

These few examples must suffice to illustrate the principle above laid down, that neurotic symptoms have their peculiar characteristics as well as organic ones, and that the diagnosis of them, to be accurate, must rest on a knowledge of these characteristics.

An evident corollary from these considerations is that in neurological diagnosis a knowledge is necessary of the typical features, not only of organic diseases, but also of the neuroses. May I add a few other reasons why some knowledge of the neuroses is an important matter? In the first place, on account of their great frequency; when the numerous errors in diagnosis are taken in consideration, it is probable that hysteria alone is the most frequent single disease calling for medical treatment. In the next place, it is obviously important to recognise affections in regard to which our therapeutic measures have most avail. In this connection I wish to call attention to the importance of making an early diagnosis of these affections. You have often heard stress laid, with right, on the urgency of the early recognition of pulmonary tuberculosis, of appendicitis, perforative peritonitis, and other maladies in which therapeutic success largely depends on the time of intervention. One hears very little about the desirability of recognising a neurosis in its early stages. Yet it is far from being a matter of indifference as to whether the radical treatment of a neurosis is begun early or late. I would remind you that the treatment of an advanced case of neurosis, when the patient is in a state of inveterate invalidism, is a formidable, laborious and often disappointing task; all such cases, however, were at one time in an early stage, and it is very difficult to foretell whether any given mild case will evolve in this direction or not. Last, but not least, is the consideration that a study of the conditions favouring the development of a neurosis is perhaps more instructive than any other medical study in regard to various sociological and educative problems which every medical practitioner must face no less than any other thoughtful citizen.