

## ELEMENTARY PSYCHOLOGY AND ITS APPLICATION TO NURSING.

*A Course of Lectures to the British College of Nurses.*

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Résumé of the Month's Lectures.

### Lecture VII.

MARCH 28TH.

This lecture was devoted to a discussion upon "Fatigue, Sleep, and Insomnia." Experiments upon muscle were first described, the lecturer explaining how the elementary facts were obtained by using the nerve-muscle preparations of frogs. It was also possible accurately to measure the effects of fatigue in man. In this connection, the Ergograph was described. By this means, muscular fatigue could be compared under various conditions. Passing to the question of mental fatigue, the lecturer explained the use of Weygandt's figures, and the class took part in an experiment with the aid of this ingenious device.

The subject of Sleep and its psychological theories of causation were next enunciated. Whilst a child soon after birth slept for five-sixths of the twenty-four hours, an adult could easily get along with a quarter of that amount. Considering the depth of sleep at various periods, a typical "sleep chart" was shown to the class, and it was explained how such a chart was to be obtained. Dealing with the causes, it was stated that the will had a good deal to do with sleep. Certain strong-minded people could actually "put themselves to sleep," as occasion demanded. In diseases, where the will was weakened, insomnia was a common symptom. According to Professor James, the act of going to sleep is an auto-suggestion. We place ourselves in the most suitable position preparatory to going to sleep. We then think of going to sleep, and normally, unconsciousness supervenes within a short time.

Sleeping and waking may be classed amongst the many cyclic processes of Nature. They are active processes and are in fact cyclic habits. Similar instances of cyclic behaviour are to be seen in the alternating phases of Manic-depressive Insanity.

Sleep has been considered by some to be of the nature of an Instinctive process.

In conclusion, the lecturer gave a brief survey of Insomnia, as a symptom. Before looking to psychological mechanisms for the cause of this condition, one had to eliminate all physical factors. The latter being absent, it was necessary to make a thorough investigation of all possible causes of mental anxiety. Insomnia frequently heralded the onset of a psychosis; once the sleepless habit had possessed a person, some degree of re-education was necessary. In the absence of associated worry, cases of insomnia due to overwork were very few and far between. A change of environment in these cases was usually all that was necessary.

### Lecture VIII.

APRIL 3RD.

This lecture formed an introduction to the study of abnormalities in the workings of the mind. The theme was based on the "Borderline mental states," and the mechanisms responsible for their production. Examples of these conditions were to be seen in everyday life, and such sufferers formed a considerable proportion of the people of whom our psychopathic population is composed. It was thought by some that a psychoneurosis was the intermediate stage between normality and insanity. Others considered that there was no relation at all between the neurosis and the psychosis. The lecturer traced the connection between certain "functional" nervous disorders

and bodily diseases, for example, between the Anxiety neurosis and Exophthalmic goitre.

Aberrations from normal behaviour had been provocative of interest from the earliest times. The Demonological conception, which was prevalent in Biblical times, and during the Middle Ages, was not entirely obliterated in some quarters, even at the present time. But whilst the Psychogenic conception was undoubtedly the most popular one nowadays, one could not help feeling that as our knowledge of the workings of the Endocrine glands improved, we should eventually obtain more useful information from that source.

Dr. Forsythe then proceeded to describe the principles of Suggestion, Persuasion, and Analysis, commenting on the fact that of the three methods the last was probably the most satisfactory as it attacked the train of events which produced the clinical picture at its beginning. Whilst Suggestion and Persuasion had their limitations, there were also very serious disadvantages to the employment of Analysis. In the first place, the method was inapplicable to all cases in whom co-operation was impossible. Secondly, it was a tedious and long continued mode of treatment, and lastly it frequently rendered the patient's subsequent mental state worse than it was before treatment commenced.

The Freudian school's conception of the unconscious was explained, and such mechanisms as Dissociation of Personality, Fugues, Amnesias, and Hysterical manifestations in general were explained upon this principle.

### Lecture IX.

APRIL 10TH.

"Dreams, their interest and significance." This subject had claimed universal attention from time immemorial, and records contain observations in almost every conceivable language. With the passing of ages, it was stated, the interest and not the dream content had changed. In ancient days, dreams formed the basis of prophecy; in modern times, they furnish us with a means of investigating past experiences and present desires.

The lecturer made a brief survey of physiological considerations which predisposed towards the occurrence of dreams.

On the psychological side, much more information was to be obtained. The differences between dream experiences and waking thought were emphasised, and the mechanisms, namely Condensation, Displacement, Dramatisation, Symbolism, and Distortion were described. In connection with the penultimate mechanism, Dr. Forsythe devoted a considerable time to Symbolism in everyday life and the part it played in abnormal mental processes.

The differences between the dreams of children and adults were pointed out. It was stated that whilst the former were usually undisguised, the latter were disguised fulfilment of wishes, some of which were consciously unknown to the possessor. Dreams, therefore, had a latent and a Manifest Content, and formed the connection between the conscious and unconscious levels.

In considering the causes of dreams, it was pointed out that external stimuli were known to have a definite effect upon the experiences of the sleeper. The lecturer quoted several examples from the dreams of persons suffering from War-neurosis. It was also stated that in dreams we sometimes receive a warning of impending physical illness, the premonitory signs of which, although present, we are unable to appreciate during waking life.

In conclusion, an allusion was made to Freud's methods of dream investigation as a method of mental exploration.

### Lecture X.

APRIL 17TH.

Continuing the consideration of Abnormalities in Psychological mechanisms, Dr. Forsythe laid stress on the diffi-

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)