

PSYCHIATRY

Soldiers Wounded in Mind

Nearly half of the G. I.'s being returned to civilian life by discharge from the Army are mentally or emotionally unfit for fighting.

By MARJORIE VAN DE WATER

How to understand and help the returning soldier discharged for neuropsychiatric reasons—pressing American problem at the present time—is discussed in this article which was prepared after consultation with leading neuropsychiatrists and experienced Army men. The article was written at the request of an editor of one of the many newspapers served by Science Service. Through the public spirited interest of many other editors it was run as a series of articles in newspapers reaching from 2,000,000 to 3,000,000 readers.

► FOUR OR FIVE men out of every ten discharged from the Army for disability are mentally or emotionally unfit.

This means that mental and nervous illness is responsible for a far greater loss of manpower to the armed forces than are battle wounds, influenza, malaria or any other single illness.

It is a serious problem for the Army. And a serious problem for the home front, too. For the people at home are wondering just what it means when a man is discharged for neuropsychiatric reasons. Are such men mentally ill, insane? Are they going to act "queer"? Can they make good on civilian jobs?

Each month something like 25,000 of these men will be coming back to American homes and looking for civilian jobs if the present discharge rate continues.

Most of the worry of families, friends and employers is due to lack of information about the sort of person that the Army is sending home for this reason.

Few Need Hospitalization

The great majority of the neuropsychiatric discharges are of men who belong in the first, the "neuro," part of the classification. They are neurotic. Few are actually suffering from mental diseases. Few need hospitalization after discharge, although many might profit from good psychiatric advice.

Up to the present time, at least, the

great majority are men who have not seen service overseas. They have had their crack-up after a few months, perhaps only a few weeks of training. They do not fit into military life and cannot successfully adjust to it.

It is a debatable question as to whether they can blame their troubles on their Army experience. Certainly it is true that these men might have adjusted perfectly well in civilian jobs if the war had not uprooted them. Most of them will go back to civilian jobs and fill them quite adequately. A few undoubtedly are the sort who never would be very successful in either civilian or military occupations.

Plenty in Civilian Life

But the Army has no corner on neurotics; there are plenty in civilian life. They become more conspicuous in the Army for two reasons. In the first place, men are so closely associated in the Army that they have no "private lives." The oddities of any one individual become matters of public knowledge and public concern. And then, too, many individual oddities and quirks of behavior cannot be tolerated in a military situation—they just do not fit in.

Think how many persons in civilian life suffer from "nervous indigestion"—cannot eat this or that. They have their own private stock of favorite "tummy-treats" or "banishburn" in the bathroom medicine closet and even their best friends do not know how much they consume. But the Army cannot issue soda mints with the K rations. Nor can time out be taken during combat for the men to stir up something for that after-meal discomfort.

Army Can't Afford Aches

Neither can the Army afford to have soldiers subject to headaches, stomach ulcers, high blood pressure, heart palpitation, dizziness or faintness. These are ills to which the neurotic is liable. They are all aggravated by emotion, by worry, by over-conscientious "stewing" over present and future problems.

Some men cannot stand the sight of blood. They faint, passing out cold. But, unless that person wants to be a dentist or a butcher or a surgeon, this is not likely to interfere with his job very much in civilian life. It will in the Army.



TENSE MOMENT—Combat is full of moments like this—moments of waiting for the word to advance against the enemy. Minds emotionally unfit to withstand the tension often crack up. Signal Corps photograph.

Very few of the nervous troubles of men discharged from the Army during military training are due to fear of combat. Many more can be traced to worries and troubles at home. Financial worries, homesickness, hunger for affection and companionship, concern over sickness at home—these are some of the things that make a soldier crack up in camp or “go over the hill.”

No one who leaves a comfortable, happy home enjoys the tough grind of military life. Strict discipline, hard work, lack of sympathy and being plunged into a large group of strangers are all hard to take for the individual who is naturally shy and unable to make new friends easily. Everything is new to him. He is awkward. The sergeant yells at him. It seems to him that nothing he does is right. He is bawled out right and

left by the noncoms and he is teased by the other men.

