

## THE MENTALITY OF CONVALESCENCE\*

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I APPRECIATE deeply the honour done me as a layman in this invitation to address you. May I suggest that, having in mind the whole panorama of military medical achievement, we consider for a time the mental attitude of the patients concerned, particularly of cases involving the restoration of function. To present this topic in the form of two questions: First, Is a patient's conscious reaction to his condition and treatment a matter of any consequence as a general rule? Assuming for the time being that the patient's attitude is not just what the practitioner would desire may we enquire, secondly, How should this psychological factor be handled? May it for instance, be ignored or be passed over with a casual word of counsel and encouragement, or should a scientific procedure be adopted throughout, *i.e.*, accept that mental attitudes, like other symptoms, show great variety and change, that characteristic attitudes result from definite antecedents, that they exhibit certain uniformities in developing, sometimes pass through crises, and regularly respond to certain lines of discriminative treatment, etc.?

The undefined term, mental attitude, is not here used as synonymous with any of the "psychical effects" often alleged to be produced on patients by this or that apparatus or drug with which they are deeply impressed. Such phenomena, half-mystically accepted by some practitioners, though without any critical or reasoned view of the underlying principles involved, may or may not be a factor in a patient's general attitude. Nor is the term intended as peculiar to those purely hysterical disorders of the war, which, perhaps happily, have compelled attention to psycho-technics that were formerly practised only by leading neurologists and psychiatrists. Again the term is in no way restricted to that difficult group of cases showing a mixture of physical and "functional" involvement that has demanded the team-play of specialists. A broader use than these is intended, *viz.*, that state of mind, which however complex in itself, is characteristic as marking a great gulf between the invalid and the well man, whatever be the lesion or pathological condition.

An appreciation of the mentality of convalescence means in the first place recognition of the fact that treatment for the restoration of

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