



A CLINICAL AND HISTORICAL SURVEY
OF DEPRESSIVE STATES BASED ON THE
STUDY OF SIXTY ONE CASES.

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The following examination of the clinical features of depressive states^{is} based on the detailed study of sixty one cases examined and treated by the writer at the Maudsley Hospital, London.

The diagnosis of "depressive state" had been made finally after the discharge of the patient; each of them had been seen first either in the out-patient department or in private by a competent psychiatrist, the case had been presented at a clinical conference and a diagnosis reached after discussion; in many cases the patient had been presented on more than one occasion, the ultimate diagnosis representing the considered view of the medical staff of the hospital. By "depressive state" has been understood a condition in which the clinical picture is dominated by an unpleasant affect, not transitory, without evidence of schizophrenic disorder (other than slight or subordinate) or organic disorder of the brain, and in which, moreover, the affective change appears primary, not secondary to other symptoms of ill-health. It was therefore/

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therefore in part diagnosis by exclusion; inasmuch as symptomatic depressive states, occurring in the course of such disorders as general paralysis of the insane, present no positive characters, qua depressive, to distinguish them from the depressive reactions here considered, it seemed preferable to limit the inquiry to those in which the disorder seemed primary.

This is essentially an examination of the clinical features of depression. It has formed part of a larger investigation in which especial attention has been paid to the relation of pre- and post-psychotic personality to the symptoms of the actual illness, and in which genetic, constitutional and prognostic factors have been considered. Many aspects of this have called for a much larger series of cases, to permit of statistical examination, but the present cases were selected for special study of the clinical features; they include all the depressive patients who were examined and treated by the writer during part of the years 1928 and 1929. The purpose of the investigations having at first been towards the investigation of personality, special studies, mainly along/

along the lines suggested by Hoch and Amsden (36) , were made by the writer and by social workers under his direction: in no other respect was the investigation and observation of the patients governed by any concern with particular aspects of the illness; the records may therefore be considered to reflect only the general attitude and preconceptions of American and English psychiatrists, and at such points as the conclusions differ from these, it has been because the data imposed the divergence rather than because it was expected or sought after.

The studies above alluded to into personality and the genetic and prognostic aspects of depressive illness are not included here except in so far as they are necessary for the elucidation of the clinical picture. The separation is a difficult one, and it has frequently proved necessary to introduce such matters. The general attitude of the writer to the dynamic aspect of the disorder may be gathered from the concluding section on "Reaction, Psychogenesis". There seems, however, still to be much that calls for investigation in the actual clinical picture; one must collect one's data before one sets/

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sets about accounting for them or interpreting them, and it is to this preliminary object that the following is devoted.

The historical introduction is lengthy and detailed because psychiatric works of this kind in English are inadequate, and in none of the available historical books or journals in other languages is there any special consideration of the development of medical opinions on this subject.

The case abstracts are brief and are not intended to provide more than the material for forming an opinion as to the diagnosis. Details are given in the body of the thesis.