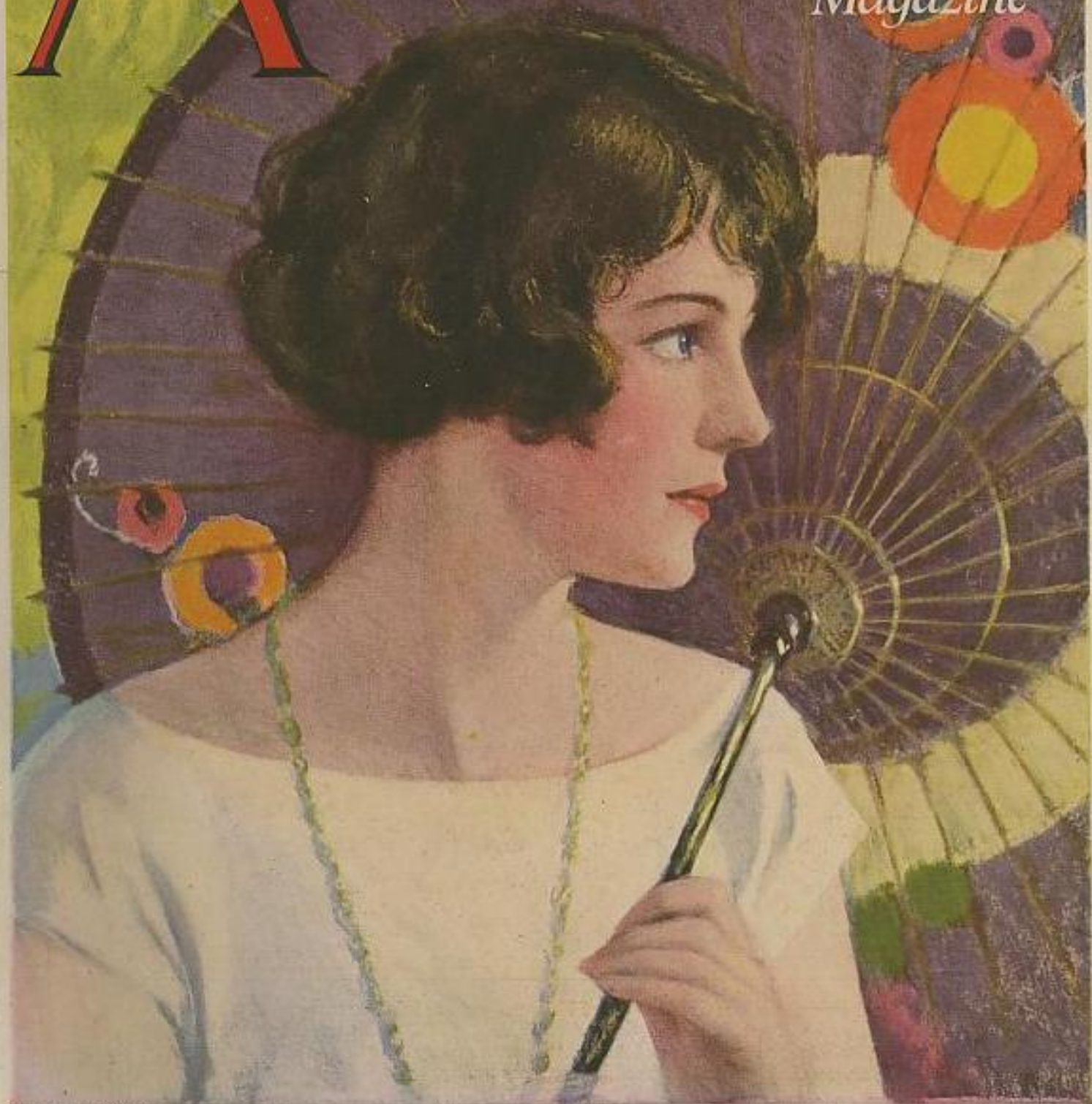


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The August

# American

Magazine



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**Rex Beach**

“My Adventures as  
a Rolling Stone”

