

and Joan of Arc are mentioned with these cases. Among the political paranoiacs, we find the names of John Brown and Guiteau. The so-called cranks of this description really create a dangerous element in society. They are apt to make some homicidal assaults in consequence of their delusions, but if confined in asylums they accept that as a part of the scheme against them, and believe that some benefit will result from it either to the world or to themselves. They often show a proprietary interest in the institution, and are very useful, and interested in the different forms of work. These patients usually live to a good age, free from care, and while terminal dementia is quite sure to develop, still the process is not rapid. There is little to be said in the way of treatment, and their physical condition is usually good. Out of door work is recommended to keep the mind diverted from its delusions and hallucinations as far as possible, and through bodily fatigue they obtain a fair amount of repose.

Before closing I must make a brief mention of two agents—hydrotherapy and electricity—which are used among some of these patients with marked success. Hydrotherapy is a form of treatment among the insane which is daily gaining in favour. It is applicable to cases both of mania, melancholia, and some forms of dementia, but in order to be used fully it calls for a hydrotherapeutic apparatus, which is never met with except in sanatoriums or hospitals, and its use is then fully directed by the physicians.

I will not take the time here to describe these appliances, which are most complex, and can be used in many ways, but will endeavour to give instead a few practical therapeutic methods, which you can use in any house with ordinary plumbing.

It is known that water affects the nerves in many ways. Cold baths increase the irritability of the brain and spinal cord in a reflex manner, by stimulating the nerves of the skin and quickening the circulation; while warm baths are relaxing, tend to induce sleep, and to diminish the irritability of the nerves. By keeping in mind the difference in hot and cold baths one can devise many ways of applying them with great benefit to the patient. Short cold baths combined with sprinkling or rubbing are stimulating and tonic. The spinal douche is a powerful tonic as well as a mental stimulus. By means of a proper nozzle a strong stream is directed up and down the back of the patient, at a distance of ten feet, if possible, and for a few seconds only. Sometimes this is alternated with a stream of hot water, and may be used with cases of hysteria or neurasthenia, or where there is sluggish intellect, stupor, or apathy. This should be persevered in daily, and the temperature of the water gradually reduced till lowered to fifty

degrees. In a private house the patient may stand in any ordinary bath-tub, and this process be imitated by using the usual spray bath; and while the force cannot be as great as from the regular apparatus, still the reaction may be quite marked and beneficial. The portable steam bath arrangements of these days make the hot air and vapour baths possible to all, and can always be used, when the patient is quiet enough, to produce general relaxation and possibly sleep. The prolonged warm bath, before mentioned, the hot or cold wet packs are always at hand, and if properly used may prevent the necessity of giving hypnotics, and aid materially in regulating the circulation and relaxing the nerve tension.

Electricity is believed to have much the same value as massage when used in connection with the rest cure. It also has a tonic effect, but as its specific use belongs to the physician's domain, I will not take up our limited time in an attempt to describe its subtle effects and the manner of its application. You will have always to "follow the doctor's directions" in any case.

We may then sum up the care of any acute case by rest in bed—overfeeding with light food—careful observation of the digestive process—massage when possible—hot wet packs or baths for sleeplessness, and electricity when it is indicated. The care of the chronic insane is much more limited, being an effort to make them as comfortable and happy as their mental conditions will allow and to keep them employed as far as possible to delay the process of brain decay. These cases are so different there can be no general line of treatment followed, and there is but little to inspire one to endure much that is monotonous and disagreeable, except a pity for their unhappy condition and a wish to aid in making what remains of their lives as attractive to them as can be.

If I have aroused in your minds any larger sympathy for these afflicted people, or have given you any suggestions which will enable you to care for them with a better understanding and appreciation of their condition, I am highly gratified.

DISCUSSION ON MISS LAIRD'S PAPER.

THE PRESIDENT: The Chair would ask Miss Wood, of England, to open this discussion.

Miss C. J. WOOD: I am a delegate from the Asylum Workers' Association. The Asylum Workers' Association is one of modern growth; it is an Association of medical men, specialists in the medical profession, and of the more intelligent and advanced superintendents and nurses in the asylums. The object of the Association is to improve the condition of the patients, by improving the education and equipment of their attendants. Our Asylums have been a by-word in time past for the very low standard of the attendants employed in them. Women of no character, or of shady character, who could not get employment else-

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)