

ABSTRACTS

THE EMOTIONS AND THEIR MECHANISM IN WARFARE

DR. TOM A. WILLIAMS, WASHINGTON, D.C

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The Role of Emotion in Military Unfitness. The allegation has been made that the emotional strain of the war is the direct cause of many functional disturbances of long duration among the soldiers. Statistics gathered at the French army centres do not bear out this statement. They show that a relatively small number of men apart from those having organic disease or toxic condition show nervous perturbation. The number of emotional cases are very small in comparison with the definitely hysterical and rapidly curable cases. Moreover, patients of the emotional type are able to remain at the front without greater inconvenience than they would experience in civil life, provided they are not given responsibilities beyond their ability to bear.

One must remember that in severe states of fear, physical signs such as palor, changes in pulse, sweating, pilomotor reactions and pollakiuria are always present. Tremour can so easily be assumed that it is not an aid to diagnosis, nor is tachycardia because it is so often the result of other states such as cardiac exhaustion, intoxication, or disorders of the thyroid gland. True anxiety states which the patient is able to control during his waking hours are often manifested during sleep in terrifying dreams, in which the patient's dread overcomes him while his volition is partly in abeyance. Such dreams gradually lessen his resistance. These cases are very different from the alleged emotive type, which is really the hysterical type, and when genuine must be absolutely differentiated from asthenic conditions. The real mechanism in such cases is an associational fear psychosis.

In practice it is most important to make this distinction because such cases are readily curable, but only by the proper psycho-therapeutic methods, whereas it is quite useless to attempt to cure asthenic symptoms by psychic means. Moreover, the latter class of patient is unfit for military service on account of physical weakness. The men under consideration are those who break down suddenly because of some alleged emotional shock or long sustained emotional strain. Among these there are two types: (1) those who are suffering from fatigue and hence have lowered powers of inhibition, and (2) the psy-