PERHAPS A GRAIN OF GOOD

When Philip, one of the Apostles, said to Nathaniel that they had found HIM of whom Moses and the prophets wrote, Nathaniel promptly asked, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" In that same spirit of inquiry generation after generation has raised the question, "Can any good thing come out of war?" The offhand answer, of course, is that no good thing can come out of war. But wait. Perhaps the natural answer needs some qualification. Perhaps you may agree that one good thing can come out of war. It can reveal our weaknesses. The tragedy is that it requires a war to reveal a weakness and make us fully cognizant of its importance. But World War II revealed two things. The first was the physical defects in so many millions of young men. Second and perhaps even more important, it placed in sharp and inescapable focus, the problem of mental health in our own country.

A CHARITABLE TERM.

That term "mental health" is a highly charitable one. But it's a very proper term because it is the official title of a Bill enacted by the House of Representatives last week. The complete title is the "National Mental Health Act." In ordinary parlance, we often speak of people who are crazy, looney, balmy, or touched. In the professional field, the word "neuro-psychiatric" came into high favor. And now the term "mental health" comes to the fore to describe a condition that has probably received far too little attention in the past. But leave it to the grim god Mars when he blows reveille and clamors for the finest, and fittest of a nation's youth to show up our weakness.

SOME FIGURES TELL THE STORY.

When the Bill to stimulate research in the field of mental health and provide grants-in-aid to states to meet this problem was before the Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce, General Horshey, the big boss of Selective Service gave testimony. The testimony was short, incontrovertible, to the point, and brutal. He said that 1,767,000 young men in the draft ages were rejected for military service because of mental or neurological disorders. Then came the Navy. Its officers said that in a 3½ year period, 88,000 young men were discharged in their training period because of mental defects and another 72,000 were discharged after they had been in service for a while. That makes 160,000. If the army had a similar percentage, its total might run close to 500,000. Now add up those who were rejected at the outset for military service and those who were discharged after getting into service. In round figures, it gets close to 2,500,000. Now remember that this figure does not apply to aged persons or children. It applies to that group who survived the afflictions of infancy and childhood and advanced to young manhood. In other words, it is a segment of the "cream of the crop" and here we are confronted with a startling figure of close to 2,500,000 who are mentally ill. We now see this grim picture and its significance because it was revealed by the demands of war. And because it was revealed, it will have the attention which a condition with such far-reaching social and economic implications so richly deserves. The National Mental Health Act passed the House and is now in the Senate.