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Weir Mitchell

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I have just walked home with Weir Mitchell from the Biological Club at Wm. Sellers and he told me on the way of his discovery if one may call it of the rest treatment:

About 12 14 years ago a Mrs. S from Bangor Maine came to consult me at the advice of a mutual friend. She was a bright intelligent woman who had as a girl attended in Boston a school in which Agassez and his wife were interested and had passed through the four years curriculum in three years. She then had married and within as short a time as was possible ~~by law~~, had had four children with the result of total break down, body and mind. Boston and New York physicians were tried for a year; then she went abroad and in London and Paris saw the most eminent consultants and spent months at various spas. But in vain, she returned a confirmed invalid. When seen she was a woman of 5ft. 8. emaciated, nervous, unable to digest any food unless she lay upon her back with the eyes shut, and full of whims and fancies. Standing at the foot of her bed, M. felt that every suggestion he had to make as to treatment had been forestalled. Every physician had urged to take exercise, to keep on her feet, to get about and she felt herself that this was the best. M. on the inspiration of the moment, told her to remain in bed. She took food better but found that on attempting to get up she was so weak that she could scarcely stand from lack of exerckse. M. says he felt that he had run up against a stone wall. About this time he had seen on several occasions a quack named Lyons, who professed to cure, by passes and rubbings, ~~relieve~~ a confirmed ataxic in such a way that he could get about for an hour or more at a time. The idea occurred to him to substitute for exercise the movements of the muscles caused by rubbings and friction and after giving to a Miss H. (who subsequently went upon the stage) several lessons he instructed M. to rub Mrs. S. for so long each day. The improvement began to be noticed and to the rubbing was added the electrical etimulation of the muscle also substituee for the active movement. The food was taken more freely ~~she gained~~ in flesh and gradually recovered and was sent to her home in Bangor perfectly well. The improvement persisted and she has since borne several ^{more} children and has been the ^{Soul} of many enterprises in her native town. An incident ~~post-partum~~ so to speak was a lttter received from Miss S's Mother a wealthy N.E. woman full of 'isms, etc. a speaker at temperance meetings, U.S.A. She wrote to Dr. M. to say that bodily comfort and ease, health and enjoyment might be dearly bought if at the price of eternal peace. That he had recommended her daughter to take champagne and to have a maid to assist in her toilette. The former she considered not only un-necessary but hurtful, the latter quite superflous as any well instructed New England husband was quite capable of helping his wife in her toilette.

W. O.