

Health Department.

Mineral Water Treatment in Heart Diseases.

The following interesting and valuable paper is by an eminent Paris physician; The advisability of the use of mineral waters in the treatment of diseases of the heart is a question that has been not a little discussed of recent times, and during the last few years the waters of Aix-les-Bains, of the Mount Dore and the mud baths of Dax have been especially recommended.

The use of the latter, when they are handled with skill, is quite supported by the heart. They give it a relative amount of rest by lowering the arterial tension without hastening its contractions and at the same time they act as an energetic stimulant to the general nutrition of the body, which may possibly have a certain influence over the different forms of myocarditis, which are, after all, connected in some way with a disorder in the cardiac nutrition.

This physiological action justifies in a measure the use of certain springs and mud baths in the treatment of diseases of the heart, but I cannot go so far as to share the conviction of a certain class of physicians who are in favor of sending rheumatic patients with heart trouble to some warm mineral spring at the earliest possible moment—in other words, twenty-five or thirty days after the acute cardiac manifestations have disappeared—in the dangerous hope that the more recent the lesion the greater the chances of its being benefited by the waters.

HYDRO-MINERAL TREATMENT BAD FOR OLD VALVULAR COMPLAINTS.

As a general thing valvular complaints of long standing are an absolute counter-indication to all hydro-mineral treatment of whatever kind it may be.

The only things that we ought to treat and that we can treat are the general diseases under the influence of which cardiac trouble is produced and grown. I refer especially to rheumatic complaints. At the Mount Dore, at Neris, at La Malore, at the Eaux Chaudes, at Chaudesaignes, at Saint Nectaire, at Nauheim and sometimes at Aix-les-Bains, the fits of palpitation and of oppression, and in some rare cases, the cardiac murmurs of certain rheumatic patients have been observed to disappear.

Certain cases are cited in which Bourbon-1 Archambault has caused pericardiac deposits to disappear. Young patients suffering from repeated acute rheumatic attacks and with aortic insufficiency have been known to bear for many years an energetic treatment at Dax without being at all inconvenienced thereby and have had their rheumatic manifestations greatly benefited without increasing in any way their cardiac lesions.

The conclusion which I draw from all these facts is that certain mineral waters and mud baths can be used with perfect safety with young rheumatic patients with whom the cardiac disorders are neither too recent nor too far gone, with whom the compensation is well established, and especially with whom there are no signs of endarteritis.

But to infer from these facts that all diseases of the heart can be benefited by mineral springs or mud baths is an immense mistake, as the two ideas are separated by a vast abyss which will not be closed for many a day yet.

TREATMENT OF MYOCARDITIS.

An interesting chapter could be written on the hydro-mineral treatment of the different forms of myocarditis, but in the state of our knowledge we have not yet reached the facts which could give to the physician an indispensable clinical guide in the cases in need. I shall, therefore, place myself on a very cautious ground but at the same time I will say as some future work may be a rational line.

The different forms of myocarditis are treated as recommended by the German physicians. I connect the different cases with the different forms of myocarditis.

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which are in direct contact with a lymphatic cavity, pour into it constantly products of this nature. If the elimination of these products is lessened for one reason or another, (superabundance of waste products, temporary insufficiency of the passages by which they are carried off, sluggishness of the lymphatic current, &c.) these products will exercise their power of irritation on the intra-cardiac connective tissue, which will proliferate, while the muscular fibre will react and become hypertrophied. Such will be the first act of an interstitial myocarditis, of which the ulterior evolution will depend on the length and degree of the source of irritation and on the nutrition of the muscular fibre.

In presence of a pathogenesis such as this what should theoretically be the treatment to be advised? It will be a treatment capable of putting a stop to the unnatural process of disassimilation which is producing these irritating substances, to hasten the lymphatic circulation and to favor all forms of elimination; it is, therefore, a treatment which both lessens the formation of irritating products and also the length of time during which they remain in the lymphatic spaces of the heart, in order to reduce to a minimum the interstitial process of irritation, which is the greater number of cases of myocarditis.

MINERAL WATERS BETTER THAN DRUGS.

Certain mineral waters can fulfil this purpose far better than all the drugs of the pharmacopoeia put together. I will take for example the treatment at Aix-les-Bains.

Let us imagine a patient of hereditary anarthritic temperament, with a slight degree of arteric sclerosis, not very active, following the sedentary life led by fashionable women in the country, endowed with a vigorous appetite, and satisfying it very fully at a well provided table. Little by little she notices that she loses her breath in walking; she has palpitations and irregular movements of the heart, but the ear can detect no abnormal sounds by auscultation. Slight, painful manifestations of rheumatic nature attract the attention of her physician, who advises a course of treatment at Aix-les-Bains. While there she takes a douche massage for ten minutes every other day and a short bath on the intervening days. At the end of three weeks she is obliged to interrupt the course of treatment, during which the cardiac symptoms had not seemed to have been affected in any way; but on returning to her home she soon perceives that she can now walk more easily, that she is less liable to get out of breath and that she has fewer and less intense palpitations. On comparing the analyses of urine made before and after the treatment, it is found that under its influence the process of disassimilation has been modified and that the extractive substance and uric acid, which are irritating for the different tissues, have diminished in quantity.

Have we not the right to think that there is some connection between these changes in the nutrition of the elements and the improvement in the functional cardiac symptoms? And as this patient, who is already affected with arteric sclerosis and in all likelihood predestined to interstitial myocarditis, finds that the symptoms, however slight they may have been, which betrayed the first stage of the disease, are lessened, can we not establish a relation from cause to effect between our therapeutical action and the result that has been obtained, and deduce a species of proof in support of the truth of the pathogenesis which I formulated a little above?

THE WALKING CURE.

The walking cure, which, connected with a special regime, has given such good results to certain physicians in Germany in the treatment of fat around the heart, probably acts in a similar way. Absolute quiet, which has for so long been enforced with cardiac patients, does them actual harm in some cases, as it favors the stagnation of the irritating substances in the lymphatic spaces of the heart. Regular and moderate exercise helps to carry off the irritating elements, mechanically at first and chemically afterwards, by hastening their combustion. If the means of exit (the kidney) be sufficiently permeable the elimination of these products proceeds just so much the better. It has been seen in the German treatment that the walking cure is likely to follow when the patient is not an albuminuric.

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be added Badenweiler, with its large baths, which render such great service in cardiac neuroses brought on by sexual exhaustion, hypochondria, the abuse of tobacco, &c.

In the same order of ideas the waters containing sulphate of sodium, combined with a strict regime, seem to me also worth trying. It is already known that Saint-Nectaire with its slight mineral qualities, has, when the treatment is well handled, an action which is very like the one of which I am speaking. This would lead me also to try Carlsbad, Brides and Mirs, but in slightly laxative doses.

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