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The Throat and The Voice: Part 1, Chapter 2: Care of the Throat

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which have been inhaled into the nose or windpipe. In certain affections, these little hair-like appendages (*cilia*) are destroyed, without being reproduced, as they are in the healthy state ; and then there is some difficulty in getting rid naturally of the products alluded to in the last sentence, giving rise to more or less painful voluntary efforts of hawking, hemming, and coughing to eject them. Besides this, the delicate mucous membrane is exposed to the irritation of the air, and thus becomes further and further diseased, sometimes leading to the formation of real sores or ulcers. It is quite likely that many severe sore throats would be prevented, if the little annoyances which the loss of the cilia occasion were promptly remedied by application to the physician instead of the more frequent resort to the various cough mixtures, expectorants, and lozenges exposed for sale. Many of these preparations are absolutely injurious, while there is only one chance out of very many that the article resorted to will happen to suit the individual case to which it is applied, even when the remedy is a good one.

CHAPTER II.

CARE OF THE THROAT.

THERE are few individuals who pass their lives without having been at some time affected with more or less sore throat. In variable climates sore throat is much more frequent than in equable climates. It is much more frequent, also, in localities where individuals are exposed to the irritating influences of particles of dust and other materials in the atmosphere, and which are inhaled in respiration. Consequently, people working in factories, chemical laboratories, and the like, are quite subject to sore throat independently of any special proclivity thereto ; while they are still more likely to suffer if constitutionally subject to sore throat. Such individuals are recommended to wear little respirators in front of the nose and the mouth during exposure, in order to filter the respired air, as it were, and catch these little particles in their passage towards the throat. There is a variety of respirators for use, under these circumstances, some of which are so arranged as to contain masses of raw cotton or wool, which collect the dust

and dirt, and which can be removed from time to time as they become foul. One of these, represented in

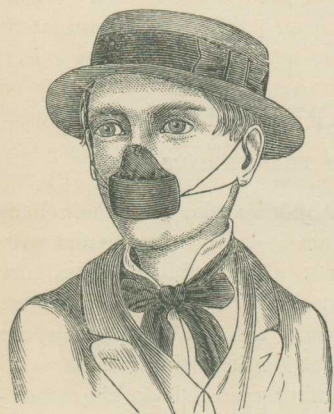


Fig. III.—Oro-nasal Respirator.

Fig. III., is composed of meshes of delicate silvered wire, covered in front with a piece of silk. Pliny mentions that workers in mines were accustomed to fasten bladders before their mouths; and that the Roman bakers placed cloths in front of their faces when working in atmospheres loaded with dust.

It is often found, too, that individuals suffering from consumption, chronic bronchitis, or even only with undue delicacy of the mucous membrane of the throat, are unable to face the air in windy and inclement weather. Sometimes they are unable to withstand the changes of temperature even on days which promise to be pleasant. Under such circumstances, they are compelled to keep in the house, or to muffle the mouth and nose with a handkerchief, veil, or something of that kind when they go out into the open air. The temperature of the inspired air is modified by the warmth imparted to the comforter

by the hotter air of respiration, while, at the same time, its pungency is moderated, if too rich in oxygen for the sensitive throat or air-passages. Unmitigated sunlight is known to be often irritating to sore eyes; and in like manner unmitigated atmospheric air is sometimes too irritant to sore throats, sore air-passages, and sore lungs. In Great Britain, a respirator of a series of fine metallic meshes, covered with silk, is much used, and, if duly appreciated, would be much used in this country also. Some respirators are made merely to cover the mouth, so as to encourage nasal or normal respiration; and others (Fig. III., p. 20) to cover both mouth and nose. These appliances are rather unsightly, to be sure, but their use often enables invalids to take regular out-door exercise, in carriage or on foot, instead of undergoing compulsory confinement to the house for fear of catching cold. Ladies may make use of a respiratory veil (Fig. IV.), devised by Mr. Lenox Browne, of London. It consists of



Fig. IV.
The Respiratory Veil.

a piece of plain, unspotted blonde, with a double

thickness of silk gossamer on the lower four inches. The part that covers the mouth and nostrils is stiffened by a layer of thin wire gauze, so that the veil may stand a little away from the mouth and be more comfortable. Such a veil is easily made at home.