**Rupert Hughes**

“My Father”

4

# The American Magazine

August, 1924

MERLE CROWELL, *Editor*

MARY B. MULLETT, *Managing Editor*

Vol. xcviii

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# Ways to Work Out Your Own Mind Cure

Most of your physical miseries have their origin in your mental state—They are mere “functional disorders,” not organic diseases—Complete recovery from them is possible, if you will cultivate the necessary habits of thought and feeling—How to accomplish this

By William S. Sadler, M. D.

EDITOR'S NOTE: 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 largest hospitals. He is a widely known lecturer and writer on health subjects and an outstanding figure among medical men who are carrying the gospel of health to the public.

LAST month, in an article in this magazine, I made this statement: “It is my belief that, outside of surgical cases, contagious diseases, and accidents, *sine tentis* of the people who come to the physician, seeking relief for their ailments, are suffering only from functional disturbances. The vast majority of them can be relieved by some kind of mind cure.”

Now it is strange, but true, that these people resent it if the physician says to them: “There is nothing the matter with you, except nerves.” Instead of being delighted, they are downright disappointed.

I can understand this attitude. Most of them have really been suffering; and it must be hard for them to believe that their misery is merely the result of their mental state.

The mind instinctively rebels against the task of curing the evils it has caused! The neurotic patient would rather be told that he must undergo a surgical operation—*anything* rather than admit that his troubles are largely imaginary and that therefore he must himself do most of the work of curing them.

But there is only one method by which any outsider can work a cure, and that is through the mind of the patient. If he can make the sufferer have *faith* that he is going to be cured, he *will* be cured; and it won't make any difference whether it is done by sugar pills, a surgical operation, baths, massage, or standing the patient on his head in the corner! It is the patient's faith in the method, not the method itself, that will heal him.

I have achieved many cures in this fashion myself. But, from the patient's own point of view, how much more dignified, sensible, and fine it would be to meet the issue squarely, fight the good fight, and win a

complete victory! For, in that case, the mind not only has won the immediate struggle, but is fortified and strengthened for the future.

If you are the victim of a nervous disorder, accept the fact that, if you want to get well, the best way—if not the only way—is for you to cure yourself! Go to work to change your mental habits. Realize that your problem is one of acquiring self-control.

I will give you specific directions which I have found valuable in these cases; but I want you to begin by adopting *with sin-*

especially during the early stages of the struggle to overcome his nervous tendencies. If your physician happens to have had experience of this sort, he will be very helpful in your efforts to achieve self-mastery.

If your doctor cannot take complete charge of your case, you may find some clergyman, or a friend, who has studied these matters. In connection with the helpful books you can read, this wise counselor will serve to steer you successfully through the early setbacks and discouragements which always come.

While you must cure yourself, don't undertake to do it alone. Don't go off all by yourself and expect to get well. Seek cheerful companionship. As far as possible avoid being left alone, even for a single hour of the day.

Of course this will not be necessary after you have got a good start toward a cure; but, as a rule, it is a safe plan to follow at the beginning. If it “is not good for man to live alone,” it is positively dangerous for neurasthenics to live an isolated and solitary life.

IN MANY cases of nervous breakdown it is necessary for the patient, man or woman, to get away from home for a while. Sometimes this is essential in order to escape friction which, no matter how trivial in its origin, has literally “got on the patient's nerves.” Or it may be necessary to get the patient away from some unwhole-

some influence connected with the home life, the social environment, or his business affairs.

Hydrotherapy plays an important part in the treatment of nervous patients. Its benefits are great, its forms varied. Yet it is easy for the neurasthenic to overdo in the matter of baths. Sea bathing and salt air are excellent; but sometimes the patient remains in the water too long, thus exhausting his ability to react. It would have been better if he had taken a good salt bath or a salt rub at home.

