

CHIEF PURPOSES: To work for the conservation of mental health; to promote the study of mental disorders and mental defects in all their forms and relations; to obtain and disseminate reliable data concerning them; to help raise the standards of care and treatment; to help co-ordinate existing agencies, Federal, State and local, and to organize in every State an affiliated Society for Mental Hygiene.

The National Committee for Mental Hygiene

FOUNDED 1909

INCORPORATED 1916

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Que	5/1/17	Que	May 1, 1917.
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The Rockefeller Foundation,			
61 Broadway,			
New York City.			

Gentlemen:

All those who are called upon to deal with new problems in their profession as a result of the war are eager to learn what has been done by our allies in meeting similar situations. This is particularly true of the medical profession upon which, in time of war, falls a very heavy burden and responsibility. American surgeons and sanitarians have been closely examining developments in their branches of medicine in European armies and a number of them have visited Europe for the purpose of increasing their knowledge so as to be more useful to our own country in time of stress.

Insanity is such a heavy affliction upon individuals and communities in time of peace that it is imperative to consider any addition to this burden which war may bring and, if possible, to devise measures to minimize it. Although in armies, as in civil life, mental diseases do not receive the attention given other disorders, they constitute, nevertheless, a cause of military disability of the first magnitude.

In the enclosed copy of a report to Surgeon-General Gorgas of the United

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States Army and of an editorial in "Mental Hygiene", a few statistics are given which bear out this assertion. Communications from English alienists reveal the fact that practically no attempt was made in England to devise methods for dealing with mental diseases until the war was well under way and the problem had become so formidable that it could no longer be ignored. With a view to making better preparation in America, a committee on furnishing hospital units for nervous and mental disorders to the United States Government has been formed by the National Committee for Mental Hygiene for the purpose of planning adequate provisions for mental cases in our Army and Navy, such provisions to be continued in time of peace and in time of war to constitute the nucleus for facilities adequate to deal with even such an influx of mental and nervous cases from the armies in the field as has occurred in England and France. These plans have been accepted by the Surgeons-General of the Army and Navy and within two months several Psychiatric Units, including the Central Army Unit of 110 beds, will doubtless be in operation.

There is need of more accurate knowledge than can be gained by indirect means regarding the prevalence of mental disorders in military forces, the kinds of provision needed near the front and at home, the most practicable methods of receiving, classifying and distributing mental and nervous cases and the standards by which recovery is determined and convalescents are returned to their colors. It is felt by the members of the committee on furnishing hospital units for nervous and mental disorders to the United States Government that the important and novel work proposed in this country would be greatly aided if I could visit France and England and observe these matters at first hand. Personally, I feel sure that if the Rockefeller Foundation would send me for that purpose, information could

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be obtained which would be of great value not only in making our own medico-military preparations but in dealing with certain mental problems in civil life.

It would be necessary for me to return as soon as possible in order to continue the work of organizing and equipping the units proposed but an interval now exists which would give me practically two months abroad. The total cost of such a study would not be more than \$2,500, as the only outlay, in addition to that for traveling expenses, would be the employment of an efficient secretary and of some clerical assistance for copying reports, case histories and such records in Europe. I could leave to take up this work about the 12th of May.

The scope of an inquiry which could be made in such a period of time can be most conveniently given in the following outline:

Administrative matter

Approximate prevalence of mental and nervous disorders
Distribution among different branches of the Service
Distribution among English and Colonial troops
Proportion of cases probably existing at time of enlistment

Provisions for treatment in the zone of the advance

Provisions for transportation to England and to distant places in France

Provisions for reception, classification and distribution

Provisions for institutional care

Military

Civil

Legal status of insane soldiers in civil institutions

Methods by which military authorities keep informed regarding
condition of mental cases in civil institutions

Methods by which decision is made regarding return to colors of
convalescent mental and nervous cases

Statistics of result of treatment

Opportunities for determining mental factors in disciplinary cases

Clinical matters

New clinical types, if any

Modifications of well-recognized types

Shell-shock

Hysterical and neurasthenic conditions

Special methods of treatment which have proved useful

General matters of interest

Prevalence of drug addiction in military forces

Prevalence and treatment of alcoholism in military forces

Suicide rate in military forces

Prevalence of syphilis and provisions for prevention and treatment

Suicide rate in civil population (said to have increased)

Insanity rate in civil population (said to have decreased)

The Rockefeller Foundation

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Although it would be manifestly impossible, in the time at my disposal, to make an intensive study of any of the problems enumerated, I believe that I could secure information on each of these topics which would be of great practical value in dealing with issues which are already coming to our attention in this country.

Respectfully yours,

Thomas W. Salmon

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