

PSYCHIATRY

# Guadalcanal Neurosis

New and unique psychiatric war illness is result of strain of Guadalcanal campaign as bad as Pearl Harbor and Dunkirk combined. No previous sign of break.

► "GUADALCANAL NEUROSIS" is the name under which a new and unique psychiatric malady, war-caused, will probably go down in medical history. The distressing neuro-mental disease, which afflicted a considerable group of Marines invalided back to this country for treatment, was introduced to members of the American Psychiatric Association meeting in Detroit by Lieut. Comdr. Edwin R. Smith, of the U. S. Naval Hospital at Mare Island, Calif.

Every one of the 500 officers and men invalided back to this hospital, though they came from widely different backgrounds, suffered exactly the same symptoms. No possible psychiatric screening tests at recruiting stations or boot camps, he indicated, would have revealed any sign that these men would break under combat conditions.

Yet the strain of the Guadalcanal campaign, as bad as Pearl Harbor and Dunkirk combined and far more prolonged, reduced the seasoned, tough U. S. Marine to a man who, weeks after, was frequently close to tears, jumped and ran from the room at the slightest noise, wore cotton in his ears, and on the transport coming home required physical restraint if there was test firing.

"Never before in history," Commander Smith said, "have such a group of well-trained men been subjected to such conditions as the combat troops of the U. S. Marine Corps faced during the days following August 7, 1942.

"The strain and stress experienced by these men produced a group neurosis that has never been seen before and may never be seen again."

The men did not exaggerate their trials and did not like to talk about them. When seen at the hospital three weeks after combat they said they were "much better."

"But all of them in their composite story," Commander Smith said, "give a picture of physical and mental strain that combines the best of Edgar Allen Poe and Buck Rogers."

Significant, he said, is the fact that of all the men arriving at Mare Island with a diagnosis of war neurosis only 5%

came from Pearl Harbor, the other 95% coming from Guadalcanal.

Quiet, food and absolute rest were the chief features of the treatment. One of the first duties of the medical officers was to assure the men that no one could ever consider them cowards. Their trembling, nervous, upset state made them fear being thought yellow. It was pathetic, Commander Smith said, to see how grateful they were when being assured no one would think them yellow.

The period of rest should not be too prolonged or the men get restless, he said. They feel futile when working at the minor chores of occupational therapy. Decision as to their future should be made promptly and the men told of it immediately.

Most of those leaving the service should be able to return successfully to civil

life, Commander Smith said. Over 30% are being sent back to limited duty but in some cases there is a prompt return of the tension and anxiety state. A six months' period of duty in the United States before return to full duty is being tried but it is too soon yet to know how the men will stand up under this. Most of them do not know what they should or want to do except that they do not want to go back to Guadalcanal.

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## No Panic on Wasp

► THE "MAGNIFICENT" behavior, with no panic at any time, of the men and officers on the aircraft carrier *Wasp* during action in combat areas and at the time of torpedoing and afterwards was described by Comdr. B. W. Hogan, the senior medical officer on board.

Only 9% reported feeling fearful and about one-third reported feeling excited, nervous, tense, and shocked immediately after the torpedo struck. Twelve hours later about half of them were fearful, apprehensive and nervous. By the time three weeks had passed, about one-third



**BIG DAM**—Conveyor belts play an important part in the building of this huge 444-foot earthen dam for the U. S. Bureau of Reclamation. Impervious clay for the core of the dam is brought from a borrow pit a mile and a half away by nine flights of Goodyear belts. After it is dumped at the site, it is spread in six-inch layers and tamped with sheepsfoot rollers, drawn by Diesel tractors. The earth which will be packed on both sides of the core will be drawn from two other pits. The upstream side of the dam will be reinforced with heavy stones for the dam's entire height.