Most neurotic patients complain of fatigue; but there are two kinds of fatigue, physiological and neurological, and nervous patients are (Continued on page 126)

## People Who Have the “Dying Spell” Habit

“NERVOUS people,” says Doctor Sadler, “often suffer from palpitation of the heart. When there is a little gas in the stomach or the large bowel, they have heart troubles and other ‘spells’ which frighten them. They are sure they are going to die. One of my patients explained her failure to keep an appointment at my office by saying she'd had one of her very worst ‘dying spells.’ These patients *don't* die during these attacks, for the simple reason that the organ which *seems* to be affected is perfectly sound; it is just a case of nerves interfering with the *functioning* of the organ.”

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Don't exaggerate your difficulties; minimize them. Lincoln, even when assailed by such anxieties and griefs as you never will know, used to say, “And this, too, will pass.” Acquire something of his patience and confidence. Learn to trust nature and God. Combat your selfish instincts. Make a “Declaration of Emancipation” against futile worry. Live according to the Golden Rule; and as often as possible cast yourself for the rôle of the Good Samaritan. Remember that *your mind can cure what your mind has caused.*

It is a great help for a nervous sufferer to have a wise and sympathetic counselor,



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# Ways to Work Out Your Own Mind Cure

(Continued from page 41)

seldom victims of the first of these two. The so-called rest cure should be used only in certain cases of hysteria and for bed-fast neurasthenics. In most other cases, the graduated work cure is better.

These people would do well not to sleep during the day. Then, on retiring at night they will enjoy sounder sleep. Of course they must go to bed to sleep, not to worry; and they will be better able to do this—in fact, better in every way—if they keep busy during the day, rest sufficiently, eat heartily, and, in winter, keep warm.

Neurasthenics often sleep well through the night, but wake up tired in the morning. Their batteries may pick up a little during the forenoon, and they may feel pretty well in the afternoon. In fact, during the evening they often can forget their nerves and enjoy themselves in a fairly normal way.

Nervous patients complain of failing memory and of inability to endure any sustained effort, either physical or mental. They have cold hands and feet—literally as well as figuratively.

They frequently suffer from palpitation of the heart. When there is a little gas in the stomach or the large bowel, they have heart troubles and other "spells" which frighten them. They are sure they are going to die. One of my patients explained her failure to keep an appointment at my office by saying she'd had one of her very worst "dying spells." These patients don't die during these attacks, for the simple reason that the organ which seems to be affected is perfectly sound; it is just a case of nerves interfering with the functioning of the organ.

THE stomach is what bothers these people most. They try every diet system they hear of, but nothing seems to help them. I remember one woman who weighed less than ninety pounds when she came to me. For six years, she told me, she had suffered tortures with her diseased stomach, and she wanted a surgical operation performed.

A careful examination showed that there was nothing wrong with her stomach then. She'd had an ulcer six years before, but it had been cured. However, she had gone right on thinking ulcer, and had starved herself until she was a walking skeleton. I knew she wouldn't believe me if I told her the truth, so I decided on a more diplomatic course.

"At last," I said to her, "we have found what is the matter with your stomach. If you will do exactly as I tell you, in six weeks you will be well."

"Why," she said, "that seems too good to be true! I can't believe I'm ever going to be cured."

That happened to be precisely what ailed her—she didn't believe she would be well. But I told her that if she didn't trust me absolutely, I wouldn't take her case; so she promised she would. I began by prescribing wholesome, nourishing food. And when she protested that she would be dead before midnight if she ate this food, I said: "All right! I'll pay the funeral expenses."

Day by day, we added new articles to

her diet. Meanwhile, we made a great fuss over her, giving her all kinds of treatment—red lights, blue lights, massage, and dings of every sort. Barring a few minor setbacks, she progressed steadily in her new diet, and in six weeks could eat anything—even raw sauerkraut!

