

Hysteria, besides occurring alone, is frequently associated with general and local diseases, such as tuberculosis, arthritis, and it is not surprising that it still more frequently accompanies organic diseases of the central nervous system. The effect of disease upon one part often produces disturbance in function of another part, and of such disturbances hysterical symptoms are frequently the result. Weir Mitchell well describes it when he says, "The symptoms of real diseases are frequently painted on a hysterical background."

The hysterical patient may be bright, intellectual and attractive, in general appearance healthy and robust, even stout and florid. The chief peculiarities of the hysterical brain, as differing from the normally acting one are, explosiveness, want of control, and proneness to exhaustion. So that two kinds of phenomena occur, one a too active and uncontrolled nerve discharge, the other paralyses of various kinds, sensory and motor.

The symptomatology of hysteria is due to an exhaustion, or want of sufficient reserve nerve energy in the central nervous system. This is liable to occur in a subject with a congenital defect in his nervous apparatus, due, as before mentioned, to some faulty laying down of the neurones in intra-uterine life, probably caused by some deficiency in the parents, resulting from bad health, over indulgence, syphilis, alcohol, or due to a nervous instability in their systems.

Of a family born to such parents, five may grow up from childhood to middle life, or old age, without showing any marked nerve deficiency. another member, through ill health, accident, mental worry or stress may develop hysteria. I have no doubt that the others, had they been heavily taxed, physically or mentally, would also have shown some defect.

The normally acting, and healthy brain, has a centre where reserve forces are accumulated, and held in readiness, to be called upon when necessary, and also an equable and steady current of nerve force which passes from centre to centre and thereby produces a state of equilibrium and healthy mutual control. It is a well known fact that exhaustion of some regions entails exhaustion on others which have not been in activity at the same time. Intellectual work, for instance, causes brain fatigue, which renders physical work difficult and *vice versa*. This shows that there is a common source of energy upon which the various regions of the cortex draw in active work, and that nerve force can flow freely from one to another.

In hysteria, there seems to be a want of this free flow, and ebb, and a deficiency in the centre where energy is stored.