There is a special proclivity to sore throat in many persons. This is often hereditary. People so disposed require more precaution than others in exposing themselves to the changes of the atmosphere, and to other causes which are likely to excite sore throat.

The most frequent exciting cause of diseases of the throat appears to be the direct action of cold upon the heated body, especially during active perspiration. Sudden exposure to heat when the body has been chilled, is likewise a frequent cause of sore throat. It is therefore necessary to avoid these sudden exposures. In cold weather, for instance, when the temperature in-doors is much higher than it is out of doors, one should not go into the open air directly from a warm room, or go at once into a very warm room, and still less, close to a fire, on coming into the house from the street. A few minutes should be passed in the entry, in either instance, so as to render the change more gradual. In similar manner, a cool bath should not be taken while the body is in active perspiration, lest it check the natural transudation of fluids and throw them in, as it is termed, upon the

internal organs, to their detriment. Taking a child from a warm bed to the window to see a parade, etc., is a not infrequent cause of the severest kind of sore throat.

Another frequent source of sore throat, to which males are subjected much more than females, is breathing in an atmosphere laden with tobacco smoke, as in the sitting-rooms of public houses, certain concert-saloons, and the like. This is a much more frequent source of danger than smoking tobacco in a private apartment, although that, too, is sometimes a cause of sore throat. If a smoker is subject to attacks of sore throat, and is too wedded to his weed to divorce himself from it, he should smoke a long-stemmed pipe in preference to any other contrivance, because it renders the smoke cooler by the time it reaches the throat. The next safest thing to smoke is a long cigar, not much more than half of which should be used, because the remainder becomes warmer and more loaded with the poisonous products of the combustion. A short pipe is not as safe as a cigar, and a cigarette is the most injurious of all. The habits of inhaling the tobacco smoke, of swallowing it, or of passing it out by the nose, are all likely to lead to disease of the parts over which the smoke is forced. Indeed, there is a peculiar condition of the throat produced by tobacco smoking, which almost any slave to the practice can observe in

himself. It consists in a series of opalescent or milky-looking patches at the inside of the corners of the mouth and lips, and some other localities, due to a sort of raising of the outermost layer of the mucous membrane. These spots are known as *the milky patches of smokers*, and are sometimes mistaken for evidence of a very unfortunate constitutional form of sore throat. They subside, usually, on abandoning the practice.

Another source of sore throat, very common in the United States, is the use of ice-water at meals. Many persons take their coffee, tea, soups, meats, and vegetables very hot, and cool the parts—mouth and throat—by draughts of ice-water immediately afterward. This frequent alternation of extreme heat and cold eventually injures the delicate structures subjected to it. Even when ice-water is used at proper times, it is best to take it by sips, which should be allowed to remain a few moments in the mouth until the extreme chill has passed off, than to pour it down the throat in a series of continuous swallows.

Another source of sore throat exists in overstraining the muscles in loud talking, protracted reading aloud and singing, screaming, calling to the deaf, and so on. In public speakers and singers, sore throat is often due to improper methods of breathing and of using the voice, and is only to be corrected by judicious elocutionary exercise, or a system of vocal gymnas-

tics. Theatrical performers, on the other hand, who pay much greater attention to a proper use of their vocal organs, rarely suffer from this cause, although they are subject to sore throat from ill-ventilated dressing-rooms, exposed and illy heated stage-flies, and the like.

Finally, the inordinate use of alcoholic liquors is another source of sore throat.

Individuals predisposed to contract sore throat, or specially liable to exposure to the causes that produce it, should get into the habit of bathing the surface of the body every morning on leaving the bed. Those who prefer the regular bath by immersion may resort to that. Some prefer the shower-bath. When the full bath is inconvenient, the body should be mopped with a wet sponge or towel, the temperature of the water being as cool as is consistent with a feeling of comfort. If the practice is begun during warm weather, with the ordinary water in the wash-basin, it can be continued on into the winter, and throughout the winter, too, for that matter, by most persons, without any necessity for heating the water as the weather becomes colder. If the practice is commenced during the cold weather, the water may be used warm at first, and gradually be used less and less warm as the individual becomes accustomed to it. If the cold bath or cold bathing chills the surface at any period of the year, summer or winter, or does not

