Chapter IV

Post World War Stress and Trauma of a Veteran with Disability

in Alfred and Emily

The first people to become disability activists in the Western world, however unwittingly, were ex-soldiers.

- Catherine J. Kudlick

Veterans with Disabilities

Veterans with disabilities are honored and respected by their fellow citizens (Deborah Cohen, 2001). The citizens think that it is their duty to help the veterans with disabilities on their return home. When the government fails to fulfill its promises with employment and pension, the citizens came forward to help them through philanthropy and charity (Cohen, 2001). Jessica Meyer says the suffering of disability is both emotional as well as physical. Gerber observes persons without disabilities lack knowledge about disability because of their participation in the society which preferred to segregate the people with disabilities in institutions or kept secretly away from participation in public life by the family. Martone points out that the military hides the soldiers with disabilities to protect its image where as the society hides persons with disabilities for the fear people have about their vulnerability. Coyne says disability is negatively associated with welfare and dependence. According to Coyne the disabled soldiers are neglected, and were considered awkward symbols of amnesia. Veterans with disabilities are confined to demeaning attitude of the public and fellow non-disabled soldiers through the appellations.
Veterans with disabilities fought for equal rights. Veterans with disabilities are the first activists in the Western World (Kudlick, 2003). Rehabilitation service has emerged since the First World War (Stiker, 1999). Since nineteenth century the state has taken necessary steps to provide pension, medical, rehabilitation and reintegrated services to the veterans with disabilities (David A Gerber, 2003). Sara F Rose shows how law insists on the rehabilitation of veterans with disabilities for employment after any vocational training.

**Civilians with Disabilities**

The veterans with disabilities are considered themselves higher than the civilians with disabilities (Cohen, 2001; Kudlick, 2003). They stood as a root cause for public assistance and rehabilitation programs for all the citizens. Public behaved in a manner that civilians deprived the resources of the nation through welfare fund and medical services (Cohen, 2001). Kudlick observes difference between veterans with disabilities and civilian with disabilities:

Soldiers, of course, sustained their injuries in the patriotic and sacrificial act of serving their country, thereby investing their disability with an honorable quality, at least when they first returned home. In contrast, civilians – even those who acquired disabilities on the job--- seldom escaped being labeled helpless, pathetic creatures or slackers who drained society of limited resources; while civilians “received welfare,” ex-soldiers “earned benefits” and “rewards.” (777)

Geber points out that veterans with disability looked at the differences between veterans with disabilities and Civilian with disabilities. He says they did not look at their similarities. Niall Barr says there was complete lack of efforts from the government to help the veterans with disabilities to get their needed funds. The pattern of organizational association of veterans with
disabilities emerged from the World War I (Gerber, 2003). Geber says the state as the reason to make the veteran with disabilities as overprivileged:

It is the state, they charge, that has provided disabled veterans with extraordinary material, moral and psychological resources, which it has been reluctant to grant the civilian disabled, who had to struggle to gain the legitimacy to represent themselves and to obtain legal production and material benefits. (911)

Philanthropy, Charity, and Rehabilitation

Rehabilitation services tried to help the veterans with disabilities to get physical recovery and some vocational training for some productive work (Coyne, 2007). Through all these assistive measures of rehabilitation services the government tried to bring a positive frame of mind among the veterans with disabilities (Geber, 2003). Rehabilitation process intends to empower and be receptive to the needs and preferences of persons with disabilities, empower both physically and emotionally and provide economic resources. (p. Tal Katz et al, 2011) The veterans organizations are created to demand the state’s benefits, services, and recognitions (Gerber, 2003).

The veterans with disabilities faced obstacles on their return home (Cohen, 2001). The government failed in its recruitment promises with its soldiers (Cohen, 2001). Deborah Cohen says philanthropy follows the attempts by numerous people. It aimed from both unknown and famous people to open facilities, to collect money from rich and poor, and create “living memorials” to help the war wounded in both countries. They turned towards philanthropy when there was no hope of getting the government benefits. Cohen reports, “deprived of guaranteed jobs and marriage allowances, disabled veterans were thrown on their own resources, the
goodwill of a previous employer, or the benevolence of the patriotic. When all else failed them, they turned to philanthropy and to poor relief.” (103)

Government expected the veterans to return to the status of self supporting citizens and thereby regain their status as male breadwinners (Rose, 2012). The veterans with disability conceived this as their right not as a privilege, or charity, or welfare. The veterans with disabilities felt it is the state which is responsible for the veterans with disability because the state sent them to the battle front so that it provides all care when they are ill and later helps them with rehabilitation and reintegration services to take them back to civilian life (Gerber, 2003).

