

## HAY ASTHMA: ITS RATIONAL TREATMENT.

BY A FAMILY DOCTOR.



THE subject of my present paper is one to which, fortunately for themselves, the majority of our readers will attach but little interest. There are, however, thousands, not only in these islands, but in almost every country in the world, where English is spoken, or CASSELL'S MAGAZINE read, who suffer from—nay, but are martyrs to the ailment I am going to discuss.

First, then, regarding the name and synonyms that belong to this strange complaint.

It is called Hay Asthma, Hay Fever, Summer Catarrh or June Cold, and also Autumn Catarrh, while over in America it is often known by the name of Rose Fever or Rose Catarrh.

Dr. Pirrie, well known and remembered in the medical and surgical world, says (I am quoting now from Tanner):—"A disorder analogous to hay asthma prevails in some parts of the United States, where the rose is largely cultivated. He believes that *hay fever* is seldom, if ever, due to the same noxious agents which are always the causes of *hay asthma*" (the italicising is mine). "Thus, whereas the latter is the consequence of the action of the powder of flowering grasses, or other vegetable irritants, the former is to be attributed more or less directly to an exposure to an excess of solar heat, aided in many instances by an intensity of light. Commenting on the histories of what he therefore proposes to call 'summer fever,' instead of 'hay fever,' Dr. Pirrie attempts to prove the correctness of his views by asking for attention to the conditions under which some attacks originally supervene; their persistence after removal from the sphere of supposed contraction; the evident increase and decrease of the symptoms with a rise and fall of the temperature of the air; the manifest and oft-expressed aggravation of general as well as local suffering after exposure to strong light, or to a burning sun; the strong likeness of many of the features of the popularly-termed hay fever to those constituting some of the after-effects of grave disorders, commonly ascribed to solar heat or high temperature; and the induction of a like train of phenomena in some persons by heated air, where no vegetation exists. Whether the mischievous effects of great heat and intensity of light are favoured by any unusual telluric or atmospheric conditions—as by an unusual amount of ozone—is uncertain. Dr. Pirrie seems, however, to think that the electricity of the atmosphere and the sun's rays may have some influence on the induction and maintenance of the disorder."

From the above quotation my readers will glean that there is, at all events, the probability that the complaint from which they have suffered so frequently and so long may, after all, not be hay fever, but summer fever, or let us say summer catarrh. They may glean some hope, too, from the words, because it is far more easy to avoid excess of light and direct solar

rays, than the atmosphere-permeating perfume of hay or grass in bloom. Those individuals who are in the habit of going to the seaside in the summer to get away from the causes of their ailment, would be evidently doing wrong if that ailment were summer fever, because by the sea there is far less shelter from the sun, and a brighter and obnoxious reflected glare from sand and water, than in the cool green country.

The question they would have to ask themselves is this, "Am I better at the seaside?"

But here it is for me to put another question to those who answer the first one in the affirmative. I ask—

"At what part of the coast do you find yourselves better or best?"

For, remember, it is not from the sea-air itself you are to expect the real benefit, though that may do good from its tonic effects, but from the absence of a hay-sporule-laden atmosphere. So if at a place like even Bournemouth, with heather and pine-trees all behind you, it is pretty evident that, if your ailment be really hay asthma, you would feel better on the days the wind blew from off the ocean.

But, on the other hand, a person liable to attacks of true hay asthma would very likely have the disorder aggravated by electric states of the atmosphere, and from exposure to the sun's rays. Pray bear that in mind, and at all events avoid intensity of light and heat. This can be done either in the country or by the sea-shore.

Strictly speaking, the causes of hay asthma may be divided into the constitutional and the exciting.

It is evident to every one that some people are more subject than others to colds in either the head or chest. To put it more definitely, these individuals are tender as regards the mucous or lining membranes of the air-passages, from the nose and eyes downwards to the ultimate ramifications of the bronchi themselves. We cannot give any reason for this—none is needed; but, given as an example: Two people ride home together in a gig late on a spring evening, and in the teeth of an east wind; one next day has the incipient symptoms of a bad cold, the other has escaped scot-free.

Tenderness, therefore—of a constitutional nature—of the lining membranes of air-passages is the primary cause of hay asthma. Time alone can cure this, and I have no other reason for making this remark than the fact that the ailment in question is not one of advanced life.

The exciting causes are not only the breathing of the perfume and floating sporules from grass in bloom, but the inhalation of many other kinds of dust and impalpable spiculæ, if the term be permissible. It is well known among young chemists and students, that the smell of ipecacuanha powder will give to some a disagreeable cold. So, in those subject to the complaint, will dust of any kind—the dust from rotten old dry wood, the dust from old walls, as when masons are

taking down houses, and dust from streets. So also will certain perfumes, notably those of the rose and peach, and certain kinds of grass in flower.

