SPECIAL REVIEWS

War Shock. M. D. EDER. Philadelphia: Blackistons, 1918.

This book appeared early in 1918 and was the result of a very praiseworthy effort of the author to give to the medical world the results of his observations and experiences with the psychoneurotic under war conditions, written, as he frankly states, "while on service, a condition which prevented any attempt at a critical study of the literature, in the hope that my experience may be useful to others." As the material for his book the author has taken the first one hundred consecutive cases of psychoneurosis which came under his care. He makes no claim to deal exhaustively with the "ultimate concepts of the psychoneuroses." He has had in mind two considerations: "to give so much of the psychology as to make the symptoms intelligible, and to show that soldiers suffering from war shock respond peculiarly well to psychotherapeutic treatment." He divides his cases generally into War Shock and non-War Shock, and then subdivides into conversion hysteria, anxiety hysteria, and psychasthenia. He finds no cases which can be classified as neurasthenia. He defines war shock as a psychoneurosis "produced by stress of external conditions acting on a mind which is but a degree or so more sensitive than the normal person's—a sensitiveness which should have involved no disability in normal life, rather the contrary, it might tend to success in a man's particular vocation."

In the 100 cases, he reports conversion hysteria, 77 cases; anxiety hysteria, 17; and psychasthenia, 6. His experience with this series leads him to believe that hysteria is rare among the wounded as the "psychical energy is sufficiently occupied with something very concrete and real." He makes a plea for the neurotic and feels that the stigma has been partially lifted from these individuals as a result of war experience, calling attention to the fact that "without the neurotic the mind of man would be stationary and that many of them are ethically in advance of their age."

Chapter 2 describes the clinical manifestations of conversion hysteria, citing a number of cases. Chapter 3 considers the psychological mechanisms of these phenomena, and in Chapter 4

some cases of anxiety hysteria are described and explained. Chapter 5 deals with psychasthenia in the same way. The last chapters deal with the general diagnosis and treatment of these disorders.

In the chapter on diagnosis the author describes methods of differentiating the functional from the organic lesions. He emphasizes the fact that no matter how self-evident the case may be no examination of a psychoneurotic is complete until a complete physical examination has been made, and further that the diagnosis must not be allowed to "rest upon negative evidence." "Positive evidence must be obtained by a psychological examination which should discover the mechanism and pathology of the symptoms." Under treatment he states that the "results of psychotherapy in cases of war shock establish its claim to be the chief method of treatment." Of secondary importance are rest and quiet, all sleep possible, and nourishing food. Of tertiary importance are hydrotherapy, electrotherapy, and massage. While he recognizes that "psychoanalysis is the only method for the radical treatment of the psychoneurotic, it is inapplicable and unnecessary for the treatment of war shock." In only six cases was psychoanalysis done and that very incompletely.

The author's method is to make a psychological examination of the individual, and from the information gained in this manner supplemented by information from the patient's dreams, he makes suggestion under hypnosis. He makes no attempts to analyze or explain the dreams to the patient, but simply uses the information gained to make suggestions which have thus come to him from the patient's unconscious. Out of 97 cases actually submitting to treatment 80 were entirely cured, 14 were improved, and 3 were unimproved. No case was under treatment more than four weeks, and the great majority less than two weeks. The author is unfortunately unable to give any information as to the after-results of his treatment, though he does say that many of them returned to duty. He feels quite certain that the somatic hysterical symptoms when once cured did not reappear in some other part of the body. While other methods than hypnosis have been found equally valuable in other hands, he distinctly favors its use as a war-time measure and on what he calls war-shock cases. The book is very readable, giving in an acceptable manner the psychological explanations for the various conditions met.

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