

a case, the flow of water from the various taps in the house will first become less powerful, then will become a mere trickle of fluid, and finally will cease altogether. So, in cases of nerve weakness, the progress of the patient's symptoms is significant of gradually failing power. The decline need not be, and often is not, persistently progressive. Just as, perhaps, a sudden pressure of water from the main may every now and then fill up the cistern again to overflowing, so in many nerve cases proper treatment and sleep may often, for a time, restore the nerve power and arrest the downward progress. This matter of proper sleep deserves to be emphasized, because "gentle Nature's sweet restorer" is, of all remedies, the most beneficent in cases of nerve weakness. It affords the brain and the other nerve centres that absolute rest from work which, in their case, means far more than a mere saving of force, for it also implies the quiet storing up of fresh energy for future use. So in exhausting illnesses, when the patient is perhaps suffering chiefly from extreme nerve weakness, a long and deep slumber is often the direct precursor to recovery, and, in many such cases, sleep is even more restorative than food.

At the same time, just as every tissue of the body requires a proper amount of food for its due nourishment, so cases of nerve starvation are often benefited to a most marked degree by the administration of a large and stimulating diet. For example, in one well-understood class of cases of neurasthenia, the muscular powers of the body, which are dependent of course upon the activity of the nervous system, become gradually less, until, at length, the limbs are so wasted that the patient becomes confined to bed and a chronic invalid. These are the patients for whom the Weir-Mitchell treatment has proved so successful. They are, for the most part, girls of delicate constitution who have exaggerated the weakness which they undoubtedly feel, or whose friends, by injudicious sympathy, have greatly magnified their symptoms, and who, in either case, have become more or less bedridden. The common sense of the treatment is only equalled by its success. The patients are fed frequently with large quantities of flesh, fat, and nerve-forming food; their muscles are passively exercised by regular massage and galvanism. Their nervous systems are thus, so to speak, recharged with vital energy, the loss of which is prevented by the absolute rest and quietude which is

enforced; and so they rapidly gain weight, and their general strength is restored—muscles, which from long disuse were wasted and helpless, becoming once more strong and useful.

Exactly the same cause is at work in some cases of heart disease, in which a sudden failure of muscular power may exhibit the most serious symptoms. From the sudden death which sometimes occurs in cases of nerve paralysis, caused by the diphtheria poison, there are many phases of nerve weakness of the heart, down to the palpitation which accompanies some forms of indigestion.

Or, again, the same chain of cause and effect is seen in the action of the nervous system over the various secretions of the body. For example, it is familiar to most, how, in times of nervous excitement, the secretion of saliva may cease, and the mouth become dry and parched. The same effect is produced by nerve influence upon the secretions of the stomach, so that patients suffering from neurasthenia very often exhibit symptoms of maldigestion.

Finally, there is a large class of cases in which the nerve weakness causes more or less temporary loss of one of the special senses. It is, for example, by no means infrequent for such patients to suffer from weakness of the sight, or of the hearing, or of taste or smell; and these symptoms are usually associated with others which cause considerable mental distress to the sufferer. In cases where the sight is weak, the patient may see flashes of light before the eyes, or large specks constantly floating in the field of vision. In the case of ear disturbances, the coincident symptoms may be even more distressing, because it is common for various sounds or noises to be heard. More or less incessant rumblings, like the sound of a distant sea, or even of thunder—or buzzings, or hummings, as if made by myriads of insects—are often complained of; or the sensation of having the ear full of cotton wool.

In former days, it is certain that cases of neurasthenia were less frequently met with than at the present time; and, therefore, perhaps when they did occur, they were more often overlooked. The steam engine, the telegraph, and the telephone have introduced an electric speed into our lives which involves a wear and tear of the nervous system disproportionate altogether to that of any other tissue in the body. It is, therefore, easy to

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