BRITISH PSYCHIATRY TODAY*

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Great Britain is separated from France, and the Continent generally, by the English Channel; early in the century an English newspaper published a headline which has since been held to typify the British attitude to the rest of the world. It stated: “Fog in Channel: Continent isolated.” This reaction, however, is no longer truly representative of the British, who today are well aware that they can learn a great deal from other countries. In the field of psychological medicine, the English psychiatrist looks to the United States for a freshness of approach and an optimistic originality of method, but is sometimes disconcerted to perceive in certain American attitudes marked differences in orientation from his own. Some of these are probably due to dissimilarities in culture patterns, and in the practice of medicine, since the National Health Service has come into effect in the United Kingdom. Because psychiatric—as well as medical—treatment is available to all in Great Britain virtually without cost, it has to be spread out evenly and somewhat thinly, leading to some extent, to a neglect of the individual in the interests of the group. Thus, lengthy analytic procedures are not available in Britain under the Health Service, and if the patient desires them, he must go privately to an analyst; alternatively, he may decide to put his trust in less extensive psychotherapeutic maneuvers—which many British psychiatrists consider adequate in most cases.

The task of comprehensively representing a national viewpoint in an accurate and unbiased way is hard to achieve; but an attempt seems most likely to succeed if it includes a varied selection of relevant quotations from recent British writings interpreted in the light of personal experience. The result, the author feels, is like that of Montaigne:⁴ “I have gathered together a posy of other men’s flowers; naught but the thread that binds them is my own.” In this case the author trusts that the bouquet is sufficiently varied, without gross discordancy, and hopes that it will not suffer from having been gathered in too small a meadow. In thanking those whose flowers are displayed, he wishes to assure them of his in-

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debtedness to them; and also to others necessarily unmentioned in this brief summary.

**The United Kingdom Today**

England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland today constitute the United Kingdom, the English and Scottish parliaments having united in 1707 and Southern Ireland having split away from its union with Great Britain in 1920. The United Kingdom has 51,000,000 people—about a third of the United States' population, packed into an area a thirtieth that of the United States. To serve this tightly-knit, insular, homogeneous population, uninvaded and undisturbed for 900 years, there were, in 1956, about 64,000 doctors, of whom some 40,000 were employed in the Health Scheme. America had, in 1956, about 220,000 doctors for 170,000,000 people.

The average working man in Great Britain today makes in the region of £600 a year but is, with this, able to buy much less than his American counterpart. Cars, for instance, are luxuries, and heavy direct and indirect taxation makes life a problem for the middle classes. This is partly due to the fact that since the Socialist administration of 1948, the country has been geared to an expansion of social services which many feel has been more than she could reasonably afford. The miner, for instance, drawing his £12 to £15 weekly for a job which is admittedly hard, difficult and dangerous, often lives in a subsidized house, eating subsidized food, with free education for his children, and free medical and dental care for himself and his entire family. In addition to the Health Service, the state provides National Insurance, family allowances, free school milk, low-priced school meals and child guidance. There are pensions for the old, the sick and the disabled, and employment services for disabled persons. National Assistance and legal aid are also available.

Comprehensive integration and development of social services in the United Kingdom along the lines of the Beveridge Report of 1942 came into full effect in 1948. The services now available have three main features and some minor ones. In the first place, they provide family allowances as an incentive to increase the birth rate—every child after the first gets eight shillings a week out of taxes. Second, there is a National Insurance Scheme, contributions to which are compulsory, except for children, old people,