

**ON HAY ASTHMA  
AND THE AFFECTION  
TERMED HAY FEVER**

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On Hay Asthma and the Affection Termed Hay Fever by William Pirrie

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BY

WILLIAM PIRRIE, M.D.

FRC. SFC.



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## P R E F A C E.

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THE leading ideas in the following remarks on Hay Asthma, also called Hay Fever, or Summer Catarrh, are given in an abridged and condensed form in two papers published in recent issues of the *Medical Times and Gazette*. These papers were written by the author without any view to their ever acquiring greater permanency than that resulting from insertion in a weekly periodical; but, since their appearance in the journal already named, he has received several requests to publish them in a more convenient and enduring form. At first the author felt altogether doubtful of the propriety of complying with these requests; but he was afterwards induced to do so by the consideration that the complaints discussed in after pages have been particularly studied by comparatively few persons, and that in consequence there is hardly any unanimity of opinion on any point regarding them.

This want of more general and close investigation cannot arise from the rarity of the complaints; for they are of very frequent occurrence amongst both males and females of all ages, for nearly a quarter of the year, in this and other countries. Neither can it be excused on the ground of their being very trifling ailments; for they occasion, for the time being, an amount of inconvenience, self-denial, and suffering, which far exceeds that arising from many other complaints which enlist for the sufferer the deepest sympathies of his friends, and the most careful attention on the part of the medical attendant.

Nor again should the proper treatment of the complaints continue to be so comparatively unheeded on the too common plea that they are beyond all cure, for there does seem reasonable ground for believing that marked alleviation of suffering can be effected in all instances, and complete cure in not a few. Perhaps there is little in what follows calculated to throw much light on the many points of obscurity regarding the complaints styled Hay Asthma and Hay Fever, and much of what is written may have been more forcibly



put by others ; but still the author will hope that he has not altogether in vain endeavoured to elucidate some difficult points ; and he trusts that he has not in any place clothed his own ideas in words which could be considered dogmatic in style or indicative of any intention on his part to detract from the opinions of previous and better observers.

The author has the impression that much more attention should be paid, than has hitherto been the case, to the recognition of two distinct morbid influences co-existing during a certain period of the year, and both inducing complaints which have many symptoms in common, but which are nevertheless essentially different in nature—the element of the one being spasm from peripheral nervous irritation,—and the essence of the other, relaxation and febrile irritation from exhaustion or impaired activity of certain centres and nerves of both departments of the nervous system.

The recognition of these distinctions accounts in great measure, in the author's opinion, for the opposite statements of different sufferers as to the amount of benefit they have experienced from change of

locality; and also points to the necessity of adopting more or less prolonged prophylactic measures before a reasonable hope can be entertained of marked diminution of suffering during recurring attacks, or of ultimate freedom from them. Marked alleviation of distress can be effected during an attack; but immunity from seizures must be hoped for from measures carefully and systematically followed out during the intervals of health. If this work, containing the author's reasons for holding these beliefs regarding Hay Asthma, and Summer Catarrhal Fever, or simply Summer Fever, as he would term the complaint discussed in the latter part of it, will only incite some other persons to such a study of them as will eventuate in the suggestion of some more definite and generally successful mode of treatment than any which has hitherto been proposed, the author will consider that he has not unavailingly complied with the wishes of those who suggested its publication.

43, *Westbourne Park, W.*  
*London, September, 1867.*

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THE distressing complaints to which the various names of Hay Asthma, Hay Fever, and Summer Catarrh have been given by different writers, who refer them to a like source, though met with under varying circumstances, and with differences in their more prominent symptoms, are of very common occurrence in this country during the greater part of four months of the year. Almost everyone has met with a sufferer from them, and has in consequence become acquainted with many of their more striking symptoms, and has listened to tales of distress regarding the inconvenience, discomfort, and suffering which they occasion. We are therefore naturally surprised that the earlier writers on medicine, who were both careful