After a little while he may begin to feel completely discouraged and defeated. He is sure that he can never make good in this strange new life. It is too hard. Most men get through this stage all right. Gradually they catch on to all the things expected of them. They learn the ropes and begin to feel at home. They make friends. But a few remain dispirited. It really is too hard for them. They are not fitted to be soldiers.

It is not their fault. Usually this type of man tries his utmost. But his very best is not quite good enough for the very stern demands made on him. So the Army decides he would be much more good to the war effort in a civilian job in a war plant where men are badly needed too.

N.P. Soldier Not Yellow

► THE MAN who cracks up mentally or nervously in combat is not yellow. He is no more a weakling than is the man who receives a bullet wound or who develops malaria.

Every man has his limit, mentally as well as physically. Modern combat puts a maximum of strain on the fighter so that if a man is in the fighting long enough, the strongest one may reach the limit of his endurance.

Fortunately, the cure for such cases is relatively simple. The principal needs are for rest, sleep and to be away from the strains of combat.

Formerly Called “Shell Shock”

These are the cases that were called “shell shock” during the last war. That term is no longer in use, because it was so loosely used and misused that it lost all real meaning. “Shell shock” was originally intended to describe the condition resulting from the nearby explosion of a shell. The force of the explosion will sometimes injure the body tissues and may cause brain concussion. This true shell shock is now called “blast concussion.”

The nervous condition of men who have had more of war than their nervous systems can tolerate has gained new names in this war. The men now speak of combat fatigue, flying fatigue, gangplank jitters, destroyer stomach, war nerves and other such descriptive names. Medical officers prefer not to use any of these names. To do so would imply that it is a new disease not known in

peace; actually it is not. It is the natural consequence of too much strain. Such strains may occur more frequently in war, but are not peculiar to it.

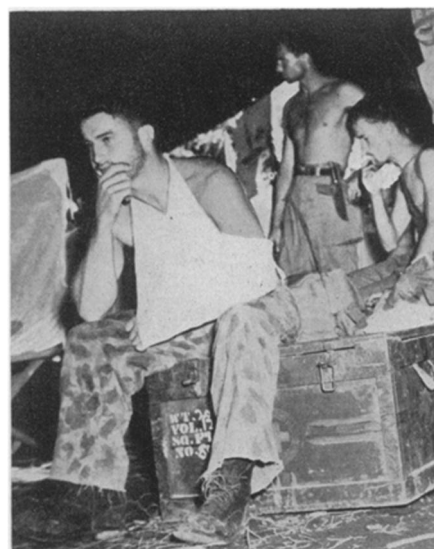
So the medical officers lump all such conditions under the broad term neuropsychiatric disability, abbreviated as N.P., which means simply that the disability is a mental or nervous condition. As a label, it tells no more about the nature of the disability than would the term physical disability if that were applied to all wounds and physical illnesses.

You need not expect the man discharged for N.P. disability to act wild. Too often, in fact, it is not noticeable that anything is wrong with him, so that he may be needlessly distressed by stupid strangers that ask “Why aren’t you in uniform?”

First Sign

The first sign you have that he has been under terrible strain may be when he starts to light a cigarette. You may notice then how his fingers tremble. It is difficult, too, for him to control his emotions at times. If painful subjects are brought up, he may abruptly leave the room or even possibly burst into tears. It is well to be careful about questioning him about how he won his decorations. Too often they recall to him the horrors of friends killed and mangled—the awful sights and odors of the battlefield.

A chief difficulty that may persist for months or longer is the torture of “battle dreams” in which the soldier re-lives the



WAITING—Those wounded men will be evacuated to rear areas. Some of the wounded from every combat are hurt in body, others in mind.
Official U. S. Navy photograph.

terrible experiences of combat over and over again. Sleepless nights, and dream-filled slumber may deprive him of rest so that when morning arrives he is worn out to start the day.

