

produce the effect, for the purpose of saving the laundress the disagreeable task of washing the napkins." My reply was, that if laundresses were acquainted with a drug that could arrest menstruation, they knew more than the profession; and that his patients had lost their monthly periods, not from secret drugs, but from loss of health due to an unwholesome system of education.

Another physician, the worthy chairman of a school-board in a young city, became awakened to the fact that a great proportion of the girls in the public schools were failing in health from backache, wakefulness, weariness, and disordered menstruation. Full of philanthropic and architectural zeal, and with the uterine idea firmly implanted in his head, he wrote to me, asking whether the long flights of stairs in the school-houses were not to blame for these female ailments. I replied in words to the effect that were a higher culture literal, being perched upon the top of some Eiffel's tower, like Simeon Stylites upon his pillar, and were girls obliged to climb up to it, the muscular effort would no doubt put them out of breath, and repeated intellectual excursions in the same direction might in the end cause—not uterine diseases, but—the heart diseases of athletes and of Alpine climbers. I further contended that stair-climbing *per se* could rarely produce uterine disorders, and that the girls in his school were suffering—not from uterine disease, but—from the nerve-counterfeits of uterine disease, viz., from the relaxes of a nerve-exhaustion resulting from an unhealthy, and therefore faulty, system of education. My arguments evidently failed to convince this honest gentleman, for the correspondence abruptly ended at this point, and I have a shrewd suspicion that he carried out his architectural plans. Should any of my readers journey westward, and see in some growing city a girl's school-house fashioned like a covered rope-walk or a skating-rink, depend upon it, it will turn out to be the philanthropic but mistaken evolution of my correspondent. The traveller would no doubt find education very effectively taught on the only floor—the ground floor—of this building; but doubtless, also, he would see as many pale faces, and would discover on inquiry no fewer backaches, spine-aches, womb-aches, and menstrual

disturbances, than when the recitation rooms were on the third or the fourth floor.

In a parous neurasthenic woman, a leucorrhœa, a slight prolapse of the womb, a small tear of the cervix, or an insignificant rent of the perineum, each plays the part of the will-o'-the-wisp to allure the physician away from the bottom factor. To these trifling lesions—because they are visible, palpable, and ponderable, and because he has, by education and by tradition, a uterine bias—he attributes all his patient's troubles; whereas a greater and a subtler force, the invisible, impalpable, and imponderable nervous system, may be the sole delinquent. She may be a bereaved mother, a grieving widow, or a neglected wife, and all her uterine symptoms, yes, every one of them, may be the outcome of her sorrows, and not of her local lesions.

Often the victim of this misdirected treatment is a young unmarried girl, whose nerves have been upset by some secret grief, perhaps a cross in love, or by ambitious over-study. Misleading symptoms now set in, which I cannot better describe than by a quotation from one of my own articles on the subject (*Lessons in Gynecology*, third edition, p. 523):

"She looses her appetite, lies awake at night, and grows pale and weak. She has cold feet and blue finger-nails, and perhaps complains of infra-mammary and ovarian pains. Headache and backache, spine-ache, and an oppressive sense of exhaustion distress her. Her monthly periods, hitherto without suffering, now begin to annoy her more and more, until they become extremely painful, and at these times dark circles appear under her eyes. Her linen is stained by a leucorrhœa, and bladder troubles soon set in. She is wearied beyond measure by the slightest mental or physical exertion; the short visit of a friend upsets her for the rest of the day; 'a grasshopper is a burden' to her, and she finally becomes very nervous or hysterical. Now, very unfortunately, the idea attached to this group of symptoms is that the womb is at fault. A moral rape is, therefore committed by a digital or a speculum examination, and two supposed lesions will be found—first, as a matter of course, the natural virginal ante flexion; and, secondly, a slight uterine catarrh. These are at once seized upon as the prime factors,