

John Peterson: a short, stocky man of 38 years (Ht. 5'4", Wt. 133 lbs.); quick in action and of pleasant appearance; race unknown; birth illegitimate; adopted at age of two years by a Protestant family in moderate circumstances; educated at a trade school on Thompson's Island; occupation, brick-layer; religion, Baptist; civil condition, married; physical findings, negative.

Reason for Commitment

In August 1927, after drinking a good bit, he lost his job and became depressed. After a week he found another job and the depression disappeared. The day before Christmas this job was finished. He then became depressed and agitated. He thought he was being watched and followed and applied to the police for permission to carry a revolver. Toward the end of January he thought every one was against him and became quite tense. About January 31 with great emotion he confessed to his wife his promiscuous sexual relations. Following this he became melancholy and fearful. He was afraid something was going to happen to his wife and he didn't want to allow her and his children out of his sight. He thought that he himself also was to die. A doctor was called in and advised his commitment. After the doctor's visit he became greatly agitated and after a couple of hours he jumped in his car and drove to the police station to ask for protection. From there he was taken to the hospital.

Personal History

Heredity and Early Influences.

He is an illegitimate child and has never known who were his parents. As a baby he was a ward of the state and was adopted at the age of two years by a family in New Hampshire. When he was twelve years old both of his foster parents died and he went to live with a sister of his foster mother. He lived with her one year and then went to a trade school on Thompson's Island. The foster parents were apparently of an old New England family and while with them he went quite regularly to the Baptist Sunday School. In school he seems to have done good work. According to a statement in the record he graduated with honors from the trade school at the age of 14 or 15.

Vocational Adjustments.

After leaving school he followed the trade of brick-mason. He has done job work. Some of the jobs are from 6 to 7 months and others are for only a few weeks. He is said to be an excellent workman. He has made as much as twelve or sixteen dollars a day but he has never known how to save his money. During the war he served in the navy.

Sex Adjustments.

He denies any sex difficulties in his early years, but tells of one occasion in his thirteenth year when he went home with a girl two years older than himself and with her taking the initiative he attempted to have sex relations. He says that this did not amount to anything but he admits that it may have made a profound impression upon him. He admits occasional masturbation in his fourteenth and fifteenth years up until the time when his heterosexual relations began.

Upon his return from the navy he went to live with a family with whom he had boarded before his enlistment. This family consisted of a man of sixty-five and his unmarried daughter, a woman of perhaps thirty-five. They were very kind to him and the daughter used to take care of his clothing and perform all sorts of little services for him. Their relations became quite intimate, with the result that the woman became pregnant. This situation was met with an operation for abortion. Their relations were not discontinued and again an operation became necessary. A few years later this woman died of carcinoma.

In the meantime the patient became acquainted with his wife. He had met her at a dance and had been at once impressed with her, tho she was not of the dancing kind. He walked home with her and saw her later with increasing frequency. It was not long before she also was in trouble. He offered to marry her, but before they were married they had an operation for abortion performed. They have now been married for three and a half years and have two small boys, one two and a half and the other one year of age. Both are healthy and attractive children. Since the birth of the second child the wife has been insistent upon the use of contraceptive measures.

Both before and after his marriage the patient has run around a great deal with women, both with regular prostitutes and with those of the clandestine variety.

Social Adjustments.

He is sociably inclined and popular, energetic, convivial and sentimental. He is said to have been a fair ball-player. He is also fond of music, and is something of a singer, having a good baritone voice. In his attractively furnished home he has a good victrola and a large collection of records. He was brought up to go to Sunday School and Church and tho for many years he has shown little interest in Church he still accepts the conventional Church standards as his own. His wife before her marriage was a faithful attendant at a Congregational Church. He is a member of the Odd Fellows Lodge.

History of Present Illness

For some time he has used alcohol. He claims that he was only a moderate drinker and that he never drank except in company. Last year however he began drinking a great deal more. Then in August he stopped drinking. He decided that he was carrying it too far. Apparently this sudden stop was connected with some idea in regard to the Odd Fellows. He seems to have had the idea that they were watching him and that he was in ill favor with them for having been untrue to the pledge he had taken when he joined that organization. He lays much stress upon a certain occasion when some fellow-workman made some sign peculiar to the Odd Fellows and he returned that sign. This, he says was an illegitimate use of the sign to advance his own interests and he felt that it brought serious consequences upon him. The events immediately preceding commitment are described under "Reason for Commitment."

Characteristics of the Psychosis

Field of Attention: He has thruout been in full contact with his surroundings and able to give a rather objective account of his difficulties. His attention has however been narrowed rather than diffused.

Mood: Predominantly anxious and worried but with a good deal of variation. At one time he will seem quite cheerful, then he will come back perplexed and fearful. In general he seems to be on the look out for something to worry about, ready to worry on the slightest pretext and seeing all sorts of dire possibilities in the merest trifle.

