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## Chapter 14 — Are We Becoming a Neurotic Race?

from *Race Decadence*:

*An Examination of the Causes of Racial Degeneracy in the United States* (1922)

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### Sources for Chapter 14, in the order in which they first appear

- (1) William S. Sadler, M.D., *Worry and Nervousness: Or, The Science of Self-Mastery* (Chicago: A. C. McClurg & Co, 1914)
- (2) Dr. W. S. Sadler, “Sadler’s Sensegrams,” in *The Way-Bill*, Vol. VII, No. 11, Feb. 1917 (pp. 9-16)

### Key

- (a) **Green** indicates where a source author first appears, or where he/she reappears.
- (b) **Yellow** highlights most parallelisms.
- (c) **Tan** highlights parallelisms not occurring on the same row, or parallelisms separated by yellowed parallelisms.
- (d) An underlined word or words indicates where the source and Sadler pointedly differ from one another.
- (e) **Bold type** indicates passages which Sadler copied verbatim, or nearly verbatim, from an uncited source.
- (f) **Pink** indicates passages where Sadler specifically shares his own experiences, opinions, advice, etc.
- (g) **Red** indicates an obvious mistake, in most cases brought about by Sadler’s miscopying or misunderstanding his source.

## X I V : A R E W E BECOMING A NEURO- TIC RACE?

14:0.1 WHEN we hear so much of neurasthenia and nervous exhaustion, when we see so many people afflicted with some form of nervousness, we may be tempted to think that the American people are becoming a race of neurotics, but perhaps things are not as bad as they seem on the surface. As we found in the examination of statistics relating to the increase in physical diseases, while they may be disconcerting, they are not, in some instances, necessarily unduly alarming. But, with all the optimism we can muster up, as we view the situation in regard to mental and nervous disorders, we must, in the language of the politicians, "view the same with more or less alarm."

### GENERAL NERVOUSNESS

14:1.1 There is little doubt in the author's mind but that general nervousness is at present on the increase. Primarily, I do not think this is altogether due to our so-called high-pressure living—the fierce pace which the present generation is setting in its social, business, and even its recreational life. I think the fundamental weakness, in so far as the nervous system is concerned, is largely hereditary, and that our all-round fast living is merely a contributing factor which earlier and more completely develops and makes manifest these various nervous disorders and weaknesses,

**SOURCE****14: RACE DECADENCE**

which are but evidences of heredity that is nervously weak and constitutionally inferior.

14:1.2 These victims of nervousness suffer from a great assortment of neurologic difficulties and complaints, and are tortured and tormented by a vast array of mental and nervous sufferings or symptoms. They embrace the chronic worrier, the individual whose mind seems to travel over a circuit of troubles, both imaginary and real. Among these nervous sufferers are found the victims of definite dreads, crystallized fears,<sup>1</sup> and an endless assortment of both motor and mental obsessions, not to mention those who are hyper-conscious, who are never able to please themselves with even their best efforts, together with a large number of individuals who take everything too seriously, not excepting themselves.

**XI: NEURASTHENIA, OR NERVOUS EXHAUSTION (*Worry & Nervousness* 128)****ARE WE ALL NEURASTHENIC? (*Worry & Nervousness* 130)**

14:1.3 Perhaps none of us are perfect when it comes to the control of our nerves and the management of our habits.

[contd] Not infrequently we have a nervous patient ask us if we are not “all more or less neurasthenic,” and, of course, I am forced to acknowledge that we are “all a bit neurasthenic at times” (*W&N* 130).

Perhaps we are all more or less a bit nervous at times.

I have sometimes thought these nervous people were little different than the rest of us, only they make a special business of picking out these undesirable nervous manifestations, and so concentrate their minds upon them as to make it a sort of a habit in their experience. All of us get tired, but we rest up and forget it.

These people carry it over from one day to another, and make almost a combined religion and business of being sick, of spying on themselves and thinking incessantly of their unpleasant symptoms and disagreeable sensations.

## NEURASTHENICS

14:2.1 **Neurasthenia is on the increase**, and it seems to be an indication of a deterioration in the fundamental fiber of the American stock. I don't believe that people merely worry more than they used to because of the increasing and changing vicissitudes of life, but that more people are actually born neurologically disinherited. I regard the increasing neurasthenic tendencies of the age as another evidence pointing toward race degeneracy.<sup>2</sup>

[INTRODUCTION] (*Worry & Nervousness* 128)

[contd] IN THE last analysis, neurasthenia must be regarded as a state of accumulated chronic nervous fatigue (*W&N* 128).

14:2.2 By neurasthenics we refer to those people who are suffering from a habitual state of nervous fatigue,

due quite entirely to functional nervous causes.

NEURASTHENIA DEFINED (*Worry & Nervousness* 128)

The general nervousness which is so often associated with various organic diseases such as tuberculosis, the infections such as influenza, or with such painful local disorders as gastric ulcer or cystitis, should not be looked upon as neurasthenia (*W&N* 128-29).

These neurasthenics must not be confused with that general nervousness which is so often associated with various organic diseases such as tuberculosis, Bright's disease, diabetes, or other real bodily ailments.

**SOURCE****14: RACE DECADENCE**

NEURASTHENIA NOT A DISEASE (*Worry & Nervousness* 129)

[contd] It must early be made clear to the reader that **neurasthenia is not a disease**—

that is, not a circumscribed, well defined disease such as spinal sclerosis or epilepsy (*W&N* 129).

