

Science Notes

BY WILLIAM G. HAYNES.

FEAR AS A DISEASE-PRODUCER.

The endless chain of cause and effect in which fear and disease are the alternate links is interestingly discussed in the department of editorial comment in "American Medicine."

Fear—"one of the basic instincts of animal life,"—has been only subordinated, not abolished, by civilization. It is still "a constant detail of life," the writer tells us; and fortunately so, since it drives us to acts of self-protection that saves our lives. Did not dread keep the burned child from the fire, we should be a singed race, like the moths. And most of all do we owe our lives to our fear of disease, in which is rooted all our modern "knowledge of hygiene and prophylaxis and probably many of our ideas of treatment." But not only does the fear inspired by disease tend to curative acts and thus curb itself, but it may also produce disease in its turn, and so end in the chain of evils noted above. The influence of fear upon health is not discussed in the text-books, nor is it considered in the management of the sick, except in the most cursory manner; but the writer asserts that few mental states add more to the burden of the physician, or make his problems more difficult. He goes on:

"That fear is a potent factor in producing abnormal conditions, or at least in accentuating the baneful effects of disease, is a fact established beyond controversy; and yet in spite of its harmful tendencies, fear in some respects is a beneficent force, beneficent in that had we not been possessed of fear, self-preservation would not be the moving impulse it ever has been and is today in our life; without fear the human race would probably have perished. Courage and fear are antithetical; courage incites to extinction, fear to self-preservation. We believe courage rarely if ever exists without fear; such a mental condition, alone and unchecked by the caution naturally engendered by fear, would have prevented the survival of mankind as well as all other forms of animal life.

"A morbid fear of disease contributes largely to an unbalanced mentality; it disarranges the bodily functions, to be later followed by organic dissolution. 'The psychopathic believes himself afflicted with some incurable physical malady, such as cardiac trouble or tuberculosis; the psychoneurotic, that he is on the verge of insanity.' Siris writes that the main source of psychopathic diseases is the instinct of fear with its baneful manifestations of anxiety, anguish, and worry. Darwin writes that 'if we expect to suffer we are anxious.' James regards 'anxiety as morbid fear.' Bain, the 'anxious condition of mind a sort of diffused terror.' In other forms, concludes Sidis, 'anxiety is nothing else but the working of the instinct of fear. Religious, social, and moral lapses and superstitions associated with apprehension of threatening impending evil, based on the fear-instinct, form the germs of psychopathic affections.'"

Death from fear is very rare, but the writer narrates an interesting, although painful, incident in the experience of a noted New York surgeon—the late Dr. Robert H. M. Dawbarn:

"Some fifteen years since, a patient, a young and apparently vigorous and sound man, was referred to me at one of our city hospitals for operation in a perfectly simple case of hemorrhoids. Due preparations for the procedure were made, and he was left in a private room to wait his turn in the number of cases detailed for that morning's routine work. The case, however, did not come to operation; in fact, not even to anesthesia.

"As the nurses passed the door of his room during our work on cases which were scheduled to precede his, he would call each into his room and inquire with increasing earnestness and obvious expression of anxiety whether in their opinion the approaching operation might not endanger his life. Finally a nurse reported to us that in spite of their efforts to reassure the patient that the operation was absolutely a safe one, he had grown almost incoherent with fear or fright; she thought that I had better see him. I had been scrubbing up in an adjacent room, but went to him at once and found him at that moment dead. Careful attempts at resuscitation were at once instituted and persisted in, but without avail.

"It developed that the young man carried several life-insurance policies. Because of the anomalous condition as to the diagnosis of cause of death, representatives of these companies were at the autopsy, which was thoroughly and properly made in our presence by a careful specialist. Not a gross lesion was found. The final diagnosis was 'death from fear.'—Literary Digest.

EATING RAW FOOD.

Commenting on the recent "raw food" school, Dr. Toulouse, a French physician, points out some of the advantages and drawbacks of the idea of consuming all food raw. Naturally in our common practice this is often done and even in the case of animal flesh such as oysters, dried beef, and others, and such substances are well digested, even better, it is claimed, than cooked meat. Salads, radishes and all fruits are eaten raw, and while they cause more work to the digestive organs by the character of the cellulose under such conditions, on the other hand they afford ferments which greatly aid digestion. Comparing the two systems, cooked or raw, the latter is the most essential for preserving life, for when the system is deprived of all fresh food, diseases of the scorbutic type appear, especially in children. The only drawback with raw food is that it may bring disease germs, which cooking destroys, and this consideration above recommends cooking in numerous cases. However an important point is that certain aliments are quite indigestible, even though the most nutritious, i. e., dried vegetables such as beans and peas, and even the most convinced of the new vegetarian school could not consume these. In the foregoing the question of taste was not considered, but in fact, cooking develops a flavor which adds in the secretion of digestive substances, and hence it is not a simple question of enjoyment of food. The practice of eating raw food does not therefore appear to be justified beyond the point where it is already the customary practice.—Scientific American.

EMMETT J. SCOTT

ON JEANES' BOARD.

Emmett J. Scott, secretary of Tuskegee Institute, has been elected to

succeed the late Dr. Booker T. Washington as a member of the Negro Rural School Fund, Anna T. James' Foundation.

THE SMART SET COMPANY.

The Smart Set company has come and gone. The impression left has caused much discussion among our people. The Monitor, having heard so many opinions as to the merits of the show, pro and con, has asked me to write my impressions, so as to try to reach a happy medium.

Nothing ever created by man has ever been pronounced perfect. But many sayings and things done by man have gone far towards making this old world a better place to live in.

Many persons say a show is bad because the comedian wasn't funny, or that the chorus couldn't sing, or that the costumes were cheap, etc. From my point of view, if an entertainment is morally clean, it deserves much credit for being so. I don't think anyone could deny that credit to the Smart Set company. The next is the individual and ensemble work of the cast and chorus. (We won't mention the plot because musical comedies do not have plots.)

What of the individuals? Mr. Salem Tutt Whitney is all a comedian should be. He is funny, has good delivery and knows how to put the punch in his jokes. His Negro character does not belittle the race. His is the old time Negro that was born with lots of mother wit and never had a chance of getting an education.

He is always entertaining without being boisterous.

Miss Hattie Akers (as Bullions Ward) more than made good. She was born an actress. She had two scene's, one pathetic and the other patriotic. Both were done with feeling and ability. Watch her she will be heard from.

Miss Blanche Thompson is the only woman (of our race) that I have seen that is fit to take up the mantle, laid down by the late Mrs. Walker. She can sing the part, dance the part, talk the part or act the part. What more can one ask?

Mr. Luke Scott displayed much ability in character parts, and he is also the possessor of a fine baritone voice, in time he will become a credit to his race.

Mr. J. Homer Tutt is graceful, delivers his lines well, and looks dandy in his clothes. Beau Brummels are not born everyday.

Mr. James Vaughn's music is of a very high order. It's a master's task to set music to action and scenes, both of which he accomplished with marked ability. His big numbers sung by the chorus were meritorious and tuneful. Vaughn was with Williams and Walker when they played for King Edward in England.

Now for the ensemble work. The chorus was well drilled and sang with that peculiar blend that only our people possess.

The drill by the guards was agile and peppery, it was in perfect keeping with the scene. The dancing was great. "The Moonlight Pace" dance in the second act, was original and graceful. "The Dance of Death" by the Rajah and Queen, was beautiful in its fiendishness.

Taking it as a whole and comparing it with other colored shows, I believe it was as good as any and second to none that has visited our city.

May they prosper and keep up the good work.

DAN DESDUNES.

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