

The July

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American

Magazine



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My Own Story

By
ZANE GREY

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The American Magazine

July, 1924

MERLE CROWELL, *Editor*
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How the Mind Causes And Cures Disease

Outside of surgical cases, contagious diseases, and accidents, nine tenths of the people who come to a doctor are suffering from functional disturbances which usually have a mental origin and can be cured by mental methods

By William S. Sadler, M. D.

LET ME say, at the very beginning, that I am a "regular" physician and surgeon. I use medicine, physical remedies, and surgery in the treatment of disease. I belong to no "mental healing" cult of any description. And yet—I admit that mind cures are possible, and even common.

I will go even further than that. In certain cases, a mind cure is the *only* thing that will restore the patient to health. But I want to state, with equal emphasis, that there are other cases where a mind cure is absolutely impossible.

The general rule can be put in two sentences: Any disease that can be *caused* by the mind, can be *cured* by the mind. And if a disease *has* been caused by the mind, that is the way it *must* be cured.

There are literally millions of people who are in crying need of a mind cure; and my purpose in these articles is to help them to get it, for I have a sincere sympathy for many of these sufferers.

First, you will want to know what *kind* of diseases can be caused, and cured, by the mind; and the moment I begin to discuss that point I must talk of two extraordinary powers—*fear* and *faith*; fear as a cause of disease, and faith as a cure.

By fear, I mean doubt, distrust, anxiety, indecision, and all the rest of the debilitating and paralyzing cousins. By faith, I mean the opposite states of mind: optimism, courage, confidence, determination.

Later I will describe the astonishing effect the mind has on the body, an effect which enables it both to cause and to cure certain diseases. But first I want to explain that there are *two classes* of disease. We medical men call them "organic" and "functional."

In the case of an organic disease, an actual change has taken place in the body structure; something has happened to the tissues. Examples of organic disease are cancer, tuberculosis, ulcer, and Bright's disease.

I doubt whether a mental state alone, unless very long continued, could produce these actual physical changes; and neither do I believe that they can be cured by the mind alone.

But with the functional diseases, it is a different story. Most nervous, digestive, and circulatory disorders are purely functional. The brain, the stomach, and the heart may be in perfect condition, as re-

functional disturbances. The vast majority of them can be relieved by some kind of mind cure.

If a mental state has made you sick, anything that will remove that mental state can cure you. It makes no difference whether it is a philosophy, a religion, a nostrum, or a new method of treatment. If it is something you have *faith* in, it will do the trick, even if in itself it is a lie. It is your faith that works the miracle, not the thing to which you happen to *pin* your faith.

It's Easy to Fool the Body

"THE mind," says Doctor Sadler, "can cause the sensation of pain, and mind can relieve pain. This has been proved by injecting distilled water into the arm of a suffering patient. He thought it was morphine—and the pain was promptly relieved. This experiment has been made many times with complete success. In one case, I did this when the patient, a young woman, was begging for morphine. Two minutes after I had injected plain boiled water into her arm she was sleeping peacefully."

gards their structure, but they do not *function* properly. And the cause of this is often found to be simply and solely the person's state of mind.

Examples of functional disease are many kinds of headache, so-called nervous indigestion, certain unpleasant heart symptoms, numbness, a feeling of creeping and crawling in various parts of the body, an indescribable sense of weakness and fatigue, or even apparent paralysis of some part of the body. Many of these nervous disorders are also associated with disturbances in the so-called ductless-gland system of the body.

THE mind can cause any or all of these functional diseases—and it can also cure them. It is my belief that, outside of surgical cases, contagious diseases, and accidents, *nine tenths* of the people who come to the physician, seeking relief from their ailments, are suffering only from

I MUST, however, give you one word of caution. Before you try a mind cure, make certain that you have no actual *organic* disease. In following up the trails of the various exponents of mental healing, I have found some tragic experiences. A patient who has been cured of a functional nervous disorder by some kind of mental treatment becomes an enthusiastic believer in these methods. But later he develops some *organic* disease, and still depends on the mental treatment as a cure. Such a course invariably terminates in disaster, for organic disease cannot be cured through the mind alone.

Of course there are many people who *claim* to have been cured of organic disease by mental treatment only. There are several possible explanations: In most of these cases there was *no* organic disease; it was a mistaken diagnosis. But if the disease actually was present, then Nature must receive the credit for the cure.

