

culty, as both the mastication and the swallowing of the food become increasingly difficult.

CHOREA.—This affection was formerly known as "St. Vitus's Dance," and is distinguished by convulsive movements first of the face and then of the arms or legs, which may be confined to one side of the body or to both. The disease affects, as a rule, weakly girls and boys, and comparatively rarely affects grown-up people. It is due to derangement of the motor nerves supplying the affected muscles, and is very common in those suffering from rheumatism; so much so, indeed, that there is reason to believe in the existence of a common cause for both affections. It is known, however, to occur in children as the result of a sudden fright or blow, or even as a consequence of some intestinal irritation, especially from worms. The nursing treatment consists of the careful administration of the medicines or enemata which may be ordered, and much can be done by keeping the patient amused, and preventing her from dwelling upon her symptoms. It is well to remember also that there occurs a false Chorea amongst neurotic girls who have imitated some friend suffering from the complaint until the spasmodic movements of the face and even the twitching of the arms have become a definite habit. Such cases are, however, comparatively easily cured by cold shower baths, or by the application of the interrupted galvanic current, combined with careful oversight and moral influence.

PARALYSIS.—Paralysis denotes loss of muscular power, and, therefore, it can be easily understood from what has been already said that it always means disease or derangement of some part of the motor nerve system. *Paralysis* may be complete or partial. When there is only a slight loss of power, the term *Paresis* is employed, and in some diseases it frequently happens that the patient suffers from paresis or muscular enfeeblement for a shorter or longer period before paralysis, or complete loss of power, is developed. Paralysis then may be due to disease or injury of one motor nerve, or to disease of the spinal cord, or of the brain itself; and it is obvious that according to the site of the disease or injury, and according to its extent, will be the extent of the paralysis and the possibility of its cure. Paralysis then may affect one muscle or many. For example, if a patient has inflammation of the facial nerve, due to a long continued draught from a carriage window, what is termed facial paralysis may be caused; that is to say, the muscles of the face on the affected side cease to act, so that

the lips are drawn down or drawn out on the other side, or the eyelids may be closed. Again, a group of muscles may be paralysed, as we find when the patient suffers from lead-poisoning, and the hand drops at the wrist. But the cases with which nurses chiefly meet are those of so-called general Paralysis, and these are distinguished as *Hemiplegia*, that is to say, paralysis of one side of the body; or *Paraplegia*, paralysis of the lower limbs. With reference to Hemiplegia, the loss of power as a rule occurs because the brain on the opposite side is injured, either by disease, or the formation of a tumour, or the rupture of a blood-vessel on the brain, or the formation of a clot in one of the chief blood-vessels—the result, in any case, being practically the same. The brain tissue is either pressed upon by the blood clot or the tumour, or it becomes broken down by the disease or in consequence of the want of its proper blood supply, so that what is called "softening" of the brain tissue occurs. It can easily be understood that, so long as the nerve tissue itself is not destroyed, there is always a possibility of the patient's recovery. For example, if the clot in the blood-vessel dries up and hardens, and the other blood-vessels of the brain enlarge so as to supply, through new channels, fresh blood to the affected part of the brain, the brain and the patient may completely recover. Or, if the tumour be of a nature which can be affected by medicine, and can, therefore, be absorbed, again the evil results of its pressure will diminish and disappear. Or, again, if the blood from a ruptured blood-vessel dries up and is absorbed, its injurious pressure upon the brain substance is removed, and the brain may recover with little or no permanent injury. But, on the other hand, if the brain tissue itself softens down and breaks up into a soft, pulpy disorganised mass, all controlling influence over the nerves of the body exercised by that section of the brain must be entirely and permanently lost. Hemiplegia, then, is frequently accompanied by what is termed an attack of Apoplexy, which is, in fact, what used to be called a "Paralytic stroke." Then, one or other of the conditions, to which allusion has been made, occurs. The patient suddenly loses consciousness, more or less completely, for a longer or shorter period. He may then recover consciousness, but is found to have lost complete muscular power of the left or the right limbs; the disease or the injury being on the opposite side of the brain. If the brain mischief is very serious, the stupor will gradually increase, the patient will become more and more unconscious, then comatose, and die. On the other hand, if the

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)