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## Original Communications.

### NEURASTHENIA.

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(Read at Meeting of Ontario Medical Association,  
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The name *neurasthenia*, or *neurastropia*, is as good as any term we can use to describe this nervous disorder. The class of patients to which this formidable word can be applied is very large, and is growing larger day by day in this nerve-exhausting age. The patient's mind is "centred all in self." The woes and aches and pains such endure—real or imaginary—and which are recited to the physician with wearisome reiteration, are legion. The old story is to such ever new. The history of these multifarious afflictions becomes an old friend in its familiarity. The weary doctor in his rejoinder can only *encore* his previous homily to relieve the recurring distress. This sad recital is repeated from week to week, and from month to month, until recovery or insanity has taken place. The concentration of thought on all the varied moods and feelings which the patient may possess intensifies the mental pain and aggravates the nervous condition. We know in our own experience how much mental anxiety or anguish depresses physical function. Fear is more distressing than pain, and tugs at the heart-strings with greater intensity. Out of this class come the many suicides who are not

insane, and who leave behind them sensible but woeful epistles to friends or acquaintances.

In medical literature this condition has been given many names, such as *cerebrasthenia*, *brain exhaustion*, *general debility*, *nerve starvation*, "run down," *poverty of blood*, *spinal irritation*, and other terms "too numerous to mention." This disease is not to be confounded with *hypochondria*, *hysteria*, or *insanity*. Each of these conditions is well marked and easily discerned by any observant physician. The morbid fears of insanity are usually definite and permanent, and accompanied by delusions, which are fixedly believed in by the insane patient. The *neurasthenic*, on the other hand, will tell you how unfounded are their extravagant ideas, and that they can temporarily banish these vagaries; but only to return again, like the swing of a pendulum. These ever-recurring whims pull down the physical energy, and the bodily depreciation reacts on the mental until the nerve masses and the physical activity are mutually put out of gear for the time. The functional want of harmony is bordering on the pathological.

The morbid fears of people thus nervously unstrung are as varied as are the individuals. The list of their fancies and wild imaginings is endless. All are based on some groundless alarm in respect to themselves or in their relation to others. Men full of energy and push succumb to the depression. "Enterprises of great pith and moment," which in their best estate they would have gloried, without waver-