

The Care of Nervous Patients.

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I. THE SICK - ROOM.

This should be sunny and airy. Cartridge paper is more restful than figured, and walls kalsomined with some soft colour are also good. Pale greens are the best tints; is not green Nature's tonic? Let us follow Nature. Red should be avoided. The use of red street signs in a certain section of Chicago, so the story goes, largely increased crime. Plain white muslin curtains, undotted, with dark green or dark blue shades, are best for the eyes. Blinds are better than shades, however, as they admit more air and do not "flap." Glare should be avoided, but this does not mean a continuously darkened room. Let the light filter in little by little, until the full sunshine can be borne, even if only for a few minutes daily. An oiled or painted floor with neutral tinted rug is best—simply a small one by the bed, that the feet may not be chilled by the bare boards if slippers are forgotten. Use a gold and white toilet set, and avoid fancifully carved furniture. The bed is, of course, of iron. Avoid pictures or ornaments, save perhaps one landscape—still water makes a restful background—or a cast of one of the strong, reposeful faces of the olden art. The vase of flowers—may I suggest all of one kind?—is indispensable. The faint odour of perfume, when agreeable to the patient, is of some slight help. Do you see the aim of these hints? *When in the room the brain should be undistracted.* How many make themselves nervous by making patterns out of carpet, wall-paper, or furniture! Thought should be directed to the beautiful, concentrated on a few things, or else held in abeyance. The landscape, the vase of flowers, the window view—preferably on a garden—will stimulate the desire for outdoor life, for *activity*. The patient gains faith in his own strength to do. With his "I can," half the battle is won. The doctor and he stand shoulder to shoulder in the fight for health, and victory is assured.

II.—THE PATIENT.

Dress.—White is most restful, with perhaps a bit of colour at the neck. Avoid figured goods and black. If the last must be worn, suggest black and white and laces.

Food.—This should consist largely of milk and its combinations. Dainty service is an essential feature. The dish garnished with lettuce or parsley is an appetiser.

Occupation.—Sleep is perhaps the most pre-

fitable. Patients, like children, are "always good when asleep." Naps afford recreation time to doctor and nurses—"a good time all around." Reading should be varied. Something solid enough to require a little thought and slight concentration is good in small doses. Pathetic stories and violently funny books are bad, as over-arousing the emotions. Books about Nature are good, as stimulating a desire for outdoor life, as are also rhythmic but not melancholy poems—some of Shelley's or Mrs. Browning's "Pan," Light calisthenics and Delsarte, especially the exercises for head and spine, should find a place in the day's programme. Needle baths and the spinal douche, 80 deg. to 100 deg., for from one to three minutes as the average, and the ten minutes' hot bath at night, 98 deg. to 100 deg., are indispensable. It is the opinion of some physicians that cold plunges in the morning should not be taken by neurasthenic women, as they believe it engenders congestion in the ovaries. The ordinary cold sponge is, in some cases, notably of poor circulation, also to be used carefully. A dry flannel rub may be substituted. The electricity thus obtained, like that of the human hand in massage, is invaluable. Regular electrical treatment, however, Weir Mitchell counts of little value. Wet packs are good, and moist steam. In walking, care should be taken not to overtire the patient. Remember "the way home" and conserve strength. City patients should not take country walks alone. The cows, dogs, of which nearly every house owns at least one, lonely stretches of field, and wood, are all sources of terror. A change of scene is good, but we all love the familiar. One patient regularly passed some tenements and a red brick building in her daily walks, and they, with the railroad cars were her great solace. She was a city woman. Another spent eight weeks in very beautiful country, and then, homesick, rested in another city, not her own. Monotony is a common cause of insanity. When weary of the country, we believe that a stay in the city at some quiet boarding-house is preferable to a sanitarium. The theatre, concerts, park, museums, taken moderately, are all so many avenues for the entrance of new and health-giving thoughts. The noise of the city is so familiar as to be unheeded. One patient who had discouraged both doctors and nurses by her frequent weeping was permanently cured when she reached the city. Books of city views, then, are often great comforts to city patients, and familiar country scenes to the country woman.

An interest in botany or entomology may be wisely cultivated, also sketching. The rhyth-

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