

Neurasthenia.

NOTES ON AN INTERESTING CASE ENDING IN COMPLETE RECOVERY.

Neurasthenia being so much on the increase, in the present race and fight for a place in life, it may interest your readers to hear of a case of complete cure, after an illness of two and a-half years. Surely that length of time is sufficient to tax the resources of the most capable nurse.

The patient was a man of thirty, of quiet, steady habits and used to very hard brain-fag—in some of his most busy years having worked ten or even eleven hours out of the twenty-four! No thought was given to the possibility of his energies failing; nor did he show any symptoms of being overdone, except that for some considerable time he had not slept well, his appetite was sometimes precarious, and he seemed to desire quiet and seclusion.

He returned one day from his usual afternoon walk in dull November, stepped heavily across the hall, banged the door of the room he entered, and flung himself into a chair. His wife, who was sitting with her children in the room underneath, heard this, for him, unusual entry. It was his custom to find them out by a call, and generally have a romp with the small folk before tea. Thinking he must be unwell, the lady hastened upstairs and found him sitting before a blazing fire, his elbows on his knees, his eyes fixed in a dull stare on the flame, and singing a few snatches of a nursery rhyme over and over again.

Fortunately before marriage the wife had been trained in a large London Hospital, and the fright of the moment was not so dire as it might otherwise have been. She realised at once something had unhinged his mind, and did her best to bring him back to his normal condition.

Nothing she did or said roused him, and it took all the powers she had at her command to get him safely in bed by ten o'clock. Then quickly dispatching a servant for the doctor, who lived within a stone's throw of the house, she seized a few minutes away from the patient to tell him what had happened.

Very little hope did the physician give of the patient's recovery after having seen him a few times; and, of course the wife's desire to *fight* such a decision arose at once, as it would in the case of any true nurse. Very minutely did she take in the doctor's advice with regard to staving off the paralysis, so much dreaded.

Cachets were given at night to induce sleep, and strong restorative medicines, also Lécithine

—the French brain-making product. Champagne and brandy were also necessary—the heart failure was often very dangerous. A great many eggs, never less than four a day, and quantities of milk were ordered—meat, freshly cooked *twice* a day—and as much fresh air night and day as possible.

Now for the method of fighting the disease. The patient's room was to be isolated as much as possible from the other members of the household—it was a large house and this could be done. He was to be in bed by 9 p.m. at latest, and in a quite dark room—windows wide open—plenty of blankets and hot-water bottles (it was very difficult to keep any bodily heat in him at all). Directly on getting into bed the cachet was given him and sleep speedily followed, generally only lasting till about 1 a.m., when intense restlessness would begin and those hopeless forebodings which are the most trying things in these cases to combat, and so terrible to hear.

On his waking he was to have a light, and a smoke and book if he cared for them to induce sleep again. This sometimes tired him, but often the restless spells were so terrible that he was obliged to have a second cachet and slept fitfully for a few hours.

At 7 a.m. he was to drink some warm milk, and get his bath, the water being nearly cold and Tidman's Sea Salt freely used—with a bath brush to stimulate circulation. Beating with cold towels followed and then he was rubbed down with a rough bath-sheet, wrapped in a flannel dressing-gown and put into bed again with a dose of hot brandy.

After half-an-hour's rest followed the massage of his entire body, it taking about an hour to get over all the muscles, the wasting of which was terrible to behold.

Then twenty minutes' rest and again a rub of the entire body with best brandy, after which he dressed and had breakfast.

Immediately after that he was taken into the open-air and driven about till within a short time of luncheon. So giddy was he, he could hardly walk at all and sometimes reeled like a drunken man. When this giddiness came on he was not to be allowed to walk a step more if it could be helped.

The doctor advised a change from London into the country as soon as it could be managed, and until a suitable house could be found the patient was taken about from place to place—only staying a few days in each.

He now, since his recovery, has hardly recollections of any of these details, and the first eight or ten weeks of his illness he was at times so desperate and at others so despondent that

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