

## MISCELLANEOUS.

## THE ARSENIC-EATERS OF STYRIA :

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At the last meeting of the Manchester Philosophical Society, I observe that Dr. Roscoe called attention to the arsenic-eaters of Styria. Having for the last two years been in communication with the medical men and other residents in the district where this practice prevails, I shall feel obliged if you will allow me through your journal to make known the facts I have at present collected. The information is derived mainly from Dr. Lorenz, imperial Professor of Natural History, formerly of Salzburg; from Dr. Carle Arbele, Professor of Anatomy in Salzburg; and Dr. Kottowitz of Neuhaus, besides several non-medical friends. If human testimony be worth anything, the fact of the existence of arsenic-eaters is placed beyond doubt. Dr. Lorenz, to whom questions were first addressed, at once stated that he was aware of the practice, but added, that it is generally difficult to get hold of individual cases, as the obtaining of arsenic without a Doctor's certificate is contrary to law, and those who do so are very anxious to conceal the fact particularly from medical men and priests. Dr. Lorenz was, however well acquainted with one gentleman, an arsenic-eater, with whom he kindly put me in communication, and to whom I shall refer again more particularly. He also says that he knows arsenic is commonly taken by the peasants in Styria, the Tyrol and the Slazkammergut, principally by huntsmen and wood cutters to improve their wind and prevent fatigue. He gives the following particulars :

The arsenic is taken pure, in some warm liquid, as coffee, fasting, beginning with a bit the size of a pin's head, and increasing to that of a pea. The complexion and general appearance are much improved, and the parties using it seldom look so old as they really are; but he has never heard of any case in which it was used to improve personal beauty, though he cannot say that it never is so used. The first dose is always followed by symptoms of poisoning, such as burning pain in the stomach, and sickness, but not very severe.

Once begun, it can only be left off by very gradually diminishing the daily dose, as a sudden cessation causes sickness, burning pains in the stomach, and other symptoms of poisoning, very speedily followed by death.

As a rule arsenic-eaters are very long lived, and are peculiarly exempt from infectious diseases, fevers, etc.; but unless they gradually give up the practice, invariably die suddenly at last.

In some arsenic works near Slazburg, with which he is acquainted, he says the only men who can stand the work for any time are those who swallow daily doses of arsenic, the fumes, etc., soon killing the others. The director of these works, the gentleman before alluded to, sent me the following particulars of his own case. (The gentleman's name I suppress, as he writes that he does not wish the only thing known about him in England to be the fact that he is an arsenic-eater; but if any judicial inquiry should arise which might render positive evidence of arsenic-eating necessary, his name and testimony will be forthcoming.)

"At seventeen years of age, while studying assaying, I had much to do with arsenic and was advised by my teacher, M. Bonsch, Professor of Chemistry and Mineralogy at Eilseben, to begin the habit of arsenic-eating. I quote the precise words he addressed to me; 'if you wish to continue the study of assaying, and become hereafter superintendent of a factory, more especially of an arsenic factory, in which position there are so few, and which is abandoned by so many, and to preserve yourself from the fumes which injure the lungs of most, if not all, and to continue to enjoy your customary health and spirits, and to attain a tolerably advanced age, I advise you—nay, it is absolutely necessary, that besides strictly abstaining from spirituous liquors, you shall learn