

tion should be seen in order that they may be appreciated. Vascular perturbances may occur without either blushing or pallor; indeed, the emotional vascular see-saw, when it takes place between important internal organs, is even more likely to prove deleterious to the economy than when one of the parts affected happens to be the skin. Professor Osler, in his most illuminating Lumléian Lectures, says that "the profession is now riding on the top of a cardiovascular wave," and I suppose I may be considered to have been caught in the trough of that wave when I ask you to believe that the physical ills which beset emotional patients are due primarily to circulatory causes. Such, however, is the position, and if I have succeeded in making myself clear up to this point, I have said enough to show that uncontrolled and misdirected emotions may, and do, by their action on the blood vessels which supply the excretory organs, and the replenishing glands, so affect the composition of the blood itself that the nutrition of the tissues is impaired.

With the nutrition of the tissues impaired, the tissues themselves become bereft of their normal powers of resistance to bacterial invasion; in other words, the soil becomes unduly receptive, with the result that acute specifics of all kinds have a peculiar tendency to show themselves.

Surgical injuries apart, there is no type of disease which may not be provoked or encouraged by the action of the emotions when insufficiently curbed and guided by the development of the will.

Dr. Williams argues that it is important that this truth should be recognised by the medical profession, because unqualified competitors have blundered upon it and ignorantly exploited it to the detriment of the public when they fail, and to the discredit of the profession when they succeed. The mainspring of all these systems, nakedly expressed, is the control which they impose on the emotions. It is doubtless true that they substitute one overpowering emotion, faith, for a host of minor ones; but so far as the health of the individual is concerned, the net result is all to the good, for his faith instils into him that all essential control over the multiplicity of emotions whose unrestrained play had hitherto exercised such a baneful effect upon him.

After saying that it is impossible to dismiss the whole question by casting doubts on results, Dr. Williams shows that martyrs have suffered with a degree of physical pain, which according to their own showing was practically negligible, ordeals which to ordinary people would have

been impossible tortures. The strength of their position is their power of turning their attentions away from what is painful in order to concentrate it upon what is agreeable and hopeful. To accomplish this, however, there must be something better than the academic acquiescence which so often does duty in this direction; it must be the overweening and ever present faith of the convert. Now in ordinary people this power does not come of itself, it must be educated.

It may be objected that the question of a rational education of the will with a view of subduing the emotions is one which concerns parents and teachers rather than medical men. In its widest sense this is no doubt true; but as medical men we are called upon to deal with the individual, whom it is our duty to help in every possible way. Now I make so bold as to say that if we fail to place before him the power which resides in him—and in him alone—of ameliorating his condition, then we are neglecting or evading an obvious and paramount duty. It is a good thing to engender in the patient a confidence that we and the methods we employ are able to guide him into the way of peace; but it is a much better thing to arouse him to a full sense of his own powers in the same direction. This is the factor which in modern therapeutics is being neglected.

I should indeed be inviting you to make bricks without straw if I were to call upon you to do this thing without appending some suggestions as to how it should be done. Such suggestions as I have to make are of the simplest possible description, for in a matter of this kind each individual must develop the details of the method along the lines which most befit his character and temperament. The essential point is that he should have a clear idea of what he wants to do, and that he should pursue that end with determination and perseverance. I have tried to show that his object is to awaken in his patient a sense of her own powers, her own dignity, and her own superiority to the littlenesses by which our lives are inevitably beset; that he should teach her so to educate and control and order her thoughts and sensations that she may learn to dominate them instead of allowing them to dominate her.

We can no longer afford to neglect the aid of the mind as a therapeutic agent. It refuses to be neglected. It is daily and hourly becoming more insistent for the recognition of its legitimate claims, and, if it does not obtain recognition at our hands, it will seek and obtain it elsewhere. It has been my endeavour to place these claims upon a scientific basis.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)