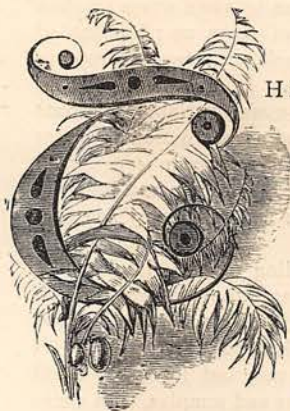


HEADACHES AND HOW TO CURE THEM.

BY A FAMILY DOCTOR.



HERE is, perhaps, no class of sufferers for whom one ought to have such genuine sympathy, as for those who are tormented with severe and constantly recurring headaches. Nor should the fact that, in a large number of cases, the headaches are the result of indiscretion, or disobedience to the laws of nature, place them beyond the pale of our compassion.

Now, in order that this paper may be of some practical utility, I must begin by saying that, independent of headaches from actual organic disease of the brain or its membranes, of which at present I shall say nothing, there are at least four distinct classes of headaches, the symptoms of which differ, and also the treatment. It will be necessary for the reader, therefore, if seeking relief, to study those symptoms, and see how far they accord with the pains and sensations which he himself undergoes when ill. We have first and foremost the commonest class of all—namely, headaches arising from derangement of the digestive organs; next come headaches dependent on the state of the blood or circulation; then those arising from disorder of the nervous system; and, lastly, gouty or rheumatic headaches. The reader, however, will not always find the symptoms of any one class exactly suitable to his case, for a headache may often depend upon several different causes. Constitution and idiosyncrasy have much to do with these complaints, as well as our general habits of life. Given one case in point: I am writing these lines at the sea-side; on the very next balcony, in the easiest of easy chairs, lolls delicate Lady D—. Now delicate Lady D— is a great sufferer from what might be termed fashionable headache, and she has come down here from London for the sake of change of air. Lady D— is at this moment reading one of the latest novels. It is evening now, and what has she been doing all day? Bending almost steadily over her embroidery frame, and when tired taking a rest on the sofa. One little drive she has had, but exercise—no. Ah! but I am told she is too delicate to take exercise. In one sense assuredly she is; and I would no more think of ordering her to take a five-mile walk along the sea-beach, than I would of prescribing for her a beef-steak and potatoes; but if she would lock up that absorbing embroidery business, and pitch that novel away, and go out and force herself to take exercise, *little by little*, the five-mile walk would soon become a daily pleasure, and a good substantial meal a necessity; and away would fly the congestive headache, and so there would be no more need for cups of strong tea, or ether, or sal volatile itself. So book-worm boys and girls often

suffer from headaches, which enfeeble their frames for ever. Parents are proud to see their children fond of study, and this is natural; but the old saying of “all work and no play” should never be forgotten, if fathers and mothers care for the future health and happiness of their children.

Those headaches which depend upon a disordered state of the digestive organs are extremely common, for the simple reason that there is no organ of the body so grossly ill-treated as the stomach. Do you know that that little instrument, the tongue, is a certain indicator of the state of the stomach? As the tongue, so the stomach—whether furred or clean. Change in the state of the weather often, no doubt, produces headaches in those who are delicate, but the weather is too often blamed when the digestive organs alone are in fault. Intemperance in eating and drinking is the rock on which thousands upon thousands of valuable lives are annually sacrificed in this country, while a return to temperance in these respects very often acts like a charm, and restores an otherwise miserable being to a state of health, happiness, and contentment.

These headaches are characterised by a feeling of weight in the head, the patient is dull and inactive, and the tongue is white in the centre. Now, as indigestion or an overloaded stomach acts thus on the brain, so, on the other hand, does worry of mind, over-study, or anxiety weaken the digestion, so that the quantity of food taken harmlessly while one is free from care and happy, is quite enough to produce severe headache when the reverse is the case. Find the moral for yourself, please. People who do not take much exercise, whose bowels are often confined, are apt to suffer from *sick headache*, if excess in eating has been indulged in, or if food such as pastry, cheese, fat pork, or indeed anything likely to disagree has been eaten.

Mostly in the morning they begin; there is a bad taste in the mouth, and a painful dull sensation in the head, presently merging into severe pain across the brow, or on one side. All the patient seems to want is to be left alone, or he may ask for stimulants, expecting relief therefrom. There is nausea which may keep on all day without actual vomiting, or sickness comes on with severe retching, which generally brings relief; or bilious vomiting may supervene, and the distress become very great, the acts of vomiting utterly wearing out the patient at last till he sinks to sleep exhausted. And this kind of headache is apt to recur at intervals of weeks.

