

antipyretic drugs in the treatment of fever, but experience had led to the conclusion that as a general rule it did more harm than good to directly treat the pyrexia in such cases.

Some few fevers were treated by agents which lowered the temperature, but these very fevers were instances of the exception proving the rule. When ague was treated by quinine, the temperature fell and the patient was better. This, however, was not because the quinine was an antipyretic, but because it was a poison to the plasmodium malarie; the patient's temperature fell because the pyrexial agent was destroyed. The same also was true in regard to syphilis.

In regard to cold bathing in typhoid fever, it must be remembered that it acted in other ways besides lowering the temperature, especially in the direction of increasing the elimination of toxins.

Experiments had been made, the tendency of which was to show that animals, in whom an artificial pyrexia had been induced by puncture of the corpus striatum, resisted a dose of infection which was fatal to others.

There was, then, much reason to believe that the pyrexia of a fever was a protective mechanism.

SPECTACLES AND ASTHENOPIA.

There are certain facts with which many of us are familiar enough, which, nevertheless, will bear repetition, and among them may be placed one to which Dr. St. John Roosa has lately called attention, viz., that asthenopia may be but an early symptom of neurasthenia. A point of interest on which Dr. Roosa insists is that it is not every case of hypermetropia, even when combined with a certain amount of astigmatism, which should be corrected by glasses.

The now well-known fact that headaches are often associated with defects in refraction has undoubtedly led physicians to transfer many cases to ophthalmic surgeons which they had far better have kept to themselves. Among students and over-worked clerks, and among operatives in textile factories, whose eyes are constantly engaged in watching trembling threads, headaches are very common, and there is a strong temptation, when hypermetropia is discovered in such cases, to look to glasses as the proper treatment. There is an even stronger temptation when their use relieves the headache to think that in ordering them the right thing has been done.

One may, however, have only put off the evil day, and, by giving to the patient a means of continuing the work which is doing him the harm, one may only be precipitating the catastrophe. The fact is, that a moderate amount of refractive defect ought not to cause asthenopia; and in those cases where it does so there is something the matter with the patient besides what is the matter with his eyes. Dr. Roosa says: "The greater part of the human race which is not myopic is hypermetropic. It cannot be said that a low degree of hypermetropia is, of itself, a sufficient cause of asthenopia. Just so with corneal astigmatism. Unless it reaches a diopter with the rule, or a quarter of a diopter against the rule, it does not of itself produce asthenopia." When in such cases he has met with asthenopia, he has repeatedly found it to be the precursor of nervous breakdown. To order glasses for such cases is not only a mere placebo, but may even be disastrous

in its effects, in that it may veil the true condition of affairs and encourage the patients to think of their eyes as the cause of all their troubles.

We are all familiar with the desire for glasses so often expressed by patients recovering from severe illnesses, the asthenopia in this case being a mere sign of debility; and Dr. Roosa points out the interesting fact that malaria may cause the same condition. But he especially insists that the first sign of nervous breakdown may be an inability to use the eyes continually. However important, then, it may be to recognise the existence of a defect in the refractive power of an eye, it is still more important to discover why such an eye, which, notwithstanding that defect had previously served the patient well, has at last failed in its function.

ELECTRICITY AND DUST.

Shoreditch has done well to institute a destructor by which to get rid of its "dust," the rubbish of all sorts which accumulates in every town in such enormous quantities as to become a perfect nightmare to those responsible for municipal administration.

The immense amount of material which has to be annually got rid of is almost as astonishing as the exceedingly primitive methods adopted by most of the London vestries for the purpose. Some simply send it out of their districts by barge or by rail—in other words, simply pass on the nuisance to someone else; others sort it, and sift it, and try to get out of it everything of any value, and then send it away; others merely dump it on vacant land for the delectation of the rats and other vermin of the neighbourhood; while a few, probably not more than half a dozen, burn it in destructors, or at any rate, burn as much of it as the apparatus at their disposal will allow them to deal with. Provincial towns have been far ahead of London in this matter, and it is from them that most of our experience as to the use of destructors has been gained.

The problem is by no means so simple as it looks. That all the offensive matters contained in "dust" can be destroyed by burning is plain enough, but to make the dust itself produce a fire sufficiently hot to consume all the vapours produced in its combustion is by no means an easy matter, as is shown by the many failures which have occurred.

The actual fuel value of London dust is but small, and no slight ingenuity is required to make it burn at all without giving off foul vapours. The first effect of making the stuff hot is to give rise to the vilest smells, and unless all the gases so produced are made to go through a really hot fire, they escape unburnt and cause a nuisance. This difficulty, however, can be at once overcome by the use of a certain amount of coal generally used in a secondary furnace, which, however, is a very wasteful proceeding, unless the heat so produced can be employed for some useful purpose. It is here that the advantage of the Shoreditch plan comes in. The papers have descanted with much delight upon the wonder of being able to put in garbage at one end of the apparatus and get out electricity at the other. But there is nothing wonderful about that. Given a source of heat, however produced, and there is no difficulty, by the help of a boiler, in producing power.

What, however, is really good, from a sanitary point of view, in the Shoreditch plan of associating dust destruction with the electric light producing industry, is that it enables coal to be used if required without wastefulness. The success of the scheme seems to depend on obtaining a large market for the electricity produced, for the smaller the proportion which the garbage can be made to bear to the total fuel used, the greater will be the facility of ensuring its complete combustion.