Cohen states Oxford Times' stand, “The state has its duties towards its disabled soldiers, and should not be allowed to pass them on to volunteers, however enthusiastic they may be.”

Cohen states clearly how veterans with disabilities were supported by their fellow citizens:

Disabled men had given the country their best, and their fellow citizens had not shirked from the task of repaying them, even after (and because) the state has failed to do its part. This was the faith that sustained the British veterans' movement and, despite small pensions, inadequate training, and high unemployment, helped to ensure their allegiance to the nation. (46)

Deborah Cohen says the state did not ensure the veterans with disabilities' integration into society. It relied on voluntary efforts to employ disabled ex-servicemen. Public supported the veterans with disabilities, and stood together with them against the state. After the First World War, veterans with disabilities demanded for pension, rehabilitation, training, and employment from the state (Cohen, 2001). However pension was the serious issue in the post war Britain. In most of the case the disabled ex-servicemen were fighting for no pension sanction or inadequate
pensions (Geber, 2003). Cohen shows how the men distrusted the Ministry of pension or the government or the state. Veterans with disabilities condemned the government for its neglect, and forgotten its promise.

What anger disabled men expressed after the war was directed against the state, usually the Ministry of Pensions, rarely against their families, almost never against the public at large. To be sure, the home front could not understand what soldiers had endured in the trenches. (48)

Philanthropists cared for the veterans with disabilities (Cohen, 2001). There were voices came in between which asserted the nation's response to veterans with disabilities, not to pose the duty on the shoulders of philanthropy and charity (Cohen, 2001: Geber, 2003). Village Centre Council at Enham, Lord Roberts, War Seal Mansions, the Star and Garter, Roehampton, and St. Dunstan were the famous charities for the veterans with disabilities (Cohen, 2001). British government did not come out with any solution for the veterans with disabilities.

British Legion stood supportive of its men still its officials understood the generous public, and their support where as the state failed in its stand.

[... the Legion brought ex-servicemen together by binding them closer to their society. According to the Legion's echoes, ex-servicemen occupied an honored position in their society, a product of service to King and country, but also of their special place in the hearts of a grateful public. In return, veterans owed the British public “Service, Not Self,” as the Legion's motto proudly proclaimed. (52)]

But the members of the Legion discontented with its function, joined the new radical organization of the veterans with disabilities in 1930s, the British Limbless Ex-Servicemen's
Association (BLESMA). Veterans with disabilities came to understand the drying interest of the philanthropy and charity in the 1930s due to other upcoming crises. This led the veterans with disabilities to return to the state for its care (Cohen, 2001).

Marilyn Martone talks about hiding the soldiers with disabilities and persons with disabilities from public view. By creating the military as a separate group, the society feels clean and protected. This secure feeling gets shattered when we face the soldiers with disabilities after their return from the war. Veterans with disabilities suffer from loneliness. These veterans with disabilities are isolated from any social participation in the society. Reentry is only possible if they maintain the illusion of normalcy as constructed by the society (Martone). They insist on taking training to be self-supportive without completely depending on any philanthropic agency.

Veterans with disabilities were the pioneers in introducing prosthesis for active participation in the society. Veterans with disabilities are motivated to use technologies and techniques to achieve partial independence. Wheelchairs as vehicles for independent mobility for the veterans with spinal cord injury were introduced after the war. Canadian Paraplegic Association (CPA) looked for normalization through the independent mobility with wheelchairs. Hand-controlled automobiles for the veterans with spinal cord-injured men, and ramps at home to facilitate mobility were sought through government assistance. Organizations worked towards self-sufficiency with its "we'll take care of you," attitude. Organizations worked to solve the pension related problems of the veterans with disabilities. Blinded Veterans Association (BVA) and CPA White canes and wheelchairs.

