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A table of contents for *Journal of the Transactions of the Victoria Institute* can be found here:

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JOURNAL OF
THE TRANSACTIONS
OF
The Victoria Institute,
OR,
Philosophical Society of Great Britain.

VOL. LXV.



LONDON:

Published by the Institute, 1, Central Buildings, Westminster, S.W.1.

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1933

766TH ORDINARY GENERAL MEETING,
HELD IN COMMITTEE ROOM B, THE CENTRAL HALL,
WESTMINSTER, S.W.1, ON MONDAY, MARCH 6TH, 1933,
AT 4.30 P.M.

SIR ROBERT ARMSTRONG-JONES, C.B.E., M.D., D.Sc., IN THE
CHAIR.

The Minutes of the previous Meeting were read, confirmed, and signed, and the HON. SECRETARY announced the election of the Rev. Robert D. Kilgour, of Boston, Massachusetts, as an Associate.

The CHAIRMAN, after paying tribute to the character and work of the late Dr. Alfred T. Schofield, called upon Dr. J. Burnett Rae to read his paper on "Psychology and the Problem of Inadequacy," which had been chosen as the Dr. A. T. Schofield Memorial paper for 1933. Dr. J. Burnett Rae was then presented with a cheque for Ten Pounds by the HON. SECRETARY, the gift of anonymous donors, relatives and friends of the late Dr. A. T. Schofield.

PSYCHOLOGY AND THE PROBLEM OF INADEQUACY.

By J. BURNETT RAE, M.B., CH.B., Hon. Physician-in-charge
of the Department of Psychological Medicine, Croydon General
Hospital.

(Being the Dr. A. T. Schofield Memorial Paper)

WE are hearing to-day a great deal about what is called an Inferiority Complex, and a good deal of loose and confused thinking has centred round it. Judging by the references made in conversation and current literature to this mysterious complex, it seems to spread its net wider and become more menacing every day. I almost began my lecture by admitting that I had an Inferiority Complex, and I might have been

excused; the subject being so vast and my ability for dealing with it so inadequate, but I saved myself. For be it noted well, a sense of inadequacy in itself is not an Inferiority Complex, and if I do nothing more than convince you of this I shall have justified my existence here to-day.

Strictly speaking, the word "complex" does not denote anything abnormal. Any interest or hobby, "any system of connected ideas with an emotional tone," is a complex, but the term "Inferiority Complex" has been so frequently associated with what is pathological and objectionable, that it should not be employed when describing anything as normal and natural as a feeling of inadequacy. The misunderstanding has come about through the general public having taken over a term which was coined for the use of the psycho-pathologist.

Let me try at the outset to make this matter clear. The sense of inadequacy usually arises out of the fact of inadequacy. Under certain circumstances nothing is more natural than a feeling of insufficiency. The human child is the most helpless and dependent of all living creatures, and comes into a world that is overwhelming and dangerous. His safety lies in his dependence upon others to protect him and supply his needs. And as he grows older he does not become less, but more conscious of his insufficiency. It is the ignorant, not the wise who are self-satisfied. The man of knowledge knows how little he knows. "Into the Kingdom of Science," writes Bacon, in his *Novum Organum*, "as into the Kingdom of Heaven, one cannot enter save as a little child."

In the sphere of social life also, many feel a sense of inferiority, especially in these days when classes are more mixed and the force of tradition still remains. When an uneducated man, through some achievement or good luck—winning perhaps a vast sum of money in a sweepstake—finds himself in a social circle, or in the possession of wealth, for which he is quite unprepared, he necessarily feels himself inadequate. This is no less true of the aristocrat who through altered conditions is compelled to earn his living and adapt himself to conditions which are entirely strange. In either case the adjustment can be made, but it is not easy. No one likes to be humiliated nor made to look foolish. We are all sensitive to the opinion of our fellows: scorn, ridicule, censure, are devastating to some and painful to all.

Again, in the moral and spiritual realm everyone must feel his imperfection. On a certain level we can maintain our position, but faced with the issues of life and death we feel ourselves to be

weighed in the balance and found wanting. If our standard is high enough, whatever we achieve, we must be conscious that at the best we are unprofitable servants. And the saint even more than the sinner feels his weakness and failure in holy things, that his "righteousness is as filthy rags."

For our comfort then let us notice that this recognition of our deficiencies, this sense of incompleteness, is the very condition of progress and happiness. To have all that we want would not make for happiness. The difficulty in helping an insane person is that he has no insight, he cannot recognize his limitations, and consequently is unable to surmount them. An employer contributing an article recently to a paper said he much preferred the employee with an inferiority complex to one without it, for he invariably found that the former was the more obliging, and anxious to learn his job. The writer was using a wrong term when he spoke of an "inferiority complex," but apart from that he was certainly right. Those who are sensitive and self-critical are likely to be more conscientious and painstaking than those who have thicker skins.

It is objected that in these days of popular psychology there is a danger of our taking ourselves too seriously, and perhaps there is some truth in it. We all have our grumbles; the elderly man thinks he is too old, and the young man is sensitive about his youth. In other days these limitations were accepted as being in the nature of things, but to-day we are apt to look upon them as diseases. We attach labels to them, and wonder if we should consult a doctor!

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There is no question that the sense of inadequacy is often so overwhelming as to ruin happiness and undermine health and general efficiency; then it is morbid and may be tragic. One of the more serious consequences is the way it may prevent one from making friends and enjoying social life. The girl, for instance, who is shy and diffident is often thought conceited, rude, or stuck-up, and treated accordingly. This reacts upon her feelings of inferiority and she retires still further into her shell. This vicious circle is doubly unfortunate as the encouragement of others is just what she needs. Again, self-doubt may lead to indecision. A man cannot bring himself to take a vital step in his career because he fears responsibility or that he will not come up to what is expected of him. A girl may not be

able to decide to marry when the opportunity comes because she doubts her capacity for the rôle of wife and mother. Through such vacillation a situation may develop which is overwhelming, and this accentuates the inferiority feeling; again a vicious circle has been established.

Before leaving this aspect of my subject I should make reference, however brief, to the distress of those who suffer from morbid fears. One of the most common is the fear of insanity, or perhaps just the vague suspicion that the mind is not quite sound. This apprehension weakens confidence and will-power. It is much easier to accept a physical disability than any mental disorder.

