

*L'examen de la suggestibilité chez les nerveux.* L. SCHNYDER. *Archives de Psychologie*, August, 1904, pp. 44-57.

Schnyder has examined 203 cases of a greatly varied number of nervous affections, with a view to determine to what extent the sham application to the fingers of two rings connected with a useless rheostat, leads to subjective sensations. Under very uniform conditions with the eyes closed, the patient is simply asked, 'Do you feel anything?' while the rheostat is being changed; the answers are at once written down; the question is repeated from minute to minute in case that the subject does not make a spontaneous statement after some new movement of the handle. The examination is not extended beyond five minutes, and since the tests were made judiciously, and always by the author, and since they were preceded by tests of the reliability in an ordinary examination of sensibility, the results are quite comparable. His cases are as follows:

In neurasthenia (rapid fatigability, phobias, conviction of impotence) and a certain number of dyspeptics: 53 women with 41 positive results; and 51 men with 31 positive results.

In hysteria (astasia-abasia, contracture, anorexia): 12 out of 28 women; and 4 out of 9 men.

In mental diseases (melancholia and hypochondriasis, catatonia and dementia præcox): 3 out of 13 women and 8 out of 22 men.

In various organic nervous affections: 5 out of 17 women; and 6 out of 10 men.

The expectant attention of the neurasthenic explains the great prevalence of positive results among them. The results in hysteria might be surprising, but they show that outside of a special strain the hysterical are more indifferent, in harmony with what Janet considers to be at the bottom of their principal sensory disorder. All depends on the relation of the stimulus to a fixed system of auto-suggestions. In this case the results are positive. In hypochondriasis and melancholia there prevails an averse scepticism, at times with a veritable negative auto-suggestion.

Schnyder does not rank all suggestibility on as favorable a level as educability, as Bérillon puts it. It is preferable to a sceptical or indifferent attitude, but its absence denotes a certain strength of judgment of great importance, as a guarantee for a rational psychic treatment. His procedure might rank as a test of individual psychology, but also as a curative factor—as a means to convince the patient of the possible error of interpretation of other auto-suggestive symptoms.

Both from the point of view of individual psychology and from that of a practical stepping-stone in psycho-therapeutic reeducation, the method seems to be well chosen, and with proper exclusion of verbal impressions and accessory suggestions of expectation while the apparatus is being put on, the conditions of the test are fairly simple and the results comparable.

ADOLF MEYER.