He may drink a considerable amount in the hope that alcohol will put him to sleep or make him forget the things it is so painful to remember. Or he may take drug sedatives for the same reason.

Another conspicuous symptom is an over-sensitiveness to noise. The dropping of a pan, the banging of a door or even a sudden noisy movement, may make the soldier jump out of his chair and set him trembling.

When he first comes home, he feels like an utter stranger. He realizes that no one around him has any conception of the meaning of what he has gone through. He feels that it is useless to speak of what has happened to him because none of these people could possibly understand. He may resent the fact that the folks at home are not suffering as he has suffered, that they are gay and apparently light-hearted. He feels cut off from friends and family.

He needs sympathy and understanding, but no over-sentimental pity. Above all, he needs the feeling that he can still contribute in an important way toward winning the war. This he is well fitted to do, for no one can know as he knows the importance and urgency of war plant work.
(Turn to page 266)

From Page 263

Home Is Responsible

► THE HOME and not the battlefield is the cause of breakdown for most of the men discharged from the Army as neurotic.

Combat can and does cause men to crack up. But the great majority of the men so far discharged have had their difficulties right here in this country in training camp.

The trouble with most of these men is that although their birth certificates may indicate they are of "military age," their behavior shows that they are really boys not yet grown up emotionally.

Many are tied to the apron strings of mother, sister, wife or perhaps father. They are affectionate boys who are dependent upon some loved one and literally cannot get along without her.

Nearly all normal men need the love and care of someone. Most men who go into the Army are homesick now and then and long with a wistful pain for Main Street and the old back porch, or a certain flight of stone steps in the city. Nearly all are delighted with a letter

from home or a snapshot. But for a few the pain of separation from home and family is so intense that it is impossible for them to put heart into their military duties. They sit and brood. They are actually ill. Finally, they have to be sent home.

Needed at Home

It may not be the man himself who is the dependent one. It may be the mother or the wife who is utterly helpless when the draft takes the man of the house away. He is the only one who knows how to run the furnace or balance the bank account or take the mouse out of the mousetrap. She is completely unable to figure out how the gasoline ration system works or what to do when a fuse blows out. If a family crisis comes up—if there is serious illness or the roof leaks, the only solution seems to be to send post haste for the man who is now in uniform. If he is not able to drop Uncle Sam's affairs immediately and go to the

rescue of those at home, he feels guilty and worried and the home folks feel deserted and sunk.

The soldier who must be discharged from the Army for emotional breakdown is often a man who cannot break home ties because someone at home is constantly making such demands upon him for sympathy, for decisions or for help.

And sometimes the boy in uniform is not only held back by the strangle hold of a clinging vine at home, but he also is helplessly dependent on the same person who must lean on him. It seems a little like the blind leading the blind, but it often happens that the mother-son or husband-wife ties are so very intimate and tight that neither can get along without the companionship and help of the other.

But not all the men discharged from the Army for mental or emotional unfitness have such indulgent mothers or wives and happy, comfortable homes. Contrasted with this type of home is the typical home of a large group of men who develop mental disease in the Army.

These men never get mail from home, nor do they want it. They have no home worthy of the name—no place or person to look back on with loving memory or to look forward to with longing. They see themselves as unwanted children, resented by unwilling parents or hated by jealous brothers and sisters. The hardships and dangers of military life are much more difficult for such a man to bear because he has no feeling that his folks at home are backing him up. He is not spurred on by their pride in him, nor comforted by their affection.

Homecoming No Joy

Anticipation of return to such a hateful spot may be harder for a soldier to face than are the hand grenades and rifle fire of the enemy. When the going gets extremely tough, he has less need to cling to life than has the man with affection waiting for him after victory.

In one group of service men who had to be hospitalized for mental illness it was found that more than four out of every ten came from broken homes. Either the parents had been separated or divorced during the childhood of the patient or had quarrelled violently or else one or both the parents had died.

And so it is the home—with demanding and dependent love, or with rejecting and embittering hate—that may put too much burden on the soldier and cause his breakdown.