In the past the problem was regarded as a moral, rather than a mental one, and the patient was left to minister to himself and find what solace he could in his religion, not always with the happiest results. Physical peculiarities and organ-inferiorities are often responsible for distress of this kind, and here the doctor may help. But it is our fuller understanding of the workings of the mind, more especially of the unconscious factor, which has brought in the mental expert. A man may feel quite up to scratch physically and intellectually, and know that he is competent at his job, yet have a profound sense of personal inadequacy which he cannot understand. This may have its origin in experiences or incidents of early life which he has long forgotten. An injudicious parent, an elder brother or sister, a foolish nurse, may have sapped self-confidence by constant disparagement. The child who is the butt of the class or family stands little chance of avoiding the conviction of inferiority: he feels alone, different from others and not appreciated by them. Or, if as a child he was not encouraged nor helped to develop his powers and verbalize his needs, the result will be much the same. But it can be made too hard. A child, for instance, should not be in a form far above his intellectual or emotional development. Unless for some good reason, no one should be put in a position for which he is unfitted by temperament, experience, ability or state of health, and in which he is bound to feel hopelessly incompetent.

A little reflection on the foregoing shows us that the feeling of inferiority depends largely upon comparison. It may be comparison with others of our own age or class, or with ourselves as we feel we ought to be. A mother may feel inadequate when she is unable to give the help her child is entitled to expect from

a parent. Unconsciously, she compares herself, to her disadvantage, with other mothers, or with her own ideal of what a mother should be. Comparison is valuable as a stimulant, but it may have a very depressing and harmful effect, and this raises the question of the value of competition in work and play. The real value of competition is to bring out the best in ourselves, not to place us either in a superior or an inferior position in relation to others; which it must be admitted is often the effect if not the intention of our educational methods. It is through comparison that the conviction of inferiority leads to jealousy, envy and resentment; an understanding of this helps greatly in their eradication.

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Conditions such as I have described lead to the formation of a certain attitude of mind or "life-style," and this explains the way in which the individual reacts when faced with any problem or situation involving difficulty. Circumstances which in another person would evoke determination and effective power, in this individual tend to cause confusion and collapse.

We must remind ourselves, however, that a sense of inadequacy in whatever way it may arise, is not in itself an Inferiority Complex which is a particular reaction to it. When I asked a young lady the other day to describe her father, she told me he was of the "low, unintelligent, almost criminal type," and that she had suffered from an Inferiority Complex ever since a friend had casually remarked that she took after him. One gets a little sceptical, of course, about the opinion that some children have of their parents these days, but even if she was unfortunate in her heredity there was no need for her to have a complex about it; that was her affair.

If we are to grasp the psychology of the matter we must understand that any sense of incompleteness implies a standard which we are concerned to maintain or attain. Without the standard there can be no lapse from it. This urge for completeness and attainment is one of the fundamental forces of life, and the problem of inadequacy cannot be considered at all apart from it. Superiority and inferiority, like light and shade, are complementary terms and meaningless apart from each other. It is necessary to remember this when we consider the psychological interactions which occur in connection with either one or the other. The ambition to succeed, what Nietzsche called the

“will to power,” is characteristic of a healthy life. It is not necessarily a demand for ruthless superiority in Nietzsche’s sense of the word, nor is it what we mean by a Superiority Complex. It may be the desire for equality; for a fair recognition of our place in life, and for an opportunity of making our contribution to the community. In short, it is the natural urge for self-expression and freedom.

What happens then when this urge is opposed and thwarted by a feeling of incompetence? As both the elements concerned have an emotional content a state of tension is set up and relief sought by action of some kind, either physical or mental. I shall mention the happiest solution first, but only in a word, as I wish to say something about it later on. Briefly, it is the way of courage and effort. “What matters,” says Dr. Adler, “is not the injury or inferiority, but the courage with which it is met.” By study and determination, often involving suffering, the person concerned overcomes his difficulty and solves his problem. He is then a stronger and, if his aim be good, a better man. The very difficulty, the resistance with which he meets, within or without himself, contributes to this. “Difficulties exist,” said Mr. Chamberlain, “that statesmen may overcome them.” The case of Demosthenes provides a classic illustration of this solution, for by overcoming his defect of speech he became the first orator of his age. History abounds with instances of men and women who have achieved the greatest things by overcoming obstacles and rising above their defects. But often this is impossible. There are inevitable things which reason tells us we must accept; there are aims we might like to achieve but which we come to see are not essential to us. A man discovers, sometimes after painful experiences, that he is not a superman, a Caruso, a Mussolini, nor a Jack Dempsey, and foregoes the ambition to become something for which he is not cut out; or he realizes that the game is not worth the candle. As we grow older there are things which we can no longer do and should not attempt nor grieve over.

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This capacity to accept our limitations makes for happiness and adaptability; it also makes for efficiency, because the energy saved in this way is run into more fruitful channels. We cannot be good at everything and we ought not to try. And let us not forget that the happiness of others depends upon our willingness

to recognize our natural limitations. The lady who will sing in church in competition with the choir and organ is a misfortune to the congregation. We must fit in our gifts with the needs of others, for it is not just a question of what we want to give, but also of what others require from us. It is sometimes said of British manufacturers that they do not sufficiently study the demands of their customers but try to force their wares upon them. There are people who let themselves go because they think it is good for them to express themselves. This gospel of self-expression which we hear so much about to-day can be carried much too far. Self-expression can be a positive menace to domestic and social life unless it serves the common good. We all know the person who talks to the boredom of his friends because he wants to cultivate his conversational powers. In the art of living, as in all arts, selection and the power of elimination is vital. It is often difficult to know whether we should accept our limitations or struggle to overcome them. A sense of proportion, and often the gift of humour, is required, but sometimes the knowledge which the expert can give is necessary before we can decide. When I asked a lady of mature years what time she went to bed, I was informed that her mother, a lady of ninety, insisted upon her and the other members of the family, one of whom was nearly sixty, being in bed by half-past eight. My authority was perhaps of greater value than any special knowledge in such a case.

