

understand why the middle-aged town dweller of to-day suffers so much more from nerve exhaustion than his grandfather did, who lived most of his life in the open air, and who made his occasional journeys by what we consider a very slow coach. There can be no doubt that, as the struggle for existence becomes more strenuous, the recuperative power of the nervous system of the average individual will probably become less perfect than is possible even in these days; because the opportunities for rest and refreshment will become correspondingly lessened. And so it may be safely predicted that neurasthenia is a complaint which will tend continually to increase amongst civilized communities. This is a probability which deserves the keenest attention, because its results upon the stamina and the mental health of future generations will be incalculable. It is quite evident to those medical men whose practice is chiefly amongst women of the upper classes, that the present social conditions are producing very grave results. The majority of these ladies are taking a more active part in the charitable, communistic, and political work of the day than has ever previously been the case; and it is frequently exemplified that the nervous organization of women is too highly constituted for it to issue unscathed from the rough and tumble work of political strife or that involved in the promotion of social reforms. Just as the Arab horse would be of little practical use in the brewer's drays—the chief effect probably being to break the animal's heart—so there can be little doubt that the nervous system of women is quite unfitted for the strife of the political arena. A considerable number of ladies now undertake public work, and the excellent and far-reaching reforms which they have effected has been of incalculable value to the whole community. But it is probably only their medical advisers who know at what a personal cost of shattered nerve power such work is often performed. Women are, as a general rule, absolutely unselfish, and careless of the consequences to themselves, so long as they perform what they believe to be their duty; and they have carried these characteristics into their conduct of public affairs. The results have already been, too often, injurious to the individual; and in the future they may be disastrous to the family, and ultimately, therefore, in the highest degree, detrimental to the nation.

Medical Matters.

HEARTBURN.



THIS is one of the best known symptoms of indigestion, and is due to the regurgitation of acid fluid from the stomach, which causes a sensation of burning in the gullet and even into the back of the throat, while in some cases it is so acrid as to set the teeth on edge, and to cause extreme pain along the course of the cesophagus. The condition is often due to an excessive secretion of the normal acids of the stomach, or to a lessened quantity of the alkaline saliva, which, in ordinary cases, neutralizes any extra amount of the gastric acids which may be present. Heartburn is, therefore, found in two different forms of indigestion—those produced by some inflammation of the stomach when the glands are over-excited, as, for example, in ulceration of the organ or unusual congestion of its mucous membrane; or, on the other hand, in persons whose nervous systems are enfeebled either by chronic or acute illness, or who are suffering from what is popularly known as “nerve exhaustion.” In all these cases, the salivary glands do not secrete in proper quality the fluid which plays such a prominent part in the process of digestion. It is, therefore, easy to understand why, in many cases, heartburn is due to food which has been too slowly digested, and which ferments and becomes unusually acid; the delay in digestion being most commonly found in those cases in which the nerve weakness causes the production of gastric juice, whose qualities are less active than they should be. The common sense, therefore, of the ordinary treatment of heartburn, by giving bicarbonate of soda or potash, can be easily understood. It neutralizes the acid in the stomach, and, therefore, removes the scalding pain which it causes. In Germany, the usual treatment for this condition is an emetic; it being argued that this is the most natural and satisfactory method of clearing the stomach of its irritating contents. But, when it is remembered that the symptom is often dependent upon ulceration of the organ, and that any violent action of the stomach, therefore, might be followed by perforation and fatal peritonitis, it is plain that this treatment might be very hazardous.

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