

Medical Talk.

"HAY FEVER"

Hay fever is naturally of great interest to the people who have got it because its effects can be rather horrible. If it is severe it may knock the patient out during perhaps the two best months of the year, and reduce him to a state of nervous wreckage. Patients often tell me that the physical distress of the disease is to them not nearly so bad as the emotional disintegration which they experience. A hard-headed doctor who had hay fever said: "From mid-May to mid-July I go completely neurotic."

For any specific treatment it is most important to be sure that the disease is hay fever. Every year hundreds of patients come to St. Mary's Hospital with notes from their doctors saying something like this:—"A bad case of hay fever. Do what you can to help," but on investigation we find that it is not a case of hay fever at all, though the symptoms looked like it.

We must have an exact definition, and this from the pathologist's angle. Perhaps something like the following will serve:—"Hay fever is the trouble which is caused by grass-pollen when this substance comes into physiological contact with the living tissues of those unfortunate people who happen to be abnormally sensitive to this pollen."

That "living tissue" part of our definition is an important proviso because our surface skin is really dead matter which is in process of being shed as scurf, or "dander" as the Americans call it. That is why the trouble of hay fever is confined chiefly to the eyeballs, lips and the inside of the nose and throat; there the surfaces are alive.

To a doctor who is not a pathologist this intense irritation and running from "the eyeballs, lips and the inside of the nose and throat" is what makes up hay fever. Unfortunately for him other substances which are not grass-pollen—Michaelmas daisy pollen in England, Ambrosia pollen in North America, the scurf of the various

animals, wheat flour, for example, the spores of various moulds—in fact all finely particulate protein matter which can be borne on the wind—these substances can produce very much the same symptoms as hay fever when they arrive at the unprotected areas of our body, if we happen to be allergic to them.

The troubles caused by these substances are called "Para hay fever" to distinguish these disorders from true hay fever. They can be treated in precisely the same way, but will need their own specific antisera or vaccines for the purpose.

To clarify the discrepancy between hay fever and Para hay fever, all that is needed is to make a test with the grass-pollen on the living tissues of the person in question, and this may be done at any time of the year whether in or out of the hay fever season. It would suffice to put the pollen on to an eyelid or up the nose of the sufferer, but it is much more comfortable for him and quite as accurate to put a drop of pollen extract on to the skin of the possibly hay fever subject, and then make a prick through this drop, and through the dead part of the skin, to the living part below it—to the cutis vera in fact. If the man is truly hay fever here would develop in 15 minutes a patch of nettle-rash on the prick mark, which patch will fade away in another 15 minutes. This patch of nettle-rash may vary from perhaps the size of a penny (for a bigger reaction) to the size of a sixpenny piece (for a rather small one).

Having made reasonably sure that by appropriate tests the patient is hay fever and not Para hay fever, it is best to treat him prophylactically, that is, say, to treat him before the grass has flowered and therefore, before he can have had any round them that year. Nowadays and England I start in February, in early March would do.

We began the research on hay fever in 1908, and my first serious attempt at desensitization was in July, 1910. The work was

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devised on the lines of Sir Almroth Wright's recently successful typhoid inoculation, and from the start we adhered to his famous dictum that for successful prophylaxis you should have some objective test to see whether or not your patient is responding to treatment according to plan. The skin testing which I have just spoken of, as I will explain to you in a minute, was the light which guided us in about 20 years to our present rather elaborate but successful treatment for hay fever (or for the other allergic troubles for the matter of that).

The patient can be desensitized by progressively larger and larger inoculations of grass-pollen extract till the diagnostic test can no longer show the patch of nettle-rash round the place of the prick. To make sure of this the patient should be tested repeatedly as the treatment proceeds: a patch of nettle-rash the size of a penny obtained before treatment, would be succeeded by a nettle-rash reaction of perhaps the size of sixpence when the treatment would be about a third or a half of the way through; later on the prick test might produce a patch no bigger than a split pea; lastly, at the end of treatment, nothing whatever would develop round the final prick, thus showing that the patient had become desensitized.

(Continued in next issue.)

MALAY CHOIRS IN CITY HALL Westminster Very Successful

CAPE TOWN.—The Cape Malay Choir Board conducted a very successful singing competition in the City Hall on Tuesday evening Jan. 8. A large and appreciative audience filled the hall.