Mandy Goff discusses how involvement in sports gives new life to the veterans with disabilities. He says;
As men women return with severe injuries and memories of war, their family, job, marriage, and relationships are affected. Many service members entered the military expecting to make it a long career, but often set it cut short due to injury. Sports opportunities give families service members a chance to embrace a new life and see just how active life be again. (28)

In the early twentieth century there was fear among the policymakers about the male dependence on charity to demean their social status.

Policymakers’ fears of male dependence and their gendered understanding of acquired disabilities were especially evident in programs directed at disabled veterans. Veterans with disabilities have commonly been thought of as infantilized, feminized versions of the figure most closely connected with modern masculinity: the soldier. (29-30)

Government was aware of the fact that the soldiers should be given pension or financial assistance after the war ended. It wanted to keep the cost down. To get the government benefits, the severity of the impairment is measured by the physicians. It ranged from 0 to 100%. Mark observes the way the government allotted the pension:

disabled veterans would require government financial assistance after the war ended – and they wanted to keep the cost down. As pensions would be awarded to compensate for a specific loss to a veteran’s earning potential, alleviating the symptoms of disability before discharge would save the government money over time. ‘A man is not pensioned because he has lost his eyes, but because, having lost
his eyes, he cannot see,' wrote Lt Colonel J. L. Biggar of Canada’s Board of Pension Commissioners.(519)

Against it, veterans with disabilities claiming for pension or some financial assistance were considered as an act of cowardice so that he was marked as deviant believed to possess femininity rather than being ‘real man’. In many cases veterans with disabilities were rejected to government assistance on the basis of their lack of masculinity. The notion that an ideal male is self-dependent, and continues to be the breadwinner in the society were in the back of the mind of the doctors and government officials who are left to deal with the issues of veterans with disabilities. ‘doctors were reluctant to admit that emotionality and fear were legitimate masculine responses to combat – supposedly the ultimate test of manliness in which the idealized response was brave self-sacrifice.’

The policymakers pushed veterans with disability to overcome their impairments and their pre-war physical and financial independence. Rehabilitators stood supportive of people with disabilities in their fight against discrimination. They were against the act of normalization. Rather than overcoming disabilities and normalizing, they demanded an accessible environment allowed for the integration of people with disabilities into society. Until the 1970’s there was no admission in the schools for students with cognitive impairments, only students with physical disabilities were admitted. The assumption that disability was dependency was also the reason for the lack of enthusiasm among the administrators. Veterans with disabilities had the view that they fought for their state so that the state has the response to teach them (Rose).

Administrators thought that educating veterans with disabilities is a kind of charity, and believed in the students impossibility of becoming the breadwinners anymore. There were administrators
who were ignorant about and fearful of people with disabilities especially about the physical impairments. They fought against the notion of disability as dependency and the idea that veterans with disabilities should normalize them by overcoming their impairment for inclusion into society. Rehabilitators and educators insisted on the independent life of the veterans with disabilities. The educators and the activists thought that the true integration lies in making the physical and attitudinal environment accessible.

**Shell Shock and Trenches warfare**

Soldiers try to escape from trenches (Mark Humphries) 'soldiers consciously used shell shock to negotiate with their superiors to escape from the trenches.' Through Mark’s report it is clear that soldiers suffered from neurasthenia or nervous exhaustion after a few months duty in the trenches. Population with post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) so a lower rate of inclusion in employment than the those who with physical or sensory disability. Those soldiers who got shell shock were considered cowards or defective so to make them ‘real men’ they were sent back to the front by the doctors.

Veterans with disabilities were unhappy about their medical treatment (Etter). Doctors only treated the people with disability physically, never tried to understand their psychological traumas until the Second World War (Gerber, 2003). Psychological services emerged slowly in the late twentieth century. In Western society the medical, military, and rehabilitation services employed “cheer-up men” with the same intention of bringing back the veterans with disabilities into normal life. These “Cheer-up men” group of America during the post World War I consists of visitors who used to tell the persons with disabilities inspiring stories to overcome their impairments, and also to effect the process of normalization.
During their rehabilitation, men were trained to challenge different types of hurdles. The ideologies of disabilities are expressed through 'heavily gendered language,' such as 'to regain the strength and will to be real men, useful to ourselves and our families,' "to be men again" of ABVA, "respectability" and "man among men" of Russel Williams, one of the founders of BVA, and the first director of the U.S. Veterans Administration blind rehabilitation program.

