

## DEGENERATES IN THE ARMY.

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When instability of the nervous system exists to such a degree as to interfere with development and to produce degenerate modifications, these anomalies or stigmata generally unfit the man for military service. Men with such anomalies of sight, hearing, speech, physique, etc., cannot pass the examination and in this way the mass of degenerates are refused. Secondary conditions are equally fatal, for rickets and other diseases so common in the degenerate cause debarring deformities like flat-foot, knock-knee, funnel-chest, etc. If a man conforms to the standards for recruits, his variations from the normal must be so slight that nothing but normal development can be logically supposed. But although it must necessarily be very difficult to find degenerates among men who are so near to the average, I was rather astonished at first in examining soldiers at my failure to get well-marked stigmata for study. We need not discuss the problem so often propounded, whether there can exist a neurotic condition of an intensity sufficient to cause a degenerate brain, while the rest of the body remains normal. A man, whose psychical stigmata are so pronounced as to label him a degenerate is sure to have physical anomalies, if we only look for them—some arrests or excesses of development and growth, or asymmetries. In examining men for re-enlistment after discharge with an "excellent" character, I have frequently been unable to detect a single anomaly of sufficient grade to call it a stigma.

It must not be forgotten that the man who represents a strict average in every respect is an absolutely characterless individual in that he has no marked characteristics. His intelligence is quite limited, for the mean between the imbecile and the genius is a man of very ordinary ability. Soldiers with average bodies

have average brains and, though strictly normal, have not a high grade of intelligence. Indeed, both extremes of very high and very low intelligence—imbecility and marked talent—are probably too far removed from the average to be normal and are almost always due to unstable development. As a result we find very few psychical stigmata among soldiers and the neuroses of the clinic are extremely rare. The moral sense, also, being nothing more than the resultant of all the higher intellectual faculties instead of a distinct faculty by itself, is of average development among soldiers. Extremes are very rare, whether ideal morality, on the one side, or crime on the other. It is quite likely that any city including 65,000 men of ages from 20 to 30, of the same class of soldiers, contains at least one million inhabitants; and as most crimes are committed by the young it is not likely that any city of that size can boast of anywhere near the small percentage of crimes shown by the army. A thief is such a catastrophe in barracks that extraordinary efforts are taken to get rid of him, and his career is short. Again, the carousals of the soldier are generally no worse than those of young men elsewhere when freed from parental authority, nor much different from those occasionally heard of in university towns. In war times, the physical standard is lowered of necessity and we get more degenerates than in peace.

An examination of the young criminals of Pontiac, Ill., a few years ago, showed that very few could pass the soldiers' physical examination.<sup>1</sup> Among these criminals the degenerate had disqualifying stigmata, while the more nearly normal had evidently been brought up in such an adverse environment as to be in bad physical condition. In like manner boys raised in the slums of the cities do not come up to the physical requirements for apprentices in the navy.

As the degenerate are sick in far greater proportion than the normal, it is quite likely that civil practitioners are brought into contact with a far greater number of these cases than the army surgeon.

When we come to that great borderland of partial degeneration where Lombroso finds his criminaloids, where we place our

<sup>1</sup> Full details were published by Dr. E. S. Talbot, in the Jour. of the Amer. Med. Assn., in 1897.

tramps and where we find "the great army of the unemployed" who are unemployable, we still find stigmata sufficiently marked to cause the rejection of most of them. Yet there are some who slip in through careless examinations and cause trouble. Some are cases of slow development—partial infantilism—who have run away from home to seek adventures, but the great majority are mild types of the neurasthenic tramp, restless, unstable and flitting from one employment to another. Unable to stand the monotony or the restraints of civil life, they cannot possibly endure the rigidity of military discipline. Hence the deserters are almost wholly of this neurotic type—the borderland tramp. Most of the scandals arising from the enlisted man have been caused by these degenerates, essentially abnormal and neurotic. Neuroses are extremely common among them and some are pitiful cases. They are deserters in spite of all we can do to keep them, and most of them never have a clear idea why they desert. These are the only ones whom I have been able to study, and the neurotic family histories are extremely interesting. A few examples are given below. The higher degenerates of talent or genius, when placed among appropriate circumstances, occasionally cause remarkable commotions from their instability and mental abnormalities, but we will not discuss this matter here.

*Case 1.* Deserter. Has the following stigmata: hernia, varicose veins, stretch of arms 4 inches greater than his height, ears very asymmetrical and very degenerate in shape, development of upper and lower jaws arrested, partial saddle-shaped dental arches, narrow high vault, tubercles on the teeth, alveolar hypertrophy, thyroid hypertrophy, asymmetrical chest, deformed toe-nails, partially webbed toes, second toe projects beyond the others, great toe separated and partially prehensile. He said that he deserted because he failed to get a transfer to the infantry and could not ride a horse on account of his hernia—an absurd story.

*Case 2.* A. H., deserter, born of aged parents in their second marriage, has a roving, unsettled disposition and has engaged in many occupations. He is impudent and quarrelsome, and has the following stigmata: goitre, flat-foot, knock-knees, and asymmetrical face. Though he had but few physical stigmata, he gave the impression of being very abnormal.

*Case 3.* A. B., a young boy, quarrelsome and drunken, and in eleven months was court-martialed five times and finally discharged dishonorably. His father and two uncles are rheumatic, a brother and grandmother consumptive; his mother is neurotic and a brother is an imbecile. He has the following physical stigmata: nose deflected, ears deformed, left ear lower and more prominent than the right, enlarged mammæ, deformed chest with lateral curvatures, malars and chin arrested, enlarged thyroid, enlarged tonsils, adenoids, "catarrh," hypertrophied alveolars, semi-saddle jaws, small teeth, asymmetrical palate, dome-shaped head, left leg longer than the right with compensatory lateral curvature of the spine, flat-foot, slight knock-knee, knees bend far backwards (relaxed joints), thin calves, varicose veins and hallux valgus. There is positively no excuse for the enlistment of such a horrible degenerate.