As the Board consists of 24 choirs, only half the number, i.e. the "A" Section, participated in the first concert, while those falling in the "B" Section will also compete on 22nd Jan. in the Main Hall, City Hall, Cape Town.

The participating choirs were the Nederlands Oranje, Red Roses, Deep River Destroyers, Young Men's Navy, Happy's, Barry's, Young Orphan Boys, Westminster, Break o' Days, Britania Dukes and Young Ideas.

Each choir had to render a combination of a solo and an ensemble and also provide a solo, and in all were allowed only 16 minutes to complete the repertoire. Choirs failing to observe this rule forfeited their points and were disqualified.

Combined Chorus
The Nederlands Oranje chose "De Valde oor See," which was very appropriate in view of their name. Red Roses, under the leadership of S. Isaacs, rendered "Wat sy woen," and gave one the impression of a well-trained choir with good production and clarity.

"Sal ek dan" was sung by the Britania Dukes and this popular song was heartily applauded. In spite of the youth of Young Men's they sang "My Ghelovindde" well, but Young Ideas, also a young choir, excelled with "O Traals."

Break o' Days rendered "Nederlands Bloed," a song very seldom heard, but Westminster might the house down amid continued applause when they excellently rendered "My laaste uur."

The theme of this old-time song of a youth spending his last hour before going on a long voyage in search of fortune and appealing to his loved one to pray the Almighty to spare him to return back home safely.

Comic Songs

There was a large variety of comic or humorous songs, the variety of which were very well rendered. Nederlands Oranje chose "Jantje is moer maar huister en" while Die Aan se tradisie at popular bedtime, was sung by Deep River Destroyers. Some of some favourite ditties in the Afrikaans version, Britania Dukes selected "Ek sal my 'n lappie kry" ("I'll buy myself a paper doll") and Young Men's sang "Blower" ("Blower").

Break o' Days, with "Makken in daer 'n vrouentje verby," also well, while Red Roses, with "Nettle" ran ahead of Westminster, who rendered "How my die wa" silently.

Solo
In this section some soloists heard from stage fright at the beginning of their songs, but managed very well to overcome their feelings, and the majority of the judges some very difficult work to allocate the marks.

The best of the soloists was Casper Syden, who sang "n Minne" (the Afrikaans version of "The Song of Songs." Mr. Syden should very far as a baritone singer if given the opportunity to show what he can do.

"Hollend sal ry," a very difficult song in High Dutch, was sung by the soloist of the Young Orphans, and he received much applause for his effort.

Ebrahim Adams ("Al Johnson") also held the audience's attention with his "Gekkeade Boon" and Gaasnt Diedericks with "Die Son skyn om my hewelike huis." Sallie Pelaar, with "Traals" Happy's with "Vagwel my meeste lief." Barry's "Ek bins voor u om vir u te verlaten" and "Hoor! hoor! die wind waai oos" received tremendous applause.

Following are the successful choirs:

Combined Chorus
1. Westminster.
2. Red Roses.
3. Nederlands Oranje and Break o' Days (Joint holders).

Comic Song
1. Red Roses.
2. Westminster.
3. Deep River Destroyers and Break o' Days (Joint holders).

Solo
1. Westminster (Soloist, Casper Syden).
2. Young Orphan Boys.
3. Red Roses (Soloist, E. Adams).

Dr. J. du Plessis was an able adjudicator and composer, and Mr. Poyles, Music Inspector of Schools (Cape), the Adjudicator.

EXPANSION OF HEALTH SERVICES Divisional Council's Programme

CAPE TOWN.—Two new clinics, one at Noordhoek, another at Phillipps, have recently been completed, while a third, at Hout Bay, will be ready in about a month. The cost is estimated at about £2,500 each.

These clinics will replace unsuitable buildings, which in most cases consisted of a tiny cottage. Nevertheless, valuable work has been done in the past.

IN GOODWOOD AREA

The Divisional Council is contemplating the establishment of a clinic in the Matroosfontein area, which falls in the Goodwood Municipality.

If accommodation is available in the Fairview area, a clinic will be set up there. Goodwood and Parow areas are served at present by the Council's big clinic in Voortrekker-road, Vasco.

A small clinic has recently been opened at Pettadum to cater for the needs of the poorer section of the community.

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