According to Geber;

*respectability* meant refusing to surrender self-pity or to accept pity from others; rejection of helplessness, particularly in the form of excessive dependence on others (especially female caregivers) for assistance with mobility; maintaining solidarity with other blinded veterans; and finding regular employment in the mainstream economy. (11)

Certain degree of difference among the veterans with disabilities was found everywhere. The union authorized the appointment of the "wounded or feeble men" as cooks, nurses, clerks, and hospital attendants, prison guards while they were still carried on regimental rolls. The groups of men engaged in such a kind of work were called as "invalid corps" or (IC) in short. Latter the term was changed as a joke where the "invalid corps" became "inspected condemned." This got changed soon due the embarrassment the phrase "inspected condemned" caused to them into "Veterans Reserve Corps." (Etter). There was a further division in the "invalid corps" as "fit" and "unfit" soldiers.

'To be a nurse in war time was a fighting occupation for a woman' says Sharon Ouditt. Women from the British Red Cross Society (BRCS),
‘You are being sent to work for the Red Cross,’ Furse informed VAD volunteers in a ‘sealed letter’. You have to perform a task which will need your courage, your energy, your patience, your humility, your determination to overcome all difficulties.’ (20)

Voluntary Aid Detachment nurses helped the men in the front during the First World War. VAD recruited only upper and middle class women. ‘The VAD recruitment campaign worked on the assumption that upper- and middle class women would be seen best to represent England; working-class women not’ says Sharon Ouditt.

Leaving the women who joined VAD service mindedly, the other women joined into service simply to escape from their patriarchal homes. They were the ‘Mothers’ to save the ‘Sons’ of their ‘Father’ land. These nurses came for voluntarily service to the men in the front without salary, though government in future decided to give a mere allowance. It is believed in the patriarchal society men could withstand discipline where as women were believed to be not. VADs with their high discipline though came close to men were considered not equal, kept only in a secondary position. Sharon Ouditt says; “Eyes uplifted, inwardly grieving, yet externally serene and efficient, she tends the wounds of the men of her home land.” As women were equivalent to men, they tried to challenge the stereotypical presentation of women as ‘war’s other.’ They sometimes adopted masculine identity. After the war they felt psychologically unfit for the job. It was always ‘the dear boys’ and ‘the poor girls’

Identity Crisis and Female Dependency

Mower & Mower says, ‘It is in the family, then, that the disabled veteran must find security, affection, reassurance, and reorientation before he can establish himself with assurance in the
world outside.' Wives of veterans with disabilities also underwent psychological trauma as well. The role of women at home has changed after the world war as they became the caretakers of their families including their wounded husbands. Meyer shows few such cases where the wives of the veterans with disabilities run business with their husbands to withstand the condition. They suffered to maintain the family. Poverty of the veterans with disabilities often separated them from their family.

Meyer shows how men were dependent on their women for emotional support throughout their illness. Meyer gives examples of breakup of marriages of veterans with disabilities as a result of their psychological disabilities. Financial difficulties also caused marriage breakups of veterans with disabilities. Meyer says women's novel about the veterans after the war portrays the inability of men to return to their wives or society.

Meyer through these novels tries to show the change in the attitude of veterans with disabilities after their return from war. These novels show the suffering of women with their veterans husbands. Dislocation of the veterans after the war is one of the reasons for the wives to isolate the men. Dependence of men on women for emotional, financial, moral support is shown in the post war novels. Meyer sees the women in the novels as the symbols of post-war sufferings. Policy makers focused on the challenges faced by men with acquired disabilities, and ignored the needs of the women with acquired disabilities. Ana Carden-Coyne says after the war the men's passivity and dependence increases. William Etter points out soldiers' writings of memoir, diaries or letters show their attempt to reconstitute their identity. Sebrina Posey discusses the suicide issue of the veterans. The soldiers are scapegoats and serve for our safety. As a result we stay protected and pure. When they return as wounded warriors we are not ready to receive them by thinking they would shatter our pretences about who we are as individuals and who we as a
society. After war men becomes impotent, sexual disorders, homosexual, (Jason Crouthamel, 2008)

