

Strange Behavior of Insane Has Meaning

Psychiatry

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At the beginning of the present century psychiatry was the most backward of medical specialties. Its status at that time was described figuratively by calling it the "Cinderella of Medicine". It was in the static, descriptive stage of development. Most of its patients were confined as a result of "due process of law" in public institutions, and its votaries were engaged in elaborating classifications on the one hand and looking under the microscope at brain sections for an explanation of their patients on the other. It was the period of "brain mythology".

At the beginning of the present century psychoanalysis made its appearance, and the individual patient for the first time became a human being with wishes and motives back of and explaining his conduct. Delusions and incoherence were no longer meaningless. They had a meaning even if it could not be found, and an attempt was made to discover it. From being static, psychiatry changed to being dynamic, from being descriptive it changed to being interpretive, and from being statistical it recognized that each patient presented an exquisitely individual problem.

These various changes could all be described by saying that in the bizarre and alien symptomatology of the patient "meaning" for the first time was discovered.

As soon as the meaning of the symptoms came to be intensively and conscientiously studied, it was discovered that these meanings were for the most part quite as hidden from the patient himself as from the observer; in fact, oftentimes more thoroughly, so that it became obvious that the motives for conduct were largely unconscious. This means that the psychic life is not all consummated within the field of conscious awareness, but as Stanley Hall used to say, conscious awareness is only a small part of the mind comparable to that portion of an iceberg which is visible above the surface of the water, a much larger portion being submerged, which corresponds to the larger portion of the psychic life which goes on unconsciously. This concept of the unconscious which psychoanalysis brought to psychiatry is perhaps the most notable single contribution to

the understanding of mental illness during the present century. It is now generally recognized that the majority of our motives are unconscious and that, at least for all practical purposes of inquiry, determinism rules as definitely in the psychological sphere as it does elsewhere. In addition to this change the emphasis has shifted from the so-called "intellectual" aspects of the psychic life to the emotions. It is the emotions rather than the intelligence that furnish the motives back of conduct and it is in this field that the psychiatrist has come to find his most significant problems. These concepts have changed the entire approach to the problem of the individual psychotic patient and made him at once an object of inquiry and interest.

From being the "Cinderella of Medicine" psychiatry in the last quarter century has come to occupy a place on all fours with other medical specialties, which means that it has covered as much ground during twenty-five years as they have during several hundred. It has definitely entered the field of preventive medicine, where it is doing excellent work. Its affiliation with general medicine has not been easy because it deals with the elusive mind, the manifestations of which are intangible, imponderable and invisible. Nevertheless, it has gradually become as objective as are the other medical specialties.

The advance in psychiatry which has taken place in these few years has been paralleled by a similar advance in biological conceptions, both based upon the concept of the organism-as-a-whole; and it has been realized as a result of thinking of the organism in this way that its psychological aspects represent only one way of looking at it, that a human being may be studied from the chemical point of view or the physiological point of view or the psychological point of view, for the purpose of convenience, if you will, but that what one finds as a result of such studies by no means indicates the absence of what would be found if one studied the individual from the other points of view. So that it has come to be realized that mind and body are only different aspects of the individual and that at least for the purpose of medicine, and of psychiatry in particular, the distinction between them, as Professor Meyer often emphasizes, is of

no practical significance.

In recent years, therefore, we have seen grow up a large number of elaborate researches among the mentally ill to determine the relation of the illness to the bodily state, so we see types of mental illness correlated with types of physique. We see certain mental diseases studied from the standpoint of metabolism, blood chemistry, reaction to toxemias and infections, changes in the blood picture, responses to the galvanometer, the relation to the endocrine glands, variations in the blood sugar curve, and many other things. More recently this field of investigation has been particularly stimulated as a result of the very numerous cases of encephalitis lethargica, known as sleeping sickness, which present such complex patterns of both bodily and mental symptoms. The tools of general medicine and the concepts of general medicine are being used in psychiatry so far as they are applicable, and vice versa. We begin to see the general medical man paying more and more attention to the psychology of his patients, until now we find him recognizing conditions as of emotional origin which but a few years ago he would have been entirely at a loss to explain because he could not find a physical basis for them. Thus general medicine and psychiatry are coming closer and closer together and thinking more nearly alike.

With the biological concept of the organism-as-a-whole, the way of looking at the human being had necessarily to change. He could no longer be considered as the sum total of the organs which compose him, and mind could no longer be thought of as an effect of physical processes. Mind behavior was only one aspect of a total functioning organism of which each organ represented an integrated part. With this concept as a beginning, it is only necessary to think beyond the span of the individual's life into his past to realize that the present-day status of any individual, be it anatomical, physiological or psychological, like any physical event, can only be thoroughly understood by interrogating its past.

