

THE CHRONIC ILL HEALTH OF DARWIN, HUXLEY, SPENCER, AND GEORGE ELIOT.

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(Abstract.)

This paper was an inquiry into the chronic ill health of the individuals mentioned in the title, based on a study of their life and letters, and was illustrated by charts and diagrams. The paper was in line with former ones read before the Academy, and showed how the influence of city dust cropped out in the biographies of men and women.

The ability to live in a dusty city atmosphere differs greatly. Some individuals are scarcely influenced by city dust, others are very susceptible and complain or suffer constantly. The list of disease and symptom names used, especially by Huxley, is suggestive of dust infection—the symptoms subsiding on going away from the city and out into a good atmosphere. The symptom names were shown in groups and their significance pointed out. In a general way, living in a good atmosphere meant health, while living in a polluted one meant ill health. Seeming exceptions should be studied in the light of the experience of living individuals, susceptible to the same influences. In a city the season of the year and the direction and force of the wind have to be considered as factors. The evil influence of the East Wind is frequently referred to; an east wind means the blowing over of the dust and smoke from the heart of the city. City dust may be brought to a country resident, as in a lot of books from a city library; and where the books are read while in a reclining position the evil influence of the dust may be quite marked. A visit to a hall or room crowded with a mass of humanity may be followed by an attack of ill health. Where the symptoms are more or less continuous, nervous manifestations may predominate.

As a rule biographies dwell only lightly on the subject of health and disease and references may be quite vague; the *Life and Letters of Huxley* are an exception, and are worthy of a close study, especially by those who are influenced by city dust.