

PROFESSIONAL REVIEW.

"NERVOUS DISORDERS OF WOMEN."*

(Concluded from page 120.)

In this illuminating book, Dr. Hollander discusses the causes of nervous disorders in women, including Nervous Exhaustion, Loss of Mental Control, Headache, Neuralgia and other Pains, Insomnia, Nervous Dyspepsia, Nervous Disorders of the Heart, Circulation and Respiration, Loss of Muscular Control, Emotional Instability, &c.

The author states that "nervousness is the trouble of the age. Many men and women are never really ill, nor well either—that is to say, they are never ill enough to be confined to bed, and never well enough to enjoy either work or pleasure. They may not complain of their 'nerves' at all, nor do they always suspect that their nervous system is at fault; but they think that some particular organ is diseased, for which they seek treatment. Some suffer from dyspepsia without any recognisable disease of the stomach; some from cardiac trouble with an apparently sound heart; some from muscular weakness or spinal pain without suspecting their nervous system to be at fault; and others from altered secretions from organs apparently in a normal state.

There may be no local disturbances, but only general debility and depression—a state in which the patient can do nothing so well as formerly, and finds every little exertion a trouble. And often this is accompanied by a feeling of insecurity and self-distrust, the patient becoming nervous, easily agitated, over sensitive, emotional and timid. The ills of these people are neither imaginary nor invented; and while they do not necessarily confine them to bed, they often prove the source of such serious disturbances as to make them very miserable. . . .

"Some women are pre-occupied with matters upon which no amount of taking thought can be of the slightest avail, and with regard to questions which are not deserving of the anxiety bestowed upon them. They are born 'worriers.' Their minds are engrossed with small points that irritate them, or filled with apprehension of what is about to go wrong. To those on the look out for something to trouble about, there is usually no dearth of material; yet, sometimes, it does seem to the onlooker that the subjects on which they seize betray by their far fetched character the fact that life near at hand must be singularly free from real sorrow."

Dr. Hollander points out that "whereas the sufferings of man arise chiefly from exhaustion, those of the woman arise, above all, from restricted energies. Girls brought up for marriage only

have their nervous system upset by the uneasy time of waiting. They attend balls which disappoint them, go into company which bores them, take part in family intercourse which leaves them weary. If they remain spinsters the want of congenial occupation—sometimes loneliness, neglect, disappointment and anxiety as to the future—tend to produce an unhealthy state of mind which is a primary condition for the development of nervous disorders. Therefore sensible women look about them for something which can give their idle days a purpose, the emptiness of their existence a meaning . . .

"Marriage frequently is an episode in the life of a man, but it is nearly always an epoch in that of a woman's, hence the problem of happiness or unhappiness of marriage is of much greater consequence to women than to men. Marriage is a lottery in which men stake their liberty and women their happiness."

The author says that "one of the commonest forms of nervous disorder is nervous exhaustion. The first sign is usually a 'tired' feeling without adequate cause. The least exertion, such as a short walk, produces an inordinate sense of fatigue and weariness, even in women who to all appearances are in good muscular condition. They can make strong single or brief exertions, but cannot continue to apply their forces. The weakness lies not in the muscles but in the nerve centres that control them, which are too readily exhausted. The nutrition of these nerve centres is defective, and the fatigue experienced is only a sign of it."

In the chapter on Headache and Neuralgia, Dr. Hollander also refers to "noises in the head," a most distressing complaint, and says that "In many cases these are due to variations in the quantity, quality and pressure of the blood, either in the ear itself or in the brain, such as are induced in adults by worry, excitement, fatigue, debility or indigestion. These noises are either ringing, whistling, hissing, cracking, pulsating, blowing, continuous or intermittent. All these sounds may be absent, and yet the subject may still be greatly annoyed by hearing the beat of the pulse in her ear when the head is on the pillow. Nothing more painful or harder to bear can be imagined than continual noises in the head. They are apt to depress the tone of the mind and of the whole nervous system of the unfortunate sufferer. The enjoyment of life is destroyed, the temper soured, and the power of work greatly reduced.

A very interesting chapter is that on "Insomnia." Dr. Hollander says that "Sleep is like a pigeon. It comes to you if you have not the appearance of looking for it, it flies away if you try to catch it. The patient must lose all fear of insomnia. . . . It is only when the mental vibration ceases that sleep comes of itself."

The book is full of wisdom and should find a place in all nurses' libraries. They cannot fail to be better nurses if they absorb its teaching.

*By Bernard Hollander, M.D. 3s. 6d. net. (Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., Ltd., Broadway House, 68-74, Carter Lane, E.C.)

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