She suffered no more "tortures" from her "diseased stomach." Those she had suffered had been the result solely of her belief that her stomach was diseased. Ulcer of the stomach had become a habit of thought with her. I cured her of that habit of thought. That was all there was to it. Anything else would have cured her, if she'd had faith that it would.

Neurotic patients should avoid dietetic fads and have an abundance of food, varied in character, well cooked, and tastily served. They should overcome the common tendency of nervous people to bolt their food, and acquire the habit of thorough mastication. They should "keep the mind off the stomach" while eating. Cheerful companionship will help them to do this.

Whatever we may think about the use of stimulants and narcotics by the average person, there can be no argument as to their effect on nervous people. I always advise that the use of alcohol and tobacco be entirely discontinued at once. Tea and coffee should be weakened and, within a month's time, some other kind of warm drink substituted.

Nervous people are notoriously addicted to the use of drugs—a custom I cannot too strongly condemn. Of course, any kind of "dope" which may contain cocaine, morphine, or heroin, should not be used; but the nervous patient should also avoid such common remedies as the bromides and various other drugs of a similar character. They do not remove the cause of the trouble; on the contrary, they weaken the heart action and irritate the nerves.

THE one thing that is fundamentally wrong in the mental machinery of the average neurotic sufferer is his lack of decision. These folks simply cannot "make up their minds" easily and quickly.

A friend of mine spent six weeks trying to decide whether to buy a soft hat or a stiff hat. I knew of a farmer's wife who worried five days as to whether she should set the Dominick hen or the speckled hen. Most of these patients have a strong will. They are as stubborn as a Missouri mule in sticking out some things. But they lack the power of deciding questions as they come up.

I have obtained good results by having the person play checkers, with a time limit for each move. One of my patients is a lawyer who became extremely nervous and lacking in decision. Not long ago, while playing checkers with his wife, he spent forty minutes deliberating over a move! Acting under my direction, he now has a time limit of one minute for each move. No matter whether it is a good move or a bad one, he must make it within sixty seconds.

Of course his wife wins every game; but that is not the important thing. He will begin to win his share later. The essential

thing now is for him to get back his power of decision, his ability to settle a thing and to let it stay settled.

If you have "nerves" you will make little progress toward recovery until you overcome this tendency to doubt and indecision. You must follow the advice of your doctor, or whoever your counselor may be, whether you "feel like it" or not. A victim of nerves must never wait to feel better before starting his cure. If he does, he will spend years over it; and in the end he will get well merely because his disorder has just naturally petered out of itself.

Most of these functional disturbances right themselves in time. But nature is very deliberate about it. She doesn't hesitate to take five or ten years for the job, whereas you can cure yourself in only a small fraction of that time.

Putting off things is the bane of the nervous sufferer. Patients often ask me *how* they can cultivate the power of decision. My reply is: "Just as you would cultivate any other power—of the memory, for instance, or of the muscles. Do it by exercise. Whenever you have any choice to make, decide promptly—and stick to your decision."

Don't sit at your desk and handle and rehandle your letters and papers. Take up one thing, put it through, and turn to the next thing. In your home, don't begin one thing and then drop it to go to some other thing. Take one task at a time and stick to it until it is finished. Form the habit of *finishing* things before you leave them.

Gymnasium drills, physical culture classes, military drills, and all kinds of games which are played in company with other people, are aids in developing decision. Driving an automobile will help, because of the constant necessity of making quick decisions and immediately acting upon them.

**NEXT** in importance in the cure of nervous disorders is the cultivation of a sense of humor. Not long ago a woman brought her husband to me for advice. All the time he was in my office he behaved as if he were an undertaker at a funeral. His wife said that he hadn't smiled for many months.