The treatment, if the headache is caused by over-eating and comes on soon after food, consists in giving an emetic, drinking plentifully of warm camomile-tea till it acts, then having a rest, the forehead being bathed with some evaporating lotion, as eau-de-Cologne or lavender-water. If the headache comes on later, a draught of rhubarb and senna will afford relief, if taken first thing in the morning: two or three drams of rhubarb tincture, with an ounce of infusion of senna, and

thirty drops to a dram of sal volatile. Avoid stimulants. A dinner-pill of rhubarb and aloes in tonic doses, may prevent a headache of this kind. But you want permanent relief. Attend, then, to regulation of diet, attend to the bowels, to exercise, and above all to diet. Be under, but never over, the mark in eating, and never let the stomach be too long empty. Suppers and "night-caps," vinous I mean, should be avoided. Aperients are only to be used when regular exercise fails to keep the system open. As a rule, it is as well to leave the choice of an aperient to your own medical man.

The bilious headache is a most distressing complaint. A general bilious state of the system is common to those who do not lead regular lives, especially if they indulge too much in wine. The skin of such is sallow; they suffer from flatulence and constipation, and at times a pain in the right shoulder. The headache which comes on in the morning is most severe; any attempt to get up increases it, or brings on vomiting. The brow aches the most, and the eyes; nausea, and a bitter taste in the mouth, with a brown furred tongue, point significantly to the fact that bile is in the blood to too great an extent. In this case all appetite is lost, and may continue so for days. The nights are rendered restless by dreadful dreams, and general despondency, gloom, and silly fears render the patient wretched indeed. Another kind of bilious headache is caused by over-secretion of bile. Here there is what is usually called a splitting headache, and the same nausea and bitter taste in the mouth will be found here as in the other. There is also giddiness. It is more transient, however, than the other, and when it ends in vomiting generally works its own cure.

Now persons addicted to these headaches cannot be too careful in regulating their diet. Over-indulgence, or indulgence in indigestible or too rich food, must be strictly avoided. Undue excitement should also be shunned, as well as exposure to sudden heats or chills. An emetic will often cut short an attack. Dinneford's solution of magnesia I have found very valuable as a draught in mild cases, along with a little tincture of ginger and a table-spoonful of brandy. When much bile is in the system, as shown by the yellow eye, the bitter tongue, and despondency, a blue pill or a pill of podophyllin should be taken at night, and followed up next morning by a claret-glassful of German Pullna water. With this a dose of taraxacum-juice will do good; both to be taken an hour before breakfast. The diet should contain a due proportion of vegetables, and be not over-stimulating. Spirits do harm. The wine taken should be of the lightest description.

Moderate exercise is very beneficial; the best of flannel ought to be worn next the skin, and a bath of some kind used daily to secure the free action of the perspiratory glands.

In sick headache, if the vomiting is very distressing, a mustard poultice may be needed. It can, at least, do no harm. Soda-water, with a few drops of laudanum and tincture of ginger, will help to check it, or a few drops of hydrocyanic acid, which must be prescribed by a medical man. The great thing is to

keep the patient quiet, and to get the bowels to act, as soon as medicine can be borne, by some warm alkaline aperient, as the decoction of aloes, co.; infusion of gentian, co.; six drams of each, with twelve drops of liquor potassæ added thereto.

Aloes pills should form the usual aperient for persons subject to sick headache; and as prevention is better than cure, and warning of its approach is generally given, let them be taken the night before, and followed up with Pullna water in the morning—only see that the latter is genuine.

Among headaches depending on the circulation, I may mention the *plethoric* and the *congestive*. The former afflicts persons who are of too full a habit, and generally addicted to the pleasures of the table. It may be either occasional or may last for days—a full throbbing headache in brows and temples, with occasional dizziness, a sense of falling backwards even in sleep (which latter is heavy, deep, and unrefreshing), and sometimes mistiness of sight. The patient's bowels are generally confined, and his breathing is short if he makes any exertion. Stooping usually causes dizziness.

This is a very distressing state of affairs, and usually brought about from high living, indolence, want of exercise, or too much sleep and clothing.

The treatment is simple enough if the patient will only do as he is told. A flesh diet should be avoided as much as possible. Meat once a day, and a dinner of fish as often as possible, ought to be the rule, and the diet ought to be restricted in quantity. The bed ought to be hard, and not too warm, the pillow high, and the room airy. Too much sleep may not be indulged in, but exercise is incumbent on the patient. The head may be well bathed at night, and if the skin be hot and dry, a few grains of Dover's powder at bed-time will stimulate the skin and induce sleep.

