

## HYGIENE OF THE BRAIN.

From a paper treating upon this subject, in the "*Proceedings*," by Dr. G. M. Beard, of New York, we extract the following: Cerebral or brain hygiene consists mainly in the avoidance of the worry or friction that is the great element in the causation of nervous diseases, and in wholesome and varied activity of the intellect. Cerebral hygiene, like digestive and sexual, is therefore both positive and negative, including what should be done and what should not be done.

The one great cause of functional nervous diseases, and of some that are of a structural character, is, as I am more and more convinced, *financial trouble* of some kind. By this I do not mean poverty—for the absolutely and hereditarily poor do not suffer from these functional nervous maladies to any great extent; but fear of poverty, and a sudden or gradual loss of money. Now and then there are cases where simple overtoil is successful, and unworried business may produce symptoms of cerebral hyperæmia or neurosthenia; but almost always there is friction somewhere, if we can only find where—and it is this friction, and not the movement of the mental machinery, that does the harm. The hard times of the past five years has furnished the soil in which many cases of nervous trouble that I have seen have taken root.

Next to financial comes domestic trouble—the sorrows and joys of love, conjugal misery and bereavement. These causes are more influential with women, as financial trouble is more influential with men.

Simple escape from friction is sometimes all that functional troubles need—a change from mental to muscular work, and the moral counterirritation that is furnished by new scenes and unfamiliar faces. Nervous invalids do not always need to suspend all labor of the brain—better, indeed, that they should be actively though pleasantly employed. The most distressing cases of nervous debility that I have seen have been in men who have suddenly retired from business. When a muscle is weakened through disease, we try to strengthen it through passive and moderate active exercise, believing that thereby its nutrition is improved. This same law the brain must obey. The feeble and tired brain, like the feeble and tired muscle, needs a certain amount of gymnastics. Labor of the intellect of the higher sort saves us from friction of the emotions of the lower sort, and thus becomes a positive and valuable remedial agency. For this reason I rarely advise patients to permanently leave their business, provided they are happy and prosperous in it; but rather to fight out the battle on the lines where they are.

Probably half of our cases of chronic functional nervous disease would never have been sick at all—at least, never would have felt the need of consulting a doctor—if their minds were stronger. What we call grit makes its own hygiene, both saving men from nervous disease, and aiding in their cure when once enfeebled. Many of the world's best thinkers have been laborious invalids.