DEATH BEACH—Scenes like this one on the Tarawa beach show the kind of strain men face in combat. Those who break here are not yellow. Official U. S. Navy photograph.

N.P.'s Excellent Workers

➤ **MEN DISCHARGED** from the Army for neuropsychiatric disability are employable. Most of them will make excellent workers in essential war jobs. But they need some consideration on the part of employers and care in placement.

As a rule these men feel very badly at being out of the Army. They don't want to go back into combat—they have had a little more of that than their nervous systems could tolerate. But neither do they want to be left out of things. They are eager to do whatever they can to hasten victory.

But some will not want to take a job right away. They want a little time to get reacquainted with their families, to hunt up old friends, to take a look at the old familiar places. If they feel this way, they shouldn't be rushed into a job. Let them take it easy for a while.

Often Over-Conscientious

It is well, in fact, for the employer to remember that the type of person who cracks up in military life is nearly always an over-conscientious sort of person. The "gold-bricker" manages to escape strain; it is the man who won't shirk and who faces the music that is the one to break. So when such a man wants a day or an hour off, you can be sure that he really needs it.

Here is some advice for employers, gathered from psychiatrists who have been caring for these men:

Don't heap lots of responsibility on them. Work it in gradually as they grow more used to civilian life and feel stronger. Remember that it may take a year or two before the discharged soldier has completely recovered from what he has gone through.

If Sensitive to Noise

If the man has come away from the Army over-sensitive to noise, be careful not to employ him where he will be exposed to sudden, crashing noise. The hum of machinery may not bother him so much, but clanging steel, the noise of riveting, sudden loud bells or whistles may be unbearable.

Don't give him a job as night watchman, in the mistaken but well-meaning notion that it will be light work for him. Loneliness and time for thought are just the things that these men do not need. Give him a job where he will be active and pleasantly occupied every minute.

Most of these men do poorly on seden-

tary work. After a very active life in the Army, don't expect them to sit still at a desk all day long. If you give a man a desk job, plan frequent breaks for him that will give him a little leg-stretching exercise. Hard work out-of-doors, such as farm work, is the best possible sort for most of them. It gives them little time to think during the day and makes it easier for them to sleep when night comes.

The worst possible type of work for the soldier discharged for neuropsychiatric reasons is work that entails long dull periods of slack work punctuated by peaks of exciting bustle and rush. This, after all, is what he could not stand up under in the Army. Waiting gives time for thinking and brooding. Think-

ing and brooding lead to depression and the blues. Then the brief spurt of rush work puts the man under acute strain for which he is not fit.

In deciding just how the discharged soldier would fit into a particular business or manufacturing organization, the employer should be guided more by the man's work record before he went into the Army than by any account of his illness or experience in service. If he has a record of failures, tardiness, absenteeism, illness, and temperamental differences with employers and fellow employees, then the chances are not very good that he will make a model employee now. But if his work record shows that he was a steady reliable worker before the war, you can count on him to be an asset to your company now once the training and adjustment period is past.

Family Can Help Soldier

➤ **THE MOTHERS**, wives, families and friends of men discharged from the Army for neuropsychiatric disability can do a great deal to help them back to full mental health.

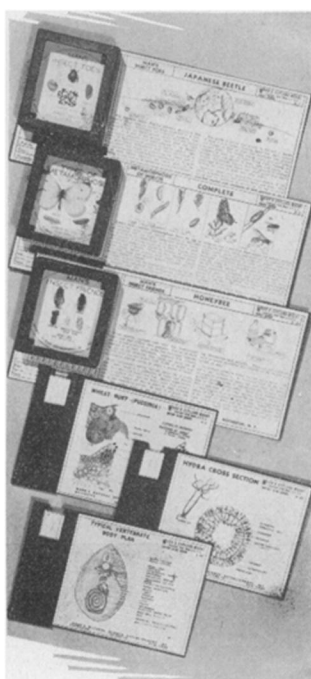
Greatest dread of these men, when they are in hospitals waiting to go back home, is that their families will not be sensible about their disability.