While emphasizing the truth that acceptance of our inadequacy is often courageous and right, I would remind you that there is an unworthy and cowardly acceptance of our limitations. A General may sacrifice a position under great pressure without abandoning the aim of ultimate victory ; on the other hand, he may surrender and give up the struggle. The same is true of the individual. You will notice that in either case the issues are seen and decided upon : there is the element of choice. And even when the grounds of our choice are not fully understood there may be an intuition that they are sound ; we are satisfied, the acceptance is voluntary and the will undivided.

We must bear this in mind when we reflect on the psychology of the Inferiority Complex proper. For it is essentially a state of indecision ; the patient neither accepts his inadequacy nor can he overcome it. Let me remind you that in the situation which I am describing there is a strong desire to succeed, but the feeling of self-disparagement is also strong and is resented

because it blocks the path of the power instinct. We recall the old medical aphorism :

“ The patient says he cannot ;
 The relatives say he will not ;
 The doctor says he cannot will.”

It will be understood that the really serious conflicts occur where the primary instincts and spiritual aspirations of life are involved. The causes of the indecision, of the failure to resolve the conflict are many. The patient may have no clear understanding of the facts, of what he ought to do nor even of what he wants to do : there is a confusion of the issues and consequently the will is divided. The conflict itself—in its beginnings at any rate—is not necessarily pathological, for conflict is one of the conditions of growth. It does not lead to ill-health so long as it does not disrupt the personality. Conflict may unify personality ; we remember how in the war all sections of the community came together in a common effort. But in the situation which we are considering, the conflict is not between the personality as a whole and the resistance which it meets in the effort to realize its ideal, but is within the personality ; and a house divided against itself cannot stand.

What happens then when opposing forces are strong and the will ineffective ? Relief from the tension may be secured in one of three ways. First, one of the elements in the conflict may be thrust out of consciousness by the process we call *repression*. If it is the sense of inadequacy which is repressed, the individual will appear egotistical and arrogant. If, on the other hand, the self-assertive instinct is the element repressed, the inferiority becomes dominant and accentuated by the energy of the repressed urge. He beats a retreat from reality for he feels, or may come to feel, that he is a complete failure, ineffective and unworthy. He knows how to be abased, but never how to abound, and he may think he has committed the unpardonable sin. There is, of course, in this solution peace of a kind, the peace that comes through defeat. For the conditions of our life we are not always to blame and cannot hold ourselves responsible. But when we do feel responsible and know that we ought to alter the conditions, yet abandon the effort to do so ; when we believe that we shall never be able to take advantage of our opportunities and solve our problem as we ought—and as we know we could if only we were what we might be—the result is a weakened

personality ; and here we strike a level of self-mistrust which we can appropriately call an Inferiority Complex.

It is rare for either of the elements in the conflict to be completely repressed ; a partial repression is more usual, both self-assertion and the feeling of inadequacy forcing their way up from time to time in disguised and disturbing forms. Before I leave this aspect of my subject I should stress the fact that there is a repression which is healthy, and which I have already indicated in another connection. Perhaps suppression is a better word for that process which is employed when a person determines voluntarily to exclude from his life or attention what in his opinion is unworthy or irrelevant. Such repression makes for concentration and power ; whereas the repression forced upon the individual by circumstances which have proved too much for him, results in conflict of an endopsychic character, and this in time may produce nervous and mental exhaustion : in any case it spoils concentration through worry and anxiety.

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I can only refer to the second solution in a word. The opposing forces may be kept apart, not allowed to meet, as if in water-tight compartments. This is what we call *dissociation*. It may be slight or serious ; some of the gravest cases of mental disorder, of alternating or dual personality, are explained in this way. And in cases such as we are considering there is a fluctuation from states of inferiority to those of superiority. Take the case of a young man who was brought to me because he had on several occasions suddenly disappeared from his work, turning up a long way from home without being able to account for his conduct. Apart from this he was a conscientious and trustworthy man, but not really fitted for the exacting work in which he was engaged, consequently he was worried and wanted to get away from his job. On the other hand he felt the necessity of remaining at his work, and thought it was his duty to do so. But there was no real decision. The conflicting desires were both active but kept apart, till the unconscious, obtaining the mastery, expressed itself in automatic action, the more conscious element being temporarily repressed.

But the third solution is the one to which I would draw special attention. It is the way of evasion. When we cannot face and deal with the facts we may distort or camouflage them. If we cannot reach our goal by fair means we may use means

that are less reputable. It should be understood that this is not done deliberately, nor is it consciously realized. The self, which is thankful to have peace at any price, rationalizes to find justification for the compromise. For it is a *compromise*, between the inhibiting, obstructive forces on the one hand, and the desire for expression on the other. Both agree to give up something, and both admit to some extent the other's claim. This might seem to be the sensible solution; and no doubt it has a protective value for the moment, but in the end this defence-mechanism leads the person concerned into further difficulties, into attitudes which he cannot justify and positions he is unable to support.

Let me give you one or two illustrations to make the matter clear. A small boy, the only son of a working man, was brought to the Hospital by his father, who was greatly perturbed because the young man of twelve was constantly knocking his mother about, kicking and abusing her in spite of remonstrances, threats, and thrashings. I ascertained that his mother had always been very kind to him, in fact she had spoiled him. I then asked how he behaved at school, and if he was a bully there. "Oh, no," said the father, "the boot is on the other leg at school; he is a muff and the boys knock him about." This was a pretty obvious case. Like most spoiled children he was a bad mixer, always wanting his own way, to dominate at school as he did at home. But boys, like all children are great believers in the levelling process; they do not like their school-fellow to be either above them or below them, so they let him have it.

Now, if he had taken his licking and learned his lesson, all would have been well. But no, he did not accept the painful fact that he had a great deal to learn, that he was not really the little god which he had been brought up to think he was; he resented it, and his self-assertive instinct, his demand for superiority, which had become a habit, was not equal to the situation at school. He could not adapt himself to it and so felt inferior. He hadn't the pluck or the power to make good there, but at home he could feel superior again. And what more natural than that Nemesis should pursue the mother, the person who had spoiled him and was really responsible for his trouble. By his "frightfulness" to her he compensated his feelings of inferiority and felt adequate. There is a right kind of compensation but this was the wrong kind, characteristic of the compromise I mentioned. Treatment consisted in helping this

young hooligan, this potential wife-beater, to understand the situation, and to alter his attitude towards his school friends so that he became socially adapted and acceptable. Then his powers had a normal outlet and feeling more adequate at school he behaved reasonably at home. His mother, of course, had also to be instructed.

