

SOME ASPECTS OF NEURASTHENIA AND THEIR TREATMENT.*

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The subject of neurasthenia presents a wide field for consideration and discussion. It is impossible within the limits of an address like this to more than skim over a few of the salient features of this widespread disease. The never-ending and ever-changing manifestations of nerve exhaustion are bewildering alike to the specialist and general practitioner. The insane revelry of the various organs, including the nervous system, produces a gallery of pictures of an infinite variety of shading. You may examine organ after organ, investigate the stomach contents with your burette, analyze the urine with an urinometer and an ureometer, take smears of the sputum, count the blood corpuscles and test the hemoglobin and manipulate the reflexes, and find no serious lesion, yet this apparent negative result offers positively no proof that you have under observation a typical case of neurasthenia.

To what may we attribute this extraordinary condition? The intense strenuosity of this competitive age, the constant increasing indulgence in alcohol, and the anxiety of the foolish parent to have his fast-growing child eclipse some other parent's prodigy in school or college, are the chief causative factors in this neurosis.

Heredity plays an important part in the preparation of the ground soil for the cultivation of these noxious neurotic weeds. An alcoholic parent, a syphilitic progenitor, a restless, nervous mother, an epileptic brother, or an insane sister will be found somewhere perched on the family tree if diligently sought for in at least 60 per cent. of all histories of neurasthenia. Can you wonder why "the sins of the father are visited upon the children even unto the third and fourth generation"? A magazine full of neurotic powder may lie dormant for years until exposed to the match of the worry of business, or domestic affairs, or numerous sprees, or some indiscretion, when it explodes.

What does the neurasthenic complain of? Listen to his story carefully, however prolix he may be; do not get impatient with

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