We must, then, come to look upon neurasthenia as a **functional nervous disorder**, not dependent on any organic disease and not associated with hysteria or any other definite mental disorder.

Neurasthenia is always **characterized by great nervous irritability**,

disproportionate mental and nervous fatigue,

and accompanied by a vast assortment of unpleasant sensations and other symptoms in the head and various other parts of the body (*W&N* 129).

**Neurasthenia is not a disease**, in and of itself, as we commonly understand the term;

it is merely a **functional nervous disorder**,

indicating, on the one hand, inheritance of a poorly balanced nervous system, and, on the other, a lack of sufficient control over this more or less un-normal nervous mechanism.

## **SYMPTOMS OF NEURASTHENIA**

14:3.1 **Neurasthenia is characterized by great nervous irritability**

and by mental or nervous fatigue out of all proportion with what could be expected from normal mental and physical activities.

This constant fatigue, which is sometimes very much worse upon first arising in the morning,

is accompanied by a vast assortment of unpleasant sensations and other symptoms in the head and various parts of the body.

**SOURCE****14: RACE DECADENCE**

This fatigue is usually very much less as the day wears on, more particularly in the evening after supper.

Neurasthenics seem to be improvident in storing up their nervous energy, or else extravagant in expending it; at least they are always short—suffering from lowered nerve tone.

**SYMPTOMS OF NEURASTHENIA (*Worry & Nervousness* 139)**

Chief among the minor symptoms of which the patient complains will be found

a series of functional disturbances and disorders embracing headache, backache, insomnia, dyspepsia and constipation,

not to mention a host of sensory troubles and annoying symptoms due to functional disturbances in the various organs of special sense (*W&N* 139).

[And so these fastidious sufferers variously describe their pains and sensations as a jelly-like feeling in the small of the back; deep-seated, permanent pains in various parts of the body; painful lumps in the throat; various abnormal skin sensations—

such as **burning**, **bursting**, **pricking**, **crawling**, etc. (quite in common with some forms of neurasthenia and hysteria) (*W&N* 184).]

Among the minor nervous symptoms which afflict these patients may be mentioned

a series of functional nervous disturbances embracing headache, backache, insomnia, dyspepsia, and chronic constipation,

not to mention a host of sensory troubles which are often most annoying

and which manifest themselves in the skin variously

as **itching**, **pricking**, **burning**, **creeping**, **crawling**, and other abnormal sensations.

## EARMARKS OF NEUR- ASTHENIA

XIII: THE EAR-MARKS OF NEUR-  
ASTHENIA (*Worry & Nervousness* 159)

CARDINAL SYMPTOMS (*Worry & Nervousness*  
159)

14:4.1 Aside, then, from the characteristic neurasthenic fatigue and the before mentioned numerous symptoms or sensory vagaries,

Before beginning the recital of concrete and definite symptoms, the reader's attention is called to the fact that all forms of nervous weakness are characterized by four cardinal and characteristic symptoms, viz.:

1. Exaggerated suggestibility.

the neurasthenic state is marked by four cardinal and characteristic symptoms:

14:4.2 1. *Increased suggestibility.*—

The patients are prone to think they have any and all diseases they hear or read about.

2. Over-sensitiveness.

14:4.3 2. *Oversensitiveness.*—

Their feelings are always being hurt. They seem to wear their feelings all on the outside of the body in the skin.

3. Abnormal impressibility.

14:4.4 3. *Abnormal impressibility.*—

They are overimpressed with everything that happens, not excepting their own thoughts and feelings.

4. Increased emotionalism (*W&N*  
159).

14:4.5 4. *Increased emotionalism.*—

They often cry if you point a finger at them, and sometimes weep if you don't.

**SOURCE****14: RACE DECADENCE**

MENTAL CONFUSION (*Worry & Nervousness* 160)

14:4.6 All of this mental and nervous condition, of course brings about a state of mental confusion—

disturbance of memory—and this sometimes gives the patients great concern.

FEARS OF INSANITY (*Worry & Nervousness* 163)

They feel that they are on the sure and quick road to insanity,

and of course it goes without saying they find it difficult to “make up their minds;” that is, decision is greatly delayed, terribly hampered, and they sometimes wear themselves out trying to decide whether to get a soft hat or a stiff hat, or whether to set the black hen or the Dominique hen.

**IMAGINARY SUFFERING**

XIV: FASTIDIOUS SUFFERING AND  
IMAGINARY PAIN (*Worry & Nervousness*  
174)

14:5.1 Some of our nervous patients are very fastidious about their sensations and pains, and of course they are exceedingly sensitive if anyone intimates that the trouble is in the “head,” or that it is “imaginary;” they want no one for a moment to presume that their sufferings are not real, even when they are imaginary.

An imaginary disease may not be real, but a diseased imagination is one of the realest things on earth.<sup>3</sup>

**SOURCE****14: RACE DECADENCE**

These people may be suffering the tortures of the damned, even while the doctor looks them straight in the eye and assures them that there is nothing at all wrong. Imaginary suffering, psychic sensation, and fictitious pain, may mean something to the nerve specialist, but they mean nothing to the victims of "nerves." They continue to be literally tortured by these various sensations of which they are abnormally conscious, and which they sometimes call pain, regardless of the terms which the medical diagnostician may apply to their ailments.