We physicians know that Nature is often the real healer of our patients. We are her co-workers. Often she doesn't need us at all. Like God, she moves in a mysterious way her wonders to perform. In cancer cases, for example, there is a certain percentage of what are known as "spontaneous" recoveries. The patient gets well; and the physician knows that he did not perform the cure.

And so, in these alleged mind cures of organic disease, *if* the disease actually was present, Nature was the real healer. The mental attitude of the patient was favorable; to that extent it helped, just

as it helps the physician to treat any kind of disease.

This brings me to that marvelously interesting subject, *the effect of the mind on the body*. It is here that we find the explanation of three fourths of our physical suffering; and here is the secret of all mind cures.

THE human body is composed of about twenty-six trillions of little cells, all of them inter-related. They are affected by two influences, two sets of "messages." One set is carried by the circulation. They are the "chemical messages," the so-called "hormones" of the ductless and other glands. In this way any one part of the body is able to influence any and all other parts.

The other set is composed of "mental messages," which reach the cells by way of the nervous system. All messages from the higher centers of your brain must pass through the various ganglia of the sympathetic nerve system before reaching the vital organs. These ganglia are relay stations, where the messages are "censored." So the definition of the "mind" must be enlarged to include the sympathetic nervous system.

In this larger sense, the mind is a mysterious but marvelous power. It presides not only over the realm of thought but also over the *vital physical functions*. It cannot change the structure of any organ of the body; but it can affect the *working* of that organ. It can help it, or it can interfere with it.

Now, our emotions—our mental "feelings"—send a constant stream of nerve impulses, or messages, to various parts of the body. And it is an indisputable fact that those which are sent out by emotions of happiness, courage, and confidence help the vital organs to function easily and efficiently. Those sent out by emotions of pessimism, doubt, and fear have the opposite effect.

It has been proved beyond question that faith—using the word in the broad sense I explained before—promotes normal circulation, restful sleep, good respiration and digestion. Fear causes the reverse of these conditions.

Please remember that these statements are scientifically true; that these mental messages are physical realities. You freely admit that if you take a chemical poison you will suffer the effects of it. What I want you to realize is that a *mental* poison, in the form of thought, also has a disastrous effect. And also, just as there are antidotes for chemical poisons, so there are antidotes for mental ones. Fear, doubt, distrust, and discouragement are mental poisons. Faith, confidence, trust, and courage are their antidotes.

I remember one patient who thought he was paralyzed. When he came to the clinic, he apparently never had seen a clinical thermometer until I put one into his mouth to take his temperature. I had to leave him for a while, and on my return found that he supposed this was a new kind of treatment which, he assured me, made him feel better.

As my examination showed that his paralysis was merely imaginary, I allowed him to go on thinking that the thermometer "treatment" helped him. Every day for two weeks I had him come to the office and hold a thermometer under his

