

and very few except the strong sought to leave the surroundings in which the chance of birth had placed them. To-day, laws and customs have abolished those barriers; everyone endeavours to raise himself higher than his ancestors; competition has increased; conflicts of interests and of persons have multiplied in all conditions of life; free course is given to ambitions that are often little justified; a crowd of individuals impose on their brains a work beyond their strength; then come cares and reverses of fortune, and the nervous system, under the wear and tear of incessant excitation, at last becomes exhausted. Thus may be explained the increasing frequency of neurasthenia in our time, and its predominance in towns, among the middle and upper classes, in a word in all circumstances where intellectual culture or commercial and industrial traffic are carried to their highest degree of intensity.

These considerations enable us already to foresee that over-pressure, and especially cerebral over-pressure, must figure in the front rank of the causes of neurasthenia.

Age.—The disease is not equally frequent at all ages. Very rare in childhood and old age, it affects adults by preference, that is to say it attacks man in the most laborious and most harassed period of his existence, from his twentieth to his fiftieth year.

There is however one form of neurasthenia that