

out so often, need more Catholic institutions of this kind, particularly homes sited in the country where normality may be restored by sound plain food, natural pursuits and a simple liturgical life. 'We have Catholic nursing homes', I once heard him say, 'where Catholic nurses look after you after a Catholic surgeon has removed your Catholic gall-bladder, but few homes for the mentally distressed.'

(d) 'It sometimes seems as if patience and humouring does no good to the neurotic, but merely increases the selfishness which seems to be the root of the neurosis. (Yet thwarting has frightening effects).'

Every word of this is true. It is the whole case of the writer of these answers. G.H.'s next two paragraphs may also be answered here. Neurosis is indeed a modern 'plague'. It is a disease like any other. As with any disease, diagnosis, i.e. facing the facts and interpreting them by expert knowledge, is the essential beginning. All but the mildest cases should be seen by an expert. A surprisingly large proportion will be found to be suffering from some handicap, that simple charity can do nothing to help.

Neurosis does spread. It is particularly harmful in a family where there are children. In such a case there is a clear indication for hospitalisation, if only for a short period.

Last two paragraphs: in such cases, charity may be heroic, but my whole point is that it should never be foolish. There is no doubt that friendship leads many a neurotic (and worse) back to health. But without special gifts, and preferably expert training in this direction, mere kindness often, as G.H. suggests, defeats its own end.

I don't know if this is an authoritative answer, but it is based on my experience and on the teaching of a great psychiatrist now unfortunately retired from practice.

V

IF, AS many think, we are nearing the end of a stage in the Church's development—it is suggested we are 'nearing the "Unitive" stage of the Church's life', 'entering into the "Age of Mary"',—if (as I think very likely) there is truth in some of this, it seems obvious

that just at this time must be a 'dark' period, just as in individual spiritual experience. The devil, in other words, is more than usually busy. May it not then be that those people who are weak in some way will be particularly vulnerable—and by these the devil can do a great deal of work—even if it be only 'nuisance value'? May he not be upsetting the rest of us through them, while trying to ruin these people utterly? In which case, instead of merely trying to exercise patience with the neurotic, can we not make a positive plan of campaign? If the next 'age' is to be more 'spiritual'—as seems certain—then we must expect in any case to meet the devil more intimately. Well, maybe this is the beginning of his attack! How shall we launch *our* offensive to this? I believe the mere realization of it, with the determined effort to *fight*, and not be dismayed, would disarm the enemy as well as anything. Psychologically, see how this attitude always prevents an attack from a pugnacious person. As another example, see how a class of children will 'play up' if teacher is 'under the weather'. At all events—still subject to your ruling—I begin to believe that something of this sort is the answer. For a great deal of our difficulty in bearing with these afflicted ones is fear. Perhaps fear of the unknown—because we cannot see what is the root of the trouble, nor know how to deal with it. If we could recognize it, and be determined to deal with it in the way most pleasing to God—might not half the enemy's strength be destroyed? By the way, I have just realized that all the time I am, of course, thinking in terms of the 'household'. Among non-Catholics, though, there could be no great difference, I suppose—but we need to deal with our own troubles first!

G.H.

VI

IN A private letter to the Editor someone well-versed in modern problems of psychology writes apropos G.H.'s letter in 'Points of View', July:

"The questions are pertinent indeed, but I don't think generalized answers are possible: I don't think they are, because 'neurotics-in-general' do not exist: there are all sorts and kinds, and more exactly still there is just Mr X. or Mrs Y. It's the same