

than the rule. Indeed, the patients are more often made worse than better.

The evil effects of surgery on the nervous and imaginative patient, whether neurasthenic or not, are so frequently seen that every surgeon knows the importance of a careful selection in such cases. There is a difference between an apprehensive imagination and neurasthenia. A man may be apprehensive of disease—most people are—he may be imaginative even, but no person with a normal nervous system is a neurasthenic. Surgery, by removing the cause of fear, or even of imaginary or trivial discomfort, often returns in relief and comforts a hundredfold the risks and discomforts of operation. Operation upon the neurasthenic returns nothing to the patient. Her last state is worse than her first, and is often pitiable. And the worst of it is that surgery and the surgeon are blamed when a really good effort has been made. I see many patients, especially women, who are nervous wrecks, and who, with their friends, attribute all the ills to the surgeon, who has perhaps removed the ovaries or an appendix. This is a burden which neither the surgeon nor surgery should bear.

The neurasthenic, nevertheless, occasionally has acquired her neurasthenia by reason of some surgical lesion, the removal of which will in time permit a perfect recovery. I have seen not a few such cases. The deduction from these observations is that extreme care must be taken in the assignment of the cases, this one to the surgeon and that to the physician. The best rule is to forbid surgery until every medical and palliative measure has proved useless.

In the suspected disease of the imaginative and apprehensive, especial care is essential lest some really grave lesion be overlooked.

I do not think, however, that the surgeon or the physician is likely to err in careless diagnosis, for these are just the cases hardest to treat—those in which the most careful histories and the most painstaking examinations fail to find any physical explanation for symptoms. Operation becomes then, as it should, a last resort rather than a first, and its failure is not censurable; nor is it censured, I think, when undertaken in this the proper spirit.

There is a class of diseases which deserves special considera-