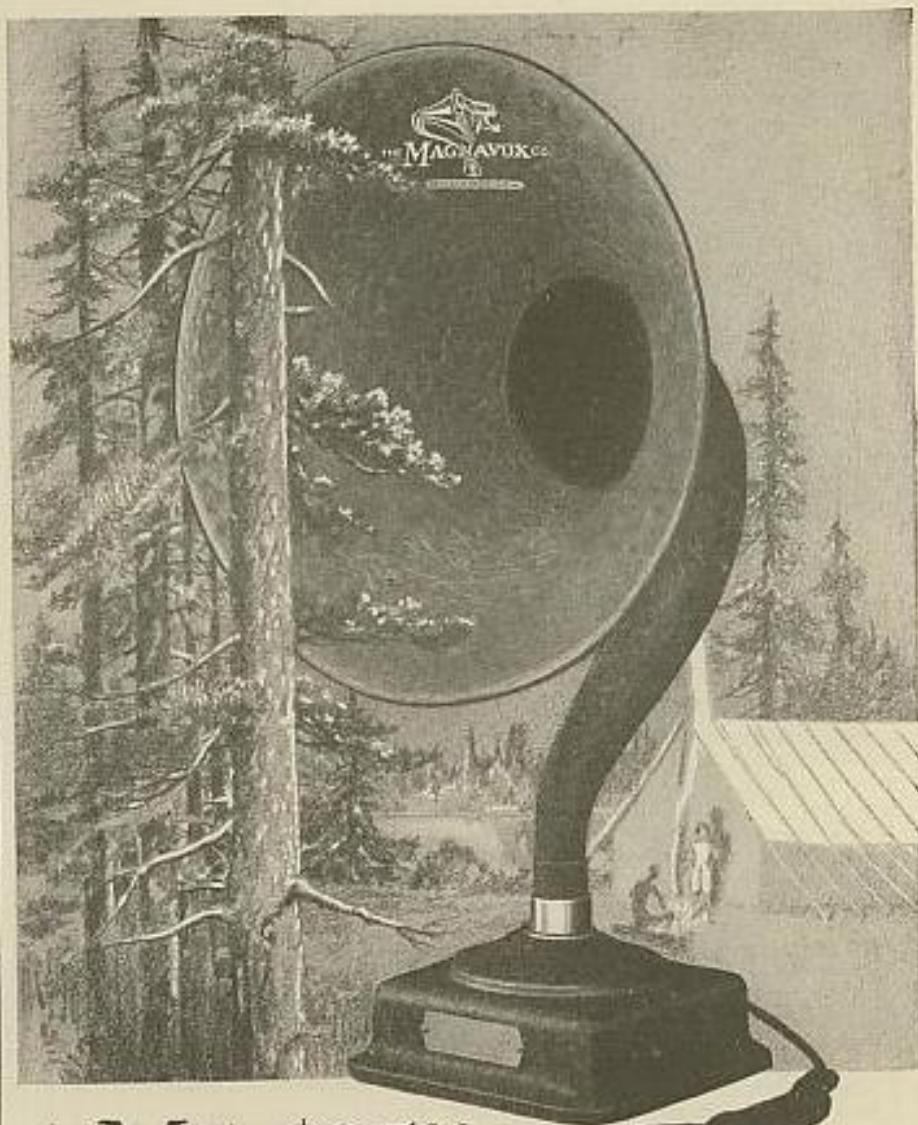
I told him that on every subsequent visit he must be prepared to tell me a funny story; that he must make me laugh before we would talk about his condition.

Three days later he returned—as solemn as ever. When I demanded the preliminary funny story, he told me one about two Scotchmen who were out in a boat, fishing, when a violent storm came up. They lost their oars and were driven about aimlessly, out of sight of land and with darkness coming on. In this emergency, one of the men asked the other if he could pray. He admitted that he was out of practice, but said he was willing to try.

"Oh, Lord," he began, "I've been a hard drinker, and I've broken most of the Commandments; but if I ever get back to land I promise never to—"

At that point, his companion interrupted. "I wouldna commit m'self too far, Sandy," he said; "I think I see land!"

