

## ON SOME AILMENTS INCIDENTAL TO THE SPRING TIME.

BY A FAMILY DOCTOR.



SI write, although it is nearly the end of January, spring time seems very far ahead indeed; but spring will come, and as you read these lines in all probability it has come, and if so a few words on the more common ailments, incidental to this usually trying season, will hardly be out of place. For further advice, I beg to refer the reader to my paper in the March number of the Magazine for 1877.

Unfortunately, very few people in this country require to be told what the symptoms of cold in the head are. The danger lies in the fact that we get so familiarised with the ailment, that we are generally more inclined to let it get better in its own time and way, than to do anything to get rid of it. This is a pity, for hereby the seeds of incurable winter cough are often sown, to say nothing of that most insidious and surely fatal disease—phthisis, or consumption. I

would here, therefore, endeavour earnestly to impress upon my readers the injudiciousness of neglecting a simple cold, whether in the head or in the chest. If in the latter, in addition to other remedies, the feet should be bathed in hot water at night, and a large mustard plaster put for half an hour or twenty minutes on the chest. The mustard-leaf, to be obtained at any chemist's, is a more cleanly application, and acts more speedily. A little turpentine poured upon a piece of flannel, which has just been wrung out of very hot water, and rubbed upon the chest before the fire, is a good old-fashioned rubefacient deserving of trial. There is no better way of encouraging free diaphoresis, or to put it in more simple language, of obtaining a good perspiration, so useful in the first stage of common colds, than the portable Turkish bath. Trisnitrate of bismuth with powdered gum arabic, as a snuff, often, if not indeed always, acts like a charm. It may be freely used. A capital soothing stimulant is thus composed:—Put one dram of the sesqui-carbonate of ammonia, and one fluid dram of the solution of the muriate of morphia, into ten ounces of the milk of almonds, and take as a dose two table-spoonfuls three times a day; and at night, especially if there be any feverish symptoms, two or three table-spoonfuls of the liquor of the acetate of ammonia, before going to bed, and lie under one or two extra blankets. These two simple yet invaluable medicines ought to find a place in every household. Two days

will be long enough to take the white mixture, and on the evening of the second take a compound colocynth pill, and a Seidlitz powder in the morning, going about your avocations as usual, but wrapping well up. People who are subject to colds should take especial care of themselves during any sudden change in the wind and weather, as from north to south, frost to thaw, or *vice versa*.

Hay asthma is in its symptoms akin to a common cold, but as it is more a disorder of early summer than spring, and brought about by a specific cause, I must leave the consideration of it to a future day, merely mentioning here that a large dose or two of quinine at its commencement has often done much good. Some young people are much troubled in the spring months with what is known as stye in the eye. In such cases the blood is seldom pure, and the diet should be carefully regulated, the bowels freely opened once or twice, either by saline aperients or by the sulphur and cream of tartar electuary, and a short course of tonics taken, of which probably the citrate of iron and quinine, in five-grain doses, is the best. The stye itself should not be tampered with, further than to bathe it frequently in hot water mixed with milk, touching it with cold cream at night, and applying a nice soft bread poultice.

Several people have accused me in a friendly way of neglecting, in my Family Doctor articles, the ailments of children and old people. I plead guilty, but have a paper in preparation on some of the diseases incidental to childhood, and another on the ailments of the aged, which I trust will do good. I must here, however, take notice of one disease to which many of our little friends are subject at this time of the year—I mean the mumps. This is not a very dangerous disease, and can usually be treated at home, unless the inflammation shifts its quarters and attacks the breasts or the brain. The ailment consists of a swelling of the gland which we call the parotid, which lies in the cheek beneath the ear, but the inflammation generally extends also to the glands situated beneath the lower jaw. It is ushered in with some degree of fever, is at its worst about the fourth day, and rarely runs on to suppuration. The treatment is simplicity itself, consisting as it does of gentle laxatives, a non-stimulating or milk diet, confinement to the house, to prevent risk from exposure to cold and damp; a little fever mixture, such as a tea-spoonful of the acetate of ammonia, with a few drops of sweet nitre in a little water four times a day, and the frequent application of warm fomentations, and the wearing round the neck of a poultice, or simply a roll or two of soft flannel.

Another spring visitor to our hospitable shores, and one who counts his victims by the thousand, is the quinsy. This troublesome and painful disorder requires something more than a passing notice.