**HABIT** PAINS (*Worry & Nervousness* 176)

14.5.2 These nervous sufferers may get into the **habit** of being in pain or in chronic misery.

PAIN AND THE PSYCHIC THRESHOLD (*Worry & Nervousness* 176)

[When] the "threshold of consciousness" is materially **lowered**, ...

the waves of former normal and natural sensory stimuli ... now pass far up into the conscious area of the mind, where they are now actually **recognized as painful** (*W&N* 177).

Their **threshold** for the recognition of pain may indeed become so **lowered**, so enormously depressed, that

the ordinary and normal sensations of physiologic life passing over their nerves may be **recognized as pain**

and may be the occasion of actual suffering on the part of these unfortunate creatures.

ACTION AND REACTION (*Worry & Nervousness* 178)

[T]he nervous pessimist—the victim of acute fear and chronic worry—by lowering the threshold of consciousness, soon comes to that point where

That is, nervous patients can get in that perverted and abnormal state of mind and body where

## SOURCE

a large per cent of the ordinary and normal pains of life

are recognized as actual pain the greater part of the time (W&N 178).

[But after all that can be said of the causes of worry, we cannot overlook the fact that some people have come to the place where they enjoy poor health (W&N 58).]

## 14: RACE DECADENCE

they will recognize the sensations which the most of us regard with pleasure and look upon as normal—

I say where they will recognize these same normal sensations as a source of suffering, as bona fide miseries of the body, sometimes even insisting that they are actually painful.

It is quite easy for these sufferers to take from one to two hours, whenever occasion offers itself, to tell their friends or their physician the story of their sufferings in the minutest detail. It becomes a habit with them, a mania, and this has no doubt led to the unfeeling pleasantry that

some of these unfortunates actually come to the place where they "enjoy poor health."

14:5.3 The author believes that heredity is the real basis for most of our neurasthenic manifestations. Environment simply serves to develop and bring forth these numerous latent but inherent tendencies.

## PSYCHASTHENIA

### XVII: PSYCHASTHENIA OR TRUE BRAIN FAG (Worry & Nervousness 210)

[Nowadays, the tendency is to classify all the so-called inherited neurasthenia as psychasthenia (W&N 143).]

14:6.1 The psychasthenes are those who suffer from inherited neurasthenia—true brain-fag.

**SOURCE****14: RACE DECADENCE**

PSYCHASTHENIC FATIGUE (*Worry & Nervousness* 214)

[contd] The psychasthene is the individual who was “born tired,”

and who has remained more or less tired throughout life (*W&N* 214).

They are the people who are “born tired,”

and are never really able to get over it.

I believe that the number of psychasthenes in our population is steadily increasing, and while psychasthenia is not, in many ways, very different from neurasthenia, it is not so easy to get away from or cure, and it represents the behavior of a nervous system that will remain more or less psychasthenic throughout one's lifetime.

NEURASTHENIA AND PSYCHASTHENIA (*Worry & Nervousness* 212)

[P]sychasthenics are far more likely to manifest symptoms which are suggestive of more serious **mental** disorders than neurasthenia ... (*W&N* 212).

[Compare: The so-called congenital psychasthenia usually makes its appearance at or around puberty (*W&N* 213).]

14.6.2 The psychasthenic's symptoms are more truly **mental** than are those of the neurasthenic.

The psychasthene usually complains of being fatigued or worn out, since 15 or 16 years of age, though he may be otherwise in a state of excellent health.

The psychasthenes do not have to have stress and strain or sickness to bring on their trouble—it just comes on naturally, just like water runs downhill.

THE EMOTIONAL THRESHOLD (*Worry & Nervousness* 211)

In many respects the psychasthenes behave and reason much like a child (*W&N* 212).

In many ways they behave, and react to their environment, like a child would,

**SOURCE****14: RACE DECADENCE**

unless the occasion is really one that demands large thinking and big action; then, as a rule, they meet it bravely, for the time being forget their troubles, but relapse back into a state of complaining and fatigue as soon as the crisis is past.

AN ANCESTRAL LEGACY (*Worry & Nervousness* 214)

And so psychasthenia must be looked upon more or less as a part of one's ancestry.

It is some sort of defect in hereditary evolution, and, therefore, overtakes us without our will or leave.

Our personal responsibility is only concerned in and by those methods and measures which on the one hand tend to make the situation worse,

and on the other, to assist in overcoming nature's handicap,

thus enabling the patient to make a creditable showing with an otherwise abnormal nervous mechanism

and a crippled nervous control (*W&N* 214).

14:6.3 Psychasthenia is a true inheritance of racial stock;

it is a part of our ancestry,

a sort of defect in hereditary evolution, and therefore overtakes us without will or leave.

Our personal responsibility is only concerned in and with those methods and measures which, on the one hand tend to make the situation worse,

or, on the other, assist in overcoming nature's handicap,

thus enabling the psychasthenic victim to make a creditable showing with an otherwise abnormal mechanism

and a greatly curtailed nervous capital.

**PSYCHASTHENIC SYMPTOMS**

PSYCHASTHENIC FATIGUE (*Worry & Nervousness* 214)

Many psychasthenes who are born and reared in the country get along fairly well.

14:7.1 Many of these individuals who are born tired, if they are raised in the country or amidst rural surroundings, do very well and make good in life.

**SOURCE**

Those who are unfortunate enough to grow up in a great city find it much more difficult to live happy, useful, and self-supporting lives.

It is largely from this class of neurologically disinherited individuals, that the common “ne’er-do-wells” of modern society are recruited.