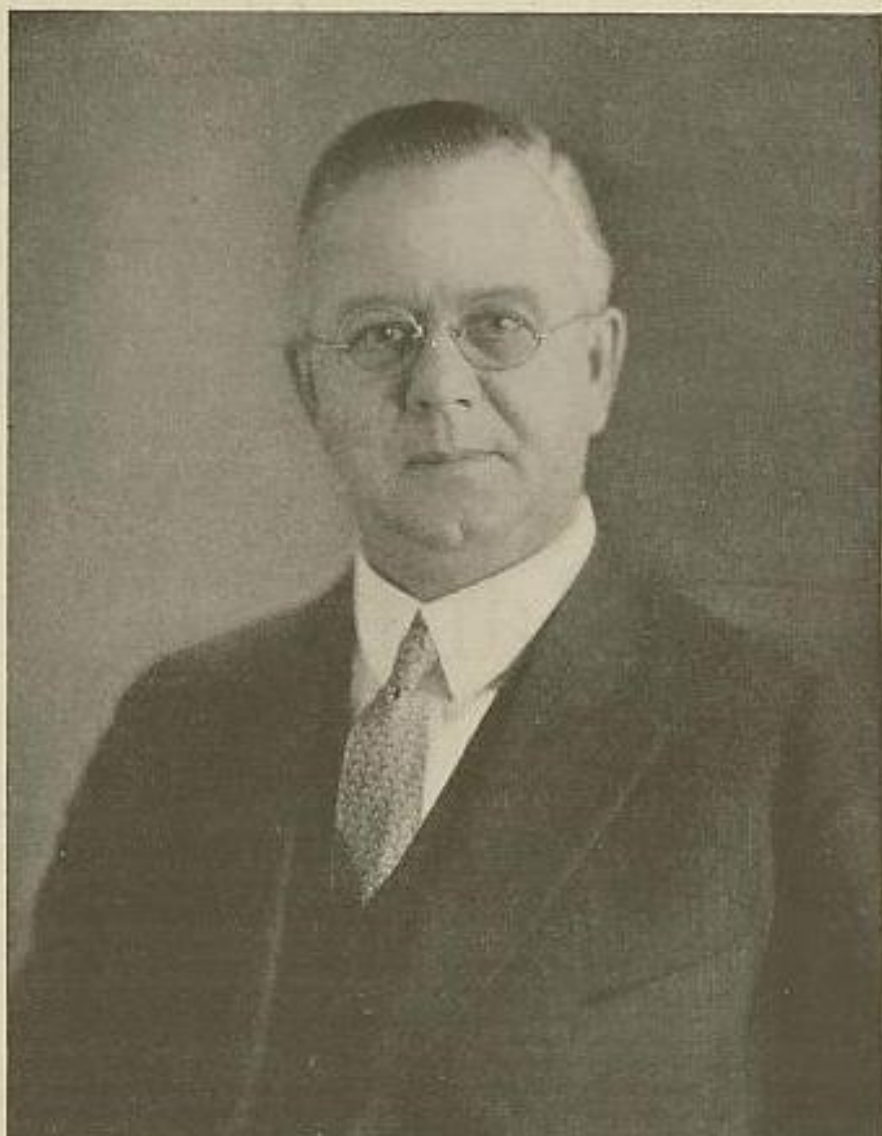


PHOTO BY HARTZOG, CHICAGO

Dr. William S. Sadler was for many years a professor at the Post-Graduate Medical School of Chicago, and is now senior attending surgeon to one of Chicago's larger hospitals. He is a widely known lecturer and writer on health subjects. Some of his books are the "Science of Living," "The Physiology of Faith and Fear," "Worry and Nervousness," "Race Decadence," and "The Mother and Her Child." Doctor Sadler, a native of Indiana, is a member of the leading medical and surgical organizations of the United States, and is an outstanding figure among medical men who are carrying the gospel of health to the public

tongue for one hour. Unaided by any other treatment, this cured him! He had thought he was paralyzed—he now thought he was being cured. That was all there was to it.

I do not claim that all pain can be relieved by the mind; but I suggest that all pain can be made worse by mental influence. Have you ever gone to the theatre when suffering with a headache? If so, you know that *during the acts* you were not conscious of your headache; but in the intermissions, when your mind reverted to yourself, the pain was almost unbearable.

YOUR mental state affects all your senses. If it is cheerful and confident, it sharpens the perceptions of taste and of smell, renders the hearing acute, and makes speech fluent and easy. In short, it causes our reactions to be normal, and so prevents and relieves functional disorders.

Fear, doubt, and discouragement blunt and distort the sensations, sometimes

even to the extent of causing deafness, hallucinations, paralysis. Of course these people are *not* deaf, blind, or paralyzed. Their ears, eyes, and muscles are all right—but they don't know it.

Not long ago, I had one of these cases, a workman who had lost the sight of one eye when a small piece of steel was blown into it. The steel was removed; but the man could not see with that eye, although several expert oculists could find nothing wrong with it.

It was evidently a case of "hysterical blindness"—a figment of the man's imagination. Therefore, to go back to my rule that what is caused by the mind can be cured by the mind, I set to work to relieve him by that method.

I told him of a powerful magnet that could draw a piece of steel out of the eye from half way across the room. You see, this was what he claimed—that they hadn't got all the steel out. I made elaborate preparations, calculated to *prepare his mind*. Three times a day I had him come to (Continued on page 72)

How the Mind Causes and Cures Disease

(Continued from page 41)

the office, and we dropped a little boric acid into his eye. There happened to be an electrician working around the place; and the patient was given to understand that this was in connection with installing the wonderful magnet that was to restore his sight.

At the end of five days, he was told that everything was ready. Meanwhile, I had borrowed a magnet for the occasion. I carefully placed the patient, and explained that when he saw some red lights go on, across the room, the magnet would be working, and his sight would be instantly restored.

That is exactly what happened. When the red lights flashed on, he exclaimed, "Thank God! I can see!"

We had bandaged the other eye, so that he would know he was cured. And of course the magnet was not connected with the electrical circuit at all. It was a pure case of building up his expectation and his faith. Anything else that would have made him believe he was going to be cured would have done just as well.

