

With regard to one and all of the diverse cases of neurasthenia in women, I firmly believe that the first essential of successful treatment is fresh air. There are no greater tonics to the nervous system than oxygen and sunlight. Common sense and successful practice alike dictate that the patient who is suffering from *nerve shock* should be moved as soon as possible into totally fresh surroundings, away from everything which would recall the loss and trouble she has suffered—if it can be done, to a seaside town if she has lived in the country—but, above all, where she can get ample air and sun space.

With *nerve exhaustion* patients, absolute mental and physical rest is the first essential—then food and sleep. If the patient can be made to sleep well and eat well there need be no anxiety as to her ultimate recovery. The fact, however, that the bromides and chloral often excite such patients instead of soothing them shows how carefully they must be treated. In most of these cases, Trional acts excellently. Twenty grains of the drug, given as soon as the patient can be put to bed in a darkened room, will generally secure some hours of sound sleep. Next, 5 grains of calomel, followed in three hours by a brisk saline purgative, has an excellent effect on these cases. Restful sleep at night, food every two hours, with complete rest in bed, in a darkened room, will put many of these acute cases of nerve breakdown in a fairly healthy mental state, in a few days. But it should always be remembered that in such women such an attack as that described is a danger-signal—all the more grave because of its suddenness and its often trivial cause—and, above all, if it has never occurred before. If its gravity is minimised, and she is permitted again to overtax her nervous system, the next collapse will be more serious and recovery more prolonged. If, on the other hand, the first attack is not treated at once and actively, the patient will not recover her nerve tone easily or speedily. So I believe it is a golden rule to insist on such patients taking their breakdown seriously to heart; to insist upon change of scene, fresh air, and rest as soon as the acute crisis is over, and, on their return home, to insist that the amount of work must be lessened, and the amount of rest and real recreation increased. Incidentally I may say that I have found nothing so advantageous to such women as to transform their mental activity into physical channels. I have cured some by tennis or golf, some by rowing, and one of the worst cases I have seen by persuading her to bicycle.

Returning, however, to the second class of Neurasthenics I have defined—those suffering from *nerve starvation*—there are two points of the utmost practical importance which demand attention—first, to discover the cause and remove it;

and, secondly, to cure the nerve condition. I would emphasise the latter point, because when these cases come under medical care they are often so exhausted that it is very rarely sufficient merely to stop the drain on the physical forces which has produced and maintained the nerve condition. These women are generally so weak that they appear to possess little or no rallying power, and therefore medicinal treatment is almost invariably necessary to restore the nerve tone. Briefly, I may say that these cases are characterised by more or less marked anæmia; in some cases it is extreme. There is generally a simple and obvious but quite overlooked cause for this. Many cases I have seen had chronic constipation and bleeding hæmorrhoids; some had fibroid or other growths of the uterus, or chronic salpingitis with frequent and profuse losses. It is easy enough with care to discover, and at the present day it is quite easy to cure, such conditions, and thus remove the cause of the nerve trouble and of its continuance. With regard to the medicinal treatment of these patients, there are many remedies more or less popular and more or less efficacious. I have tried them all, and obtained more or less satisfactory results with several. For some months, however, I have been prescribing a comparatively new preparation—Hæmatogen—and invariably with uniform and rapid improvement in the condition of the patient. The explanation of such results seems very simple. Assuming, as I have done, that these cases of Neurasthenia are due to nerve starvation, the first principle of medicinal treatment must be to improve the blood condition, and also supply those elements which the nervous system demands for its nourishment, and especially phosphorus. I was first led to employ this remedy because, as you are doubtless aware, it is composed of purified and concentrated Hæmoglobin, obtained, together with the albuminous constituents of the blood serum, under strict antiseptic precautions, from the blood of healthy bulls. It therefore contains all the natural salts of the blood, including phosphate of sodium and phosphate of potassium, and the whole is agreeably flavoured with pure glycerine and wine. I have found that most patients take the preparation best in a wine-glassful of soda-water before food, two or three times a day. The anæmia disappears, the appetite improves, the nerve symptoms pass away in the most satisfactory manner under this treatment. Especially during the warmer months of the year, when Cod-liver Oil is impossible to most patients, it has certainly proved most excellent and reliable. One would hesitate to dogmatise on such a matter, but I am inclined to believe the preparation is in many ways better suited for neurasthenic patients than Cod-liver Oil; and for this simple reason. Many of these patients are unable to take or digest ordi-

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)