Emotional and fond mothers become

frightened and tearful over the "N.P. disability" diagnosis. Very little, it would seem, is known about such mental or emotional crack-ups. All sorts of superstitions and misinformation are spread about and terrify relatives.

The following facts will help to blast these false notions.

Because a man breaks in combat or in training does (*Turn to next page*)



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Write for Bulletin N-397 which describes and lists 67 currently available Explano-Mounts.

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Do You Know?

Nearly 7,000,000 pounds of *tin scrap* are collected by the Army each month.

Stripped of passenger accommodations, the *Douglas DC-3A* air freighter can carry at least 5,600 pounds.

From 20% to 30% of all the *food* produced in this country is wasted somewhere between the plow and the plate.

Ice cubes freeze more rapidly if the bottoms of the trays are damp; this makes a closer contact between the tray and the evaporator.

Protein deficiency is a common cause of sows eating their young; feeding tankage and soybean meal prevents this porker infanticide.

Equipment once used for curing Italian spaghetti is now drying the freshly-laundered *clothes* of America's fighting men in southern Italy.

To reduce a woeful waste of choice stock, involved in fabricating *skis* from solid wood, skis for the Army's crack troops are being made of plywood.

Tough rope to tow airplane gliders and sheer hosiery for women are both made of *nylon*; houses are painted and teeth are cleaned with nylon brushes.

The *insecticide* DDT, or dichlorodiphenyl-trichloroethane, is so effective that one treatment on clothing gives 30-day protection from disease-carrying vermin.

Army *binoculars* are made more effective by a new surfacing treatment to the lenses which permits greater transmission of light by decreasing losses by reflection.

War or no war, more than 36,000,000 *cars, trucks and buses*, not including military vehicles, are reported still running throughout the world; only 8,000,000 less than at the close of 1939.

The new disease-resistant *Vicland oats*, distributed by the Wisconsin Agricultural Experiment Station in 1941, was grown on 1,300,000 acres in Wisconsin in 1943 and increased the state yield by 20,000,000 bushels.

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not mean that he is yellow. He is not a coward. He did not run. He stayed at his post and suffered the consequences, until he could stand no more.

A mental break in the Army is not the fault of the individual; it is not a reflection on the character of either the man or his family. It is not due to a "taint."

A mental illness, even a severe psychosis, is not necessarily permanent. Mental illnesses developing in military service are of shorter duration and more frequently result in recovery than illnesses of civilian life.

Most of the men discharged for N.P. disability do not even require hospital care, although for many good psychiatric advice is desirable where it is available.

Many of the men trace their emotional and nervous difficulties back to the kind of home they had before they went into the Army. Perhaps the folks at home were too dependent upon the soldier, or perhaps stood in the way of his striking out for himself and making his own decisions—wouldn't let him stand on his own feet. Or perhaps the home was unhappy due to friction with an uncongenial brother or sister, father or mother. A little soul-searching on the part of the returning soldier's next of kin might result in changes in the home to make it a more favorable place for getting well.

Here are some specific suggestions to relatives, friends and fellow workers that will help the soldier to get well:

1. Don't gush. Let the soldier know in every way you can that you are glad to have him home, but try to control the tears and kisses.

2. Remember that he is a man. Mothers are inclined always to think of sons as though they were little boys, and he may have been a boy when he left home; but after service in the Army he is a

man and wants to be respected as a man. Don't try to boss him all the time or make his decisions for him.

3. On the other hand, don't meet him at the front door with a thousand family problems for him to handle. You have gotten along without him when he was away; get along a little while longer until he has had time to get his bearings.

4. Don't fuss over him and indulge him. He should not be allowed to dominate all the rest of the family or wreck the lives of those who are well. They have their rights, too, and these should be respected. It is not good for the returning soldier—it will not help to restore his health—to make him a pampered pet.

5. Don't have all the neighbors in for parties to show off the returned soldier. He has been away—a long way in spirit. He may want to relax for a while in the comfort of being home with just the family around him. Take his wants into consideration, not just what you think he should want.

