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Original Communications.

CLINICAL LECTURE.

Delivered at the Montreal General Hospital,
December 15th, 1885.

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HYSTERIA.

The patient who presented herself last Thursday the 7th of December, in the out-door room, and who is before us to-day, is suffering from hysteria. This is a purely functional trouble of the nervous system, *i. e.*, she has not any organic disease which is the cause of her present condition. She is a servant, has been much confined to the house, and her general condition has for some time been getting below par. Her appetite is poor, at least is not what it ought to be, and her temperament is highly nervous; she had a choking sensation, caused by the feeling as if a ball was in her throat. She is very emotional, and the class will remember that when we first saw her it was a matter of some difficulty for her to restrain her tears. I placed her on the following prescription:

R Potas. Bromid., ʒ iii.
Tinct. Valerian Amon., ʒ iss.
Liquor Strychnia, ʒ ii.
Aque ad., ʒ vi.

A dessert-spoonful three or four times a day.

And the result has been, she informs me, very satisfactory. There has been a decided improvement. The choking sensation has all but disappeared, and she is able to attend better to her work.

Hysteria is characterized by various motor, sensory and intellectual disturbance. It is a disease which is met with in women, in fact may be called a disease of females, although in my practice I have met with several well-marked cases in male adults. It is often met with just at that period of life when the sexual functions are developing, and may continue for a number of years, manifesting itself under the most trivial exciting cause. The hysterical type is said to be inherited. It frequently develops its manifestations in females, at or just previous to the catamenia, when an examination of the ovaries will generally show that they are in a state of congestion, being swollen, hard and tender. At one period *all* hysterical phenomena were attributed to ovarian or uterine irritation, but it is now known that many cases have not this origin. Violent hysterical paroxysms have been known to take place in women where both ovaries and uterus were congenitally absent. The blood of hysterical patients is generally deficient in red corpuscles; a condition of anemia is present, and when this is the case the nervous tissue is very irritable. The symptoms are numerous and varied, the following are among the chief: The patient experiences rapid change of feeling, without any apparent cause; at one moment she is sad and desponding, the next bright and joyous; one minute in tears, the next bursting into fits of uncontrollable laughter; the hands and feet are hot and cold in turn. The patient fears Paralysis, on account of a numbness and tingling felt, generally in the hands and fingers. These generally disappear or are forgotten when the attention is fully occupied. Pain at the heart, palpitation, rapid breathing, a sensation of fulness in the stomach and bowels,