The majority of our inveterate and incurable tramps are affected with this psychasthenic taint;

as are also those scions of certain aristocratic and wealthy families who are now and then so strikingly attacked with the *wanderlust*.

It would thus appear that the term “psychasthenia” might be pressed into service for the purpose of

describing certain strata of modern society which are otherwise commonly and vulgarly called “lazy” (*W&N* 215).

PSYCHASTENIC SYMPTOMS (*Worry & Nervousness* 215)

Practically, the chief complaint is

an incapacity for doing things, coupled with an ever present over-attention to everything connected with one’s thinking, living, and working (*W&N* 215).

**14: RACE DECADENCE**

They do not do so well in the swift channels of commerce and society which characterize the larger cities.

There they are more likely to break down, “go wrong,” or “blow up.”

It is quite largely from the psychasthenes of the nation that the ne’er-do-wells of modern society are recruited.

The majority of our inveterate and incurable tramps are afflicted with this psychasthenic taint,

as are also those scions of certain aristocratic and wealthy families who are now and then so strikingly attacked with the *wanderlust*.

So it would really seem that this term “psychasthenia” might be pressed into service for the purpose of

courteously describing a certain stratum of modern society which might otherwise commonly and vulgarly be called “lazy.”

14:7.2 The psychasthene’s chief trouble, after all, is

not merely the ever-present and pressing fatigue, but also

a general incapacity for doing things, coupled with the everlasting habit of over-attention to everything connected with his thinking, living, feeling, and working.

## SOURCE

[contd] The psychasthene spends the larger part of his mental effort and nervous energy in watching himself

and otherwise trying to help carry on those varied mental and physical processes which nature designed to be automatically executed.

In this way his energies are almost wholly consumed in useless channels—

in efforts which are not only unnecessary, but which are highly harmful to the healthy and normal workings of both the psychological and physiological processes and mechanisms of the human organism (W&N 215-16).

PSYCHASTHENIC INTROSPECTION (*Worry & Nervousness* 216)

They are incessantly spying upon themselves (W&N 216)..

These patients even try to watch themselves sleep, and of course, there can be but one result—insomnia (W&N 216).

## 14: RACE DECADENCE

The psychasthene spends the larger part of his mental effort and nervous energy in watching himself

and otherwise trying to help himself in carrying on those varied mental and physical processes which nature intended to be automatically executed.

Thus his nervous energy is almost wholly consumed on himself, in a useless and thoroughly harmful manner.

in efforts which are not only unnecessary, but which are highly harmful to the healthy and normal workings of both the psychological and physiological processes and mechanisms of the human organism.

In other words,

the psychasthene is chronically guilty of “spying on himself.”

He cannot let his mind think or his stomach work without watching it.

He is even guilty of trying to watch himself go to sleep, which of course never fails to spell insomnia.

14:7.3 But it is surprising what education and training, development of decision and improvement of will-power will do for some of these psychasthenic patients. They learn to forget their ever-present fatigue and their nervous sensations. They are able to train themselves to go about their business and to come just about doing a real man's or a real woman's work in the world,

**SOURCE****14: RACE DECADENCE**

XXXII: THE WRITING OR ELIMINATION CURE (*Worry & Nervousness* 424)

16. The psychasthenes must be taught to

live a philosophical life, to master the art of living with themselves as they are and the world as it is—to live in the future, not the past (*W&N* 444).

so that after all some of them turn out to be very efficient workers, and to be quite happy and contented with their lot.

The majority of them are really able to

master the art of living with themselves as they are and the world as it is.

**HYSTERIA**

14:8.1 Our utter carelessness and indifference as to who marries, in this country, is not only contributing to an increase in our markedly defective stock, but is also leading to an undoubtedly increase in all of the lesser forms of nervousness, including hysteria. And what is hysteria? The answer is difficult.

XVIII: HYSTERIA—THE MASTER IMITATOR (*Worry & Nervousness* 221)

HYSTERIA IN OLDEN TIMES (*Worry & Nervousness* 221)

[contd] There is little doubt in the minds of medical men, but that a large part of the so-called "demonic possession" of the middle ages, would today promptly be diagnosed as major hysteria ... (*W&N* 221).

Some of our present day hysterics ... would have been in grave danger of being burned for witchcraft (*W&N* 221).

In olden times it was called demonic possession,

witchcraft, and what not.

**SOURCE****14: RACE DECADENCE**

Hysteria, as a disease or a nervous disorder, must not be confused with mere hysterics, which any neurotic person may indulge in from time to time. Hysteria is far more of a grave disorder than hysterics. Most nervous, uncontrolled, neurasthenic individuals may get hysterical at times, but this would not warrant a diagnosis of hysteria.

WHAT IS HYSTERIA? (*Worry & Nervousness* 221)

The physician of olden times looked upon hysteria as a malady that was largely feigned;

as a fictitious sort of disease performance on the part of certain sorts of nervous and emotional women.

Men were not supposed to have this disorder

and met with but scant courtesy at the physician's hands, or else they were looked upon as being "effeminate" (*W&N* 222).

It is going to be neither a small nor easy task concisely to define hysteria for the layman; in fact, hysteria is a disease about which we doctors disagree probably more than about any other common disorder to which human flesh is heir;

nevertheless, I am disposed to attempt to define this interesting and unique nervous malady—at least I will give the reader a definition of this disturbance in accordance with my understanding.