Another case is interesting. A boy at a preparatory school was constantly stealing sweets from the top shelf in the matron's room. When discovered he was very penitent, but the trouble persisted in spite of the fact that he was threatened with expulsion, and that his parents loaded him with sweets, to remove any desire for them. But it was always the forbidden fruit that he wanted. I discovered that when a child of three or four his nurse, a somewhat repressive person of the old school, used to punish him for any naughtiness by taking away the daily sweet to which he was entitled and placing it upon a high shelf which he could see, but could not reach. This was a humiliation and evidently made a deep impression. The boy was now compensating; he was getting his own back. It was not really the chocolates that he wanted, but the assertion of his powers. He had not of course connected the incidents, but I explained them to him. I said that it was obvious he could always get the sweets if he wished. He was big enough and clever enough every time, but I asked him to remember the next time he did it that he was behaving like a baby of four, not like a boy of twelve. This was enough.

Again, a boy of fourteen in an institution for fatherless children was brought to me by the master of the Home, who reported that he was a very good boy in his work and conduct, but repeatedly walked in his sleep. He always came into the master's room, and stood over him in a threatening attitude, his face livid with passion and his fists clenched, but when gently received would allow himself to be taken back to bed. In the morning he remembered nothing of what had happened. I ascertained that his father used to beat his mother before he finally deserted her, and the boy told me that when he was seven or eight years of age—just before he was taken from home—he had felt the desire to protect his mother and strike his father. This he could not do in real life, but in his sleep the long repressed instinct for justice and revenge was freed, and his feelings of inferiority for the time being compensated. The master who was *in loco parentis* and whom he genuinely respected

and loved became in his dream life a father-substitute. Again, an explanation was required so that the situation could be faced in consciousness and the right compensation found. To some extent this might be gained in working so as to provide for his mother and take his father's place, but a new attitude towards his father was certainly required, difficult though this might be.

A great number of cases are explained by this mechanism, but they are rarely as simple as might appear from this description of them. They are often exceedingly complicated, other instincts beside that of self-assertion being usually involved, more especially the sex-instinct.

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I would also point out that the *compensation* which is characteristic of this kind of reaction has no social or individual value, because it is unrelated to facts. An example of this is the invalid who rules through her weakness and compels the sympathy which she has failed to obtain in ordinary healthy life. A sick headache or a nervous fear may provide the pretext for avoiding some unpleasant or difficult task. We call it the flight into illness : at school it had a less dignified title. It may be said here that alcoholism and other drug habits are often the way of escape from the stress of an inner conflict. The youth who has been too much repressed may find outlet for his emotions in an orgy of drink, which by drugging self-consciousness and self-criticism liberates his instinctive nature for the moment.

It is evident that in this complex there is a strong element of self-deception. The person is pretending, unconsciously perhaps, to be something which he is not. Never having accepted his inadequacy, the painful fact is always there ready to come up, and on this account he will not place himself in any position in which his inferiority may be exposed ; at all costs he must avoid that. He can stand up to big difficulties but is afraid of smaller ones, afraid to lose something that he wants. The result of this insecurity is that he is touchy and easily hurt. He imagines that people are hostile when they are not, that he has to overcome obstacles which really do not exist, or which only come to exist because of his attitude to those around him. If you imagine hostility you tend to create it ; the person who is looking for a snub sometimes gets it. Another feature of the complex is that the person concerned makes demands upon himself and others which are unnatural and excessive. This is

understood when we remember how one extreme leads to another, excessive repression for example to excessive indulgence. So it is here, the excess of inferiority swings to excessive superiority. The key is pitched too high, and the result not unnaturally is that the sense of personal inadequacy is increased. The clever young man who has had a rather poor education and feels at a disadvantage on that account, may attach an excessive and even absurd importance to the advantage of a public school or university training, and this accentuates his feeling of inferiority and gives him a very false estimate of himself. He may be, and often is, much better educated than his fellows.

We see this reaction not only in individuals but in families. One example will suffice. I was asked to see a young patient who had a nervous breakdown following his failure to pass the Matriculation examination. Now anyone may fail in that, but he belonged to a family with a sense of social inferiority where failure was regarded as almost synonymous with disgrace. When an unnatural standard such as this is set up and failure not tolerated, there is no place for the good loser. A strain like this on human nature causes the pendulum sooner or later to swing back; vaulting ambition o'erleaps itself and falls on the other. The child not certain of winning the race will not run in it at all; the man with only one talent, afraid to risk it, wraps it in a napkin and buries it in the ground.

In addition to fear, there is an element of pride in this failure to take risks. Both inferiority and pride lie behind any excessive demand for security, whether in nations or individuals. The country conscious of inferiority is usually the most jealous of its prestige and afraid of losing it. It is often exceedingly difficult to distinguish between the superiority which is a defence-reaction from the sense of inadequacy and pride itself, so much so that we are puzzled sometimes to know whether the Inferiority Complex is the back-fire of a superiority complex or vice versa. The fact appears to be that, however they originate, whether from a feeling of superiority or of inferiority, the reactions become intermingled. The pride that apes humility, and the inferiority which masquerades as pride are in the same vicious circle—and most of us have some experience of it.

But I would enter a caveat. There is a tendency to-day always to look for hidden causes and never to assess a thing at its face value. We suppose that pride must always be a reaction from a sense of inferiority, and that inferiority is necessarily

indicative of pride ; this is unjustifiable. The one may be a true inferiority, and the other really pride. Inaccurate conclusions may be arrived at and wrong treatment follow if our knowledge of the matter is superficial. Those who are afflicted with self-doubt are often thought to be proud and to need squashing. This of course only makes them worse ; they really need understanding and encouragement.

