

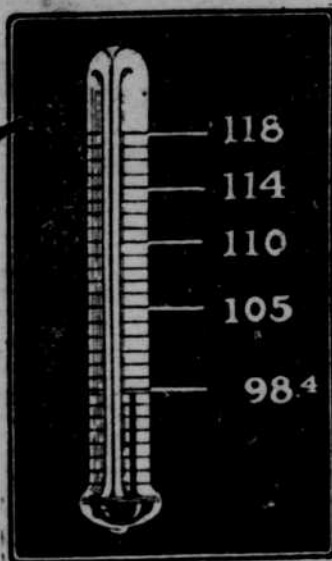
How Evelyn Fooled the Doctor With Her Hot Water Bag



Science Explains Why This Perfectly Healthy Girl Got Such Great Satisfaction Out of Pretending She Was Burning Up With a Temperature of 118--Six Degrees Higher Than Ever Before Recorded

What the doctor saw when he peeked through the keyhole of Evelyn's bedroom.

Delevant



The normal temperature of the mouth in health is 98.4 degrees. In disease it rarely goes above 105, except in some infectious fevers, when 110 is sometimes reached, and in sunstroke, when a temperature of 114 has been recorded. But a patient can live only a few hours with a temperature exceeding 105.



Mary McDonald, whose stories of ghosts in her Nova Scotia home proved to be all her imagination.

By I. L. NASCHER, M. D.

When Evelyn Lyons of Escanaba, Mich., slyly removed the clinical thermometer from her mouth, placed it on a little hot water bag hidden under her blanket, then replaced it in her mouth, she did more than fool her doctor. The thermometer registered 118 degrees, and she created a world-wide sensation.

She was a hysterical girl who wanted sympathy and attention, and when she found that she gained them through this deception she kept it up until it was exposed.

We all have met persons, women and girls and sometimes men, who are forever talking about their ills and ailments. They regard these as the most important things in their lives.

These persons are extremely selfish. They constantly want sympathy and attention and the more they get the more they want. To secure sympathy they will invent all sorts of complaints and will even submit to painful operations.

In Evelyn Lyons' case she had gone with one complaint or another to every one of Escanaba's 15 physicians and to physicians elsewhere. At one time she inserted a piece of rubber catheter into the bladder and went to a hospital; had her appendix removed in Escanaba and part of her thyroid gland removed in Chicago, deceiving physicians everywhere by fictitious or exaggerated symptoms.

As she had been doing this for years she gained a smattering of medical knowledge and of nursing and therefore was able to avoid the mistakes usually made by such tricksters. But even the cleverest of frauds sooner or latter over-reach themselves.

One day Evelyn complained of a pain in her back and her mother put her to bed and applied a little hot water bag. But she continued to complain of pain and finally the doctor was called in. She knew that the doctor would not believe her story unless she had an elevation of temperature. When he put the clinical thermometer in her mouth she took advantage of a moment's inattention on his part to remove it, place it on her little hot water bag and then replace it in her mouth.

When the doctor looked at the thermometer it stood at 108 degrees. The ordinary temperature of the mouth in health is 98.4 degrees with slight variations during the day. In disease the temperature rises, but rarely goes above 105 degrees except in sunstroke, in which a temperature of 114 degrees has been reached, and in some of the infectious fevers when tempera-

tures ranging as high as 110 degrees have been found. While there is a record of the survival of a patient whose temperature reached 112 degrees and remained there a few minutes, a prolonged temperature of even 106 degrees is usually fatal within a few hours.

The ordinary clinical thermometer registers up to 110 degrees and the column of mercury remains at the highest point until it is shaken down.

When Evelyn's doctor found a temperature of 108 degrees he tried it again with another thermometer. This time it recorded 110 degrees, the limit of the scale.

A chemical thermometer was brought and a temperature of 114 degrees was recorded. The city authorities were notified and she was forcibly removed to a hospital. On admission a temperature of 101.4 degrees was found, but her temperature the next two days was normal and she was discharged.