Hysteria is some sort of disorder in the personality,

occurring in hereditarily predisposed individuals who are highly suggestible on the one hand,

14:8.2 The older physicians were tempted to look upon hysteria as a malady that was largely feigned;

as a fictitious sort of disease performance on the part of certain sorts of nervous and emotional women.

Men were not supposed to have the disorder

unless they were somewhat effeminate.

Doctors disagree as to what hysteria really is,

but I have come to look upon it as a sort of hereditary deficiency in nervous self-control; at least the tendency is hereditary.

It is a mild disorder of personality

and occurs in those individuals who are, by heredity, highly suggestible, on the one hand,

**SOURCE**

and who possess a small degree of self-control on the other (*W&N* 222).

I may further say that hysteria is a mental state—possibly a disease—largely due to cerebral insufficiency,

manifesting itself in so many ways and producing so many and diverse symptoms as to impersonate almost every known form of human illness.

It is certainly true that a diseased and uncontrolled imagination plays a large part

in the cause and conduct of this perplexing disorder (*W&N* 222).

[contd] Briefly summarized then, hysteria is a nervous disorder occurring chiefly in women;

characterized by lack of control over the emotions and certain physical acts, by morbid self-consciousness, by exaggeration of all sensory impressions,

**14: RACE DECADENCE**

and who possess a small degree of self-control on the other.

It is something more than neurasthenia, it is more deeply rooted than the mere nervous disorders. It comes nearer being a part of one's real temperament and personality.

There seems to be at times a real mental insufficiency,

which results in the sympathetic nervous system engaging in various wild and sort of runaway performances affecting various parts of the body and the patient's general behavior.

During these attacks the disorder

manifests itself by producing many and diverse symptoms,

and is able in one way or another to impersonate almost every known form of human illness.

And of course it is true that an uncontrolled imagination often plays a large and important part

in the manifestations of this perplexing disorder.

14:8.3 Hysteria is, then, briefly summarized, a nervous disorder occurring chiefly in women,

characterized by lack of control over the emotions and certain physical acts, by morbid self-consciousness, by exaggeration of all sensory impressions,

**SOURCE**

and by an extraordinary ability to simulate the symptoms of numerous diseases, and thus to impersonate a host of minor and major disturbances (*W&N* 222-23).

**14: RACE DECADENCE**

and by extraordinary ability to simulate the symptoms of numerous diseases, and thus to impersonate a host of minor and major physical disorders.

**THE HEREDITARY NATURE  
OF HYSTERIA**

14:9.1 Hysteria, whether it is the phenomenon of the imagination playing the rôle of the actor;<sup>4</sup> whether it is partial dissociation of ideas,<sup>5</sup> deranged nervous control, or disturbances of personality; whether it is temporary insanity of the sympathetic nervous system,<sup>6</sup> or what not; it is certainly a disorder that is largely hereditary. Whatever the causes of stress and strain, nervous tension, anxiety or worry, or whatever the bodily habits or physical vices which may directly or indirectly contribute to the outbreaks, attacks, or spells of hysteria, the fundamental and underlying fact remains—the disease is hereditary and is certainly transmissible in some form or other to the next generation.

14:9.2 While it is true that neurasthenia, psychasthenia, and hysteria probably do not tend to go down the line with the same unerring accuracy as do feeble-mindedness and insanity; nevertheless, when two individuals who are highly neurotic marry it is common observation that the majority of their children are almost equally neurotic or more so. Now when these neurotic persons are mated with normal or nervously superior individuals, there usually occurs great improvement in the majority of the offspring.

## SOURCE

## 14: RACE DECADENCE

So we are encouraged by the fact, or by the belief, at least, that these less serious nervous disorders have a tendency to "breed out" of the stock rather than to increase in intensity and severity with successive matings. Many of these nervous traits seem to behave after the fashion of **Mendelian recessions**. This fact probably explains why we are not cursed with more defectives of the nervous sort, in view of our utter indifference to improvement of our marriage laws and other eugenic precepts. But, notwithstanding these favorable features regarding the inheritance of these disorders, it is the common belief of physicians and specialists who handle these troubles that **they are considerably on the increase in America at the present time.**

## SYMPTOMS OF HYSTERIA

### SYMPTOMS OF HYSTERIA (*Worry & Nervous-ness* 226)

It is obviously impossible to undertake to catalogue all the manifestations of hysteria in this chapter (*W&N* 226).

As before noted, this protean malady is able to produce symptoms which simulate practically almost every known disease (*W&N* 226).

2. *Motor stigmata.* ... **Catalepsy** may be the culmination of these numerous motor disturbances (*W&N* 227).

14:10.1 The symptoms of hysteria are too many and varied to catalogue.

As has been intimated, these patients can simulate the manifestations of almost any and every known disease,

ranging from a fit of bad temper to complete unconsciousness or **catalepsy**,

on the mental and nervous side;

**SOURCE**

1. *Sensory stigmata*. The typical hysterical patient usually presents symptoms of anaesthesia—loss of **skin sensation** over certain parts of the body ... (*W&N* 226-27).

[7. *The Headache Crisis*. (*W&N* 230)]

They often complain of neuralgic pains (*W&N* 227).

