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Editorial.

A Nurse's Tribute to Neuro-Surgery.

*A recent experience of one of the new fashioned operations
—Sympathectomy (Bi-lateral Splanchnectomy).*

IN MARCH, 1952, I was advised to have investigations to confirm hypertension with the possibility of sympathectomy. I was unable to have these carried out until August.

August 31st, 1952, I was glad to enter hospital. In a side ward of the medical unit my tests began. These consisted of:—

Investigations of the renal tract.

Chest X-ray.

Electrocardiogram.

The final test—the sedation test.

Always shall I remember in this ward the flower on my food tray. Food served so seemed delightful.

September 8th, the day of committee meetings. Results were below par and surgery was my only hope. With compassion the surgeon gathered his team together, and I was transferred to the neuro-surgical block. The usual pre-operative treatment and the skin preparation of the whole of my back. The following morning, slightly sedated, I was taken to neuro-surgical operating theatre at 7.30 p.m. on September 9th.

The anaesthetist proceeded to bandage firmly over a thick lining of wool both legs from the toes to the groins, following with the insertion of a cannula into my wrist for intravenous blood. Pentathol injection followed.

The surgeon has designed a special bed for his surgery, a "Bailey Bed." Immediately after the operation the head is just above floor level and the legs raised. The bed is adjusted each day according to the blood pressure. Any pain is relieved instantly by injection of morphia.

The post operative treatment consists of:—

Recording the blood pressure.

Intra-nasal oxygen and C.O.₂.

Penicillin and streptomycin.

Changing of position from side to side.

Physiotherapy. Breathing exercises and tipping and tapping.

Both legs remain firmly bandaged for five days and gradually the head of the bed is raised. The sixth day the occupational therapist visits, which became each day to be a tonic. Sutures removed on the tenth day and

after this I was allowed up and later walked in the grounds of the hospital.

October 6th at lunch time I returned to the operating theatre for the other side. The same procedures were effected. On this occasion I was not conscious until 5.30 a.m. the following morning. How nice to awaken and see a nurse sitting by the dimmed light at your side.

I felt very different from the first operation, very weak, exhausted and helpless. In spite of this, the drill started again. The post operative treatment was the same as the first operation with the exception of oral aureomycin and chloromycetin. The head of the bed to be kept very low. Not all the charm in the world would make the nurse change the position of the bed. After the tenth day commenced the rehabilitation.

Each day one hour prior to getting up my legs were again bandaged, the bed in the old upside down position. This to send the blood to the head. Gradually you master the posture difficulty. Then comes the great day when you are taken to the big bath without leg bandages. I am sure it is a relief for all concerned when you are safely back into bed.

October 24th, elastic stockings were supplied to me. What a joy to get rid of those bandages. I found a great help in wearing my elastic roll-on. With these two aids I got along well.

On October 20th I was discharged to my home. On this date my B.P. was in my boots, sitting and lying it registered.

The convalescent period was hard. I was fortunate in having help at home, assisted in bathing, dressing, walking and gaining confidence in getting around. Once a week I had a day of depression and was weepy, but it gradually went away. Before Christmas I was able to discard my elastic stockings.

The affliction of this surgery is that you feel the cold so intensely. In fact it is like a disease. I have to wear all woollen clothing, and not until after mid-day do I feel warm.

January 19th, 1953, back to work. Eight weeks in hospital, 12 weeks convalescence.

Now it is a joy to work without headaches. If any of our readers are advised such treatment I hope that they will have as fine a physician and surgeon and the same excellent nursing care.

"Now I look before as I look behind. Come storm, come shine, whatever befall,

With a grateful heart and a constant mind, for the end I know is the best of all."

HENLEY.

B. C.

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