

Finally, there was the need for right leadership. Dr. Baldie gave a long list of qualities desirable in a leader: physical health and fitness, intellectual and technical ability, integrity (corresponding closely to what the psychologist meant by integration), alertness and attention, and ease and quickness of response, a sense of justice, a capacity for sympathetic imagination, resoluteness, equanimity, a sense of humour, and a concise and effective philosophy which could be expressed in a few sentences. If there was any one defect from which the vast organization of civil defence suffered it was not in

the incapacity of its leaders, but in the fact that owing to the swiftness with which it had to be brought into being many of the leaders had so far not found their *métier*.

In the discussion Dr. Baldie further explained his reference to the defensive value of religious belief. He was concerned that the strong suggestive value inherent in such belief should be available for the comfort and security of those who could possess it. No doctor, of course, would insist that his patients must be religious, but to some people the comforts of religion were very real.

Dr. G. DE SWIET, from the chair, differed a little from Dr. Baldie in his conception of leader. In his view the leader must be the embodiment of average characteristics, with a good deal of greed, conceit, and verbosity. Not a little of the strength of this country, he said, was due to the fact that owing to the constitution of our people the question of leadership was not so essential as it was in some other countries, and change of leadership did not entail revolution.

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## MOBILE HOSPITAL FOR FREE FRENCH FORCES

One of the exciting escapes from France last summer was that of the Hadfield-Spears Ambulance Unit. It disappeared when the Germans occupied the country, but the members, though minus their equipment, turned up in England, followed their French comrades to camp, and resumed the care of the men they had been in France to serve. At General de Gaulle's training camp the unit has been running a hospital and canteen, and two other canteens for the Free French Forces in London have been under its control.

The unit has now got together a complete ambulant hospital for service in Africa. It can be unpacked and set up ready for work within three or four hours. It is loaded on a fleet of thirty-three vehicles, twelve of which are heavy lorries, eight smaller ones, six water trucks, five saloon cars, and one lorry for x-ray outfit with dark-room and all equipment, and another for sterilizing apparatus. One hundred patients can be looked after at one time—fifty in beds and fifty on stretchers. The personnel consists of Mrs. Spears (wife of Brigadier-General E. L. Spears, and known to a wide circle of readers as Mary Borden) and her second-in-command, eight fully qualified hospital nurses, eight V.A.D. drivers, and fifteen French orderlies. Fifteen members of the Friends Ambulance Unit, who will drive the heavy lorries, are also attached, as well as seventeen members of the American Field Service. All these men are trained in first aid, and most of them are also fully qualified mechanics. The medical staff is French, and will probably be supplemented from the French forces in the field. It includes a surgeon and a radiologist. A laboratory worker and a chemist have also been recruited.

When unloaded the hospital will consist of five tent wards, each holding twenty beds (or stretchers), with a separate tent for infectious cases, an operation tent large enough to take two operating tables, and tents for staff and for storage. Two generating plants are carried, one for the operation tent and the other for the x-ray unit. There is also a well-stocked pharmacy and a laboratory with microscope and sufficient equipment for ordinary work. The equipment further comprises an oil-burning field kitchen, easy and simple to manage, a disinfector for clothing, and the usual appurtenances of a hospital—ward screens, crutches, splints, ether inhalers, complete mastoid, dental, and ophthalmological sets, an outfit for cranial surgery, as well as the usual surgical instruments, with bandages and dressings. Supplies, including car spares, are available for six months; in other words, should the hospital be cut off from communications for six months it would be able to function completely. The only commodity it does not carry is food, which will be supplied by the French Army.

The organizers have kept the hospital on French lines as much as possible. The staff will have their own uniform and badge, and when in uniform will also wear the badge of the Free French Forces.