

to himself, and the subjection of his natural emotions was the result of the triumph of his higher moral attributes over those feelings which, if displayed, would have stamped him as a coward. The genesis of neuroses was in some cases rapid, in others slow, and depended on the contributing factors.

The prevalence of trench warfare conduced to the production of neuroses, as these affections were comparatively unknown in previous wars where open fighting was the rule. It was unusual for an unstable soldier to develop marked symptoms during his early days in the trenches as his first feelings were those of curiosity regarding his new surroundings and his intimate relationship with the war. This curiosity kept his fear of consequences in abeyance for a time, and it was only when it was satiated that he awoke to the actual realisation of his position.

In open warfare the daily incidence of fresh scenes and pastures new served in the same manner to sustain the soldier for an indefinite period. A man awoke to his danger by seeing his comrades stricken down and by the sight of their wounds, and any further desire he felt of probing the action of modern projectiles was soon dissipated by his imagination, which conjured in his mind the view of himself as a casualty. Trench warfare gave him ample time to exert his imagination, and, if a weakly-balanced individual, he soon developed a state of mind in which any slight shock would prove to be the determining factor in his nervous breakdown.

There seems no doubt that apart from commotional cases of shell shock, which were the result of physical trauma of the nervous system, a state of neurasthenia was primarily present, and the development of hysteria was the result of sudden shock on an already unstable nervous system. Without any definite shock occurring, the neurasthenic state tended to progress, so that ultimately the sufferer became unfit. The progression was engendered by the constant mental conflict in which the soldier was endeavouring to repress his complexes of fear and anxiety.

The additional responsibility devolving upon officers was a factor which made the officer a more likely subject for rapid neurasthenia than the private soldier. It was often pitiful to note the almost superhuman efforts of some officers to hide their emotions; and, indeed, many forced themselves to brave danger needlessly in an endeavour to deceive either themselves or their men. These efforts only served to exhaust them the more, and sooner or later they had to be removed from the line as totally unfit. In a few cases of neurasthenia, where no hereditary taint of instability could be ascertained, the presence of bodily disease seemed to have acted as a predisposing factor in the production of the neuroses.