

SELECTED ARTICLES

TREATMENT OF NERVOUS DISORDERS.

(Selected)*

BY PERCY LEWIS, M.D.

Honorary Physician to the "Nursing Homes" Military Hospitals,
Folkestone.

REGULAR attendance for some months at one of the large hospitals for nervous diseases has induced in the writer certain reflections which it is here endeavoured to put forth.

Treatment in such institutions seems to be devoted far more to diagnosis than to cure. What is meant is that the painstaking attention to the minutest detail, and the accuracy of inductive reasoning which is exhibited in the making of a diagnosis, is by no means so much in evidence when the question of treatment is under consideration. A house physician at one of these hospitals, when asked what he thought of the treatment, summed his opinion up thus: "Everything is syphilitic; and, if it is not, you cannot do anything." This was, of course, an overstatement of what obtains, but there is a modicum of truth in his dictum.

For purposes of discussion, nervous diseases may be divided into three classes, viz., those in which there is a structural change, functional cases where there is no obvious structural change, and mixed cases.

In the first class, the most interesting are those which are characterized by sclerosis. The routine treatment consists of rest in bed, massage, electricity, salvarsan and mercury, often even if the Wassermann reaction be negative, and so on.

In considering whether these usual methods, whose success is mostly temporary, constitute all that can be done, it behoves us to review similar morbid processes in other organs with the treatment in those cases adopted. Further, we have to note the results of those treatments, and to see whether, having regard to the greater vulnerability of the nervous system, the application of similar methods to it would be likely to be followed by better results than are at present obtainable.

Analogy from the causes of sclerotic changes in other organs would point to similar changes in the nervous system having also a toxæmic or micro-organismal origin. A large number of nervous disorders are already acknowledged to have such a source. To mention some—neuritis, anterior poliomyelitis, myelitis, cerebrospinal meningitis, chorea, Lan-

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