

to do their work for them, the result being that the business is disjointed, and not only do things go wrong in the particular department singled out for his attentions, but a general atmosphere of unrest and undue excitability pervades the whole establishment. If, however, the head of the firm now goes away for a week, and plays golf at the seaside, the probability is that on his return he no longer wants to sell reels of cotton himself or interferes with the shopwalkers, and no great harm is done.

This is what takes place if the head of the business is a sensible man. But let us suppose that he does not rest, but that, through a mistaken belief that his presence is essential for the success of the smallest transaction, he continues to work. By degrees the whole business becomes disorganised, and the firm begins to fail in its competition with others, because it is always being run at high pressure and with undue expenditure of energy.

At this stage it is possible to imagine that the business may still be saved if the head of the firm takes a rest, but it will probably have to be a rest of some months, during which time all originating is dropped, and the business confined to simple buying and selling which the shopwalkers and buyers can manage.

Let us now go a step further, and imagine that the head of the firm does not rest. Sooner or later he makes a great mistake, and does something utterly unwise from the commercial point of view, the result being that the firm goes bankrupt, and merely the machinery of clerks, assistants, and so on is left, without any responsible head.

In the first two conditions we have illustrations of what takes place, in various grades of severity, in two diseases—namely, neurasthenia and hysteria, while the last corresponds to some types of insanity.

Here I must insert a caution against pressing the analogy too far. I do not mean that hysteria is an aggravated form of neurasthenia—it is, in fact, an entirely different disease—nor that insanity is necessarily preceded by either of these, but the analogy will help us somewhat in dealing with nervous diseases as a whole, and the differences will be described when we consider each almost separately.

Let us begin with neurasthenia, which, being literally translated, means nerve weakness, and is, on the whole, not a bad name for the disease which it denotes.

It most frequently arises as a consequence of a period of overwork, which, though generally mental, may have been physical, or a combination of both. When, however, the nature of

the exciting trouble is inquired into, it is usually found that it has been not so much overwork as too much worry associated with the work. Thus, attendance on a sick or dying relative in those unaccustomed to illness, or an attempt to drown trouble or care by deliberate overwork, will very often result in neurasthenia. Want of sleep is also a fruitful cause.

Shock is another, and this is often the reason why people "break down" after a railway accident from which they have apparently escaped uninjured, or an operation which has seemed to be completely successful. An important point is that one can practically always find a definite cause for the condition.

It occurs both in men and women, and is not unknown in older children after a fright or a period of neglect or cruelty.

Whatever the cause may be, the effect is the same—namely, a weakening of the source of nervous energy in the brain. There is no organic disease, and if we examine the nervous system of a person who has succumbed to neurasthenia—as sometimes, though very rarely, happens—we cannot discover by any methods at present at our disposal anything visibly wrong in any part of it.

Now one consequence of this will be obvious—namely, that the neurasthenic person will be disinclined for any mental or physical work—he is always tired. But there is another: he is always irritable. By this I do not mean that he is bad-tempered, but that he responds in an exaggerated way to slight disturbances. Thus, he may jump out of his chair if a door slams, or become violently emotional for no obvious cause, and the reason of this is that the higher centres of the brain are interfering with the work of the lower centres in the spinal cord, and are sending messages down all sorts of unnecessary nerves, as well as those which are normally required for the particular movement only. Inasmuch as each message uses up a certain amount of nervous energy, just as a telephonic message uses up current from the battery which supplies the instrument, the result is more weakness still, and, in fact, a "vicious circle" is produced in the nervous system.

It is most important to remember that a neurasthenic person is not shamming, and that he cannot help his want of control, or irritability; if he could, he would not be neurasthenic. More nervous systems have been hurled over the precipice into insanity by ill-judged attempts of friends to "knock it out of them" than is pleasant to contemplate.

I have said that in neurasthenia the brain interferes with everything; it irritates where it

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