Like nearly all inflammations, quinsy, the seat of whose attack is one or both tonsils, is generally ushered in with some degree of fever and rigour or chill. The patient feels all over ill, and as if buckets of water were being poured down his back. When the disease is fairly established, especially if the case be a severe one, the condition of the patient is painful in the extreme. The tonsils are swollen and covered with creamy mucus, the tongue is furred and bitter to the taste, there is a constant discharge of viscid saliva which gives additional pain to expectorate. No solids can be swallowed, and water returns through the nose. Thin arrowroot, by the way, or well-boiled sago pudding is more easily got down. The nights too are sleepless, the sufferer being often afraid to fall asleep, even if he could, for fear of suffocation. Now quinsy may in a few days end in resolution—get better, that is—or it may run on to the formation of matter, when, on the tonsils breaking, almost immediate relief is the result. Fits of shaking and shivering generally herald the formation of pus. The treatment of quinsy is directed, at first, to endeavours at the resolution of the forming abscess. With this end the patient should stop in bed and have a fire in his room, and as the air should be rather moist, the use of the bronchitis kettle will be highly beneficial. A dose of Epsom salts with a little senna should be taken to begin with, and hot fomentations are to be applied externally, followed by a nice, large, warm, soothing poultice of linseed meal, the painful portion of the neck having previously been well smeared with the extract of belladonna, softened with a little brandy. If the patient possesses an inhaler, or can buy or borrow one, he will find much relief from inhaling steam medicated with laudanum, say three drams to half a pint of hot water. A gargle may also be used, and I know of nothing better than three drams each of laudanum and the tincture of belladonna added to ten ounces of camphor water. I am somewhat chary in advising you to use leeches, though I have often seen their use followed by immediate relief and abatement of all the symptoms. The food should be nourishing, but non-stimulating—milk puddings, eggs, good broth, and jellies. If suppuration has taken place, with a plentiful discharge of matter, you must then nurse and feed the sufferer well, and quinine will then come in handy, nor will a generous glass of port wine do harm. Persons who have once had a severe attack of quinsy should take great care how they expose themselves to damp, or to cold easterly winds, for the disease is very apt to recur.

Should any enlargement of the tonsil remain, good may result from sea-air and bathing, and the use of the light brown cod-liver oil, or the emulsion of the oil with quinine and phosphates, which is beautifully prepared by some chemists.

There is one other disease far too common in the spring months, to which I wish in a few words to call attention. I refer to erysipelas, generally called the rose. Many, I have no doubt, are already familiar with its symptoms and appearance. There are two kinds of erysipelas, differing merely in cause—namely,

that called *traumatic*, which begins and spreads from the wound or seat of injury; and the idiopathic erysipelas, or that which has been preceded by no previous disease. The latter generally has its seat in the face. But in whatsoever way it may be brought on, erysipelas is always a very dangerous and painful disease. It is very infectious, too, and it is not like some skin eruptions such as small-pox, for one attack does not prevent the possibility of the disease breaking out again in the same person, rather the reverse in fact. Idiopathic erysipelas is generally, in my opinion, brought on by a combination of causes, such as disregard of the simple and easily learnt laws of health and sanitation, foul air, uncleanly habits, stuffy rooms, &c., and the disorder proves more rapidly dangerous and even fatal to those who are addicted to habits of intemperance.

Erysipelas in the face is generally ushered in by a few days' preliminary illness, feverish feelings, chilliness and perhaps distinct rigors, probably even high fever with delirium characteristic of the mind and frame of the patient. The redness usually commences on the side of the nose, and the swelling extends to the lips, and cheeks, and eyelids, which become closed, all trace of the features being lost. It may even extend to the neck and shoulders, and in some fatal cases to the brain itself. Of course there is the usual concomitant fever, with its high pulse, furred tongue, and heated skin. In favourable cases, the swelling dies away as well as the redness in from three to four days, and the skin then peels off, but in more extreme cases sloughing and mortification set in.

No attempt should be made to cut short the disease; it ought to be guided rather to a safe termination. The treatment resolves itself very simply into the administration of proper food, the prescribing of medicines of proved value, and the local applications. You must remember that erysipelas is a weakening, pulling-down disorder, therefore, although you must give aperients at the commencement, let them be gentle ones; the bowels may be emptied by an enema, and afterwards a little castor oil given. The best diet is sago boiled in milk, or arrow-root, light puddings, plenty of milk, and occasionally an egg beaten up in it and nicely flavoured. You must also give good port wine, from the very beginning, say three glasses during the day, or better still, six half-glasses. The administration of the tincture of perchloride of iron (generally called steel drops) has a very marked effect for good in cases of erysipelas. Give it in doses of half a dram every three hours.

Hot fomentations of poppy-heads make about the best local application I can recommend for popular use, but medical men use many others. To prevent the spread of the disease over the adjoining integuments, draw a boundary line with a stick of nitrate of silver all around the inflamed portions of the skin. This will help to localise it.

When the inflammation is gone, good nourishing food, with Peruvian bark, or quinine, and iron will be required to restore the system to its former, or rather more than its former vigour.