THE SIMULATIONS OF HYSTERIA (*Worry & Nervousness* 228)

4. *Appendicitis Crisis*. (*W&N* 229)

5. *Gallstone Crisis*. (*W&N* 229)

AFFECTIONS AND EMOTIONS (*Worry & Nervousness* 226)

Experience has more and more forced me to recognize that unrequited love, unsatisfied emotional longings, together with other disappointments and **representations of the affections**

and the **passions**, must be regarded as the prime cause of hysteria in many youth, especially young women (*W&N* 226).

**14: RACE DECADENCE**

and from simple perversion of **skin sensation**

down through headache

and all sorts of pains

to apparent appendicitis

and gallstone colic on the physical side.

And in many cases, in connection with the periodical manifestations of this disorder, there is to be found

more or less **emotional repression**, lack of adequate self-expression.

Many cases of hysteria are also associated with some conscious or subconscious sex disorder—

**sex repression**.

In most instances where the sex element enters into the causation of hysteria or other forms of nervousness, the victims are more or less unconscious of the presence of this factor.

**RACIAL INSTABILITY**

14:11.1 We cannot look with equanimity upon the fact that the racial stock of a state or nation is becoming more unstable, less self-collected and less self-controlled. It is no cause for congratulation that our people are threatened with becoming, individually and collectively, more and more panicky and hysterical. Normal nervous stability and that superb self-poise and self-control, which are characteristic of superior peoples in the higher civilized races, cannot be sacrificed, even to a small degree, through successive generations, without jeopardizing the future integrity and position of any race of people.

14:11.2 It should not be inferred that a race must necessarily be stolid, stoical, and unemotional, in order to be free from hysterical tendency. A people may have a great inherent capacity for self-expression, they may have great potential emotionality, they may indeed be warm-hearted and truly spiritual, and at the same time be a great and growing race. Let us not be frightened by the presence among us of any of these good characteristics of a great nation. We should only be alarmed by the fact that there is to be found too great a tendency to this direct hereditary instability of the nervous system, and that, as a people, if it should continue to increase throughout succeeding generations, we are destined to become a nation with less self-control, less self-respect, and less inherent capacity for individual development and collective national greatness.

## HYPOCHONDRIACS

XIX: HYPOCHONDRIA AND MELANCHOLIA (*Worry & Nervousness* 235)

THE BLUES (*Worry & Nervousness* 235)

14:12.1 Under the functional nervous disorders, before we take up insanity and feeble-mindedness, we should also briefly note hypochondria, melancholia,

and the chronic “blues.”

Those who suffer from these disorders usually have something wrong with them physically as well as to be so unfortunate as to have inherited a defective and deficient nervous system. They are the folks who have chronic dyspepsia and biliousness. They are bilious mentally as well as physically.

They make a business of being sick when they are well,

just as a Christian Scientist makes a business of being well when he is sick.

They suffer a great deal with burning sensations here and indefinite pains there. They are, in a word, chronic pessimists.

[The hypochondriac is a man who makes a business of being sick when he is well,

just like a Christian Scientist makes a business of being well when he is sick, and they both of them succeed at it pretty well (Dr. W. S. Sadler, “Sadler’s Sensegrams,” in *The Way-Bill*, Vol. VII, No. 11, Feb. 1917).]

WHAT IS HYPOCHONDRIA? (*Worry & Nervousness* 235)

It is the patients’ tendency to exaggerate all their physical suffering that affords the clue to diagnosis (*W&N* 236).

One thing characteristic of them is not merely the quality of their complaints but also the fact that

they invariably tend to exaggerate even their physical ailments.

**SOURCE**

They are constantly preoccupied with their own troubles, inordinately self centered, and introspective to the highest degree (*W&N* 236).

CAUSES OF DEPRESSION (*Worry & Nervousness* 237)

People over forty years of age are in danger of brooding over themselves and their imaginary troubles when they are not kept busy at something more useful (*W&N* 237).

WHAT IS HYPOCHONDRIA? (*Worry & Nervousness* 235)

On the other extreme, certain of the more profound hypochondrias we now classify as **melancholia**, and frankly recognize them as a part of "circular insanity" [i.e., the **melancholic hypochondria of insanity**] (*W&N* 236).

XX: BORDERLAND NERVOUS AILMENTS (*Worry & Nervousness* 243)

CHOREA OR ST. VITUS' DANCE (*Worry & Nervousness* 243)

**14: RACE DECADENCE**

They are constantly preoccupied with their own troubles, unerringly self-centered and introspective to the highest degree.

We especially find these cases in **people of over forty years of age** who have no active "job" to interest and keep them busy.

14:12.2 And, of course,

these hypochondriacs may go on to the verge of **melancholia**,

where it is difficult to distinguish between severe cases of hypochondria and mild cases of **melancholic insanity**.

**CHOREA, OR ST. VITUS' DANCE**

14:13.1 We have a large group of nervous disorders which do not belong to the so-called neuroses on the one hand or the insanities on the other.

Chief among these disorders is St. Vitus' dance,

## SOURCE

[contd] This is a disorder occurring in those hereditarily predisposed nervous children, especially young girls ... (*W&N* 243).

The disease is too well known to need description.

It is characterized by jerky, involuntary muscular movements and minor twitching of the face and upper extremities.

These movements are not indulged in during sleep or when the patient's mind is fully occupied;

on the other hand they become rapidly worse when the patient is an object of anxious solicitude or curiosity at either home or school (*W&N* 243).

## 14: RACE DECADENCE

a disease frequently appearing in the offspring of nervous parents.

This disorder is too well known to need description,

being characterized by jerky, involuntary movements, and minor jerking of the face and upper extremities.