6. Don't push him into a job. If he wants to rest for a while, he probably needs the rest. Some men want to try themselves out on a job that is considerably below their abilities until they regain confidence. This is wise. Don't coax him to get something better.

7. A few men come back feeling "high" and think they are able to do anything. They are likely to overestimate their strength and their abilities and will tackle anything, however much beyond them. Such men need a little steadying. And you should stand ready to mop up when the bubble bursts.

8. If the returning soldier's home has not been a happy one for him, it is best to try to face that fact and do what you can to alleviate the condition. It may be best for him to live away from home. In that case, be sure that he does not feel neglected. Let him know constantly that

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you are interested in him and want to do what is best for him. Sometimes it is possible for individuals to get along with relatives with a minimum of friction provided they are not thrown into constant daily contact with them.

9. Avoid over-solicitousness. Don't make an invalid of the returning soldier. Work is the most healing medicine for sick spirits. Let him take part in the work of the home and the community. He wants to do this. Particularly does he want a part in war work. He is out of the Army but he is still in the fight. Make good use of his services.

Science News Letter, April 22, 1944

ORNITHOLOGY

Owls Hatch From Eggs Days and Weeks Apart

See Front Cover

► BARN OWLS lay their eggs at intervals so that eggs and young of wholly different sizes may be found in the same nest. George A. Smith, of Quarryville, Pa., who took the photograph on the cover of this SCIENCE NEWS LETTER, says there were six young owls in the nest pictured. The youngest one, at the foot of the owl to the right, was less than a day old. The wide-eyed fellow at the left was several weeks old.

Barn owls are always hungry, eating their own weight in food every night, and more if they can get it. Like hawks, owls tear their prey apart and swallow the pieces whole. The flesh is digested and the bones, fur, feathers and other indigestible parts are formed into compact pellets which are regurgitated.

The usefulness of these birds in the destruction of rodents is evident from inspections of the disgorged pellets. Dr. Alexander Wetmore of the U. S. National Museum examined 1,247 pellets of barn owls that lived in a tower of the Smithsonian Institution Building in Washington, D. C. In these he found the skulls and other bones of 1,987 field mice, 656 house mice, 210 rats, 92 sparrows and blackbirds, and 4 frogs.

Science News Letter, April 22, 1944

One *bad apple* in a box often hastens the spoilage of all because the decaying fruit gives off ethylene gas.

Electronically cleaned air in dwellings is a future possibility; high-voltage rectifiers create electrostatic attraction which takes all dust, dirt, ashes and pollen grains out of the air.

GENERAL SCIENCE

"Living Package" of Home And Surroundings Urged

► A "LIVING PACKAGE," a complete package for living with ample land and trees and a structure that gives maximum protection from the elements at minimum maintenance, was visualized as a post-war housing goal by Irving W. Clark, manager of better homes department of Westinghouse Electric & Manufacturing Company, speaking before the

American Ceramic Society in Pittsburgh.

"The full realization of this huge post-war housing program will require large volumes of permanent public works such as streets, water systems and playgrounds as well as commercial and public buildings," he said.

"Representatives of the industry should take an active part in the post-war planning of these community activities to assure such projects getting through the blueprint, specification and finance stages."

The immediate post-war housing pro-



now wear "Plastic Overcoats"

Bausch & Lomb 7X, 50mm Binocular



Denied the continued use of vulcanized rubber for binocular covering, the U. S. Navy sought a plastic material that would furnish the metal-clinging, watertight, sure-grip properties required in sea-duty binocular body covers.

Because the cooperative effort of engineers representing Bausch & Lomb, the plastics manufacturer and the Navy solved the difficult details posed by this problem, the new all-weather Vinylite coat on today's binoculars is as good as and, in some important respects, better than the former rubber coats. This plastic does

not deteriorate in sunlight and clings more firmly to the metal body.

This superior covering material will be on the *better* Bausch & Lomb Binocular that will be available after Victory, one more reason why Bausch & Lomb Binoculars will still be known as "the world's best—by any test."

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