

*Neuralgia and Kindred Diseases of the Nervous System.*  
By JOHN CHAPMAN, M.D. J. and A. Churchill.

In the January number of this Journal for 1872 Dr. Anstie's book on Neuralgia was reviewed, and now we have a larger volume on the same subject by Dr. Chapman. Dr. Anstie put forward the theory that the disease means weakness of the body, and especially anæmia and atrophy of certain nerve centres in the brain; Dr. Chapman thinks it has but little to do with weakened vitality, and results from hyperæmia of the nerve centres. Anstie says the general health of nearly all his patients was bad; Chapman avers that neuralgic patients "live on often to a ripe old age, the term of their existence not being appreciably shortened by the disease." Anstie thinks it is a very hereditary disease indeed; Chapman does not think it very often so transmitted. The former treats it by all sorts of nutritive and tonic means; the latter treats it by "spinal ice bags." But we shall allow Dr. Chapman to state his own theory on the whole subject.

*Summary Statement of the Author's Theory.*—The theory which I believe adequate to explain all the phenomena of neuralgia, which indicates a successful method of treating the disease, and the truth of which seems to be proved by the results of the practical application, may be stated in the following propositions:—

(1.) That pain, whatever may be its exciting cause, and whatever may be the structure in which it is felt, is, like ordinary sensation, a phenomenon of functional change in the sensory centre into which the affected nerve is rooted.

(2.) That the nature of the functional change denoted by ordinary sensation, and the nature of that denoted by pain, are essentially identical; the difference between the two being only a difference of degree of rapidity or intensity with which the change occurs.

(3.) That pain, like ordinary sensation, is of various degrees of intensity, and that whereas pain denotes a more rapid functional change in the affected sensory centre than occurs during ordinary sensation, the successively higher degrees of intensity of pain are expressive of successively higher degrees of rapidity of functional change in the functioning sensory centre.

(4.) That whereas an indispensable condition of those functional changes in the sensory centres which are comprised within what may be termed the ordinary sensory scale is a normal supply of arterial blood, in order to provide for those transformative changes which are at once chemical and nutritive, and which constitute the groundwork and possibility of functional change. So a supply of arterial blood greater than normal is an indispensable condition of those more

intense functional changes in the sensory nerve centre comprised within the wide range of what may be called the neuralgic, or, more generally, and perhaps more correctly, the *Algie* scale.

(5.) That pain is not necessarily a morbid phenomenon; that in its beginnings it is rarely, if ever, so in otherwise thoroughly healthy organisms; but that if, in such organisms, the operation of its exciting cause be long continued, it will induce in the affected sensory centre a habit of morbidly intense functional activity; so that at length, when that habit is generated, it will persist even after its cause is removed.

(6.) That a neuralgic habit thus generated may be transmitted hereditarily; and that, although it may remain latent during a considerable time, it may be suddenly lighted up by some exciting cause, so slight as to escape observation, and thus constitute in the second generation what is sometimes designated spontaneous or idiopathic neuralgia.

(7.) That the general doctrine expressed in the foregoing propositions in respect to pain is, *mutatis mutandis*, applicable to the several phenomena constituting the complications of neuralgia, which consist generally in disorderly actions of muscles, voluntary and involuntary; of morbidly excessive actions of glands, and of disorderly processes of local nutrition.

*Proof that the Algie Nerve Centre is Hyperæmic.*—The proposition that there is hyperæmia of the affected nerve centre in all cases in which pain is felt is, in my opinion, susceptible of decisive proof; for, as I shall hereafter show, by exerting a sedative influence over the spinal centre of a painful nerve, the pain may be abolished; whereas, by exerting a stimulant influence over the spinal centre of a nerve prone to neuralgia, but not actually painful at the time when the stimulus is applied, the pain may be reproduced.

Dr. Chapman gives a full description of the various forms of neuralgia, with their complications, and this part of his work implies a wide acquaintance with the authors who have gone before him. This we consider by far the best part of the book—if, indeed, it is not the only part that is of much value, if we except the description of the causes of the disease. These parts of the book will be extremely useful for reference to those who wish to see what has been said about the subject by previous authors. There is but little care exercised in determining the relative value of the opinions expressed by his authorities, and there are a singular confusion and jumbling of names and cases; all this under the appearance of system and order, and regular headings. It is, in fact, an ill-assorted compilation in which it is sometimes difficult to make out which author's sentiments is being

referred to, or to distinguish the opinions of his authorities from his own. It is ~~day-reading~~, and tends strongly to confusion of ideas if long continued.

He puts mental depression among the predisposing causes of the malady.

*Mental Depression* is itself a form of hyperæsthesia, a sort of generally diffused excess of feeling; it is, therefore, easily conceivable how thoroughly conducive it is to the production of that special and distinctly localized excess of feeling constituting neuralgia; and certain it is that of all the various causes of the malady which may be enumerated, there are few, if any, at once so potent, so frequently operative, and so difficult of detection and counteraction as that of Mental Depression.

“Psychical Influences” are included among the exciting causes.

