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the

ACTIVE

dental
cream



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ACTIVE!

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When the Bomb Falls

A TALK on the effects of atomic weapons, announced in an article on page 6, may bring the subject a little closer to balanced discussion. Although it is now nearly seven years since the first atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, many people still see the bomb as a sort of apocalyptic weapon, so terrible that it can be talked about only in terms of collapsing civilisation or the end of the human race. Sir George Thomson, one of Britain's great physicists, has prepared his paper with the detachment which permits scientists to deal calmly with matters that most of us find alarming. The bedside manner of the expert will not make us forget that the subject is an instrument of wholesale death and destruction, but it can at least help us to look at facts which may some day have a bearing on public safety.

According to an American report, used by Sir George Thomson as the basis of his talk, an air burst is the sort of explosion most likely to be suffered by civilians. It has three effects: blast, flame, and radio-activity. Each of these is examined, and the speaker describes the conditions under which immunity, or reasonable safety, may be expected. Radio-activity is the one danger "peculiar to the atomic bomb." Sir George thinks it is less to be feared than blast or flame. It can be divided into two parts—radiation in the first minute (initial), and what comes after, known as residual. "By and large, effective shelter from blast will usually give shelter from initial radiation as well." No residual radiation is caused when a bomb bursts high in the air, but there is contamination if the burst is close to the earth, and danger remains to the pedestrian for at least six hours. No mention is made of the effects of exposure to

radiation, perhaps because medical scientists are still investigating them.

These are a few of the facts to which we may have to give attention if we wish to stay alive in the atomic age. Sir George Thomson touches very briefly on their moral implications: "Some consider the atomic bomb inhuman, just because it is powerful. I think they are wrong. In itself power is an advantage. If you do not want force, why use weapons at all?" The question is rhetorical. We are living in a world which has been troubled by human frenzy for thousands of years. Men have become clever in the making of weapons; their inventiveness, a creative attribute, has been stimulated by their destructiveness. And so it goes on—new wars, new weapons. There is, however, no logical necessity which demands that the process must continue indefinitely. If it is true that men still fight, it is also true that they have learnt a great deal about co-operation. In a hundred different ways the nations are now joined more closely than ever before: even the Iron Curtain cannot prevent some exchanges of thought and service.

The atomic bomb has not changed the problems of peacemakers, but it has made them more urgent. New weapons increase the range of destruction, and in doing so they compel us to work harder for peace, to be slower in making the final appeal to arms. The race for atomic armament has given the nations two incentives, one for preparedness and the other for prevention. There is little hope for the unprotected; but there is none whatever for peoples who look only to their military defences and neglect those other defences which are in the mind.

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