Congestive headaches are also caused by too much blood in the brain; but instead of the quantity of blood in the body altogether being too great, there is here a want of tone in the whole system, circulatory and otherwise. The sufferer is pale, rather feeble and nervous; either the blood is not propelled with sufficient force, or, through weakness of the heart—which, being a muscle, partakes of the general feebleness of the constitution—is not received back again quickly enough from the brain capillaries, being dammed up there, so to speak. There may be actual pain, or there may be merely a fulness felt in the head and eyes, with irritability of temper.

People afflicted thus should observe the same general rules of living as those given for the headache of plethora, only in this case a meat dinner is absolutely necessary, with a glass or two of good Burton or Bass, or instead a glass of generous wine. No excess, however, can be borne.

An occasional saline aperient does great good in these cases, and I find nothing answer better than Pullna water. However, there being a want of tone in the system, in addition to plenty of exercise in the open air, cheerful society, &c., an iron tonic had better be taken—either the muriated tincture of iron (fifteen drops three times a day—this latter being often in-

valuable to females about the change of life) or the saccharated carbonate of iron.

Nervous headaches are more common to females than males. They usually come on quickly, and leave as suddenly, the pain being sharp and darting, rendering the patient irritable, or dull and languid. Persons often troubled with these headaches have generally a careworn, jaded appearance; are fickle in temper, easily cast down or elevated, and extremely sensitive.

Pain of a severe nature confined to one particular spot, called *Clavus hystericus*, or nail in the brow, is common among weakly, nervous girls.

Brow-ache, where one half of the head only is affected, is another distressing form of nervous headache. It is more common in low-lying marshy places, and is apt to assume a periodic type; or it may be caused by cold, or arise from a decayed tooth. If from the latter cause, the tooth must be removed. A dose of sal volatile (forty drops), with two or three grains of quinine, may be tried, and an application of tincture of belladonna, aconite, and chloroform painted gently over the painful nerves. It will be well to open the bowels by salines. A pill of phosphate of zinc, combined with the same quantity of extract of gentian, and one-fourth of the extract of nux vomica, should be persevered in for several weeks, to prevent recurrence. In the ordinary nervous headache proceeding from weakness or functional derangement, anodyne stimulants will be required to give relief. A dose of the tincture of hyoscyamus with a little spirits of chloroform, administered in camphor-water, will tend to ease the pain in most cases.

Nervous or hysterical people liable to headaches should live very regularly; their food should be of the simplest kind, compound dishes being avoided, as well

as large draughts of warm tea, &c. Bitter beer may be drunk *with meals*, or light wines.

The exhibition of a tonic will in all cases be necessary, but the benefit derived therefrom will greatly depend upon the manner of its administration. It is better to begin by giving a dose of aperient medicine, and then to resort to the mildest tonics first, such as gentian and orange, going gradually on to the more powerful as the patient feels himself getting stronger.

The nitro-hydrochloric acid tonic combined with bitters will be found very serviceable, and, where there is much debility, quinine, or quinine and iron.

Tonics should not be continued longer than a fortnight without intermission or change. Patients ought always to bear in mind, however, that without a properly regulated diet, and attention to the general rules of health, medicine is of little avail.

Rheumatic headaches are generally the result of a chill or check to the perspiration. They are characterised by a dull aching pain, usually in the brow, the temples, the back of the head, or jaws, which often extends to the neck and shoulders. There is tenderness on pressure, and a feeling as if a blow had been received.

In cases of this kind, the diet is of great importance. It must consist principally of vegetables, and spirits and beer are to be prohibited. The body must never be exposed to damp or cold. Stimulating liniments are to be applied to the seat of pain, and counter-irritation by mustard to the nape of the neck. The compound colycinth pill, with the addition of a little colchicum, should be taken at night, followed up by a saline draught containing potash in the morning.

Change of air and scene, a residence by the sea, and the careful use of the salt-water bath, prove beneficial in nearly all cases of chronic headache.



A BOATING-SONG.

A FULL moon lights our rock-bound bay—
 Push off, push off, and let's away,
 And from our oars the glitt'ring spray,
 Like fairy jewels fling.
 A paper craft might safely ride
 Upon this gently flowing tide;
 Come then, and as we deftly glide
 Upon our way we'll sing:
 Softly, slowly dip the oar
 To a tuneful melodie;
 For awhile we quit the shore,
 Wanderers o'er the moonlit sea.

Oh! banish every sense of fear,
 When stars so bright, in heavens so clear,
 Like very angels' eyes appear,
 Filled with eternal love;
 For promises to us they make
 That stormy winds shall not awake,
 Nor other evil overtake
 Our bark where'er we rove.
 Then softly, slowly dip the oar
 To a tuneful melodie;
 For awhile we quit the shore,
 Wanderers o'er the moonlit sea.