

majority of cases our investigations in this direction are fruitless; still, cases now and then are met with where the reward more than compensates us for our time and trouble.

It will be necessary, for the sake of clearness, before considering this subject, to take a survey of the nature of epilepsy. It is necessary, for intelligent treatment, to have a working hypothesis to go on. From the earliest times the nature of epilepsy has been a subject of the greatest interest. It is unnecessary to refer here to the numerous and often crude ideas that have been advanced in the past to explain its origin. Even now, after centuries of speculation and work, we cannot say that we know anything positive as to its true nature. Through the labors of that great medical philosopher Hughlings Jackson, and also the admirable work done in this connection by Gowers, we may consider it as proved that the epileptic paroxysm is dependent upon an instability of the nerve elements in the gray matter, which has as a consequence a proneness to discharge violently. The intimate changes that bring about this instability are unknown. In many cases the influence of an indirect heredity is marked—*i.e.*, an heredity to various functional nervous affections. Such a history is obtainable in 35 per cent. of cases.* A large number of epileptics are born, then, with this instability. The above proportion seems, after considering everything, small. It is so difficult in these cases to get a full and true history that we may be safe in saying that probably in 50 per cent. of all epileptics a neurotic history is obtainable, and we must consider the fact that these histories only refer to marked disturbances. The numerous silent but potent forces ever at work in the generation of being are beyond questionings. When we consider how few people live up to a high moral or physical state, the wonder is not that there are so many, but that there are so few born with unstable ganglion cells. Many epileptics would no doubt escape if their training and habits were not vicious. A slight instability becomes, as the results of bad training, a confirmed and marked instability. Some of the causes that lead to this, in a measure, acquired instability will now be shortly considered.

* Gowers, Diseases of the Nervous System,