Intellectual Functions: Answers thruout have been relevant, speech coherent and intelligent, orientation correct, memory intact.

Social Attitude: Thruout his entire hospital residence he has been cooperative, frank and sociably inclined. He has preferred to be with others rather than by himself. Not long after his admission he was assigned to the carpenter and has done good work. He has also been given parole and he has not abused it. He attends the religious services when he does not have company, also the movie shows. He has had a great many visitors, chiefly members of his lodge in Somerville. He is eager to talk over his difficulties and comes regularly of his own accord to the chaplain's office. He wants to be prayed with and makes such a request if the chaplain himself does not offer to do so.

Content of Thought

Philosophy of Life and Eschatology: Not a man who has ever thought very seriously or attempted to interpret and organize his life experiences. He has taken things pretty much as they came. His conventional world is now pretty well smashed up and he is trying hard to understand. Most of his thinking centers around the ideas of the lodges and of Protestants and Catholics. In any case a struggle was in progress and he divided those around him into friends and enemies.

Self-Estimate: Asked what part he was to have had in this war, he replied, "Well, it's like it says in the Bible, 'A little child shall lead them.' Apparently however neither this idea nor that of world catastrophe have been particularly important. His attitude has been distinctly self-accusatory.

Symbolism and Hidden Meanings: The attempt to find hidden meanings in trifling occurrences has thruout been characteristic. He finds himself in a strange and mysterious world and can only be sure of one thing, that things are not what they seem. Central in this world are the lodges and the churches. In explanation of his great concern about the lodges, he says, "Lodges are very sacred organizations. If you are in trouble, you want the help they can give you." He is convinced that they have a great deal to do with his present situation. He has not lived up to their rules. They are aware of that fact and have, apparently by means of certain mysterious influences, brought the present disturbance upon him. One occasion he brought me a card sent out by his lodge. This card contained a telegraphic code covering certain situations with which lodges have frequently to deal. "Purple thus meant, 'Bury him where he is'". The patient was greatly disturbed by the fact in the room where he was staying there was purple crepe paper on the flower pot in the window sill. These fears were greatly augmented by the gift of a purple necktie. He interpreted this to mean that he was slated to die. He also mentions the fact that on one occasion while still in school and only sixteen years old his teacher said to him one day, referring to Goethals, "Perhaps some day you will build a wall around China." It seemed to him that this meant that he was to be a Mason and when he came in on "this recent spree" he thought he was being initiated into the Masons.

He has found great significance in the number 5. On one occasion in his presence a certain patient had been informed that he had had five dollars given to him. The patient had said, "Go to hell". Shortly after this, he himself received a gift of five dollars. A little later he received visits from five friends in one day. Again he asked a certain patient for a match and he was given 5 matches. All these things seemed to him most ominous.

Anxiety: Thruout his hospital residence he has been constantly on the watch for something to worry about. On several occasions he was in considerable distress as to whether he should write to his wife. He saw the possibility of bringing trouble upon her by so doing. Two weeks ago he came to me in very great distress. His wife was to have come to see him that afternoon and she had not showed up. He was sure something terrible must have befallen her. I assured him that the chances were all in favor of something having happened to keep her at home. Didn't he realize that forty-five miles was no small distance for her to have to travel in order to see him? He would not be reassured, however. When next day word came that she had been involved in a serious automobile accident on her way out to see him, his grounds for pessimism were greatly strenghtened.

Sense of Guilt: Prominent thruout. It is one of the marked features of this disturbance. He is sure that he is responsible for the death of the mistress upon whom the two illegal operations were performed. He fears that his wife also will have carcinoma as a result of the illegal operations performed upon her. He feels that the lodges are quite justified in singling him out for disciplinary measures. He feels sometimes that the one way out is to end it all.

Incapacitation: not in evidence.

Persecution: Ideas especially at the beginning that every one was against him and that he was being watched and followed. The lodges especially were on his trail. However he takes the position that they are quite justified in so doing because of his own serious transgressions.

Erotic Interests: Worried over past transgressions. No evidence of any present pleasure-taking.

Religious Concern: Marked. He attends services when not prevented by visitors and is eager to talk of his religious problems. He is anxious also to be prayed for. He not infrequently weeps when talking over his difficulties.

Integration.

No clear evidences of hallucinations but the ideas of death, of an approaching world struggle, the suggestion of cosmic identification and the marked tendency to read hidden meanings into trifles indicated a broken-up world and a considerable degree of regression.

Reaction Pattern.

Attitude predominatly self-accusatory. He is attempting to face rather than to evade his difficulties. It is to be noticed that the tendency to project his difficulties is evident chiefly at the beginning and that after he makes the confession to his wife, the tendency to projection seems to be displaced by self-blame.