

IRRITABILITY AS A SYMPTOM IN THE MANIC-  
DEPRESSIVE PSYCHOSES.

By W. MAYER-GROSS, M.D.,

Rockefeller Research Fellow, Maudsley Hospital.

[*Abstract*].\*

THE occurrence of irritability has been described in most text-books as a symptom in manic and depressive states. The causation of this symptom and the circumstances in which it is observed, have not received much close attention. Most authors put the states of irritability under the heading of mixed states. They cannot, however, be regarded as such in a strict sense, because the effect of irritability brings into the picture something new which cannot be derived from a mixture of the basal manic-depressive symptoms.

Irritability is, on the one hand, a very common phenomenon in more or less normal states of mind (in fatigue, in alcoholic drunkenness, in premenstrual phases, in mountain sickness, etc.) ; on the other hand, it is known as a symptom in several psychic illnesses, as, e.g., in neurasthenia, post-traumatic and other forms of organic impairment, and in epileptics. Thanks to the frequency with which it is observed under various conditions, something is known about the nature of irritability and the conditions of its occurrence. This should enable us to enlarge our understanding of the dynamics of the morbid affective happenings which characterize the manic-depressive phases. There is, furthermore, always some advantage in attacking a clinical problem from an outside angle. Kahn, who has also pointed out the interesting light cast by such a procedure, has studied irritability in manic-depressives by collecting his material out of a large number of case-histories. I tried to check his results by a smaller number of patients who had been seen personally and in whom I had investigated the conditions of irritability as widely as possible.

A small number of typical constellations in which irritability occurred were thus established. These constellations are of theoretical interest through their contribution to the psychology of irritability, and they are practically useful in regard to diagnosis and treatment of manic-depressives.

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