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***DOCTOR
AND
PATIENT***

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INTRODUCTORY.

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The essays which compose this volume deal chiefly with a variety of subjects to which every physician must have given more or less thought. Some of them touch on matters concerning the mutual relation of physician and patient, but

are meant to interest and instruct the laity rather than the medical attendant. The larger number have from their nature a closer relation to the needs of women than of men.

It has been my fate of late years to have in my medical care very many women who, from one or another cause, were what is called nervous. Few of them were so happily constituted as to need from me neither counsel nor warnings. Very often such were desired, more commonly they were given unsought, as but a part of that duty which the physician feels, a duty which is but half fulfilled when we think of the body as our only province.

Many times I have been asked if there were no book that helpfully dealt with some of the questions which a weak or nervous woman, or a woman who has been these, would wish to have answered. I knew of none, nor can I flatter myself that the parts of this present little volume, in which I have sought to aid this class of patients, are fully adequate to the purpose.

I was tempted when I wrote these essays to call them lay sermons, so serious did some of their subjects seem to me. They touch, indeed, on matters involving certain of the most difficult problems in human life, and involve so much that goes to mar or make character, that no man could too gravely approach such a task. Not all, however, of these chapters are of this nature, and I have, therefore, contented myself with a title which does not so clearly suggest the preacher.

It would be scarcely correct to state that their substance or advice was personally addressed to those still actually nervous. To them a word or two of sustaining approval, a

smiling remonstrance, or a few phrases of definite explanation, are all that the wise and patient doctor should then wish to use. Constant inquiries and a too great appearance of what must be at times merely acted interest, are harmful.

When I was a small boy, my father watched me one day hoeing in my little garden. In reply to a question, I said I was digging up my potatoes to see if they were growing. He laughed, and returned, "When you are a man, you will find it unwise to dig up your potatoes every day to see if they are growing." Nor has the moral of his remark been lost on me. It is as useless to be constantly digging up a person's symptoms to see if they are better, and still greater folly to preach long sermons of advice to such as are under the despotism of ungoverned emotion, or whirled on the wayward currents of hysteria. To read the riot act to a mob of emotions is valueless, and he who is wise will choose a more wholesome hour for his exhortations. Before and after are the preacher's hopeful occasions, not the moment when excitement is at its highest, and the self-control we seek to get help from at its lowest ebb.

There are, as I have said, two periods when such an effort is wise,—the days of health, or of the small beginnings of nervousness, and of the uncontrol which is born of it, and the time when, after months or years of sickness, you have given back to the patient physical vigor, and with it a growing capacity to cultivate anew those lesser morals which fatally wither before the weariness of pain and bodily weakness.

When you sit beside a woman you have saved from mournful years of feebleness, and set afoot to taste anew the joy of wholesome life, nothing seems easier than with hope at your side, and a chorus of gratitude in the woman's soul, to show her how she has failed, and to make clear to her how she is to regain and preserve domination over her emotions; nor is it then less easy to point out how the moral failures, which were the outcome of sickness, may be atoned for in the future, now that she has been taught to see their meaning, their evils for herself, and their sad influence on the lives of others.

To preach to a mass of unseen people is quite another and a less easy matter. I approach it with a strong sense that it may have far less certain utility than the advice and exhortation addressed to the individual with such force as personal presence, backed by a knowledge of their peculiar needs, may give. I am now, then, for the first time, in the position of the higher class of teachers, who lay before a multitude what will be usefully assimilated by the few.

If my power to say what is best fitted to help my readers were as large as the experience that guides my speech, I should feel more assured of its value. But sometimes the very excess of the material from which one is to deduce formulas and to draw remembrances is an embarrassment, for I think I may say without lack of modesty in statement, that perhaps scarce any one can have seen more of women who have been made by disease, disorder, outward circumstance, temperament, or some combination of these, morbid in mind, or been tormented out of just relation to the world about them.

The position of the physician who deals with this class of ailments, with the nervous and feeble, the painworn, the hysterical, is one of the utmost gravity. It demands the kindest charity. It exacts the most temperate judgments. It requires active, good temper. Patience, firmness, and discretion are among its necessities. Above all, the man who is to deal with such cases must carry with him that earnestness which wins confidence. None other can learn all that should be learned by a physician of the lives, habits, and symptoms of the different people whose cases he has to treat. From the rack of sickness sad confessions come to him, more, indeed, than he may care to hear. To confess is, for mysterious reasons, most profoundly human, and in weak and nervous women this tendency is sometimes exaggerated to the actual distortion of facts. The priest hears the crime or folly of the hour, but to the physician are oftener told the long, sad tales of a whole life, its far-away mistakes, its failures, and its faults. None may be quite foreign to his purpose or needs. The causes of breakdowns and nervous disaster, and consequent emotional disturbances and their bitter fruit, are often to be sought in the remote past. He may dislike the quest, but he cannot avoid it. If he be a student of character, it will have for him a personal interest as well as the relative value of its applicative side. The moral world of the sick-bed explains in a measure some of the things that are strange in daily life, and the man who does not know sick women does not know women.

