

The Home Doctor

Hysteria

It is not possible to define hysteria satisfactorily, for it is not a clearly marked disease with definite symptoms; it manifests itself in a hundred different ways. It affects the young and the old, men as well as women, the intellectual as well as the weak-minded and the ignorant. It is a condition of emotional instability and capriciousness. The mood of the hysterical person changes from day to day, almost from hour to hour—now he is gay, now downcast; one moment full of hope or of quiet resignation, the next in the depths of despair or peevishly discontented; to-day friendly and at peace with the world, to-morrow sensitive, faultfinding and impossible to please.

A striking characteristic is the patient's "suggestibility"; he is ready to act in response to any idea that is impressed upon him from without or that is born in his own inner consciousness. The mimicry of symptoms, therefore, is common. If a hysterical person sees or even hears of a paralytic, he is very likely to have symptoms of paralysis, so real that they may deceive the most wary physician. The paralysis, indeed, is real while it lasts, for the patient is actually unable to move the affected limb; and often sensation is absent as well.

Instead of paralysis there may be convulsions, especially in "major" hysteria,

enjoyment in familiar things, that susceptibility to nature which keeps the nerve gently thrilled in her homeliest nooks, and by her commonest sounds, is worth a thousand fortunes of money, or its equivalent.

Warm Feet

If grown people choose to go to bed with cold feet, "what's to hinder?" Maybe they agree with the irascible old man who, having tried various liniments and emollients without effect, at last defied the offending member: "Ache away, old fellow, I can stand it as long as you can." But to put into cold sheets feet that should be warm and rosy, but that are numb and blue, is enough to make all the toes this side of the tropics curl. Some have constitutionally cold feet, that will be cold in spite of woollen stockings, and thick shoes, and any amount of exercise. The nervous system of children is said to be five times greater proportionately than that of their elders. Who can doubt it? And certain restless specimens, common to every neighborhood, should be, in justice to ordinary two-footed urchins, ranked as human decapods; for how can one pair of feet accomplish all these juvenile Flakims do? But bed-time rolls around, and then the tired limbs, the yielding bones of the growing body, should lie in happy unconstraint: knees and chin should not be brought into unnatural and uncongenial neighbourhood.



Canadian cook making tea in the line. A stretcher bearer is waiting for his share.

and instead of insensibility to pain there may be extreme sensitiveness or spontaneous neuralgic pain. Many other symptoms may be associated with hysteria; there is probably no symptom of organic disease that it cannot cunningly imitate.

The treatment of hysteria is often very difficult, and, in severe cases, it should be undertaken only by the trained neurologist. As suggestion often causes the symptoms, so it may be employed in their removal; but hypnotism is not often used at the present time. The patient must be under the control of some wise, tactful and resolute person who can persuade without argument and, when it is necessary, can command without offense.

Prevention of hysteria, however, is better than cure, and nervous, excitable children should be carefully trained, kept outdoors as much as possible, and shielded from everything that is likely to upset their unsteady nervous systems.

Hints on Health

Warm fomentations applied with cloths wrung out of hot water are the best applications in the first instance to sprains. Subsequently, when inflammation is past, cold water may be useful, and the common practice of holding the limb under a spout of water is not a bad one.

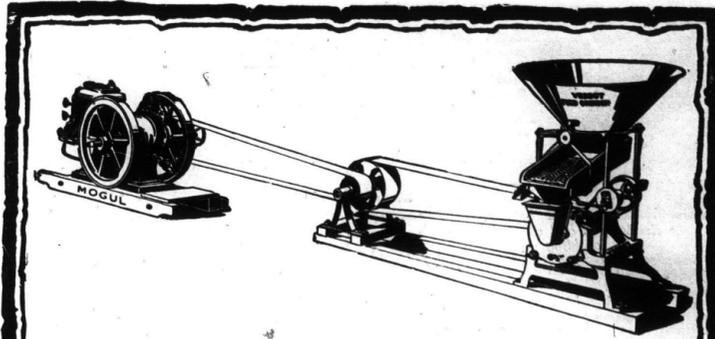
It is a sign of health, or of convalescence, when men love gentle, simple pleasures and enjoyments that do not rush or roar, but distil as the dew. The love of rural life, the habit of finding

How can they help it when all below the hem of the night-dress is a dreaded Nova-Zembla? If the bed-rooms are warmed, there will be no chill in the mattresses and blankets; but everyone knows how it is in a cold room. We should like to urge all mothers, elder sisters, aunts and nurses to use either a soap-stone, which is easiest, or a warmed crib-blanket, for the feet of their little charges. With that pleasant anticipation, going to bed will be robbed of half its objections. There will be fewer coughs and catarrhal colds, digestion will improve, and "awful dreams" becomes less frequent; there will be no tedious hours of chilly wakefulness. Mother may then, with the good-night kiss, safely invoke "pleasant dreams and sweet repose."

Work Quietly

Endeavor to take your work quietly. Anxiety and over-action are always the cause of sickness and restlessness. We must use our judgment to control our excitement, or our bodily strength will break down. We must remember that our battle is to be won by a strength not our own. It is a battle that does not depend upon the swift and strong.

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