These movements are not indulged in during sleep, or when the patient's mind is fully occupied.

On the other hand they are present when the patient is an object of anxious solicitude or comment, either at home or in school.

**This condition is very general and undoubtedly on the increase,** notwithstanding our improved methods of treatment and the fact that these cases are now more generally early isolated and more effectively treated.

## TICS AND HABIT SPASMS

14:14.1 How frequently one sees on the streets, in the trolley cars, or at social gatherings, persons who have these minor nervous manifestations commonly called "tics."

TICS AND HABIT SPASMS (*Worry & Nervousness* 244)

One of the most common "tics" is the involuntary winking of the eye.

Other movements of the nose, the upper lip and the muscles of expression are common.

Among these disorders may be mentioned involuntary winking of the eyes,

spasmodic movements of the nose, the upper lip, and other muscles of expression,

**SOURCE**

We also observe nodding tics, talking tics, etc. (W&N 244)

[contd] The constant habit when speaking, of uttering the words "don't you know," "listen," or, when hesitating, to say, "hum," or "hem,"

are nothing more than chronic tics.

Likewise, the mannerisms or gestures of public speakers come to assume the rôle of a chronic tic,

as does also the fussiness of other people who must needs play with the pencil, the knife, or twirl the mustache, their hair, or their thumbs.

Others chew their finger nails, or pick the nose (W&N 244).

It is found that these manifestations of tics seem to run in families;

and it is highly probable that heredity and suggestion both play a part in their causation.

If taken in time, they are practically all curable by persistent nerve-training methods.

Even the worst cases may be greatly benefited or even cured if the patient will persist in following the prescribed regime (W&N 244).

**14: RACE DECADENCE**

not to mention nodding and talking tics.

Among the latter may be mentioned

the habitual utterance of such words as "don't you know" or "listen," or when hesitating to say "hum" or "hem."

These are all purely and simply verbal tics.

Then the nervous mannerisms and useless gestures of some public speakers no doubt belong to this disorder,

as does also the fussiness and finickiness of some other people who must needs constantly play with a pencil, a knife, or twirl their thumbs, or their hair.

Others chew their finger nails or pick the nose.

14:14.2 These manifestations or nervous practices certainly run in families.

It is probable that while they are, in the main, hereditary, suggestion or example always plays a large part.

If taken in time, young people can be cured of these things,

and even the older ones can help themselves by persistent effort.

## STAMMERING AND STUTTERING

14:15.1 If one reads the magazines today and notes how many stuttering specialists there are and how many stammering schools are run for helping these sufferers, he would suspect that stammering and stuttering are at least not on the decrease. **They seem to be on the increase.**

STUTTERING AND ATAXIAS (*Worry & Nervousness* 244)

[contd] Stuttering in children is sometimes lightly regarded

because of the wide spread belief that they will probably outgrow it (*WC&N* 244).

We once had a patient who had such a stuttering of the gullet that

he was unable to eat solid food, and could eat nothing at all when any one was watching him (*WC&N* 245).

The stuttering gait in walking

is nothing more nor less than a crystallized fear (*WC&N* 244).

Other nervous patients cannot write; they are not even able to sign their name when anyone is watching;

These disorders are sometimes neglected or winked at in childhood,

on the supposition that the young folks will outgrow the ailment.

This is a dangerous practice, for it indicates inherent instability and deficient control over the nervous system.

Some nervous individuals acquire such a stuttering of the gullet that

they think they are going to choke,

and are, for long periods, afraid to eat solid food.

Others stagger in their walk,

with no other cause to explain their behavior.

I once had a patient who had stuttering of the hand when he came to sign his name,

although he could write anything else without the least quiver of the fingers.

**SOURCE****14: RACE DECADENCE**

I have wondered if

even writer's cramp must be regarded as belonging to this class rather than to that of the genuine cramps (*W&N* 245).

STAMMERING CURES (*Worry & Nervousness* 245)

[contd] I know of more than a dozen successful systems for curing stuttering and stammering.

Some of these systems are diametrically opposite, and yet they are all more or less successful, which only goes to prove that it is their power to take the patient's mind off his talking that affects the cure, and not any inherent virtue residing in the system itself (*W&N* 245).

One of the most successful systems is the singing cure. These patients never stutter while singing.

It has been observed that normal speakers talk during expiration, while the stutterer usually begins to speak at the end of inspiration (*W&N* 245).

TREMORS (*Worry & Nervousness* 246)

even some forms of so-called "writer's cramp" didn't belong in this category.

14:15.2 There are perhaps a dozen successful stammering cures.

They are all based on the principle of

getting the patient's mind off himself and his talking.

It was long ago observed that

patients seldom or never stutter when they sing,

and that the stutterer has a tendency to try to talk on empty lungs.

14:15.3 Many forms of physical tremors that are not associated with real disease also belong to this same group of nervous disorders.

## MIGRAINE—NERVOUS SICK-HEADACHE

MIGRAINE (*Worry & Nervousness* 248)

14:16.1 Last, but not least, among the inherited nervous disorders, should be mentioned the periodic nervous headache—migraine.

[contd] Migraine or nervous sick headache is an explosive, paroxysmal, nervous attack, accompanied by headache (usually one-sided), nausea, vomiting, and other minor manifestations ... Migraine is one of the most directly inherited of all nervous disorders (*W&N* 249).

