

ailments is likely to be based on the observation that real viruses or bacteria can be proved to be present. If they are there and can be shown to be the medical cause of the cold or stomach ache, then why should we seek for a behavioural explanation? The answer is that in any large city, for example, we are all exposed to these common viruses and bacteria all the time, but we only occasionally fall prey to them. Also, certain individuals are much more susceptible than others. Those members of a community who are either very successful or socially well adjusted rarely suffer from 'grooming invitation ailments'. Those that have temporary or longstanding social problems are, by contrast, highly susceptible. The most intriguing aspect of these ailments is the way they are tailored to the special demands of the individual. Supposing an actress, for example, is suffering from social tensions and strains, what happens? She loses her voice, develops laryngitis, so that she is forced to stop work and take a rest. She is comforted and looked after. The tension is resolved (for the time being, at least). If instead she had developed a skin rash on her body, her costume would have covered it and she could have gone on working. The tension would have continued. Compare her situation with that of an all-in wrestler. For him a loss of voice would be useless as a 'grooming invitation ailment', but a skin rash would be ideal, and it is precisely this ailment that wrestlers' doctors find is the muscle-men's most common complaint. In this connection it is amusing that one famous actress, whose reputation relies on her nude appearances in her films, suffers under stress not from laryngitis, but from skin rash. Because, like the wrestlers, her skin exposure is vital, she falls into their ailment category rather than into that of other actresses.

If the need for comfort is intense, then the ailment becomes more intense. The time in our lives when we receive the most elaborate care and protection is when we are infants in our cots. An ailment that is severe enough to put us helplessly to bed, therefore, has the great advantage of recreating for us all the comforting attention of our secure infancy. We may think we are taking a strong dose of medicine, but in reality 184