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I have outlined some of the psychological processes involved in our subject, in order to clear the ground for my conclusions. The mechanism of an Inferiority Complex may be interesting and important, but what we all want to know is how the complex can be prevented or cured. Fortunately we live first and reflect afterwards. So long as our attitude to life generally is sound, many of these difficulties, some of which are of a temporary nature, disappear. At the outset I drew attention to the acknowledgment of inadequacy under certain circumstances as being healthy and necessary because it corresponds with the facts, and because without it the individual may be living in a fool's paradise. For a time we may get away with it, but "facts are chiefls that winna ding," and sooner or later we must face up to them. In his autobiography Mr. Churchill mentions that when he was about the age of thirty, realizing that he was not properly educated, he set about remedying the defect. That was the right response to a feeling of deficiency. trouble follows when we resent and refuse to acknowledge the defect, or weakly give in to it, for the true compensation comes only when the facts are understood and accepted. The place of psychology is to help us to see the facts aright ; often we see them awry, as in the case of the young man who had never been to college and who thought he was on that account uneducated. To assess the position truly is most important, for things are real to us in proportion as we attach significance to them. Any conviction of inadequacy, whether justified by the facts or not, has to be reckoned with and is magnified by dwelling upon it, so much so that it may overspread and obsess the entire personality. This is much more likely to happen when the feeling is divorced from the facts ; then an entirely fictitious situation may be built up in ways that I have described. But although understanding may be necessary, it is not enough. We shall be much mistaken if we think that by knowing the causes of inferiority we necessarily get rid of it.

Looking at the problem as a whole, we are driven to the conclusion that most of the trouble arises from an excessive self-centredness. There are two general attitudes to life, both of which are needed, but either of which can become overpowering. *First*, there is the introspective attitude. It has its value; the great thinkers and philosophers of the world belong to the introverted type, but the danger of it is that it may become too ego-centric. Then everything is judged by its effect upon oneself. What shall I get out of this? How will this thing affect me? The trend of mind is centripetal, from without in, towards a centre which is the ego. It is not difficult to realize that in consequence the individual is over-sensitive, for everything impinges upon himself. He craves sympathy and appreciation, but going the wrong way about getting them is thrown back upon himself. Any strong natural instinct that turns in upon the self can disturb its balance. The emotion must be directed into an objective channel. I should give a wrong impression if I suggest that this is a person of no worth; on the contrary, he is usually a man of real value. He has probed the depths of his own personality and has therefore the power to understand and help others. Nor is he necessarily selfish; quite possibly he has become ego-centric through exhaustion in the service of others. His failure is not moral but mental; his intentions may be excellent, but his attitude is wrong. Whatever the reason he has become involved in himself and detached from his fellows, afraid of what others think of him and therefore afraid to venture.

The other attitude is very different, not centripetal, but centrifugal, not towards the centre, but away from it to the world outside. This is the extravert and such a man is not easily hurt or shocked, for he does not refer things to himself. But we must not think he is perfect; he may have the defects of his virtues. Although he thinks little about himself, he may think still less about others and be superficial in his judgments. He is immersed in the affairs of life, interested, happy and confident, and surmounts many a difficulty without knowing it. As a plant thrusts out its roots to the soil and its leaves to the sun and receives what it needs, so we live by what we take in from the outside. But everything grows from a centre and it must be a centre that is living and sound.

There is a school of psychology, that of Dr. Alfred Adler, to which we are largely indebted for bringing the whole question

of inadequacy into the forefront of our thinking. This school holds that the cure for these inferiority states is only to be found in the re-orientation of the individual to his fellows. It is maintained that if he makes his *contribution* to the common good and *co-operates* with others he will not be troubled by any morbid sense of inadequacy. It is a gospel of Humanism. Now I agree that there is much here that is admirable, but it is obvious that if we are to co-operate we must have something to co-operate about, and something that will satisfy the highest instincts of our nature. A herd can wander about aimlessly or combine to injure and destroy. "It is useless," says Mr. Clutton Brock, "to tell us to take an interest in that which is not ourselves, unless there is also affirmed a something not ourselves that demands and deserves our supreme interest." My power to contribute, and to co-operate with others will depend upon the way in which I deal with certain interests and problems which are essentially personal and individual. The result will have its repercussion on others, but need not be in any way dependent upon them. "To make a moral ideal out of social service," says Professor Macmurray, "is wrong. I will go further, and say that it is, at the present moment, the greatest danger that faces our country."

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The supreme interest of the individual is his relation to God. The Fatherhood of God implies and inspires the Brotherhood of man. Each at its best is impossible without the other. But there are those who hold that belief in a righteous and loving God increases to an intolerable extent our sense of inadequacy because of the standard of perfection it imposes upon us. The strain of this, it is said, is too great for human nature. I have pointed out that any sense of inadequacy implies the demand for a fuller, completer life, and that this is a healthy human instinct, the very condition of progress and achievement. I have also spoken disparagingly of those who pretend to be something they are not. But in a real sense we all aspire to be something other than we are. He is a poor creature who is content to remain as he is: "A spark disturbs our clod." We have the ambition to be better parents or children, better friends and citizens:

"What I aspired to be,
And was not, comforts me:

A brute I might have been, but would not sink i' the scale."

The spirit of man cannot be content with a second best. His destiny is not to be at one with nature, but at one with God.

It has been often remarked that Christianity which emphasizes the greatness of this destiny at the same time declares our complete inability to attain it by our unaided effort. Hence the virtue of humility, which has always been the hall-mark of those who have maintained the highest standard. What we want is not a lower standard but a truer one. It is the standard imposed on us by others and sometimes even by ourselves that crushes us. The man of one talent buried it because he had a false standard. He compared himself to his own disadvantage with those more talented than himself, and forgot that the Master required his gift just as much as those of others. But above all he lacked faith; he was conscious of his own poverty and had forgotten the true character and resources of the Master. My consciousness of need is only of value when it passes over into the consciousness of that which can meet my need, as a feeling of cold draws one to the warmth of the fire. The trouble with some people is that they never escape from the subjective, their consciousness of inadequacy dominates and possesses the mind because it never passes over to the consciousness of that which can remove it. The result is that they are always thinking negatively, of what they haven't got and cannot do.

This negative attitude to life is often confused with *humility*, which accounts for the fact that in some minds humility is regarded as a vice rather than a virtue. They forget that the one is a self-conscious attitude, whereas the other is conscious of something greater than itself. The cure for an Inferiority Complex is not to get a Superiority one, for they are both self-conscious. Two men went up into the temple to pray. The one, comparing himself with other men to his own satisfaction, thanked God he was not like them. He had a Superiority Complex. But it was the other, the Publican who felt his unworthiness, who went down to his house justified; not because of his consciousness of sin and weakness, but because he brought them into the presence of God's holiness and love. That is a tremendous thing to do. It requires courage and it lets loose the power of God to change and recreate.