ONE of the commonest examples of the mind's effect on the body is the heart action. It is a well-known fact that the heart centers can be temporarily and completely paralyzed by fear. There are numerous cases on record of apparently healthy persons being actually frightened to death.

The heart action can be altered by merely thinking about it. Any emotional agitation almost immediately produces a thumping of the heart. Persistent worry is usually accompanied by increased blood pressure. And these symptoms, mind you, occur when the heart and the arteries are perfectly normal.

An ex-convict came to the clinic one day complaining of insomnia and loss of appetite. He had a blood pressure of 190, although a careful examination showed no physical condition to account for it. This continued during two weeks. We found that he was afraid that he might be arrested, on the ground of "once a criminal, always a criminal." When he was promised that he would be safe from arrest, his blood pressure soon went down to 150, and remained there.

A very nervous man who had a blood pressure of 170 joined a religious order that does not believe in the use of medicine; his blood pressure went down to 145 when he stopped worrying about his health. A jilted lover also had a pressure of 170; it was reduced to 135 when he became reconciled with his sweetheart. A business man in financial straits had a pressure of 180; it fell to 150 after his affairs took a turn for the better.

Recently it has been discovered that abnormal mental states can, in a measure, actually deteriorate the blood by affecting the general health. In particular, mental depression causes sluggish circulation and, very often, chronic liver stagnation. This brings about the destruction of large numbers of red blood corpuscles.

Faith favors normal blood and increases the resistance to disease. Fear

promotes anemia, decreases the resistance, and predisposes to infection.

The mind affects also the action of the skin. Anxiety, worry, and fear, by their influence through the nervous system, cause the small capillaries to contract; this not only produces pallor of the skin, but forces the blood into the internal organs; and so, because of insufficient skin circulation, the person is liable to many circulatory and digestive disturbances.

THE mental state alone can change the pulse from regular and strong to irregular and weak. Just as a joke, some medical students once bandaged the eyes of a fellow student and pretended to open a vein in his arm. A small stream of water was then allowed to trickle over his arm and to fall into a bowl. The student, believing this water to be his own blood, turned deathly pale and fainted.

I was summoned by telephone to the hospital one day to see a patient who recently had undergone an operation. She had suddenly developed a very weak pulse and seemed to be on the verge of collapse. Of course, even before starting for the hospital, I had ordered certain things to be done for her; but as the distance was very short I arrived before any of these directions could be carried out.

As I was trying to feel her pulse, the patient whispered, "Doctor, am I dying?" Now, I could not then feel any pulse at the wrist; but with all the courage and optimism I could command, I replied, "Certainly not! You'll be all right in a jiffy!"

Within ten seconds after she heard me speak these words of reassurance, the pulse could be felt at the wrist, the color began to return to her face, and thirty minutes later she was in a fairly normal condition. She had thought she was dying; and her fear had brought her, to all appearances, dangerously near to death's door. It is difficult to explain just what happens in a case of that kind; but it is not difficult to recognize the value of courage, hope, and confidence.

Next let me take the effect of the mind on the respiratory function. Good cheer and optimism increase the depth of breathing, and therefore the relative oxygen intake—and oxygen, as you know, is necessary to life. Courageous and confident people usually have a lung capacity decidedly above the average. Victims of worry and anxiety almost invariably suffer from depression of the chest as well as depression of spirits; and this has an important bearing on health, for a well-developed chest is a great safeguard against tuberculosis.

There is such a thing as a psychic cough. I was once called to see a man who had been coughing continuously for hours and was almost prostrated with exhaustion. While I was examining him a neighbor's child was run over by an automobile; and in the excitement which followed my patient entirely forgot to cough! Half an hour later he remembered—and at once began to cough frantically. However, he had to admit that he had been "cured" for half an hour; so he summoned

his will power, began to control the impulse to cough, and made a speedy recovery.

I know a woman who, for three years, had suffered with a persistent cough. She joined a religious cult which didn't believe in coughs, and she quickly got over hers. Faith worked the cure.

The muscles reflect the mental balance, or the lack of it. Nervous people are always at high tension. They don't know the blessings of muscular relaxation, and that is disastrous to the general health. This mental tension causes what we call "motor obsessions," twiddling the thumbs, drumming on the table or the arm of a chair, keeping the foot in motion when the knees are crossed, and so on.

