

An Interesting Case of Hysteria.

THE patient, Miss J. S., a tall, slight, delicate looking girl of 23, was admitted on December 11th to a private home, suffering from hysteria. The history of the case showed the patient to be of a very nervous and emotional temperament. Up to the age of 18 she had been fairly strong and lived in a small county town in New England. At this age she had begun to "go into society," had kept late hours, and according to American custom, in her desire and the desire of her friends that she should "have a good time," had more or less exhausted her health capital, and when admitted under the care of Dr. W. M. was more or less of a bankrupt so far as energy and nerve power was concerned.

For the past two years she had lived more or less of "a sofa life," had been surrounded by anxious and sympathetic friends who had so encouraged hysterical and emotional displays as almost to undermine the patient's self-control. So that it was easy to appreciate from the very first that here was a case needing tact and forbearance. But, unlike the general run of "nervous cases" this patient was of a sweet and clinging disposition and very pleasant to nurse, but the doctor's prognosis was therefore the less hopeful. "It is doubtful whether she has the moral or physical stamina necessary for recovery," he said, after the first long examination of her condition.

It had been decided that her only hope was to remove her from affectionate but injudicious friends, and place her under the usual "rest treatment," with a rigorous exclusion of visitors, no outside influences or exciting interests.

There was no "outward and visible sign of disease." Beyond a delicacy of appearance, and a ready tearfulness and sensitiveness there seemed little wrong. The heart and lungs were sound. Appetite fair but capricious. Patient complained of occasional headache and "pains" in the back. She described herself as "unable to walk" and if pressed to try would burst into tears and declare she could not do so. She also stated that she had "no feeling in her limbs."

The body was well-nourished and the limbs, although flaccid from want of use, showed no emaciation. She was put to bed on "rest treatment" and on milk diet only. A sponge bath was given on alternate mornings; massage daily in the afternoon. The physician under whose care she was placed, usually—and always

in exhausted cases, preferred the sponge bath to be given about 10 a.m. and massage at about 3 p.m. By this arrangement the patient had a long rest between the tiring processes.

A galvanic current was applied to the spine daily at about 12 o'clock. First for five minutes gradually increasing two minutes daily, to a maximum of fifteen minutes. To correct the anæmic condition of the patient and to "raise the tone," ferri citras gr. 3 was given three times daily.

Constipation being somewhat troublesome—and this condition being increased by the patient's somewhat obstinate convictions on the subject— $\frac{1}{2}$ gr. of extract of aloes was given three times a day.

After the patient had been under this treatment for about two weeks, the galvanic current was discontinued, and the faradic brush was applied to lower limbs. At this stage in the illness some solid food was allowed, although the full quantity of milk (about two quarts in the twenty-four hours) was continued. After about three weeks the aloes mixture appeared somewhat to lose its effect. But the physician felt assured that much of the deficiency in intestinal power was due to obstinacy on the part of the patient. So four aloes pills were given daily, and these were afterwards increased to six daily. Cascara gtt. xx. three times daily was afterwards substituted for the aloes and acted very much better.

After five weeks' treatment the patient was on a generous house diet, taking only three tumblers of milk daily. Partly for the sake of a moral impression, and partly because the physician in charge was working out some theories with regard to the effect on pulse temperature and respiration of "rest treatment" and wished to get as many statistics as possible to add to his tables of effects, her pulse, temperature and respiration were ordered to be taken night and morning. Pulse and respiration showed considerable divergence, owing to the excitable, neurotic condition of the patient. But the temperature range was usually from 97.6° to 98°.

At this time Hunyadi Janos water was given every morning, and the cascara discontinued. After six weeks the patient showed some improvement. Her colour was better, appetite increased and less variable, spirits somewhat improved. But she still became tearful on very slight provocation and was liable to recurring fits of depression.

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