

The above quotations not only show the power which the mind has over the body but also serve to explain the rationale of the treatment that should be employed.

Other well known examples of the influence of mind over body have no doubt, been individually experienced. For instance, we all know how depressing it is to most of us to be told that we look ill, though in perfect health. If the remark be repeated by several acquaintances in succession it will take a strong minded person to prevent his giving way to the belief that his health is really impaired.

Many of the Christian martyrs were so wholly possessed by their faith in a power to protect them, that they bore patiently without suffering the preliminary tortures of the rack and final burning at the stake.

If, then, the brain is so susceptible to suggestion in health, we can understand how much more so this would be in neurasthenic, and more especially in hysterical individuals, where a characteristic feature is that they easily acquire conditions, from their surroundings, and readily act to suggestions from those associated with them.

A knowledge of functional diseases if more widely appreciated would be the means of increasing the size of our individual practice. It is through our neglect in treatment of these cases that Christian Scientists and osteopaths flourish so well in our midst; and, if we do not wake up and show attention to this class of patients, other cases not necessarily neurasthenics may also pass into their hands.

I propose, therefore, to offer to this association a few remarks on this subject, and shall try to show that hysteria is a disease of the central nervous system, and that the patient has little or no voluntary power of preventing or interrupting its course. The disease to the public, and to a certain extent the professional man, is chiefly associated with a condition where the symptoms are largely supposed to be simulated, or at least the idea is entertained to a considerable extent that the patient could prevent the symptoms if he so desired. But this is erroneous, the malady is a real one, and altogether beyond the influence of the patient's will.

It was long supposed to be a disease of females, but of late years we have learned that it affects males very largely, if not to the same extent. The name is derived from an erroneous idea that there is a special connexion between the disease and disorders of the womb which, at one time, was even thought to move about the body, causing the local symptoms. The opinion that the disease is primarily, and chiefly, one of cerebral function is now all but universally held.