

of the nervous system reacting upon the nerves which maintain the action of the heart. The treatment, therefore, which is always carried out in these cases, is dictated by the knowledge of this physiological fact; and the doctor will direct first of all that the burnt surface should be covered up from the air as rapidly and as completely as possible, by some material such as zinc ointment, carron oil, chalk powder, treacle, or some similar substances; the material itself being comparatively unimportant so long as it forms a thick adherent coating over the wounded surface, and thus covers up the nerve ends from the outer air. And then, again, the same principle must be remembered when burns are dressed; only a small part of the injured surface being uncovered at a time, and the new dressing being replaced over this, before the next layer of bandage is removed. The matter is so important that it may be emphasized by saying that more patients die from severe burns in consequence of indirect injury to the nervous system than from direct harm to the local structures affected by the burn.

It is, for example, by no means unusual for patients to die either unconscious or after violent delirium following severe burns; the inflammation of the brain being the indirect consequence of the injury. Or, after the first shock has passed away, many patients exhibit nervous symptoms which are more serious than those caused by the local affection. There is also reason to believe that the remarkable frequency with which ulceration of the intestines, and especially of the duodenum, occurs after a severe burn is due to nerve disorder; so that the practical lessons for the Nurse are not only that the injured surface must be protected from the air as completely as possible, but also that the mental condition of her patient requires much tact, firmness, and special kindness on her part. As a rule, patients suffering from nerve depression especially need most careful nursing, and, for example, the kindly ministrations of the Nurse may make many forget the pain, or at any rate the serious discomfort, from which they suffer; and by tactful sympathy and care some of the results of depression can to a large extent be prevented.

An old-fashioned remedy, and one which is employed in cases of very extensive burns, especially in children, is often most valuable. The patient is placed in a warm bath, with proper appliances for supporting the head and shoulders, and is kept there for hours, or,

if necessary, even for days, with the injured surface thus kept absolutely antiseptic and completely protected from the air. As a general rule, at the present day, this treatment is used only for children or adults who have had a very large surface of skin denuded by the burn—when, for example, both lower limbs and perhaps part of the trunk have been injured. A special advantage of the treatment is that the nervous system of the patient receives the calmative effect which a warm bath almost invariably gives. And it is not digressing from the present subject to emphasize the fact, which Nurses will find, if their work lies much with children, of much importance and value. There is a large class of patients whose nervous system is deranged by illness to such an extent that the ordinary functions of life seem to become out of gear, and they therefore, perhaps, find it almost impossible to sleep; night after night they will lie awake until daybreak, and if sleeping draughts be given them, too frequently, one of two results follow—either they become so habituated to the drug that they will not do without it; and instead of opium, for example, being their useful servant, it becomes an imperious master; or the drug exercises its ill effects upon the other functions of the body, and thus, perhaps, becomes a cause of still further ill-health. In these cases, then, you will usually find that doctors refrain as much, and as long, as possible from the use of narcotics; and yet the importance of sleep to the patient is incalculable. For many of these patients the hot bath is a remedy of the utmost advantage, and a patient who has been sleepless for many nights will, after being kept in a hot bath for half an hour or so, fall off into a healthy and profound sleep, from which he will wake not only refreshed, but with the irritable condition of his nervous system so far alleviated that the sleeplessness may, thereafter, gradually pass away.

*(To be continued.)*

---

### The Matrons' Council.

ARRANGEMENTS are being made by the Matrons' Council to hold interesting Conferences during the winter, the first of which will take place early in November.

Miss Sophia G. Wingfield, M.R.B.N.A., late Matron of the General Infirmary, Macclesfield, has accepted the position of Hon. Secretary at the request of the Council.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)