"The women suffer almost as much as the men" claimed W. J. Roberts, secretary of the War Seal Foundation. "They undergo a great nerve-strain, and everything must be done to alleviate their cases as well as their husbands." In 1938, the Pilgrim Trust visited the wife of a disabled man: "The women is in a broken-down state of health, 'Feels she is finished' and unsuitable for further work." More than one third of the War Seal Foundation's wives predeceased their severely disabled husbands. They were, according to the Mansions' nurse, "literally worked to death." (107)

Depiction of World War in Literature

Wilfred Owen, Sandra Gilbert, Rebecca West, Virginia Woolf are the few writers who represented World War veterans in their works. Owen depicts his veteran as angry towards the state, and with full of vengeance. Jessica Meyer says literature depicts the "soldiers as passive victim," "symbol of heroic suffering." Coyne presents the "overcoming" disability as a positive attitude of the soldiers. There are other depiction which shows the soldiers as "shell-shock victim" (Meyer, 129)

Martone describes the difficulty of veterans with disabilities' cope with life:

Integration into civilian community after active duty is a challenge for all who return from war, but individual who are wounded and permanently disabled must learn to live with their new identities not just as civilians but also as persons who may now be critically dependent on others for their case. (230)
Veteran with disability in Alfred and Emily

The story of the novel is the fusion both fictional and nonfictional events. This Novel has two parts. The first part of the novel is the life of Alfred and Emily before First World War. The second part is the story of their life after the Great War. The story is from the daughter’s point of view. The first part is the imagined life of Alfred and Emily that Lessing wanted to give to her parents, “If I could meet Alfred and Emily Mc Veagh now, as I have written them, as they might have been had the Great War not happened, I hope they would approve the lives I have given them.” (viii). The second part is the truth, the miserable life after the Great War. The writers either glorify war or present it as a misery (Joanna Scutts, 2009). The representation of the life of a veteran with disability is depicted as miserable in this novel.

“If he had post-traumatic stress and disorder or very bad depression these days, there would be miraculous pills, dulling it all.”(154) The above cited lines indicates that Alfred as a disabled veteran has undergone the post-traumatic stress and disorder. Alfred’s sleeplessness, nightmares, and his repeated talk about shell shock are evidences to consider him as a victim of PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress and Disorder). It states the insufficient/ poor medical facility during his time.

Alfred Tayler was a soldier in the First World War. Mary, the daughter about her parents, and their participation in the First World War:

My Parent were remarkable, in their very different way. What they did have in common was their energy. The First World War did them both in. Shrapnel shattered my father’s leg, and there after he had to wear a wooden one. He never recovered from the trenchers. He died at sixty-two, an old man. On the death certificate should have been written, as cause of death, the Great War.(vii)
Alfred is presented as a First World War victim. He lost his one leg in the war. After his return from the war, he kept on talking about shell shock and trench warfare. His mind was filled with horror, and the cruel face of the war. He was unable to forget his friends those who lost their life in front of him, “My father slept badly for all his life, what there was of it; he dreamed of his old comrades, and grieved for them. […] at the breakfast table he might say to my mother, I was dreaming of Tommy again,” or Johnny or Bob.”(154) G.C. Harb et al. say “sleep disturbances, including recurrent nightmares and insomnia are a hallmark of war zone-related PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder)

He describes his war experience with his wife and children. Alfred has been nursed by his wife, Emily. In this way Alfred’s wife and children also are shown as victims of the war:

The fate of Parents who most terribly need their offspring to listen, to ‘take in’ something of their own substance, is to be thwarted. My Father’s need was, as it were, legitimate. The trenches, yes, I had to accept that. But my mother also needed a listener, and to her needs I tried to be obvious. Later, much later, did I see that my mother’s wartime ordeals were ravaging her from within just as my father’s Trenches were eating away at him. (170)