produce an agreeable glowing sensation after it, the water used may be impregnated with a little table salt, pickling salt, or sea salt, in the proportion of a handful to a bucket of water. A bag of salt may be immersed in the water a short time before it is used. Where even this plan fails in its purpose, a cloth or sponge dipped in warm water, warm salt water, or warm acidulated water, (say a teaspoonful of aromatic sulphuric acid or a teaspoonful or two of vinegar to the ordinary basinful,) may be applied to small portions of the body exposed in succession, until the system becomes educated, as it were, to endure simple water at ordinary temperatures. There is no necessity for the use of a flesh-brush or rough towel after these ablutions, though there is no objection to be made to their use when their effects are agreeable. These baths are excellent tonics to the skin, and, through the influence of the nerves ramifying in it, to the system at large. They induce increased tolerance to ordinary atmospheric changes, and often inure the constitution to resist injurious influences which might otherwise be sustained by forced or unexpected exposure to extraordinary changes.

A person subject to diseases of the throat should be exceedingly careful as regards the use of underclothing. The undershirt and drawers should be of flannel, or of some mixed fabric containing wool, such as the ordinary merino garments of the shops. Those

who can afford it may use silk. Silk and wool, being animal fabrics, are much more suitable for covering the human animal than vegetable fabrics, such as cotton and linen. Buckskin and chamois, though animal fabrics, are not suitable for underclothing, no matter how well "perforated" they may be to provide better ventilation. They are very soon rendered very filthy garments, even on the cleanliest bodies, because they retain accumulated products of cutaneous secretion, which undergo decomposition, and are often productive of great injury. An undergarment should be of loose texture, and capable of being easily washed or made clean.

To suit the varying seasons of a climate such as ours, three varieties of weight of underclothing should be used,—one, the lightest texture made, for the extreme heat of summer; one of medium texture, for late spring and the autumn, and one much heavier, for winter and early spring. Changes from heavy fabrics to lighter ones should not be made until there is positive evidence of confirmed change of season. Some individuals wear underclothing of very light texture altogether, and use one, two, or more of them, as may be required, in preference to having garments of varying texture. The plan is a good one, especially for those who are apt to make too premature changes. It is very serviceable, too, when a change is made from heavy outer garments to

light ones, as in dressing for an evening entertainment, when the lessened weight in the dress-clothing may be supplemented by an additional light undershirt and a pair of drawers. The underclothing worn in the daytime should be removed on going to bed, and be turned inside out to air and become well dried and ventilated by morning. It is very imprudent to sleep in the same underclothing which has been worn all day, or to wear during the day the underclothing used at night. It is rarely necessary to keep underclothing on in bed, as there is little or no exposure to direct atmospheric change; but where the protection of a cotton night-gown is insufficient, a flannel night-gown may be used, or a special set of underclothing.

In the matter of stockings, there is not so much necessity for the use of wool in preference to cotton, even in winter.

Boots and shoes are very important articles of clothing with regard to the health of individuals subject to sore throat. Two pairs should always be in use at the same period, to be worn on alternate days respectively, inasmuch as a single night's exposure to the air is usually insufficient to free them from moisture; and the practice of having two pairs in wear at a time will be found productive of an economy of about thirty-three per cent., a matter of some moment to many people in hard times. An additional pair,

exceptionally well-soled, should be kept for use in inclement weather. What are called double-soled shoes or boots should be worn in winter, and in wet weather at any season; and quite light soles are perfectly safe in hot and dry weather.

Water-proof shoes, rubbers, furs, and mufflers of all sorts, are not to be recommended for customary use. Rubbers and light water-proof cloaks are advisable on occasions of special exposure, but should be removed as soon as the special occasion has passed. Water-proof garments should have slits under the arm-pits, and at other protected points, to favor ventilation.

Confirmed invalids who cough on exposure to the outer air, should be careful not to talk during open-air exercise, and should wear a folded veil or a respirator in front of both nose and mouth when exposed to the wind, in order to modify the irritating influence of cold air upon the delicate mucous membrane of the throat. It is the confirmed opinion of the author, that if invalids suffering from diseases of the respiratory organs would make systematic use of respirators, they would be spared a great deal of suffering, and would actually prolong their lives by the practice.