But it is objected that dependence upon God may sap a man's confidence in himself, that he should grow out of an attitude in which he looks for support and guidance. This is to ignore the facts of our position in the universe. In certain respects we

should be confident and resourceful, in relation to our fellow-men, for instance. Our attitude here should be one of personal equality in spite of social and intellectual differences. But beyond all this there is a relation in which we must be, not childish, but child-like. The child is of the nature and being of the parent, growing more and more to understand and co-operate with him, but recognizing his own immaturity. Dependence on a parent involves no humiliation to the child and gives him the confidence which he needs.

So it is here, faith in God and faith in ourselves are not mutually exclusive; they are complementary and essential to each other. In so far as a man has faith in himself, can trust his own judgment, he is in a better position to repose faith in others and in God. We remember that Christ always sought to evoke this faith. "Thy faith hath made thee whole." It is faith in God, but the man's faith. It has an objective reference, but is itself subjective. The person who has no confidence in himself is at one moment too credulous and suggestible, believing everything he is told, and at the next too incredulous or suspicious, he cannot believe anything, for not trusting himself he is unable to trust others either. But while confidence in oneself is good, it is not enough. I should be able to depend on myself, but I am in a sorry plight if that is all I can depend on. If I am in a railway train I must have confidence, not only in myself, but in the train, the driver and the whole railway system. If I cannot, I am not likely to enjoy the journey. Faith in God enables a man to be more self-reliant, for he knows that he is in touch with the source of power. He can be too dependent on others, but he cannot be too dependent on God.

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In one of his essays Archdeacon Charles reminds us that the Old Testament described Moses as the meekest man on all the earth, and he points out the significance of the meekest man of ancient Israel being also its strongest; the humble servant of God's will the greatest law-giver of the ancient world. "To be truly meek," Dr. Charles goes on to say, "one must be strong; for the meek man has forsworn his own private gains and personal ambitions and resolved to follow God's will at all costs and at all hazards. This meekness requires courage, singleness of aim, self-control, self-sacrifice. And to such the promise, naturally, is that they shall inherit the earth."

That, however imperfectly I have expressed it, is, I think, the Christian solution of the problem of inadequacy, and looking at it from the viewpoint of psychology and alongside the facts which I have put before you, I can see no better solution and no other. It depends upon the introduction of a new fact, the fact of God, and this transforms the other facts by changing us in relation to them. Both elements in the conflict are transmuted. They are no longer antagonistic, because they are both drawn into the service of a higher purpose than self-gratification, or even self-realization. Jesus did not depreciate the instinct for power and mastery, but he deflected it from its narrow orbit and gave it a new direction. "He that is greatest among you shall be your servant." In a word, the cure for inferiority is to convert it into humility.

In this service there is perfect freedom from conflict which disintegrates and exhausts. And in it also we receive power, not only to accept our limitations when necessary, but to overcome many an obstacle which otherwise would daunt us. "I know both how to be abased and I know how to abound: I can do all things through Christ, who giveth me the strength." The only real inferiority is to be unable to serve. It may well be that we have not been so gifted as to make us pre-eminent among our fellows, but there is no one who may not have the power to serve his day and generation well. With it we shall make our contribution with confidence, not thinking of ourselves more highly than we ought, nor less highly.

And let us not forget that one of the greatest contributions we can make, one of the most important services we can render, is the appreciation of others. Far more than we realize this would help to solve the whole problem for ourselves and others. "Be kind to the man next to you," Ian Maclaren once said, "for he is fighting a hard battle." To encourage his gifts and rejoice in his success may be to render a greater service than to bestow upon him something of your own.

With the consciousness of power there comes relief from strain. Effort is always necessary to achieve anything worth while, but strain is fatal. The danger of any feeling of inadequacy is that it makes us anxious about results, too concerned to please or impress or attain, and in consequence we try too much. A certain ease is essential for the finest work; power expresses itself not only in contraction but in relaxation. "Strenuousness," says Tagore in one of his essays, "is the foe of achieve-

ment ; the strength that wins is calm." But whether we win or not, the thing that matters most is the kind of effort which we have made. "The artist," writes Mr. Clutton Brock, "knows that he cannot achieve the beauty he sees ; but it is the effort to accomplish the impossible which makes him produce beauty." In his delightful book on fly-fishing, Lord Grey describes three kinds of anglers. There is the angler who fishes to kill fish—he is really a fishmonger. Then there is the man who wants to catch more fish than his friend—he is the competitive angler. But the true angler is he who is content to cast a perfect line. This ease and contentment is impossible so long as we are straining after results. The aim and the effort is our affair but not the outcome ; that we must leave. "'Tis not what man does that exalts him but what he would do." This spirit of desire and daring, because he needs must love the highest when he sees it, is man's nature and makes him but a little lower than the angels. But it is when he knows that in spite of all his failure God believes in him and loves him ; when he is conscious of the eternal Spirit of God within him, that any feeling of inadequacy becomes impossible. It is lost because it is transformed.

DISCUSSION.

The CHAIRMAN (Sir Robert Armstrong-Jones, M.D.), in some introductory remarks, spoke of Dr. A. T. Schofield as "an esteemed citizen and a firm believer in a personal Creator and Sustainer of the world," and proceeded : He was a devoted brother, and I knew him best as the biographer of his brother (and my friend), Dr. R. Harold A. Schofield, an Oxford graduate in Arts and Medicine, and a Radcliffe Travelling Scholar. His brother was a fellow-student of mine at St. Bartholomew's Hospital, and one of the most brilliant men who ever entered as a student. His whole life was devoted to the glory of his Master, and his motto was "God resisteth the proud but giveth grace to the humble." He was the founder of the Hospital Christian Association, and I met him at those meetings. He was greatly inspired by that great missionary, Dr. Moffatt, whom we were both privileged to meet, and after serving as House Physician to Dr. Southey, to whom I was a clinical clerk, Dr. Schofield joined the China Inland Mission, but after three years faithful and devoted service, he died in China. His religious belief became

a conviction with him, and this elicited an enthusiasm which kindled the two brothers into a most earnest Christian activity.