*Case 4.* W. T., deserter, aged about 33. His father, brother and grandfather are consumptive; his mother is rheumatic and neurasthenic, and his sister is feeble. Stigmata: ears deformed, too low and too far back on the head, thyroid large and hard, chin arrested, speech lisping, enlarged mammæ, wide hips, slight knock-knee, sub-microcephalic head, face beardless and remarkably senile. He is a periodical drunkard and mentally is distorted and stupid, almost imbecile.

*Case 5.* E. K., deserter. He left home when fourteen years old and went West, and has been restless and roving ever since; he does not know why he deserted. Stigmata: obesity, very asymmetrical head, senile wrinkled face, large mammæ and very small bent penis, right leg longer than the left, short slightly deformed feet, depressed sternum, small teeth, partial V-shaped dental arches, asymmetrical palate, eyes small and set near together, ears asymmetrical and the left one is lower and more prominent than the right.

*Case 6.* J. M., convicted of fraudulent enlistment after having deserted. His father was a drunkard. He has a roving disposition and before enlistment had been a cow-boy and desperado. He associated with thieves and burglars and confessed to a murder "in self-defense." He is very quarrelsome and is covered with scars from his frequent brawls. There is an undoubted hypæsthesia, for he delights in fighting and suffers no pain when he is struck. Stigmata: semi V-shaped dental arches, coni-

cal upper lateral incisors; a temporary canine is still present and the teeth are generally arrested in development, flat-foot, knock-knee, and astigmatism. A discriminating enlisting officer would have rejected this man on his physiognomy alone, for he has a sullen, surly face with coarse lips and an abnormal smile; the face is flat, asymmetrical and has prominent malars; the right eye is smaller than the left, and the left ear and eye are higher than the right. He says that he does not drink nor care for women. A few weeks after his discharge from prison he was reported to have been arrested for burglary.

*Case 7.* W. S., deserter and drunkard. As an excuse he claims that he was drunk when he deserted. He has a surly, ugly face which is always a cause for the rejection of a candidate. His father died of consumption and his mother is a frail neurotic with neuralgias, rheumatism and heart disease; two sisters are consumptive and two are probably neurotic. Stigmata: goitre, flat-foot and knock-knee, upper jaw and zygomata arrested, ears asymmetrical, the left being the higher, though the right eye is higher than the left, saddle-shaped dental arches, marked alveolar hypertrophy, wisdom teeth not erupted, left leg one inch too long with compensatory lateral curvature of the spine. He is left-handed and his left arm is half an inch longer than his right; the stretch of the arms is two and a half inches greater than the height; the uvula and nose are both deflected.

*Case 8.* G. R., deserter. Father epileptic, brother drunken, two married sisters neurotic, childless and very obese (190 and 250 pounds); six brothers and sisters have died. Claims to have enlisted from reading Captain King's novels and to have deserted because he was afraid of horses. Stigmata: face, zygomata and lower jaw arrested and asymmetrical, forehead narrow, bregma sunken, left eye higher than the right, thyroid excessive, ears prominent, nose deflected. He had indulged in great sexual excesses and was ultimately discharged for persistent neuralgias.

*Case 9.* F. D. claims to have deserted because he wanted to see a sick relative and could not get a furlough. Father died of consumption, mother has always been sickly, has heart disease and can not live with her second husband. F. D. is a drunkard, and on coming of age he wasted his whole inheritance, several hundred dollars, in a few months, in gambling and fast

living, after which he became a "hobo," and begged in the streets; when enlisted he was in rags and had not eaten anything for two days. Stigmata: low forehead, face and zygoma arrested, ears very degenerate and prominent, nose deflected, large hands, stretch of arms two inches more than height, slightly bow-legged, feet very broad and toes widely separated, loose-jointed; he has deafness of the left ear from scarlatina. He is a whining, complaining, stupid, egoistic, weak, plausible, unstable man, lacking self-control. He was ultimately discharged for persistent cardiac neuralgia.

*Case 10.* Aged 22, deserter. He is very stupid, and deserted thirty-one days after enlistment to go home to see a dying brother, but he did not ask for a furlough and makes the stupid plea that he did not know that it was wrong to desert, as the recruiting sergeant had told him that if he did not like his post of duty he could leave it. His father is a drunkard and deserted him family; his mother has heart disease and one sister is very delicate. Stigmata: body quite hairy; low forehead and deformed skull (platycephalus), face arrested and asymmetrical, right zygoma more prominent than the left; the latter is arrested; ears degenerate and prominent, thyroid excessive, irides of different colors, the right being smaller than the left, chin arrested, lower jaw narrow, tubercles on the teeth, wisdom teeth not erupted, arms three and one-half inches greater than the height, slight flat-foot and knock-knee.

As affording a curious illustration of variations which cannot properly be classed as evidences of degeneration may be mentioned the army musicians. Such high development of the music sense is far from the average—a wide variation—but the men are near or above the intellectual average. Nevertheless they have numerous traits which in a higher degree would be real stigmata. They are to a slight degree nervous, irritable, emotional, egoistic, full of strange conceits, and so different from the average soldier as to require a separate system of discipline. No army band can be kept together if managed on rigid military lines. They must be coddled. It is very noticeable, nevertheless, that they have physical stigmata in far greater numbers than the soldier in the ranks. They remind one quite forcibly of the vagaries of the musical unions in our larger cities.