*Psychical Influences.*—Still more subtle and mysterious even, and much more frequently operative than the agent just mentioned, as an exciting cause of neuralgia, is mental emotion, and especially when the disturbance is of a distressing kind. Though I cannot adduce any case in which any well defined and persistent neuralgia has been originated by the operation of psychical influences, I am disposed to believe that in a considerable proportion of those cases in which no assignable cause is seemingly discoverable, the real cause is psychical; and it is notorious that neuralgia as well as epileptic paroxysms are, in a vast number of cases, very often induced by mental disturbances in the form of vexation, irritation, or emotional depression; and in some cases even joyous excitement, when excessive, will act in the same way.

Moreover, a special and energetic concentration of thought on any particular part of the body is capable, in some cases, of exciting in it not only pain, but even symptoms of inflammation.

The physiological effects of undue “attention” serve to explain many curious phenomena exhibited in certain disturbed conditions of nerve centres which may be induced artificially, as in hypnotism, or arise from less obvious internal causes, as in hypochondriasis . . . . A woman is brought into close relation with some one suffering from cancer of the breast; the attention is directed involuntarily to the corresponding organ in herself; the part becomes painful, swelling even occurs, and what is termed neuralgia of the breast is set up. A case is related of a gentleman who lost an intimate friend from cancer of the œsophagus; the sufferings which he witnessed made a strong impression on his mind; he began himself to experience difficulty of swallowing, and ultimately died from the effects of spasmodic dysphagia.”

We would recommend Dr. Chapman to read Dr. Hack

Take's book on "The Influence of the Mind on the Body," before he publishes his second edition. He will find some more striking facts than those which he has mentioned.

Dr. Chapman devotes a long chapter to the demolition of Anstie's theory as to the cause and nature of neuralgia, and utterly refutes him to his own satisfaction. He then goes over all the drugs ever recommended for its treatment, quoting the opinions of the innumerable authorities who have written on the subject. The effect on the mind after reading this chapter is not any definite idea of what drugs and what modes of treatment are suitable for definite classes of cases, or that those therapeutical agencies have any sort of relation to special causes of the disease, or to special forms of the malady, but that if one had a case to treat, one might give arsenic, put on a blister, give opium or iron, or apply the constant current, and the result will be about the same, viz., failure to do any good. Dr. Chapman certainly admits that some drugs, such as bromide of potassium, do good in some cases, but they do so only temporarily, and by virtue of their power of "depressing the vitality of the algic centre." But at last, after wading through all this, we come to the safe, sure, and permanent cure, viz., "the neuro-dynamic treatment," and to the exposition of this the author warms up in earnest. This is merely one part of a system called by Dr. Chapman "neuro-dynamic medicine."

Dr. Chapman informs us that the cure (*i.e.* ice-bags) must be applied to the spinal cord as the *fons et origo mali*, to the part affected, and to the various complications of the disease; and that there is a "special neuro-dynamic treatment of certain kinds of neuralgia." He devotes a chapter to "the soothing and agreeable effects of the spinal ice-bag, and exemplifies the whole system of neuro-dynamic medicine" by "an analytic exposition of its effects," the last consisting of accounts of "cures" and letters from grateful patients of which this is a specimen taken at random: "The ice is beautiful. If you are lying in bed with the ice on, it's wonderful how warm your feet get. You don't notice it so much when you are up and about. My hands, too, are not so cold. I seem altogether very different." Dr. Chapman properly adds in this case, "Treatment as before."

The chief interest in such a book lies not in its contents, but in a psychological study of the author's mental condition. To say that he is utterly incapable of understanding the rudiments of what constitutes scientific proof is a mere

truism. To say that he is one of those who have abounded in our profession in all ages, doing no particular harm, gaining a temporary notoriety, is equally evident. But to understand the exact state of mind that is implied in knowing so much about a disease, taking so much trouble to hunt up every author on the subject, arguing in favour of a particular pathology so plausibly, seriously entering the lists with such men as Dr. Anstie and Dr. Radcliffe, brandishing his spear over an imaginary victory over them, and then finishing the performance with a grand proclamation that he has discovered a new "system" of medicine, in which hyperæmia of the spinal cord and sympathetic system is proved to be the origin of all disease, and ice-bags to cure it:—this, truly, is a study for the medico-psychologist.

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*What am I? A Popular Introduction to Mental Philosophy and Psychology.* By EDWARD W. COX, Sergeant-at-Law. Volume I. *The Mechanism of Man.* Longmans and Co., 1873.

No one can find fault with the candid and earnest manner in which Serjeant Cox enters upon the formidable task of supplying an appropriate answer to the momentous question, WHAT AM I? Believing that the small progress made by Psychology and Mental Philosophy, when other sciences have been advancing with giant strides, is the consequence of the obsolete method of investigation pursued by the few who have undertaken the study of them, he has set before himself the aim of treating Psychology in the same fashion as the Physical Sciences are treated—that is to say, "by the gathering together of *facts*, attested by good and efficient evidence, trying them by experiments carefully conducted, rejecting nothing on merely *à priori* argument, nor because of its apparent impossibility, or improbability, or seeming inconsistency with some fact or law already assumed to be true." This volume is the first instalment of his labours; it is devoted to a description of the human mechanism—Body, Mind, Soul—merely as it is constructed; and it is to be followed by a second volume, which will be devoted to "a description of the *machinery in action*, and will embrace all the phenomena of *intellectual existence*, as distinguished from pure organic life, viewing it in its normal and abnormal conditions, in health and in disease."