

**THE SYSTEMATIC  
TREATMENT OF  
NERVE PROSTRATION AND  
HYSTERIA**

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The Systematic Treatment of Nerve Prostration and Hysteria by W. S. Playfair

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**W. S. PLAYFAIR**

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*M. Goldsmith*

THE  
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BY

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# NERVE PROSTRATION AND HYSTERIA.

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## INTRODUCTORY.

I AM tempted to reprint in a collected form the articles contained in this pamphlet, in consequence of the numerous inquiries I am constantly receiving on the subject they treat of from practitioners in all parts of the country. The possibility of curing a class of case we all have been too much in the habit of abandoning in despair has evidently interested a large number of the profession; and I am not without hope that these papers may enable many to succeed, as I know that some have already done, in restoring to health—I might almost without exaggeration say to life—some of the miserable and helpless neurasthenic invalids who are so widely scattered over the country. No doubt the systematic treatment of

such cases involves an immense amount of trouble, and requires the training of a specially instructed staff of assistants. This latter difficulty, however, is not insuperable, and the striking results to be obtained fully repay the trouble required.

In order to facilitate this, I have added in an appendix a description of the method of performing the massage, which constitutes an important part of the treatment, written for me by one of my rubbers. The details of the massage are not, however, of such consequence, provided the operator produces in his patient the waste of tissue which is essential. Individually I never trouble myself as to *how* the massage is done; it is soon very easy to see if it is not done effectually; for if, after a sufficient time, the patient is not able to take and to assimilate the large amount of food given to her, most certainly the massage is at fault. It is to results, therefore, not to method, that one must look. It would be a great mistake, however, to suppose, as some seem to do, that the systematic treatment here advocated depends altogether, or even chiefly, on the massage. This is only one of the many agencies brought to bear on the patient, the combination of which produces so remarkable

an effect in properly selected cases. As a matter of fact, massage is nothing more than a mechanical tonic, and it is no more justifiable to talk of this system as a rubbing treatment, as I have heard it called, than it would be to talk of the occasional administration of a laxative for a definite object as a castor-oil treatment. It is simply a remedial agent, known from time immemorial, and much practised in the East at the present day, which has been strangely neglected amongst us, and the therapeutic powers of which no one can doubt; and to refuse to employ it, or to look on it with suspicion, is a species of red-tapeism which to me is altogether incomprehensible.

This leads me to say a word on the subject of isolation and removal from unwholesome domestic surroundings, which is even a more important matter in the successful carrying out of this method than effective massage. The difficulty and expense of this are so great that there is a strong temptation to modify it by treating the patient in her own house, or by admitting the occasional visit of a friend. The more I see of these cases the more satisfied I am that any relaxation of this rule is an absolute bar to success, and