These are, after all, causes that act in a mechanical way. Perfume of flowers is invisible, but it is none the less substantial in that it consists of the volatile oils of the fruits or flowers, mixed with the seed-dust or sporules, and these impinging on the mucous membrane of the air-passages, irritate them, and the complaint is set up. When I use the word "mechanical," it is to show that I attribute no poisonous character to the vegetable or other dust which produces hay asthma, although I do not deny that poison may exist in it.

But draughts of cold air alone will set up an attack of hay asthma in those subject to it. This would be determined by the greater amount of blood sent back upon the mucous membrane, during exposure to a current of cold air.

Well, now we have got so far on with our subject that, by knowing the causes of hay asthma, we know precisely what we must carefully avoid to prevent attacks. There is only one way of preventing any disease, and that is by removing the cause from ourselves, or removing ourselves from the cause.

People subject to hay asthma have therefore to avoid: 1. Exposure to dust of all kinds, for there is no saying what the particular kind of dust may be that brings on an attack—for that matter, it may be a combination. 2. Exposure of either face or body to currents of cold air. 3. The inhalation of perfumes of grass, or fruit, or flowers that are known to have a tendency to produce it. 4. Exposure to excess of heat, direct solar rays, or intensity of light.

*The Symptoms.*—I need not dwell on these. I am not writing for students, but for sufferers themselves, and alas! they know the symptoms better than any person could describe them. They are those of a terrible catarrh, lasting for weeks and weeks in the season, with irritation of all the air-passages, accompanied too often by actual paroxysms of asthma, which are distressing in the extreme.

Added to other symptoms, will be heat of forehead, often headache, and burning and suffusion of eyes. Enough said.

*The Treatment.*—Here lies the difficulty; the patient is constitutionally prone to attacks of the complaint. This is a difficulty which may seem insurmountable at first, but it is not so much so as it appears at first glance. For, to begin with, there are differences even in constitutional tendency. There is every degree of susceptibility to the complaint, from the highest to the lowest. Secondly, although I cannot help believing that, as in the case of "winter cough," one attack of hay asthma leaves the sufferer more subject to another, still that is no reason why he should not make a brave stand, even after he has had several, to obtain not only present relief, but future immunity; and, thirdly, in the very fact that some attacks are more severe than others, lies hope to the sufferer, for it should lead him to study well the apparent causes of each, and to avoid them. He may be able to say to himself, "That last attack of mine was terribly severe, but then I have to remember that my health, at the time it commenced, was certainly a little below par."

Well, here is one step in advance already, and the hint which I shall now put in words is implied in what I have already written. It is this: People subject to hay asthma cannot be too careful in keeping up their health-status. No need for me to tell them how to do this; they must, while carefully avoiding, as far as possible, well-known exciting causes, live by rule.

Here is another hint: While living by rule, they must avoid, in the intervals of their illnesses, taking many drugs. If one does really and truly live by rule, medicine of any kind is hardly, if ever, required. This is all I, or probably any one, can say about constitutional or preventive treatment; there is no prophylactic for hay asthma, that must be apparent to every one.

*Treatment during an Attack.*—Cut it short, if possible, by getting away *at once* from the neighbourhood where the attack took place.

There is no end to the medicines that have been tried, but I have only two that I should recommend in the intervals of attacks, namely, iron with quinine, and the solution of arsenic.

These I cannot give the doses of, for obvious reasons; but a duly qualified medical practitioner would prescribe according to circumstances.

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## FLEMISH LACE AND LACE-MAKERS.



**B**RUGES is a quaint old city, full of curious remains of the past, with irregular streets of pointed-gabled houses, no two alike in colour, size, or shape, everywhere intersected by canals, up and down which great barges move slowly along, drawn by men or boys, occasionally by a weather-beaten bare-footed woman; at every turn bridges meet the eye, and these resemble one another so much that it is most puzzling for strangers to find their way about. During the winter months a calm,

sleepy repose settles down on the city, but with the spring it wakens into life; its long straight avenues of poplar and lime trees don their delicate green garments; the gardens become gay with flowering shrubs; water-lilies, white and yellow, tall bulrushes, meadow-sweet, and forget-me-nots deck the wide canals, and all looks bright to welcome the influx of visitors from all parts of the world, who come to explore the ancient city, to gaze on the old pictures which it treasures, and the many objects of artistic value and interest to be found in it. Many of these visitors were attracted by the exhibition of ancient