Human beings have, therefore, come to be studied in this way, and it has been realized as a result that the living organism has always had types of reaction which were as properly called psy- (Turn to next page)

Unknown Empire Under American Flag

Geography

Not all of the unexplored places of the earth lie in far-away places under foreign flags, according to Stephen R. Capps, acting chief Alaskan geologist of the United States Geological Survey. Up in Alaska, under the Stars and Stripes, is a vast area of many thousands of square miles which is practically unexplored. One of the largest of these unexplored areas is the region that lies between the Skwentna River on the north and Lake Clark on the south, and between the west front of the Alaska Range and Cook Inlet. This region, in the south central portion of the Territory above the Alaska Peninsula, is entirely occupied by rugged, glaciated mountains except for a narrow strip of low, marshy land between Cook Inlet and the mountains.

A portion of this hitherto unknown territory has been invaded by geologists and topographic engineers of the Geological Survey under considerable difficulties, and as a result of their labors during one season an area of

about 1,200 miles was mapped geologically and topographically on the scale of 1:180,000. Of this area 900 square miles, mostly in the headwaters of the Skwentna River, was country that previously was entirely unexplored.

In such new, unknown country, where streams are too swift for ordinary boating and the only trails are those made by the native animals, the map-maker and geologist must still use the primitive methods of transportation, including the pack horse and the boat dragged by hand through swift currents. In one locality visited by a Survey party no human being was seen for a period of over two months, and even the signs of native camps indicated that they were twenty to thirty years old.

In this country, so little visited by man, either white or native, the animal life is almost undisturbed. Over a hundred black and grizzly bears were seen one summer by the surveyors. *Science News-Letter, August 17, 1929*

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chological as were certain other of its types of reaction called physiological. The psychological aspect, therefore, of the human being is as much a product of the past as his anatomical and physiological aspects, and its history is as long. In this way we envisage the individual as coming into the world with certain functions prepared for so thoroughly that the necessary structures for carrying them into effect are already laid down. Speaking generally, these are the instincts, and it is with instinctual equipment that the individual faces the world to which he has to adapt.

Just as we had a period of "brain mythology" when delusions, so to speak, were hunted for under the microscope, so we have had a period of cerebral localization in which every function of the organism was supposed to be located in some particular spot in the brain. Our new concept realizes that this can only be true with certain qualifications and that every behavioristic reaction is a reaction of the organism-as-a-whole, which, to be sure, is brought to pass by virtue of certain structures and through certain structural pathways. And so, while we have come to realize that there are certain very definite tendencies which are pretty clearly defined by equally definite structures, we have also come to realize that there is a large field

of adaptation in which the whole situation is very fluid and therefore modifiable.

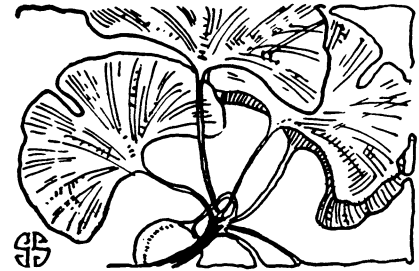
Just as a man is born into the world with certain structures and tendencies already well defined, he comes into surroundings with already existing institutions and traditions to which he has to adjust if he wishes to be a part of the social group. Psychiatry is primarily interested in the individual contribution to this cultural background. The social sciences are the sciences that are interested in the background itself.

Psychiatry should be known not alone by what it has accomplished but by its tendencies. It does not pretend to have the answer to all questions in the various fields in which it believes it has an important contribution to make, but it does believe that it knows in which direction to search for light. Professor Freud made the significant remark in his article on Psychoanalysis in the *Encyclopædia Britannica* that the future will probably attribute far greater importance to psychoanalysis as the science of the unconscious than as a therapeutic procedure. While this is true of psychoanalysis, psychiatry will always remain that department of medicine which deals with the nature and the treatment of mental disease.

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NATURE RAMBLINGS

By FRANK THONE



Ginkgo

Visitors to Washington, D. C., are always much impressed with the beauty of the avenues of ginkgo trees that line the approaches to the Department of Agriculture buildings, and that ornament the city in many other places. There are two splendid specimens of this tree behind the statue of Daniel Webster at Scott Circle, that are worth a special side-trip to see, especially in early autumn, when their leaves turn yellow.

There is no good reason why Washington should be the only city in the country especially favored with this famous tree, sacred to the Chinese and Japanese, and grown for centuries in their temple courts. It does very well in all parts of the United States where the winters are not too severe, and can at least survive as far northwest as central Iowa.

It can also stand a good deal of city smoke and dust. There are a lot of young ginkgos growing in Battery Park, New York City; though to tell the truth they do not look so happy as the Washington specimens. One of the good botanical jokes of the season came off when a little ginkgo tree was solemnly presented to Mayor "Jimmy" Walker as a great rarity from the East, and as solemnly planted by him in front of the City Hall, when within a stone's throw—or at least a Babe Ruth home-run slug—there were dozens of them that had been growing for several years.

China is the native home of the ginkgo tree, though it has been much disputed of late whether there are any more really wild trees left in that country; the species has been cultivated so long. But there are fossil ginkgo leaves and twigs in American rocks, proving that the present importations are not a *première*, but a return engagement, for this handsome tree.

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