This narration is stereotypical. It presents the veterans with disability as a “passive victim” or as “symbol of heroic suffering.” The narrative is not from the disabled veteran’s point of view. It presents the disabled veteran as shell-shocked victim. Alfred is shown dependent on his wife. This is the recurrent image of the disabled veterans in Literature. Meyer Says, “Indeed, According to the analysis of post-war literature of Hynes and Bernard Bergonzi, among others,
the shell shocked ex-soldiers became the only symbol of the heroic suffering of the men who fought in the war. (128-129)

As Barnes says, the opening description of Alfred makes us think disability as pathetic and pitiable:

Alfred Tayler, a vigorous and healthy man, was wounded badly in the First World War, tried to live as if he were not incapacitated, illness defeated him, and at the end of a shortened life he was begging, ‘You put a sick old dog out of its misery, why not me?’ (152)

The representation of the life of the veteran with disability is burdensome, miserable and unhappy. The narrative is based on the prejudice. It gives the impression that life is not worth living with disability. It reiterates the prejudice that survival with disability is a burden. The representation unveils stereotypical notion of veteran with disability is a long suffering, only to end with the death.

The representation of veteran with disability, and his family is portrayed negatively. Alfred’s wife, Emily is presented as a victim of war. Meyer says, the wives of the disabled veteran into a symbol of suffering that may be compared to the similarly symbolic figures of the neurasthenic veteran.” (117) The daughter reports her mother’s service as a nurse during the Great War, “My mother nursed the wounded for the four years of the war, in the old Royal Free Hospital” (vii)

As a child of veterans with disability, we can see how the war and its experiences inter-mingled in her mind, and her efforts show her willingness to come out of it:
free That war, the Great War, the war that would end all war, squatted over my childhood. The trenches as present to me as anything I actually saw around me. And here I still am, trying to get out from under that monstrous legacy, trying to get free. (viii)

There are one or two instances where we could see Alfred’s attempt to overcome disability, but not entirely successful:

[...] He would ride, Kermanshah, Persia, to his work at the bank. I have seen him go down a rough mine shaft in a bucket, his wooden leg sticking out and banging against the rocky sides. He ran, or hobbled, in father’s races at my brother’s school. He climbed a difficult tree to a tree house made by my brother and me. He would go stomping through the bush, more than once taking a fall, or clamber over the great clods in a ploughed field. (152)

Unlike civilian with disability, veterans with disabilities received the state benefits. In Alfred’s case government benefits were given to him. The government of Southern Rhodesia invited ex-service-men to come out, be given land and form on loans from the land Bank. “My father had his war pension; thousand pounds that was his capital had been swallowed buying equipment for the farm.” (177) Alfred’s attempt to do the farm business was only to end up as a failure.

Then there again comes a detailed description of the ‘wooden leg’ used by Alfred Tayler after the war. The ‘wooden leg’ became the war memorial after the death of Alfred. The following passage comes up with a description of the wooden leg, provided by the War Office, and about its difference from the present day prosthesis:
The contraption that enabled to do all this was called by him ‘my wooden leg’ and it lived, in duplicate, leaning against a wall in the parental bedroom. Recently Burroughs and Wellcome had an exhibition of their products past and present in the British Museum and there in a glass case, a museum piece, I saw my father’s wooden leg. It consisted of a bucket shape in wood, into which the poor wasted stump was put, on a metal leg and foot, and heavy straps that held the device in place. The stump was fitted with stump socks, in knitted wool, up to ten of them, according to the weather and condition of the stump. If the weather was hot, the socks were itchy and uncomfortable. My father got diabetes and lost weight, he filled the wall with layers of wool. (152-153)

The following line shows the government benefits to the veterans with disabilities, ‘The war Office supplied the wooden leg, and replacements when it wore out’

Though Alfred was given the ‘wooden leg,’ by the government, it nowhere came close to the modern day prosthesis with its comforts and convenience, ‘This contraption in no way resembled the artificial legs of these days, which are light and clever and can do anything.’

