

on an underestimate of what the best treatment can accomplish, as often incorrect. Let us now turn to scrutinize the commonly adopted *causes*.

In the minds of most persons the *hereditary or innate tendencies* take the first place as causes of these psychoneurotic illnesses. It is not remarkable that this is so, when we consider that the signs of nervous weakness in the child—usually taking the form of shyness, timidity, sensitiveness, and self-consciousness, or of excitability and passion—are recognizable so early that they seem to be inborn. Something which prepares the way for these symptoms doubtless *is* inborn, but evidence has been rapidly accumulating of late years which tends to show that experiences after birth are more significant as causes than we have hitherto supposed. The first few years of a child's life are rich in emotions and vague thoughts. These years have never been adequately chronicled but there are grounds for thinking that traits of character are founded or accentuated at that period which tend strongly to remain through life. In view of those facts the old phrase "the boy is father of the man" gains a fuller and richer meaning. A considerable portion of the evidence bearing on this point is associated with the name of Freud, a name to which I shall frequently occasion to revert. It is obvious also that nervous children have often had nervous parents and equally so that certain sorts of bodily weakness or "delicacy" which are apparently hereditary, predispose to lack of nervous strength. The boy that can play hard and work hard and who comes of sound stock, starts life with an obvious advantage, although it may be pointed out at once, as showing how difficult it is to arrive at positive conclusions in these matters, that some of the most striking forms of the psychoneuroses are found among professional and amateur athletes, and that seriously nervous patients seem sometimes to have had healthy parents. Finally, common sense seems to demand an acquiescence with the view that the characteristics of the bodies and brains and physiological mechanisms with which we are born *must determine* our reactions to the strains of life, at least by establishing predispositions of important sorts.

But even though the hereditary or innate influences are fundamentally important as giving a *predisposition* to the psychoneuroses, it is extremely difficult to define with fairness in what this predisposition really consists. The anatomical study of the brains of psychoneurotic patients has thus far taught us nothing. The chemical studies of their excretions have been equally without fruit. We may surmise that if we had the power to make careful physiological tests upon all the nervous functions of the newborn infant we might discover differences in his responses which would foreshadow mental excitability or mental weakness; but the proofs of this are lacking. Towards the close of the last century much evidence