The telling of this story, although my patient related it without a glimmer of a smile, was the beginning of the end of three years of worry, apprehension, and depression. Three times a week he would



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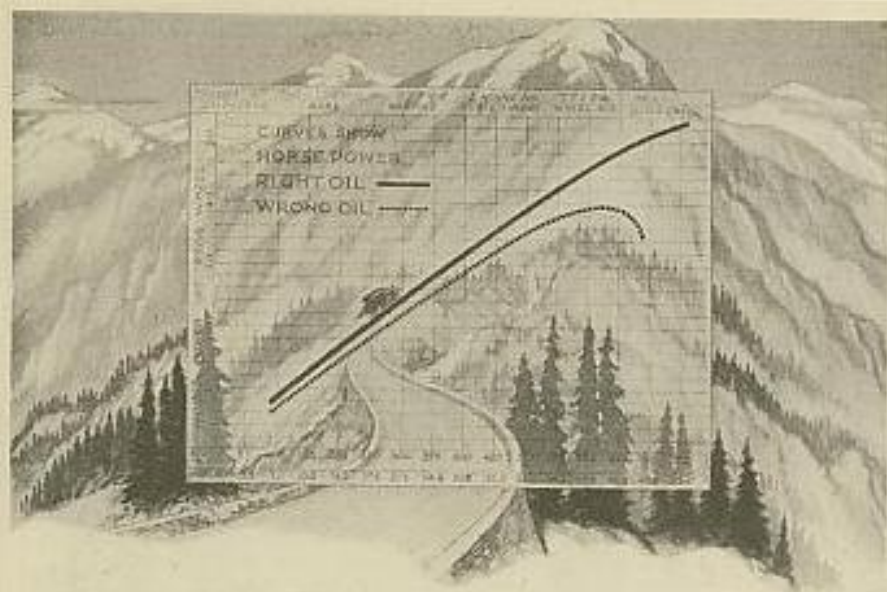
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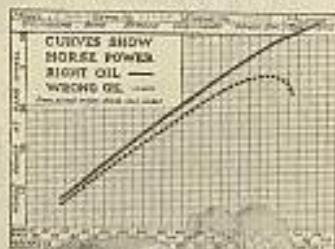
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come to my office, and we always began by swapping stories. In three months' time, the man was so changed that his friends could scarcely believe it was he. In six months he was well. His expression had undergone a complete transformation. The only thing that bothered him was wondering why and how he could have made such a fool of himself for three long years.

The home treatment of worry and nervousness must include the cultivation of these two things: decision and a sense of humor. But there are three other essentials: work, play, and some sort of religion.

In cases of profound nervous exhaustion and prostration, I find it a good plan to isolate the patients in bed for a number of weeks on a milk and fruit juice diet. But after this preliminary recuperation, I gradually put them to work. Only a few minutes a day, at first; then half an hour; then an hour; and so on until they are restored to normal activity. And I begin this program even while they are complaining of sensations of weakness and various other kinds of fictitious suffering.

If you do not like your work, either make up your mind to learn to like it, or get other work that you *can* like. Of course in the case of married women who find their job irksome, I do not counsel them to quit and seek a divorce! I guess they will have to acquire the philosophy of the Apostle Paul, who said that he had learned, in whatsoever state he was, "therewith to be content." That is a marvelous philosophy for everyone.

If you want to master your nerves, to re-acquire control of your mental machinery, you must go to work—and put your *heart* into your work. "Get busy" is the best slogan for neurotics. But don't overdo this method. Have enough self-control to stop before you become overfatigued.

There is plenty of useful work to be done, even by people who do not need to take a business job. Wake up and lend a helping hand to some movement that will benefit others. These movements need you, and *you need them!* Cultivate the society of children and of cheerful grown-ups. Laughter and light-heartedness are of real value in the treatment of nervous states. They help to get your mind off yourself—which is your main difficulty.

If you are going to cure your nerves, you must learn again what most neurotics have forgotten—how to play. I prescribe a hobby of some sort for every nervous patient. But I don't prescribe any particular one. Getting a hobby is like finding a sweetheart. You must fall in love with it—or with her—of your own choice.