The suffering of the war wounded is brought out to through the following lines;

Medicine generally has evolved so that probably most people now would not recognize its clumsiness at the time my father was wounded. He said that his mind was full of horrors as he lay in hospital; ‘Dreadful things, horrible, awful. I would wake up screaming.’ My mother, nursing him, confirmed. ‘I was afraid to sleep.’ (153)
Alfred underwent post war depression all his life. It was not mentioned as post-traumatic stress disorder then. But the doctor assured him of no shell shock victim.

Alfred’s war shock and its related impacts were fully experienced by his family members:

There are pills for it today, surely, and for what sounds to me like a major depression: ‘I was inside a dark cloud. It clung to me. You see, the men who were killed and wounded, the men in the company, oh, they were such a fine chaps. I couldn’t stop thinking of them. There was such a weight on my heart. My heart felt like a big gold stone...’ (154)

Alfred was with depression:

And now, looking back at that life, it is evident to me that my father, during the dreadful slow end of it, was depressed. [...] But no one suggested that my father was ill with bipolar or any other depression and needed serious medicines.

My father slept badly for all his life, what there was of it; he dreamed of his old comrades, and grieved for them.(154)

There are two kinds of soldiers we come to know of. The first type keeps on talking about the war where as the second type never open their mind. Alfred being known as the first type, kept on talking about the horrors of trench life.

Alfred was unable to forget his war life in trenches:

My father dreamed a lot about the trenches, and my mother said that sometimes she felt as if his old comrades were there in the room with him – with us. Alfred’s children acknowledge the war days; Even as a child I knew his obsessive talking
about the Trenches was a way of riding himself of the horrors. So I had the full force of the trenches, tanks, star-shells, shrapnel, howitzers – the lot – through my childhood, and felt as if the black cloud he talked about was there, pressing down on me. I remember crouching in the bush, my hands tight over my ears: ‘I won’t, I will not. Stop. I won’t listen.’(154)

But the parents were very much in need of listeners. They were unable to come out of it. Alfred in the trenches during the war and Emily as a nurse for the wounded shared a similar post war depression;

The fate of my parents who most terribly need their offspring to listen, to ‘take in’ something of their own substance, is often to be thwarted. My father’s need was, as it were, legitimate. The Trenches, yes I had to accept that. But my mother also needed a listener, and to her needs I tried to be obvious. Later, much later, did I see that my mother’s ordeals were ravaging her from within just as my father’s Trenches were eating away at him.(170)

Alfred was active. He was with his children everywhere. He was independent within family and outside the society as well. He was a dutiful father;

[...] My father, probably already in bed, laboriously arose. ‘Your historical daughter is at it again,’ he remarks, furious, but contained. He comes hopping on his clumsy clutch over the uneven floors and sees me crouching under the net, with the brown ugly things above me all over the net, He stands on one leg holding on to the washstand with one hand, and brushes them off, using his crutch.(224)
Emily performs two major roles in the novel. She is an efficient nurse. She is appointed to serve the war wounded for four years. Along with her duty as a nurse Emily is also a dutiful wife of Alfred Tayler. She nurses him in the hospital and at home as well. Emily renders her service unconditionally to her nation, and to her husband, 'She nursed her husband, Alfred Tayler, who nearly died, in the operation of taking his leg off, and it went on, and on, and on.' Both husband and wife were unable to overcome the mental trauma caused by the war;

So there was this load of suffering deep inside my mother, as there was inside my father, and please don’t tell me that this kind of pain, borne for years, doesn’t take its dreadful toll.

It took me years – and years – and years – to see it: my mother had no visible scars, no wounds, but she was as much a victim of the war as my poor father.(172)

Emily being a nurse herself took care of her husband throughout his illness:

If say my mother nursed my father day and night for the last four years of his illness, a minute by minute vigilance, while his organs failed, one by one, and everything went, until he was begging to be given death, then it is hard to take in. and she had nursed him for ten years before that.(256)

It pictures not only the life of the veteran with disability was miserable but also the life of wife and children of his family. As per Barnes words, this narrative failed to show the veteran with disability as a productive member of the community but showed him as a burden.
This representation is stereotypical. The narrative is not from the disabled veteran’s point of view. It echoes the prejudiced notion that disabled person is a burden, pathetic and pitiable, dependent and incapable. The depiction of veteran with disability is negative.
Works Cited


