

The Story of Hair

the scalp follicles in producing condition. After all, inconvenient as such treatments may appear to be to the person who still has his full head of hair, they amount in exertion to much less than that used in a woman who has thirty-inch long hair to comb and dress daily. It is the heavy hair grower who keeps his limbs the most hair-free. Ladies of the mid-Victorian age brushed their hair from ten to fifteen minutes daily with a traction effort amounting to between sixty and one hundred pounds. The traction effort of the man or bob-haired woman of the present day rarely amounts to over two or three pounds per day which is entirely insufficient to attract all the hair the body produces to the scalp area.

CHAPTER XIV

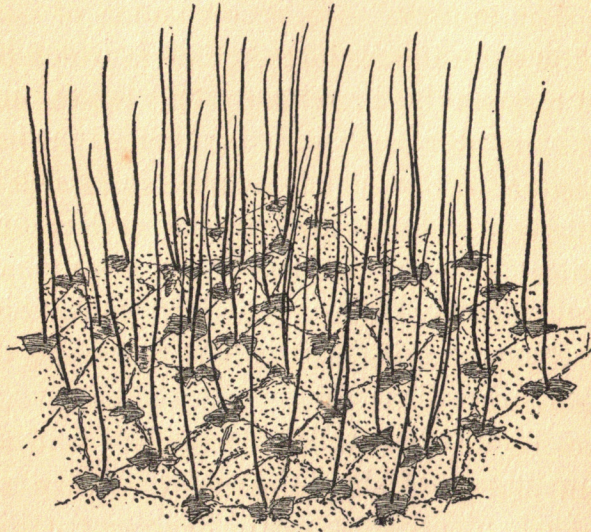
DANDRUFF AND OILY SCALPS

As the tiny hair workshops—the hair papillæ—located within the deepest scalp layers, produce hair cell after hair cell, another functionary—the sebaceous gland—situated in the depths of the scalp and next to each hair papilla—produces fat. There is a duct leading from the sebaceous gland to the hair follicle through which the sebum, as this fat is called, flows into the follicle, where it is absorbed by the newly constructed horny hair cells. As the hair cells are gradually pushed above the surface of the scalp this fat hardens into a waxlike substance. The sebaceous gland does not always meet the exact requirements of the hair. Sometimes, it produces less than the hair can absorb, in which case the hair loses some of its natural gloss. Very often, on the other hand, the gland produces more fat than is necessary and the overproduction is forced through the follicle to the surface

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by the hair, itself. It then forms into a little layer around the hair and is known as a dandruff scale.

The action of the sebaceous gland has been



THE SHADED PATCHES AT THE HAIR BASE REPRESENT DANDRUFF. IT EMANATES IN THE FORM OF OIL BUT DRIES INTO FLAKES WHEN APPEARING OVER THE COOL SCALP

sorely misunderstood in the past. A great many hair "specialists," or nostrum vendors, have made it responsible for various types of natural and unnatural hair losses to which our scalps are subject. These merchants of hope advertise that

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their preparation "cures dandruff and stops hair from falling." We have already learned that the hair fall, when it comes, is normally due to the natural law which produced it. Dandruff in an average cleanly person never interferes with hair growth. Any accumulation of dandruff on the scalp produces itching to which the child responds by scratching. This loosens and breaks up the scale and the itching ceases. Adults find the brush and comb a more refined substitute for the fingernails, but nevertheless, chemical dandruff treatments are quite popularly recognized. These consist of the application of salves or hair lotions which dissolve the sebaceous fat scales.

Among the best known "remedies"—and one of the oldest—is a salve made of vaseline and sulphur. There is a certain degree of danger connected with the use of solvents with a sulphur content, due to the fact that sulphur penetrates the scalp perforations, the hair follicles. If such remedies are frequently used, the result is almost invariably an oily scalp. This happens when the excretion from the sebaceous gland does not dry up as it emerges to the surface,

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but runs along the hair shafts, bringing the hair flat to the scalp. This condition is much more disadvantageous—especially to women—than the dandruff condition. The latter can always be kept normal by a daily brushing, but the oily condition requires frequent shampooing. This causes more irritation to the sebaceous gland and brings the condition to an extreme. In the meantime the hair shafts, that is, the hairs on the head, get brittle because the running sebum so softens the fat filling of the hair that it is easily removed by shampooing. The only dependable treatment in such cases is to dry-clean the scalp by means of absorbent paper pads. If this is thoroughly done, morning and night, the washing of the hair may be delayed from a few days to a week, and later on from a week to two weeks until the scalp gradually becomes dry again and produces dandruff, unless, in the meantime the gland production has become normal and sufficient for the hair itself.

An accumulation of dandruff, if permitted to remain on the scalp, will produce a crust and as such prevent the daily surplus fat exit. The fat,

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finding it difficult to press through this crust or lift it, finds its way to the hair base which is the bottom of the follicle. As it accumulates there it lifts the individual hair from its socket and pushes it to the surface. New hair will not form in the duct because the accumulated fat will prevent such formation. Hairs which are lifted from their follicles by the excess of sebaceous fat can be recognized by a little tail extending from the whitish hair bulb which is absent in the normally shedded hair, the latter appearing clean and round to the bare eye.

It is, however, important to recognize the fact that dandruff is a normal scalp condition and not a disease. Only in extreme cases is it productive of harm to the hair, while the attempts to remove or cure it by use of most of the remedies on the market, may lead to greater injury to the scalp and hair than the "affliction" itself.