The disease is just as certainly hereditary as epilepsy, perhaps more so.

It is, from the standpoint of medical science, an incurable form of headache, though much can be done to help these sufferers.

When both parents have these headaches, the children are almost sure to be sufferers, but when only one parent is afflicted, the majority of the offspring is apt to be free from it. If one parent is entirely free from the disorder and comes from a family likewise unaffected, then none of the children are likely to be affected.

Mendel's law of heredity appears to govern in the case of this disorder.

14:16.2 And so it would seem that almost all of these nervous disorders which afflict the white race are on the increase throughout the civilized world, and the author believes particularly on the increase when it comes to the American people.

But the problem would be far from serious if this were all we had to fear regarding the increase of hereditary nervous diseases. This is but an introduction. These disorders are indeed minor and trivial compared to the more serious nervous diseases and mental disturbances which we are about to consider.

## S U M M A R Y   O F   T H E C H A P T E R

1. There is, undoubtedly, an increase in general nervousness; caused more by heredity than by environment.
2. This nervous group embraces those with chronic worry, special fears, definite dreads, obsessions, the hyper-conscientious, and those who take everything too seriously, including themselves.
3. These nervous sufferers make a combined religion and business of being sick, of spying on themselves and thinking incessantly of their disagreeable feelings and sensations.
4. Neurasthenia is on the increase, due to deterioration in the nervous fiber. More and more people are born neurologically bankrupt.
5. Neurasthenia is not a disease; it is a state of habitual nervous fatigue—a functional nervous disorder due largely to heredity, but also influenced by environment.
6. The minor symptoms of neurasthenia may embrace headache, backache, insomnia, dyspepsia, constipation, and a host of sensory disturbances such as itching, crawling, pricking, etc.

7. The characteristic earmarks of the neurasthenic state are: increased suggestibility, oversensitiveness, abnormal impressibility, and increased emotionalism.

8. In neurasthenia, decision is hampered and delayed. Patients find it very difficult to "make up their minds."

9. There is much fastidious pain and imaginary suffering; and, while an imaginary disease may not be real, a diseased imagination is one of the realest things in the world.

10. There is grave danger of neurasthenics forming a habit of suffering and complaining and this may be carried to the point of apparently "enjoying poor health."

11. The psychasthenes are those who suffer from inherited neurasthenia true brain-fag. They are the unfortunates who are "born tired."

12. In simple surroundings many psychasthenes do well; but in the large city they are apt to break down, "go wrong," or "blow up."

13. The chief troubles of the psychasthenes are: ever-present weariness, incapacity for work, and in-growing of the attention they can't get their minds off themselves.

14. The psychasthenes—in common with neurasthenes, make a business of "spying" on themselves.

15. Mental training, re-educating the will, and developing the power of decision will work curative wonders for all these neurotic sufferers.

16. Hysteria as a disease is one thing and hysterics—in which any nervous person may indulge—is quite another thing.

17. Hysteria is a sort of hereditary deficiency in nerve-control—a mild disorder of personality in certain highly suggestible and overemotional individuals.

18. In hysteria the sympathetic nervous system seems to indulge in wild, runaway performances at the behest of an uncontrolled imagination.

19. The characteristics of hysteria are: lack of control over certain physical acts, emotional explosions, morbid self-consciousness, sensory exaggerations, together with a peculiar ability to impersonate numerous other diseases.

20. Hysteria is a hereditary disorder. It is transmitted to succeeding generations, modified by the nervous character of the other parent concerned.

21. There is some ground for the belief that these functional nervous disorders, unlike insanity, show a tendency to “breed out” of the stock in successive generations.

22. The symptoms of hysteria are too many and varied to summarize; and too well known to require naming.

23. Racial instability, lack of self-poise and self-control, are hereditary and their increase in the nation is not to be viewed with equanimity.

24. Hypochondriacs are those who suffer from both physical and mental ailments; they make a business of being sick even when they are well.

25. Chorea, together with a host of nervous “tics” are merely straws which show which way the winds of heredity are blowing.

26. Stuttering and stammering are only other manifestations of this inherited nervous instability and are cured by any system that gets the patient’s mind off himself and his defect.

**SOURCE****14: RACE DECADENCE**

27. Migraine—nervous sick headache—is an inherited disorder which unerringly passes on from one generation to another, almost in accord with Mendel's law.

1. Sadler mentions “chronic worriers” in *W&N* 5 and elsewhere in the book. “Crystallized Fear and Definite Dreads” is the title of Chap. 8 of *W&N*.

2. *Compare*:

Many of our modern breakdowns also represent the coming to the surface of a strain of nervous weakness which has in the past been increasing for generation to generation, but which has not heretofore been sufficiently marked or well developed to assume neurasthenic proportions; but which, under modern high tension of the incessant battle for riches and fame, readily assumes the gravity of neurasthenia or near-neurasthenia ... (*W&N* 12).

3. *Compare*:

We well remember hearing some one say “an imaginary worry may be unreal, but a worried imagination is the realest thing in the world” (*W&N* 66).

4. Human imagination is a marvelous actor.... Hysteria is merely an actor who temporarily has lost his head, but goes on playing his part thinking it to be real (*W&N* 223).
5. Some authorities look upon hysteria as a sort of temporary dissociation between certain important complexes or groups of complexes (*W&N* 224).
6. Hysterical attacks might thus be regarded as a mild and temporary form of physical or bodily insanity ... (*W&N* 223).