

A CLINICAL NOTE.

AN EXAMPLE OF SIMILAR MENTAL DISORDER IN IDENTICAL TWINS.

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[Received March 10, 1946.]

THE following two case-records furnish an interesting example of similar mental illness occurring in identical twins, in which, however, in the one case the illness had come on endogenously, whereas in the other there was an apparent precipitating cause. Their age when seen was 25 years.

The first patient complained on admission of an all-round loss of interest with some depression and sought relief especially from his thoughts, which milled round in a ceaseless turmoil, concerning his loss of contact with people and things. There was some complaint of unreality and loss of sexual desire over the previous nine months. Three years previously he had had a nervous breakdown characterized by loss of concentration, which had cleared up six months later. No precipitating cause could be discovered. He expressed no ideas of guilt whatsoever, and his condition was in general one of distressed perplexity. The illness had come on gradually.

The second patient stated that for three months he had assisted in trying to get his twin brother to "pull himself together," when one Saturday he got intoxicated, and for a wager attempted bestiality. He woke up the next morning feeling unutterably guilty and depressed, and rapidly developed feelings of unreality. His compelling symptom was the scare that his mind was disintegrating, and he churned over in a ceaseless turmoil the fear of insanity.

The family history of the twins was bad; the mother had developed a menopausal depression and two sisters had had nervous breakdowns. One of these was subsequently under my care with severe feelings of unreality and depersonalization.

The twins were uniovular, but distinguishable from one another on brief acquaintance. Their eye colour, hair colour, lobes of the ears and finger-prints were identical. They both continued under my care for six months without improvement and both had a prolonged course of convulsion therapy. Finally they were sent home, where one married his nurse, the other remaining single. Six years later they are reported as earning their living, but still hypochondriacal and full of woes whenever they see their general practitioner.