**M**Y DEFINITION of play is something you would rather do than eat; something that has no connection with your ambition, or livelihood, or religion. You have to have a reason for working, but not for play. It is natural to us, and uses the nerve cells in a special and beneficial way.

Among the fads which are helpful to neurasthenics I might mention those connected with nature study: collecting flowers or mineral specimens, observing the habits of birds, animals, or insects. These have the advantage of taking you into the open air and giving you needed exercise. Making collections of other things—china, coins, stamps, pictures, rugs, or whatever interests you—is a useful therapeutic diversion. But I must warn you against over-

doing; against too long walks and too intent application, even in the pursuit of these curative diversions.

Let me say a word here about reading. Avoid pessimistic literature, also suggestive books, particularly the soul-and-sex variety. I advise against much reading of medical works and of books highly descriptive of nervous disorders. In what I write here, for instance, I must be careful, lest in helping some nervous sufferers I contribute to the morbidly "ingrowing thoughts" of others.

Every worrier should read and long remember the admonitions of Marcus Aurelius, the old Roman philosopher. Books of a light, almost juvenile character, may be beneficial; and I can recommend also such apparent opposites as mathematics and poetry. A systematic study of the Bible will help some people; but it excites the over-conscientious and over-religious patients. However, I can unqualifiedly advise the reading of the Psalms, the Book of Job, Isaiah, the Gospel of Saint John, and the Epistles of Saint Paul.

Nervous patients would do well to cultivate the simple art of being good-natured. It can be cultivated at home and at no expense. It does not require ocean voyages or going to the mountains or the seashore, and its benefits are even greater. Good humor, I sometimes think, is merely the highest attainment of good manners; and it is, without question, of great value in the fight against neurasthenia.

In acquiring more of the play spirit of children, we acquire also something of their ability to relax. Most nervous patients are in a constant state of muscular contraction; but a large percentage of the things which harass and vex them, causing this nervous tenseness, would cease to torture them if they would simply stop resisting. It is our perpetual *resistance* to annoying trifles that gives them the power to annoy us.

**O**THER things being equal, people who have a sincere and natural religious belief of some sort are happier and enjoy better health than those who lack this spiritual nutrition. Over-conscientiousness and fanatical piety can cause mental disaster; but I'm inclined to think that many people who go crazy over religion already had a through ticket to the asylum. Sooner or later, *something* would have sent them to their destination.

Prayer is a wonderful mental medicine. I have seen nervous people quieted by prayer when drugs would have had little or no effect. In this connection I am, of course, discussing prayer and religion from the *physician's* standpoint, solely with regard to the physical and psychical reactions. And from that standpoint I have come to look upon a sincere religious faith as a natural cure for nerves. So far as this curative rôle is concerned, the creed, faith, or religion is not as important as it is that the patient should wholly and sincerely believe in it. It is the patient's faith that cures, not the shade of doctrine to which he has given his spiritual allegiance.

I had an interesting case: A young Jewess who broke down and was given a month's vacation in which to rest and pull her nerves together. If she failed to do this, she would lose her job. When she asked me how long it would take for her to get on her feet again, I answered, "From



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six months to a year." At that, she declared that she might as well jump into the lake then, for she couldn't wait that long.

"What can you do for me in one month?" she demanded.

"Not much," I said. "I could start you on the path to self-control. But if you must be cured in a month, you'd better try religion. Have you got much religion?"

"No," she replied; "but if it will do any good, I'll get some."

Then she added despairingly, "But I can't. You're a Christian, and I'm a Jew-ess."

"You don't have to *change* your religion," I told her. "All you have to do is to get plenty of it, and use it faithfully."

