

**HAY FEVER AND  
PAROXYSMAL SNEEZING  
(VASOMOTOR RHINITIS)**

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Hay Fever and Paroxysmal Sneezing (Vasomotor Rhinitis) by Eugene S. Yonge

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**EUGENE S. YONGE**

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(*VASOMOTOR RHINITIS*)

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"A HANDBOOK OF THE DISEASES OF THE NOSE AND THROAT"

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## PREFACE

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EUGENE S. YONGE.

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# HAY FEVER AND PAROXYSMAL SNEEZING

(*VASOMOTOR RHINITIS*)

## I. HAY FEVER (HAY ASTHMA).

### HISTORICAL SKETCH

SOMEWHERE about the first quarter of the nineteenth century attention began to be directed to the occurrence of a curious and hitherto unclassified disorder—a malady which attacked the eyes and the nasal organ, and in some instances the chest, and which was observed to assail its victims at a particular season of the year but at no other period. The malady appeared, moreover, to be the peculiar appanage of the better classes, with, if anything, a predilection for those belonging to the upper ten thousand. “It appears,” says a contemporary writer, “to be quite an aristocratical affection . . . a highly gentlemanlike and indeed (I may add) *noble* affection.” This “aristocratical affection” gradually became known by the name of hay fever, and the designation still remains in common use, in spite of the fact that the disorder is neither due to hay nor characterised by the presence of fever. Nevertheless the popular term has not been suffered to remain unchallenged; on the contrary, the nomenclature of the disease has received quite a disproportionate amount of attention, and a prodigious number of synonyms, in English, French, German, and other languages, has been suggested. Some of the designations are based on the season of incidence (*e.g.* Summer Catarrh, June Cold, **Frühsummer-Katarrh**, etc.); others relate to the assigned

cause of the malady (Pollen Catarrh, Rose Cold, Ragweed Fever, **Rhume des Foins, Corizza da Fieno**); others, again, to the symptoms (Spasmodic Rhino-bronchitis, Rhinitis Pruritus, **Niesfleber**, and so on). A term which has been invented by our German colleagues (**Bostock'scher Katarrh**) gives due credit to the observer who first described the affection, while the designation "**Asthme-hay des Anglais**" sufficiently indicates what may be regarded as the "birthplace" of the malady.

The first description of hay fever, as now recognised, did not appear until the year 1819, when an observer named Bostock published an account of "a periodical affection of the eyes and chest," which, in reality, represented a congeries of symptoms which he had observed in his own person.<sup>1</sup>

Long before the date of Bostock's communication, however, there had appeared, in various published works, indications that the symptoms of the malady had not passed entirely unobserved, although it is probable, as J. N. Mackenzie has suggested, that the affection was commonly confounded with ordinary coryza on the one hand, and with asthma on the other.

Heberden,<sup>2</sup> in 1802, stated that he had observed the annual recurrence of "catarrh," in some cases attacking the patient in the summer for a month, in other instances lasting longer. At a still earlier date, namely, in the latter part of the previous century, Cullen<sup>3</sup> observed that in some individuals asthmatic attacks were more frequent in the summer—especially during the *dies caniculares*. And if we search still farther back, we find that the medical literature of the seventeenth century (and even that of the sixteenth) reveals passages suggesting the existence of a malady which was either hay fever or, what is essentially the same disorder, "rose cold." In some instances roses are specified as the exciting cause, but in others the attacks are merely described as occurring "in the rose season" or "when the roses are in bloom."

<sup>1</sup> *Med. Chir. Trans.*, London, 1819, vol. x. pt. 1, p. 161.

<sup>2</sup> *Commentarii de Morborum Historiâ et Curatione*, Londini, 1802.

<sup>3</sup> *Synopsis nosolog.*, Londini, 1780.

The earliest reference of this description appears to be that of Botallus (1565), who stated that he had noticed instances in which headache, sneezing, and itching of the nostrils, lasting for as long as two days, had been set up by the odour of roses.<sup>1</sup> About half a century later Van Helmont mentions the case of a certain canon who suffered from asthma during the major part of the summer (*tota aestate propemodum asthmaticus*), but remained free for the remainder of the year, and, indeed, in other respects enjoyed excellent health.<sup>2</sup> Binningerus (1673) relates the case of a "worthy matron," evidently a lady of substantial proportions (*ampli corporis et carnosi*), who suffered from "coryza" for many weeks during the period when the roses were in bloom.<sup>3</sup> De Rebecque (1691), who was himself a sufferer, describes his own case as one in which, for thirteen years, symptoms of coryza had regularly appeared at the commencement of the rose season, and, after lasting during the whole of that period, had spontaneously ceased. He considered that the symptoms were induced by some emanation from these flowers, and termed the affection *coryza a rosarum odore*.<sup>4</sup> Lastly, Riedlin (1695) describes the instance of one of his friends who suffered from sneezing and catarrh each year during the time when the roses were in bloom.<sup>5</sup>

It would seem, therefore, that although hay fever, like other functional neuroses, has no doubt increased in modern times, the malady was in existence long before its place in the nosology was definitely recognised.

Returning to the year 1819, when the affection was described by Bostock, and tracing the progress made in the general recognition of the malady, we find that another and fuller communication appeared from the same observer in 1828, in which he termed it "Catarrhus Æstivus," or "Summer Catarrh," and put on record a number of cases.<sup>6</sup> Bostock

<sup>1</sup> *Commentarioli duo*, Lugduni, 1565.

<sup>2</sup> *Opera omnia*, Edit. Nov. Francofurti, 1707, p. 346.

<sup>3</sup> *Observat. et curat. medicinal. centuriæ quinque*, Montbelgardi, 1673.

<sup>4</sup> *Atrium Medicinæ Helveticorum*, Geneva, 1691.

<sup>5</sup> *Linæe Medicæ* (Ann. 1695-1700), Augustæ Vindelicorum, 1697-1701.

<sup>6</sup> *Med. Chir. Trans.*, 1828, vol. xii. p. 437.