

## The Neurotic Patient.

(Concluded from page 190.)

I can best offer a sketch of the outline of the treatment of severe cases of neurasthenia that I have found successful by giving a short account of one or two such cases.

A married lady, aged twenty-nine, was sent to me by one of our most celebrated London physicians. Her physique and general development had always been defective. An attack of influenza reduced her strength, and she had passed by degrees into a condition of serious illness. For some months she had been under treatment for renal disease, but on a consultant being called in, it was decided that there was no organic disease, only a really serious condition of neurasthenia. After a week's attendance, during which the patient carried out none of his wishes, the consulting physician urged that, if her life was to be saved, she should be sent immediately from home to those who might succeed in inducing her to obey his orders. He gave her relations to understand that if she continued to refuse food, as she was doing then, she would not have much longer to live. She arrived in an ambulance on a water-bed, accompanied by her husband, doctor and nurse. The medical man who now undertook charge of the case, explained to the husband the conditions of the treatment ordered by the London physician— isolation from friends, a full milk diet, massage, &c. The poor husband was quite unprepared for this, and was aghast. "You will never get her to submit to discipline. The London physician has done his utmost to get her to take milk. She refuses to allow it to come near her. It is impossible. I know her. You do not. She will not do it." He departed with the doctor and nurse, desiring our success, but with no hope of it.

The patient was much to be pitied. To an utterly undisciplined mind strict Weir-Mitchell treatment cannot be made desirable. She was in a very emaciated condition, having refused all food except tea and grapes for some little while. Her weight was 5 stone 6 lb., her temperature was 96 deg., her pulse 56. She complained of pain in the region of the kidneys and suffered from insomnia. There was amenorrhœa.

The doctor in charge departed, having given orders that the patient was to be placed on a strict milk diet, nothing else. A short hysterical attack, during which she became quite rigid, resulted from her understanding this. After three hours had passed, during which she could not be induced to allow a drop of milk to pass her lips, I sent a note to the doctor reporting this, and adding that she was offering to take other kinds of food. The reply was a decided one: "Mrs. Z. will take milk. She may have it hot or cold, iced, or prepared in any way she fancies and, as you think fit, but milk she will take, and nothing but milk until further

orders." The doctor was a great student of character. He by no means treated all his neurotic patients in exactly the same way, though invariably with firmness. He had taken the measure of this one and had planned the campaign. When he arrived a few hours later, he found that his mandate had not yet had the desired effect. A serious interview with the patient took place. He explained to her with much decision that no one had any intention of keeping her from her home against her will, that she might return the following day; he told her plainly what in that case would be the probable result, and impressed upon her the fact that she would only remain in the Home as long as she obeyed every order. The absolutely uncompromising attitude with regard to the milk, combined with this conversation, convinced the patient, and she laid down her arms. From that time she accepted her fate and submitted to the treatment.

Her diet at first consisted of five pints of milk (variously prepared). It was taken obediently at regular intervals. On the fourth day an addition was made of raw meat juice (the juice of a pound of beef-steak). This was given sometimes plain in a coloured glass, sometimes added to a cup of beef-tea (not hot); the latter method was usually the one preferred. Malted foods, porridge, cream, rusks, and fish followed. Later, a full diet of meat and vegetables, the original quantity of milk and meat juice continuing. Massage, for purposes of digestion, circulation, and improvement of the nervous and muscular conditions was a systematic part of the treatment; at first for half an hour, by the sixth day for an hour twice daily, gradually increasing in degree.

Absolute quiet without a sense of loneliness, every encouragement to sleep, regular feeding at proper intervals, a calm and cheerful atmosphere, nothing to arouse the emotions or mind, constituted her life for the first eight weeks. Her temperature ceased to be sub-normal, hot bottles could be dispensed with, sleep improved, and pain in the back gradually disappeared. At first there was a gain of 4½ lbs. every week. Then came a loss of 4 lbs., after which on an average there was a gain of 3½ lbs. a week. There were many ups and downs in both physical and mental progress. It was not a simple case nor an easy one, and it demanded a great deal of patience.

As such a patient improves in strength very special efforts of will are necessarily required of her. Almost everything that she has to do is against her own inclination—the prescribed diet, the physical exercises, the readjustment of her mind with regard to her own mistaken view of herself, finally the abdication of all invalid habits and a return to a healthy manner of living both as regards mind and body.

The second stage of the treatment was a gradual

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