

EXPLANATORY NOTES

II. The "Complaint" is the statement of the patient concerning what he believes is troubling him. It includes the symptoms which have determined him to consult his physician. The onset, duration, and nature of each symptom should be so carefully and exactly investigated that the record will be one of undoubted fact. No such belief that he has "rheumatism", or any other-named affection should be accepted, but what were the occurrences that led him to this conclusion.

The minute consideration of each symptom should be made under "Present Illness", and the "Interrogation Concerning Special Systems".

III. If the illness be acute the symptoms will likely be accurately noted by the patient, and should be very helpful to the physician in reaching a diagnosis, *e.g.*, the pain of pleurisy. If, however, the disorder has been of some duration, the earliest disturbances may be obscured by the later, and these alone are often communicated to the physician. As it is always important to discover the earliest symptoms or signs of a departure from normal health, we should make some such enquiry as "When last were you quite yourself?" Having fixed this date, further interrogation will usually elicit the earliest symptoms of the disease, *e.g.*, good health may be succeeded by insidious weakness and wasting, whilst only later do the more definite symptoms, such as cough and expectoration assert themselves, as in pulmonary tuberculosis. Was the apparent onset preceded by slight ailments, such as "cold", sore throat, etc.?

The student is usually advised to avoid asking "leading questions", by which is meant a direct enquiry concerning a certain symptom. For example, the puffy eye-lids of a middle-aged man might suggest interstitial nephritis (Bright's disease); a leading question would be, "How much urine are you passing each day?"

A detailed consideration of the symptoms complained of should be reserved for the interrogation of the particular system involved. For example, cough, and when it began, might be recorded under "Present Illness", but its character, time of occurrence, etc., should be noted under the "Interrogation of the Respiratory System".