I have been often asked by ill women if my contact with the nervous weaknesses, the petty moral deformities of

nervous feminine natures, had not lessened my esteem for woman. I say, surely, no! So much of these is due to educational errors, so much to false relationships with husbands, so much is born out of that which healthfully dealt with, or fortunately surrounded, goes to make all that is sincerely charming in the best of women. The largest knowledge finds the largest excuses, and therefore no group of men so truly interprets, comprehends, and sympathizes with woman as do physicians, who know how near to disorder and how close to misfortune she is brought by the very peculiarities of her nature, which evolve in health the flower and fruitage of her perfect life.

With all her weakness, her unstable emotionality, her tendency to morally warp when long nervously ill, she is then far easier to deal with, far more amenable to reason, far more sure to be comfortable as a patient, than the man who is relatively in a like position. The reasons for this are too obvious to delay me here, and physicians accustomed to deal with both sexes as sick people will be apt to justify my position.

It would be easy, and in some sense valuable, could a man of large experience and intelligent sympathies write a book for women, in which he would treat plainly of the normal circle of their physiological lives; but this would be a method of dealing with the whole matter which would be open to criticism, and for me, at least, a task difficult to the verge of the impossible. I propose a more superficial plan as on the whole the most useful. The man who desires to write in a popular way of nervous women and of her who is to be taught how not to become that sorrowful thing, a nervous

woman, must acknowledge, like the Anglo-Saxon novelist, certain reputable limitations. The best readers are, however, in a measure co-operative authors, and may be left to interpolate the unsaid. A true book is the author, the book and the reader. And this is so not only as to what is left for the reader to fill in, but also has larger applications. All this may be commonplace enough, but naturally comes back to one who is making personal appeals without the aid of personal presence.

Because what I shall write is meant for popular use rather than for my own profession, I have made my statements as simple as possible. Scarcely a fact I state, or a piece of advice I give, might not be explained or justified by physiological reasoning which would carry me far beyond the depth of those for whom I wrote. All this I have sedulously avoided.

What I shall have to say in these pages will trench but little on the mooted ground of the differences between men and women. I take women as they are to my experience. For me the grave significance of sexual difference controls the whole question, and, if I say little of it in words, I cannot exclude it from my thought of them and their difficulties. The woman's desire to be on a level of competition with man and to assume his duties is, I am sure, making mischief, for it is my belief that no length of generations of change in her education and modes of activity will ever really alter her characteristics. She is physiologically other than the man. I am concerned with her now as she is, only desiring to help her in my small way to be in wiser and more healthful fashion what I believe her Maker meant her to be,

and to teach her how not to be that with which her physiological construction and the strong ordeals of her sexual life threaten her as no contingencies of man's career threaten in like measure or like number the feeblest of the masculine sex.

THE PHYSICIAN.

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I have long had in mind to write from a physician's point of view something in regard to the way in which the well-trained man of my profession does his work. My inclination to justify the labors and sentiments of an often misunderstood body of men was lately reinforced by remarks made to me by a very intelligent patient. I found him, when I entered my room, standing before an admirable copy of the famous portrait of the great William Harvey, the original of which is in the Royal College of Physicians. After asking of whom it was a likeness, he said, "I should be a little curious to know how he would have treated my case."

I had to confess that of Harvey's modes of practice we know little, but I took down from a shelf those odd and most interesting letters of Howell's, clerk of council to James I., and turned to his account of having consulted Harvey on returning home from Spain. Only too briefly he tells what was done for him, but was naturally most concerned about himself and thus missed a chance for us, because it so happens that we know little of Harvey. At this page of

Howelliana was a yellow paper-marker. Once the book was Walpole's, and after him was Thackeray's, and I like to fancy that Walpole left the marker, and that Thackeray saw it and left it, too, as I did.

My patient, who liked books, was interested, and went on to say that he had seen several physicians in Europe and America. That in France they always advised spas and water-cure, and that at least three physicians in America and one in London had told him there was nothing the matter with him, and that finally a shrewd country doctor had remarked bluntly that he would not give him any medicine, because he was overdosed already with work and worries, which was true.

At last he came back to Harvey. "He looks ill," he said, which is true. His honestly-painted knuckles make diagnosis easy. My friend thought that this great man would probably have dosed him well, and, as he added, would not have bothered him about too much sugar, nor forbidden champ gne. I had to reply that whatever ills were in the England of that day,—and there was much dyspepsia and much gout,—sugar was the luxury of the rich, and anything but as abundant as it is to-day, when we consume annually fifty-six pounds per head or per stomach. I told him that in all ages the best of us would have dwelt most on diet and habits of living, and that Harvey was little likely to have been less wise than his peers, and he has had but few. Then he said it would be curious to put on paper a case, and to add just what a doctor in each century would have ordered. The idea struck me as ingenious and fertile. I could wish that some one would do this thing. It would, I think, be