Considering the great influence that Psychology exercised over the Mind of him whom we commemorate, it would be difficult to find a more able and worthy authority to deliver this memorial lecture than Dr. Burnett Rae. Both of us served together in the Great War and his special skill and experience in the treatment of the "shell-shock" soldiers at Aldershot were most helpful and valuable. I cannot think of any one more entitled to remind us of the life-work of our respected member, Dr. Alfred T. Schofield.

Following upon the lecture, the Chairman gave a lead in the discussion of the subject. He said: There was a time, not far distant, when theological creeds tended to limit and even to repress scientific inquiries and thus to be intolerant of the search for Truth, but we know to-day that there is nothing inconsistent with Religion in the teachings of Science. Man possesses in his nature what has been described as an innate capacity for religious consciousness, and we know that the deepest impulses in human nature crave to become both rational and religious, and the life which is *not* in a real sense, both, is, in a *complete* sense, neither. It is acknowledged that Man has the capacity to form ideas or concepts, and that these, by constructive association, tend to become formulated into *ideals*. It is the distinctive privilege of Man to construct in his mind *ideals* which transcend himself—which are something beyond and above himself, which may not inaptly be described as Divine ideals, and which we apprehend as attributes of the Deity. These ideals (depending upon the earnestness of Man's aspirations and the exaltation of his moral sense) tend to become stronger and more dominant, so that his life in the search for Truth, endeavours more and more to follow in the steps of his Divine Master.

There are two terms in Dr. Rae's paper upon which I may be allowed to comment, viz., (1) Inadequacy and (2) Psychology:

1.—The term *inadequacy*, in the sense used by the lecturer denotes a definite mental condition and under ordinary circumstances is perfectly normal. The criterion is whether the person possesses an "insight" into his own condition, as there are limitations beyond which "inadequacy" is injurious; that is, when the repression of the instinct of self-assertion becomes abnormal, then inadequacy is a barrier to efficiency, for it engenders mental conflicts, uncertainty,

and doubt, the will is inhibited and action fails. Inadequacy then merges into the inferiority complex—a complex is any idea that I may entertain with the feeling kindled by it, *e.g.*, I have a complex about the man who steals my watch! The inferiority complex is abnormal, it is often the cause of ego-centric boasting, and is characterized most often by its opposite, the feeling of superiority. It is the ruin of much happiness, but it can be removed by what Dr. Chalmers (the Scotch divine) described as “the expulsive power of a new affection,” in other words, by the Grace of God, or as psychologists say, by an effort at self-expression and self-reliance, and this effort should be pursued vigorously and with courage.

2.—*Psychology*, as we know, is the study of the mind. It is an investigation into mental phenomena. It deals with the thinking principle, rather than the thing thought of, with the process of thinking, and not with the object matter. It has to do with sensation and emotions, perception, concepts, thoughts, thoughts or ideas, and volition. Psychology deals with the mind as we feel, know, and will. It has nothing to do with such conceptions as the freedom of the Will, the existence of the Soul, or the origin of intellectual ideas. These concern philosophy and metaphysics. Psychology has experienced many revolutions within the last century. The teachings of George Henry Lewes, and of John Stuart Mill, for instance, were both different. Mill regarded the mind as the outcome of individual experience, whilst Lewes viewed the mind as an inherited racial development, based upon the theory of Evolution. Then came the study of Physiology and Biology upon which Bain and Spencer based their materialism. Idealism gave way to neurological, physical and material explanations. Experimental psychology followed with the investigations of Ziehen, Wundt, Galton, Myers, Spearman and others, their psychology being described as the “New Psychology,” but now we have the “newest” Psychology, based upon the teaching of Breuer (1881), Freud (1913), and later of Jung, Adler, and others, who claim to have explored the “unconscious mind” by psycho-analysis, by means of three special methods which cannot be explained now, *viz.* : (a) free association ; (b) time reaction ; and (c) the interpretation of dreams. Ideas or complexes come into the mind, but they may become repressed, giving rise to conflicts which, though hidden, may be brought into consciousness

and then removed. In the course of investigations into abnormal mental states, new terms have been invented and a complicated vocabulary has resulted. It is the modern psychologist who has described the term "inadequacy," which Dr. Rae has so fully discussed, and explained to us this afternoon.

The moral of Dr. Rae's paper is not to tolerate passively the feeling of our inadequacy, not to despond under adversity, and not to repine that Providence has not placed us in a sphere of more extended influence; but to try, with every effort and courage, to cultivate our one talent and that in all humility. We are urged to labour so as to acquire the dominance over self. We should always aim at a high standard of excellence, and set before ourselves the life of the One Perfect Person, who dwelt among men, who was made manifest in the flesh and whose example remains available for the up-lift of Man.

Mr. W. McADAM ECCLES asked three questions:

1. Is a true "inferiority complex" more common in males or in females?
2. Can there be true humility without an "inferiority complex"?

Mr. Eccles referred to the fact that many paintings depicting our Lord Jesus Christ showed what would at the present day indicate the facies of one with an "inferiority complex," whilst nothing of this kind should ever be attributed to our Lord, and His "humility" could not be caused by such.

3. Has the possessor of a genuine gift of humour ever been known to have an "inferiority complex"?

Rev. Dr. H. C. MORTON declared the paper to be one which would bear reading and re-reading again and again. The New Psychology is not always good, but here we have it at its best. Proceeding, he said: Dr. Rae suggests that the really serious conflicts occur where "the primary instincts *and the spiritual aspirations* are implicated;" thus emphasizing the spiritual factor. He was very thankful that such an authority on Psychological Medicine gives such testimony to the essential value of the Christian Faith; for the paper draws the conclusion that the sense of inadequacy which we all share, which is not a delusion but a fact—and which sometimes intensifies

into a veritable inferiority complex—is not to be dealt with by repression, which would give from the unconscious level additional force to the sense of inadequacy ; and that neither is it to be dealt with by fleeing to self-assertion ; but only by seeking an actual increase of adequacy and power, and that that is the message of the Christian Faith.

