

Taka diastase, being a dry powder, tasteless, and of no perceptible odor, can be given in very small bulk, and for this reason I think it will prove itself of value in infant feeding, where it is desirable to give starch-containing foods, provided said food would easily dissolve, and the infant's saliva could be relied upon to perform that function. That the new diastase is destined to become a favorite with the profession I have no doubt, having acquainted myself with its potency in converting starch in a minimum of time into a form ready for absorption by the system, and I think it will be found the very remedy for which we have waited so long.

The Pumice-Stone Industry of the Lipari Islands.

So extensive are the deposits of pumice in the island of Lipari that, according to a recent report of Mr. Norman Douglass, the supply is practically inexhaustible. It is said that good pumice is not so abundantly found as formerly, but this impression may be attributed to the fact that customers have of recent years become more fastidious, and not so easily satisfied with bad stone. That washed up by the sea is hardly ever collected nowadays. Pumice itself is a trachytic lava, rendered light and scoriaceous by the escape of gases, and every gradation can be traced from this condition to the heavy vitreous matter of similar composition known as obsidian. Good pumice contains 74 per cent. of silica, 12 per cent. of alumina, 5 per cent. of potash, 5 per cent. of soda, 2 per cent. of oxide of iron, and 2 per cent. of water, lime, etc. Most of the volcanoes of Lipari have ejected pumaceous rocks at some period or other, but the best stone of all is the product of one mountain, Monte Chirica, with its accessory craters, Monte Pelato and Forgia Vecchia. The district containing the deposit lies in the north-east of the island, and covers an area of about three square miles. The mineral is excavated in various parts of it—in the plateau of Castagna, near the seashore of Acqua Calda, and at one or two isolated points. To this end caves or burrows are dug into the layers of denuded lapilli or ashes that have gradually covered the pumice. They occasionally strike the mineral near the surface; at other times a thick mantle of white substance must first be pierced. Digging in such circumstances affords no difficulties. These caves are lighted at intervals by small terra-cotta lamps of antique form, and are so narrow that two men can hardly pass. The deficiency of air is soon felt. Sometimes when a stratum of pumice has been reached radiating galleries are constructed to gain a larger supply of pumice out of the soft material in which it lies imbedded. Some caves ascend, others descend. It is often a matter of speculation how soon pumice will be reached, so that many

tunnels are abandoned, while others are worked for long periods. The output may be large one day and almost exhausted the next, or the quality of the stone may change. It has been observed that certain localities produce certain qualities; thus some of the best pumice comes from Acqua Calda and Monte Pelato; an inferior quality, known as *alexandrina*, is found at Castagna. The number of caves actually in working has been estimated at 250, but this gives no idea of the number of workmen, as some caves can accommodate only three or four, others as many as fifteen, men. The number of cave workmen also fluctuates, according to their personal requirements and the season of the year, while the number of those employed in the workshops of the merchants at Lipari and Canneto depends upon the needs of the latter. It has been calculated that there are about 1,000 hands employed altogether, 600 of whom are engaged in extracting the mineral. Pumice is brought to the surface of the earth in large blocks or in baskets, and is carried thus either direct to the village of Canneto or to the nearest seashore, to be taken there in boats. About one-fourth subsequently reaches Lipari by sea, to be manipulated there. It is generally stored in the sheds of the merchants, and unless they are in a hurry to dispose of their stock it is allowed a month to get thoroughly dry; this reduces the weight and shows off the quality. Large blocks, weighing a stone and upwards, are allowed to crumble, according to their cleavage, into so-called *liscenti*, and all the pumice is then sorted, according to its size, into *grosse*, *correnti*, and *pezzame*—that is, into large, medium, and small pieces. The quality is primarily a matter of texture. As pumice is useful for polishing purposes in various trades, an essential condition is a certain homogeneity of structure and freedom from included crystals, etc. The stone must be neither too brittle nor too hard, and it is in these respects that the Lipari pumice surpasses that of other volcanic regions. After it has been divided, according to its size, the large stones (*grosse*) are again sorted in three superior qualities, called *fiore*, *quasi fiore*, and *mordente*. These are never filed. After they have been selected, the remainder of the *grosse* are filed by hand, in order to remove asperities of surface, and to test whether the stone is not too friable for use. They are then reclassified into first, second, and third pick (*bianco*, *dubbio*, and *nero*). Large pieces of inferior pumice, known as *rolonde*, are never trimmed. Besides this, there is an entirely different variety, so-called *alexandrina*, which is cut with hatchets into brick-shaped pieces, and used for smoothing oilcloth, and a heavy dark stone, *bastardone* (always trimmed), as well as many less important varieties. The *correnti*—commercially termed "sorts"—contain all varieties, and are generally exported as they are; the *pezzame* is usually, but not always, ground

to a powder of more ten different degrees of fineness, according to the work for which it is required. There are between twenty and thirty merchants engaged in the pumice-stone trade in the island of Lipari, the majority of whom live in the village of Canneto and are of Italian nationality. The better kinds of pumice are packed singly in paper and in barrels of different sizes, made at Lipari. Crates are also used, and the *pezzame* and powder are usually exported in second-hand Indian grain sacks. Formerly all the Lipari stone found its way to Leghorn, where the merchants sorted it and packed it for shipment, securing large profits. There is still a considerable quantity of *pezzame* ground there, as Lipari possesses only three mills: but the export has been gradually discontinued, and the dealers of the island now communicate direct with the consumers. The work in the *barache*, or workshops of the merchants—filing, etc.—is mostly done by women, who receive daily wages of about eighty centimes. As regards the destination of pumice, the French market demands the best stone, and differs from the British in not accepting filed material. In point of quantity imported, England probably stands first, then France and America, with Austria, Germany, and Belgium following. Large lumps, known as *testoni*, are sent to Trieste, to be ground to powder there. Almost all the *alexandrina* finds its way to England and the United States. A good deal of inferior pumice is also sent to St. Petersburg and Odessa. —*Oils, Colors, and Drysalteries.*

Substitute for Natural Sulphuretted Waters.

The fact that natural sulphuretted waters do not keep and travel well, losing their free sulphuretted hydrogen, and therefore their efficacy, has suggested the expedient of using a solution of monosulphide of sodium in diluted glycerin to serve as a "concentrated" water, which, when suitably diluted, is stated to possess all the efficacy of the natural sulphur spring (*Rev. Inter. de Méd. et Chirurg.*). The formula of this solution is: Monosulphide of sodium, 10 parts; distilled water, 40 parts; glycerin, 150 parts. Dissolve the sulphide in the water with a gentle heat and mix the solution at once with the glycerin. This solution keeps well and affords a sulphuretted water by mixing a teaspoonful with about 90 fluid ounces of water, previously boiled to expel the dissolved air, and cooled. A teaspoonful added to 9½ fluid ounces of syrup forms a convenient and portable form, of which half a teaspoonful in milk or water affords a ready means of administering the required dose. Obviously this preparation is incompatible with free acids. These should be neutralized with a little alkali before adding the sulphide solution.—*Pharmaceutical Journal.*