When Evelyn found she had become famous as the girl with the highest temperature on record, she wanted to live up to her reputation. She insisted upon remaining in bed and continued to complain of the pains in her back for which her mother gave her the hot water bag. So long as she remained in bed her temperature continued high, going up on one occasion to 118 degrees.

Doctors usually allow a little leeway both for exaggeration and for the minimizing of symptoms by the patient, but they believe the thermometer. The patient may lie but the thermometer is expected to tell the truth. But when several thermometers keep on recording temperatures ranging from 108 to 118 degrees and the patient is otherwise comparatively well, there is either something radically wrong with the patient or some deception is being practiced.

The Journal of the American Medical Association sent two investigators to Escanaba. They

found the girl's body temperature normal but her mouth temperature high. They detected her trying to shake the thermometer while removing it from her mouth, so that it would register higher. If this failed she broke the thermometer.

After several unsatisfactory tests the investigators left the room while she had the thermometer in her mouth, closed the door behind them and watched her through the keyhole. And this is what they saw:

As soon as Evelyn saw the door close she sat up in bed. Reaching under the bed clothes, she produced a very small rubber hot water bag, and, taking the thermometer from her mouth, she pressed it against the bag. Then she hid the bag under the blankets, put the thermometer back in her mouth and disposed herself in bed just as she had been when the investigators left her.

When they returned to the room the mercury in the thermometer was as high as it can go. And no wonder, for that little rubber bag which they now made Evelyn produce was full of very hot water.

Hysterical malingers, as tricksters like this are known, seek sympathy and notoriety, and will do almost anything to secure them. Their emotions overwhelm their reason and judgment, and yet they often exhibit unbelievable shrewdness and cunning in their efforts to deceive. In some cases they will submit to painful tests and operations, to agonizing contortions, even to self-mutilation.

Hysteria is a well recognized mental disease which gives a number of mental and physical symptoms, increased, diminished or perverted sensations, motions, etc. Malingering is one of the constant symptoms of hysteria.

Most malingering has, however, a clear, rational purpose and is not



Evelyn Lyons, who created a world-wide sensation by the trick she played on doctors, nurses and her anxious mother.

due to mental aberration. In most cases the purpose is either to escape punishment, to avoid conscription or some other duty, to obtain financial benefit or secure release from prison or asylum or from military service. Malingers generally defeat themselves by overacting or by lack of preparations or instruction.

A poor tailor confined in a New York prison ate soap for a few weeks and made himself so ill that a petition praying for permission "to die at home," was followed by a speedy pardon. The man recovered a few days after his release.

In the conscription examinations in Europe and in the draft examinations in this country when we entered the war, malingering was frequent.

At the draft board where the writer was one of the medical examiners poor vision malingers were generally detected by means of glasses of different strength and color. Those whose poor vision was deliberately produced by drugs which dilated or contracted the pupils, were cured when drugs having the opposite effect were used. If this did not cure them the threat of hospital treatment and operation usually had the desired effect.

Some of those who pretended they could not hear instinctively turned around when a silver quarter was dropped behind them on the stone steps down which they were going. Some were found keeping time with their feet to the distant music of a band.

One man who claimed to have heart disease had a very rapid-thumping heart. This usually occurs during or immediately after active, strenuous exercise, especially in one who has done much athletic work. He said he was not an athlete and had not done any heavy work or active exercise.

In an hour his heart beat was nearly normal, and an hour later it was perfectly normal. He had taken a drug just before the examination which produced the rapid thumping heart.

There are two forms of malingering diseases: Fictitious or feigned, in which the individual complains of symptoms which do not exist, and fictitious or artificial diseases in which a disease or injury is deliberately produced or made worse. The most difficult to detect is the feigned disease in which pain is the only symptom, for the doctor cannot positively disprove the existence of pain.

Usually the malingering betrays himself when he believes that he is unobserved, doing things then which he could not do while being examined and which would be impossible if the degree of pain complained of really existed.

A woman sued a street railway company for injuries received in a fall from a broken car step. At the medical examination the next day she gave evidence of great suffering, screaming when her limbs were moved. Even slight

Turn to Page Eight.