

**SEXUAL NEURASTHENIA
[NERVOUS EXHAUSTION]. ITS
HYGIENE, CAUSES, SYMPTOMS,
AND TREATMENT, WITH A CHAPTER
ON DIET FOR THE NERVOUS**

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GEORGE M. BEARD & A. D. ROCKWELL

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SEXUAL NEURASTHENIA

[NERVOUS EXHAUSTION].

ITS HYGIENE, CAUSES, SYMPTOMS, AND TREATMENT,

WITH A CHAPTER ON

DIET FOR THE NERVOUS.

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[POSTHUMOUS MANUSCRIPT.]

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E. B. TREAT, N. Y.

PREFACE.

IN acceding to the request to edit the posthumous manuscript of my former associate, Dr. Beard, on "Sexual Neurasthenia," I have done little more than arrange the papers in proper order, and fill up gaps here and there where the continuity was found to be broken. This was rendered comparatively easy, since much of the clinical material which had served as the foundation upon which he built many of his theories, had for many years been our common study. As early as 1868, after we had enunciated the idea that electricity was a powerful constitutional tonic in its action, and not merely a stimulant and excitor of paralyzed muscles, and had demonstrated the methods by which such tonic effects were best obtained, many cases were sent to us, which were then vaguely classed as general debility, hypochondria, or hysteria. Many of these cases, which had resisted all other forms of treatment, yielded with more or less rapidity to some one of the various methods of electriza-

tion, and first called our attention to the fact that the varied symptoms which went to make up the conditions so lightly spoken of as nervous prostration—sexual debility, hypochondria, and hysteria—had a far deeper origin and meaning than was generally supposed. With his keen powers of analysis, Dr. Beard was active in formulating the thousand and one symptoms constantly detailed, and gave them, as it were, a “local habitation and a name.”

To him more than to any other is due the credit of having first described, under the head of “Neurasthenia,” a congeries of symptoms, which has greatly simplified the treatment of such cases, and ought to do much toward the relief of a large class of suffering humanity.

Opinions will differ as to the value of some of his suggestions and conclusions upon this as well as upon many other themes with which his thought and pen were constantly busy, but that most of them were original, stamped with his own individuality, and presented in such a clear and lively way as to compel attention, all must agree. The section devoted to the perplexing subject of the physics of neurasthenia is handled with especial vigor and originality. It

will be found by every physician of large experience who has a well-kept record of cases, that those who have suffered from the effects of excessive dissipation, and especially along the line of sexual gratification, may be roughly divided into two classes: First, those whose disease was local and structural; second, those who suffered from general functional nervous disturbance; and it will be further found that the patients whose disease was local and structural, were most frequently from among the strong and non-nervous, while those whose disease was of a functional and general character were of the highly sensitive and nervous class. From this it is inferred that in the strong, functional excess tends to produce local structural disease, and in the weak and nervous, general functional nervous disease. The philosophy of this suggestion, based on the great resistance to molecular changes of the lowly evolved non-nervous organization, is discussed by the author in some detail and with much clearness. A notable characteristic of Dr. Beard's therapeutics, as illustrated in this and other works by him, was the number and variety of the measures prescribed, either alone or in combination.

He may have carried this to an extreme ; but that he thoroughly believed in the efficacy of heroic methods was evidenced by his vigorous and unsparing self-treatment at various periods of his life, and especially in the earlier part of his last illness. His opinions were fearlessly as well as honestly given, and that he was in purity of thought and character, as well as through large experience, peculiarly fitted for the consideration of the delicate but important topics herein discussed, those who knew him best fully appreciate.

A. D. ROCKWELL, M.D.

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