I remember a woman who came to the clinic one day to inquire about her husband. All the time she was talking she kept beating a tattoo on the table with her fingers. She explained that her husband, after going to bed at night, would suddenly begin to wriggle his toes and would keep this up until he went to sleep.

"What ails him?" she demanded.

"Well, madam," I said, "he has the same disease you have, the fidgets! Only, he has it in his feet, and you have it in your fingers."

Phases of muscular nervousness keep up until the person becomes a victim of chronic muscular rigidity. Upon retiring at night, instead of relaxing, they clench the hands, draw up the legs, and stiffen the neck. When they awaken in the morning, they complain of feeling more tired than when they went to bed. No wonder! They have worked hard all night.

Observe yourself when you go to bed. More than likely you will find that you do not relax as a baby does, but are more or less tense. Learn to let go! As I often say to my nervous patients, "Learn to live on your *vitals* and not on your *vitals*." When you go out in your automobile, let the motor do the work. A lot of people pay twenty cents a gallon for gasoline—and then help to pull the machine all over the country.

A PERSON'S state of mind has a vast effect on the amount of muscular work he can perform in a given time. I once knew a man who had not done a good day's work in three years. He believed he was suffering from some insidious and incurable disease; and he became weaker and weaker, finally taking to his bed. At last there fell into his hands a book which contained the story of a case much like his own. The patient described in the book had cured himself by deep breathing, focusing his mind on some distant object, and repeating the words, "I can, I will, I am doing it now."

The bedridden man did likewise. Within a few days he was back at work, and he has been an enthusiast for that particular brand of mind cure ever since. And who can blame him? Of course anything else would have done just as well—if his mind had accepted it and believed it would cure him.

The mental state has a very decided effect on the action of the secretory glands.

For example, fear causes a marked decrease in the flow of saliva. I have heard of an ancient test which the Chinese are said to have used in the detection of criminals. The suspects were drawn up in line and each was compelled to chew and swallow a handful of dry rice. The idea was that the guilty man would be so frightened that his salivary glands would refuse to work, and his mouth and throat would be so dry he could not swallow the rice in the time allowed for the test.

Many a nursing mother has been compelled to wean her baby because the milk glands were dried up as a result of chronic worry.

With regard to digestion, a cheerful mind encourages appetite, and the result is an abundant flow of gastric juice. Fear, worry, grief—all such emotions invariably decrease this flow. Despondent people nearly always have slow digestion. It is a familiar fact that our food always seems to "agree with us" when we have had a cheerful, pleasant atmosphere at a meal. Digestion is always good on a holiday, unless we over-eat and under-exercise.

The mental state affects not only digestion but also nutrition and metabolism. I have seen a chronic sufferer from malnutrition permanently cured by a trip around the world. It was simply a mind cure. If there had been actual organic trouble, mere change of scene and of mental interests would not have been sufficient.

A very wealthy and self-centered woman, who had endless trouble with her food assimilation, lost both her husband and her fortune. She went to work in a store, had no time to think of her troubles, and fully recovered her power of assimilation.

The special danger in any mental state which is unfavorable to health is due to our tendency to form habits of thought; and it is the habit that results in disaster. That cloud, however, has a silver lining; for it is also possible to form the habit of cheerfulness, courage, and confidence. A bad mental habit is a cruel tyrant over the body. A good mental habit is a beneficent protector and healer of the body.

MANY chronic worriers are like an elephant I have heard about. He had stood in one place for a long, long time, shackled by a chain so that he could not move from the spot. Finally, as an experiment, the chain was taken off. The elephant didn't budge! Then some food was placed just out of reach of his trunk. For days he stood there, trumpeting loudly and trying to reach that food. He could have taken one step—and have had both his food and his freedom. But he *thought* he was hitched, and he stood there just as if the chains that had bound him never had been loosed.

And so it is with human beings. If you believe a thing, and fear it enough to allow it really to take hold of your mind, you become a slave to that belief. Yet there is only one step between you and freedom. You only *think* you are bound.

Worry may be defined as a persistent concentration of the mind on some fear-thought. It is a chronic process of making mountains out of molehills. Lack of self-

control is a great cause of worry; that, and the inability to distinguish between forethought and "fear-thought."

A great many people seem to think it is their duty to worry; they wouldn't feel that they were conscientious if they were not always anxious about things. They are like the old woman who complained to her physician, "My head feels dull-like, and I've kinder lost the power to worry over things." What we all ought to do is to *conquer the desire* to worry, for worry defeats its own object by making us less capable of meeting or escaping the very situations we fear and want to avoid.