Toward the end of the paper we read : “ The Fatherhood of God implies and inspires the brotherhood of man.” Personally, he had never been able to accept the idea of the universal natural Fatherhood of God. The New Testament does not teach it. There is one passage (in Heb. xii, 9) where God is called “ the Father of spirits,” but the Revised Version margin gives “ Father of *our* spirits ”—a reference to Christians. Apart from that one doubtful passage, God in the New Testament is only the Father of believers. Since the argument of the paper is that the solution of the problem of inadequacy is, to become adequate, to claim something the sufferer has not yet got, viz., in this case to claim position and power as a child of God, would it not be better to avoid phraseology that assumes what is required to be already possessed ? He suggested, therefore, that the sentence might read, “ Each human being has a potential position as a child in the family of God, and should claim his adoption thereinto.”

Lieut.-Colonel MOLONY said : I had a friend who suffered from an “ inferiority complex ” ; he had never been at any university. He used to bemoan the fact, saying, “ It gives a man such a polish, you know.” So he set himself to be very careful about his behaviour, and was so successful that a brother-officer of mine remarked, “ I like that fellow Goldsmith ; he has such nice manners.” This I was very glad to hear, because Goldsmith was a good Christian, and my brother-officer made no pretence of religion. When Goldsmith was chosen Mayor of Devonport, the men in the street said, “ Thank goodness, they’ve got a gentleman at last ” ; and that was what he was, in the best sense of the word.

Mr. PERCY O. RUOFF said : Dr. Rae has argued that the recognition of deficiencies is the condition of progress. This point receives striking illustration in the words of the great preacher,

Spurgeon. Referring to the almost overwhelming responsibility of preaching, he once said : “ I remember the answer I received when I once said to my venerable grandfather, ‘ I never have to preach but that I feel terribly sick, literally sick I mean, so that I might as well be crossing the channel,’ and I asked the dear old man whether he thought I should ever get over that feeling. His answer was, ‘ Your power will be gone if you do.’ ”

It is said that many public speakers feel acutely their inadequacy (occasioned through nervousness), and cricketers before batting in great matches ; and it is supposed that this feeling distinctly tends to success in their undertakings. Perhaps Dr. Rae can explain this.

May not very much be done in family life, which will yield permanent advantage to the children, by understanding and sympathetic direction of the young lives ? In my family of eight children, all are encouraged to express their opinions, but no one is ever allowed to take an unfair advantage of another, and due attention is given to the defence and development of each personality. Does not the lecturer think that, in cases where individuals are oppressed with a morbid sense of inadequacy, they might be greatly helped by the broadening influences of watching the conduct of public affairs in Council Chambers, Parliament, or the High Courts of Justice ?

With regard to the concluding part of the paper, dealing with an individual's relation to God, the teaching of the Bible seems uniformly clear that the compensations and enrichments in the realm of the grace of God immeasurably outweigh the natural deficiencies of a man. God seems to single out for His special regard the man of humble mind, as it stands written : “ To this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at My Word ” (Is. lxvi, 2).

Dr. LOCKHART ANDERSON said : I have listened to the paper with the greatest pleasure, and I am glad to have the opportunity of adding my tribute to the quite admirable way in which Dr. Rae has dealt with a most difficult subject.

As a medical psychologist myself, I am familiar with this difficulty, and I do not feel that I have much, if anything, new to add from the strictly psychological point of view. But as the Institute is pledged to the search for truth from the angle between science and

philosophy, with a view to discovering a higher idealism than can be reached by either of them alone, perhaps I may be allowed to add a comment on this subject of inadequacy not strictly psychological, yet one which seems to me of great importance.

The lecturer has made it clear that both the inferiority and superiority complexes are complementary aspects of a struggle for self-adaptation which is fundamentally the same effort expressing itself in opposite ways. Further, he has shown us that each of these modes of the effort has an emotional content; and I think it is fair to add that the oppositeness of these complementary modes implies that what is "yes" for the one is "no" for the other. At least, that is a conclusion to which the speaker's argument seemed to me to lead; and it certainly is a conclusion which my own experience confirms.

Now the terms "yes" and "no" with regard to important values imply more than psychological categories—they are philosophic as well. And I cannot but think that they might possibly in the future be correlated with positive and negative electrical reactions in the grey matter concerned. If my surmise be correct, it would bring a purely physical hypothesis to the aid of abstract idealism. For myself, I have adopted this hypothesis for a number of years, and, to put the matter briefly, I find that it works. The technique is simple, being nothing more than voluntary muscular quietude, a sort of physiological meditation which, as a leveller of disordered emphases, has a surprising value.

I have long had a feeling, amounting now to conviction, that strong emotion is accompanied by an alteration of voltage in grey matter, though it may be many years before it can be proved. All I can say is that the patient practice of simple muscular relaxation tends undoubtedly to bring about a levelling of emotional pressures, and I recommend this simple technique as an important aid to that readjustment of emphases, and consequently of values which it is perhaps the psychologist's highest object to induce, and to which our attention has been so ably directed to-day.

WRITTEN COMMUNICATION.

Mr. GEORGE BREWER wrote: The feeling of inadequacy is often, I think, occasioned by a lack of faith either in ourselves or others;

but even the exercise of faith depends for success in the ability and willingness of its object to effect the desired result. Thus while faith in humans must be confined within strict limits, faith in God may be exercised without limitation in accordance with His revealed will, for with Him all things are possible.

Moses when in Egypt had a strong desire to rescue his fellow Israelites from their cruel bondage, and would appear at that time to have contemplated action in his own strength ; and when forty years later God called him to that very work, he fully realized his inadequacy, confessing that he was not eloquent, but slow of speech and of a slow tongue (Exod. iv, 10) ; yet by the obedience of faith he was able to accomplish what otherwise would have been impossible.

Gideon when God called him to save Israel from the army of the Midianites said : " Oh my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel ? My family is poor, and I am the least in my father's house " ; yet by faith in the Lord's assurance to be with him, he was able with 300 men to defeat the host of Midian.

The Apostle Paul, with the thorn in his flesh and the reputation of being weak in bodily presence and in speech contemptible, was able by faith to declare : " I can do all things through Christ, who strengtheneth me " (Phil. iv, 13).

With constant dependence upon God, and seeking that mind which was in Christ Jesus, we shall escape being victims of an inferiority complex, and while ever ready to esteem others better than ourselves, will be able to rejoice in the fact that our sufficiency is in God, and that His strength is made perfect in weakness.