I wrote out directions for her. She thought they were mighty queer ones; but as she was desperate and ready to grasp at a straw, she agreed to follow them. She was to go up to the attic, every morning and evening, kneel down facing in a certain direction, and pray. She might pray about anything she chose—except that she was never to pray for herself! She was to keep on praying for her friends and for other people, until she had shed copious tears. Then she could say "Amen," wipe her eyes, and go to work at something, if this was in the morning, or go to bed, if it was at night. She was to keep this up for two weeks, then report to me.

She did so; and in those two weeks she had had only one "blow-up," as she called it. At the end of her month's vacation, she went back to her job, practically cured. In six months' time, she gained fifteen pounds and looked like another person. She was rather cute about following my directions; for she later confessed that, while she confined her attic prayers to other people, she then went back to her room and prayed for herself all she wanted to.

PRAYER is a safety valve for the mind and the soul. If Christianity were practically applied to our everyday life, it would so purify and vitalize the race that at least one half of our sickness and sorrow would disappear.

But I must warn you against morbid methods in prayer. A meaningless recital of one's difficulties is simply a source of adverse auto-suggestion to the mind. The highest conception of prayer is that of silent spiritual communion between man and his Maker. Merely to kneel silently, in a room with closed doors and drawn blinds, possesses great therapeutic power.

Worship is getting out of fashion. Yet it renews the spirit as sleep renews the body. Faith is an actual remedy for those physical ills which result from doubt, depression, and discouragement. I make this statement as a physician and surgeon. Fear is the cause of the worry and nervousness which are responsible for most of the functional diseases. Faith—courage, confidence, optimism—is the only known cure for fear. It is back of every kind of mind cure. And religious faith is the *master* mind cure.

What I have said in these articles has been based on clinical facts taken from my own medical experience. But I beg now to be excused from speaking as a physician, and I ask the privilege of saying a few things for which I have no scientific evidence, but which I believe to be true, and which I recommend to your consideration.



I have explained here that a nervous patient can be cured by faith in *anything* which his mind accepts as having power to cure him. I could fill a book with cases I have cured with sugar pills—plus faith. The patients believed they were getting some wonderful medicine. In other words, they believed a lie. But the lie cured them because of their faith in it. And in just the same way you can be cured by your faith in any cult, or system, or religion, without regard to whether it is founded on truth or not.

But what I want to say, not as a physician but as a human being, is this: Let us call a halt on this business of starting new religions. Let us go back to our neglected Bibles, with their exceeding great and precious promises—to our Bibles, wherein it is written, "Casting all your care upon Him, for He careth for you." . . . "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." . . . "Who healeth all thy diseases."

I ask you to get a new vision of the Son of Man, going about, healing the sick and comforting the afflicted. If you are looking for a religious mind cure—and it is the only short cut to health that I know of—get a religion that will not only heal your body, but that promises to do something for your soul. And it is my personal belief that the religion which does this most effectively is the simple, old-fashioned Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

## His First Job Was to Win a Rough-and-Tumble Fight

(Continued from page 43)

poor rooms and fed poor food so often that he has ceased fussing—almost. But he does speak out when he gets good accommodations.

"He is entirely unlike the man we dread most—the man who, as one of the managers says, 'Tries to put on dog.' Not long ago, one of his kind came to the Hotel Rochester, and demanded a room which he had wired for. Fortunately, it was not engaged, and he got it. But in five minutes he was back at the desk. He didn't think it *was* the room he had wired for; he hadn't remembered it was like this. When the clerk convinced him that it was the identical room—well, he didn't like it anyhow! Could it be changed?"

"It was changed; and he entered room number two. A few minutes later he called the office; this room was too noisy. He moved to room number three, and in a short time he 'phoned down that this room was too hot. He got a fourth room, and the bath did not suit him. Not until he was installed in a *fifth* room did this gentleman settle down. And he was going to stay only overnight!"

"The man who travels with a chip on his shoulder is another difficult guest. He *hunts* for something to complain about. Usually he finds nothing until he gets to the dining-room, and then he will call the head waiter: 'I want to report my waiter. Look how he pulled this chair out! Why, if I had tried to sit on it, I should be on



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