The trouble with a great many nervous sufferers is that they have "chronic in-growing of the thoughts." They are like the morbidly depressed girl whose mother said to her, "Oh, Maggie, for goodness' sake, can't you get your mind off your thoughts?" Many people are wasting on themselves the very things the world so keenly needs—pity and sympathy. Self-pity is only a form of plain selfishness.

THE mind can affect the body through the power of mere suggestion. This can come from without or from within—auto-suggestion. It can cause incredible suffering; and it can perform miracles of healing. Suggestion is as old as the hills. It always has been one of the chief assets of the successful physician.

Auto-suggestion can help anyone to overcome the effects of bad mental states. Some evening when you are going home, feeling completely worn out, try reversing the usual association of ideas and feelings. Instead of "tired and miserable" and "tired and cross," keep saying to yourself, "tired, but happy—tired, but satisfied—tired, but smiling." You will begin to smile, in spite of yourself. I know this from my own experience.

Suggestion is a form of mental contagion. In fact, it often becomes epidemic when large numbers are involved. It may deceive our very senses, as in the case of the workman I have described here, the one who thought he was blind. When a child falls down and begins to cry, its mother says, "Come and let Mama kiss the spot and make it well." She does kiss it, and the child stops crying. That is mind cure by suggestion.

There are people who make a business of being sick when they really are well. They complain of an endless variety of sensations; water running under the scalp; prickly burs on the hips; a tight band around the head; a constant burning in the stomach; heat, cold, numbness—oh! if it isn't one thing, it is another—until semi-invalidism becomes a habit. And it is merely a habit of thought.

In some cases, people actually simulate the disease they claim to have. For instance, I was called to see a patient upon whom a young surgeon was going to operate for an abdominal tumor. When I questioned her she said she'd had this tumor "off and on for a dozen years." Apparently she was in good general health, had good nutrition and, although she claimed to be in great pain, she could smile very pleasantly while describing her miseries.

Of course my suspicions were aroused, and I was inclined to think that this was what surgeons call a "phantom tumor," a hysterical contraction of some sort that was able to simulate a genuine tumor. I therefore advised that she be put into a hot bath—110 degrees temperature—and kept there eight, ten, or possibly twelve minutes. I predicted that if this was done the tumor would disappear—and it did.

Physicians used to give an anesthetic in order to test these phantom tumors; but I have found that the hot bath of 110 degrees will cause them to vanish in almost every instance. If the surgeon had prepared to operate and, after giving the anesthetic, had failed to examine again for the tumor, he would have found no tumor to operate on. And yet, only a few minutes before, there was a mass so hard that when tapped with the fingers it sounded as if you were hitting a board.

Not long ago a woman came to us who, by actual count, complained of *eighty-seven* aches, pains, and miseries. Yet, after careful examination and observation during a period of ten days, not a single blessed thing of an organic nature could be found wrong with her. She was in perfect health, except for the "flock of miseries" she had accumulated.

Another woman came to me to have a floating kidney stitched up, to cure her nervousness. When she was examined she was found to be as scarred as a veteran of many wars. She'd had five operations! After the examination I said to her:

"Madam, you've had all your fixed organs made movable, and all your movable organs made fixed. Everything has been tampered with except this kidney. It's about the only thing left the way the Lord made it. It has nothing to do with your nervousness, and I decline to operate."

She was set on another operation, however, so she left me. As was said by a well-known surgeon, some years ago, "We must educate both surgeons and nervous patients themselves to be more circumspect about operations. If we can't do that, there should be a law in every state making it a crime to operate on nervous people during sixty, or perhaps ninety days, each year. Let them at least enjoy a 'closed season,' such as we have for game birds and wild animals."

AS FOR stomach troubles, I could fill a book with accounts of cases which have been cured entirely by the mind. And the reason is that they were *caused* by the mind. I have almost reached the conclusion that there is no such thing as so-called "dyspepsia;" that genuine stomach troubles are due to ulcer, gall stones, appendicitis, and other bona fide physical causes; but that all others belong in the group which we call "nervous indigestion"—which simply means "stomach trouble in the head." That is where the cause lies; and that is where the cure must take place. Next month I shall give advice and specific directions, as an aid to you in working out such a cure in your own case.

DR. WILLIAM S. SADLER, author of the article you have just finished, explains next month how you can work out your own mind cure. By cultivating certain habits of thought and feeling—which are explained in the article—he says that you can recover completely from those functional disorders which give rise to most of your physical miseries.