

vessels on the brain, and the pressure from the escaping blood produces the condition and symptoms described as apoplexy, or in popular language a "stroke"; the patient becoming more or less paralysed, according to the part of the brain which is affected and rendered useless.

Violent attacks of palpitation are often complained of, or the patient describes the sensation as though a hand had suddenly grasped and tightly squeezed the heart, the condition probably being that the ventricles were for the moment relaxed and over-distended with blood, followed by a spasmodic contraction of their muscles; and the whole departure from the natural cycle of the heart's action being due to some disorder of the controlling nerves of the organ. Not unfrequently the palpitation is due to digestive troubles, caused by congestion of the stomach and colon, leading sometimes to the distension of those cavities by an extraordinary amount of gas, which causes upward pressure upon the diaphragm and upon the heart. The latter explanation is worth remembering, because the symptom is sometimes so extreme as to persuade the patient that she is suffering from heart disease, and she feels as though she were on the point of death.

The nerve influence is still more clearly shown in the sensation of choking which is so often complained of. The patient feels as though a ball were rising in her throat and preventing her from breathing. That the condition is purely nervous, and is not due to any grave disease, is shown by the fact that actual suffocation never does occur, and that, however extreme the symptom may be, if a little cold water be dashed in the face the sensation will immediately pass away.

Digestive troubles, as already said, are extremely common, and generally commence with, and are intensified by, obstinate constipation, which is, once more due, in large measure, to loss of nerve influence over the muscles of the intestinal walls, and which requires careful medication, or it may progress even to a dangerous condition of obstruction. The dilated condition of many of the vessels can be understood, by the marked tendency which is exhibited towards a varicose condition of the veins, not only of the limbs, but also internally, the latter fact explaining a very frequent condition at the menopause—extreme vascularity, and even vascular growths, at the orifice of the urethra.

At the same time, it is probable that a powerful adjunct may be found in a species of blood poisoning—the system being, so to speak, loaded with effete matter, which is not being removed periodically as before. But whether this be so or not, and it is at least probable, the nervous and vascular conditions are sufficient to explain the alterations which often take place in the very disposition and character. If there be any hereditary tendency to nerve or mental disease, it is not unusual for this to be markedly displayed at the menopause, the patient exhibiting periodical attacks of extreme irritability, and even of increasing violence.

The most favourable fact about all the symptoms to which reference has been made is that, being dependent as they are on a more or less temporary cause, a more or less hopeful view can generally be entertained as to the patient's complete final recovery; and the common-sense treatment at the present day is to treat the condition therefore by more or less temporary measures. As the system becomes habituated to the altered conditions—and in the majority of cases the menopause is a very slow and gradual process—the vessels seem to accommodate themselves, the nerve irritability passes off, and the patient thereafter probably enjoys better health than ever before. It is a curious fact that there are two salts which surpass all others in their efficacy at this time—the bromides and the sulphates. The sulphates of soda or magnesia, by causing a serous drain from the blood vessels of the intestines, so to speak, tap the circulation in a more simple, but equally effectual, manner to that which the practitioners of eighty years ago practised by means of blood-letting. And at the same time, by preventing constipation, they relieve to a very great extent the digestive troubles of which mention has been made. The bromides of ammonia, potash, or soda, by their sedative power on the nervous system, soothe and control the nerves which are irritated and excited by the congestion from which they, together with the other tissues, suffer. That both the reasoning and the treatment of the symptoms described are correct, is again shown by the fact that the use of leeches to abstract a few teaspoonfuls of blood, either from the region of the heart or from the nape of the neck, or wherever pain is complained of; often gives the most rapid relief.

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