

overshadowed the original local disorder. I am sure that I should not, in common honesty, make the somewhat humiliating confession that, in many instances, overmuch and injudicious local treatment, has, in my opinion at least, intensified, and kept up the now dominating neurasthenic disorder as in a case under my care as I write, in which the patient may fairly be said to be suffering from pessary on the brain—so incessantly is she thinking of one or other of the seventy-nine different instruments which she has had inserted in the last few years in America and in this country."

The case best suited for systematic Weir Mitchell treatment is the worn and wasted, often bedridden woman, who has broken down, either from some sudden shock, such as grief, or money losses, or excessive mental or bodily strain, beginning with simple debility more and more yielded to, until at last all power of effort is lost. Coincident with this is the total loss of appetite, the profound anæmia, and the consequent wasting of the tissues.

Then follow the graver forms of hysterical disease, such as paresis, or paralysis, vomiting, disorder of motion, hystero-epilepsy, and many others which constitute the despair of the physician.

The principal elements in the systematic management of these cases are:—

1. The removal of the patient from unhealthy home influences, and the placing her at absolute rest.
2. The production of muscular waste, and the consequent possibility of assimilating food by what have been called "mechanical tonics," viz., prolonged movement and massage of the muscles by a trained shampooer, and muscular contractions produced by electricity.
3. Supplying the waste so produced by regular and excessive feeding, so that the whole system, and the nervous system in particular, shall be nourished in spite of the patient.

Dr. Playfair cites four cases to illustrate

the class of disease to which this method is applicable and the uselessness of all ordinary treatment in such conditions. In one of his cases no less than twenty-five medical men had been consulted, this number including the names of many of the most eminent consultants in the country, of itself a sufficient proof that all that the most advanced medical knowledge and skill could do had been tried in vain.

Case I. A young lady with hysterical vomiting, which she had had for six years. Latterly, she could keep nothing upon her stomach but a single mouthful of milk, and this only when mixed with whiskey; so that in this way she was taking three to four glasses of spirit daily. Weight 63 lbs. In three days after isolation, she was keeping down two quarts of milk, without the aid of whiskey. In ten days she was eating with an enormous appetite, and in six weeks she left town weighing 106 lbs., a gain of 43 lbs., and has since remained quite well.

Case II. A girl aged seventeen. Hysterical hemiplegia of four years standing, during which time she had never been out of bed. Severe cough, which had resisted all medication. No food could be taken beyond milk, a biscuit and an orange. At the end of a month Dr. Playfair drove her out in his carriage, dropped her at the top of the street in which she lived, and made her walk down to pay her parents a visit. She has since remained quite well. The cough ceased forty-eight hours after she was removed, and was never heard again.

Case III. This next instance is an example of the kind of case best suited for this treatment. No definite illness, no simulated disease, but a general breakdown. An invalid all her life; sometimes headache and nausea; at others, spinal irritability, giddiness, etc. Never happy unless seeing a doctor or taking physic. She was wasted to a skeleton. Her chief complaints were nausea, headache, backache, intense nerv-