

Health Department.

[A certain space in each number of this journal will be devoted to questions and answers of correspondents on all subjects pertaining to health and hygiene. This department is now in charge of an experienced Medical Practitioner, and it is believed that it will be found practically useful. Questions under this department should be as brief as possible and clear in expression. They should be addressed to the editor of this journal and have the words "Health Department" written in the lower left corner on the face of the envelope.—Ed.]

How to Get Asleep.

When I was a student I suffered much from sleeplessness, and, after trying many remedies, I hit upon this one: I discarded my feather pillow for one of hair. The effect was wonderful. I slept soundly the whole of the first night, and have never since, except when feverish, been so wakeful as I usually was before. Although feathers are excellent for preventing the dispersion of the heat of the body, so much fault has been found with feather beds that they have quite generally gone out of use, and it is strange that feather pillows have not been sent after them. Feathers in pillows are open to the same objections as feathers in beds, and even their chief virtue, that of keeping up a high temperature, is a defect in a pillow: certainly when one-half of the head is kept at blood heat by being buried in feathers, and the other half is exposed to the air, both halves cannot be at the most favorable temperature. A hair pillow does not get warmed up to an uncomfortable degree, because it rapidly conducts away the heat imparted to it by the head. Since hair pillows are not yet in common use, it might be supposed that a person accustomed to the use of one would either have to take it with him every time he was to be away from home for a few nights, or suffer considerable inconvenience. But fortunately hair bolsters are more common, and if the pillow is thrown aside the bolster will raise the head probably as high as is good for the sleeper. If a hair bolster is lacking, the end of the mattress may be raised high enough to make a comfortable head rest by putting the pillow under it.

According to most, but not all, medical writers, wakefulness and mental activity depend on the circulation of a large quantity of blood through the brain, and the flow of blood must be lessened before sleep can come on. I have obtained especial benefit from drawing the blood into the muscles by means of a brisk walk or a quarter to half an hour's vigorous performance of light gymnastics just before going to bed. The majority of cases of sleeplessness occur among persons who use their muscles but little, and for very many taking more exercise is the best remedy. Sleep can sometimes be brought on by simply warming the body, especially the feet; the drowsiness caused by sitting in a warm room is a familiar instance. The blood may be drawn to the skin by a cold shower or sponge bath, followed by a rubbing with a coarse towel. Getting out of bed for a few minutes when the air is cool will often bring relief. I have lain awake half the night, and then, after being up long enough to mix and drink a lemonade, have fallen asleep at once on going back to bed. Perhaps the lemonade should have part of the credit. On hot summer nights a cold bath will reduce the bodily temperature so as to admit of sleep. If the skin is not wiped quite dry, the evaporating moisture will increase the cooling effect. A light lunch just before going to bed relieves the brain by drawing the blood to the stomach, and the inclination to doze after a meal is explainable in this way. Diminishing the cerebral circulation by compression of the carotid arteries is advised by some physicians. Lying on the back with a doubled pillow placed against the back of the neck so as to tip the head forward will effect this, and Dr. J. L. Corning has invented an instrument in the form of a collar for the same purpose.

In view of what has been said about the circulation of the blood, coldness of the feet is a natural accompaniment of sleeplessness, and one means of cure may be made to serve both ends. Bathing the feet

in hot water is such a means, but after a few hours a reaction is liable to set in, which will send the blood from the feet to the head, and cause the sleeper to awake. It is better to take advantage of the reaction which follows a cold foot-bath with vigorous rubbing of the feet, both in the water and with the towel. The stimulus thus given to the circulation in the feet will be more permanent. I have found walking just before bed-time beneficial, and when I do not wish to go outdoors I raise myself sharply on my toes to the full stretch fifty or more times. A paragraph has recently been in circulation to the effect that a continuous low noise favors sleep; the sound of water dropping on a brass pan has been prescribed by a physician with good effect. The explanation seems to be that a simple monotonous impression quiets the brain by occupying it, to the exclusion of more varied and interesting, and therefore stimulating, impressions. On the same principle are the devices of counting forward or backward, imagining sheep jumping one by one through a gap, &c.; but they are open to the objection of causing one portion of the brain to be exerted in order to control the rest of it.

If the hygienic measures which have been described fail to induce sleep, probably some form of disease stands in the way, and a physician should be employed to discover and remove it. Soporific drugs should be regarded as a last resort, for, unless skillfully used, they produce a stupor rather than a refreshing sleep. Do not take a narcotic or nostrum at random because somebody says it is good to make you sleep; one narcotic is injurious where another is beneficial, and the chances are that you will choose one which will do you more harm than good.

Brain Difficulties.

The obscure diseases of the brain and disorders of the mind furnish material for countless volumes. So momentous are the consequences which follow in the train of whatever affects the material instrument through which the mind operates, and so extraordinary and enigmatical are the various modes by which healthy conditions depart and hidden phases of insanity appear, that the general reader feels almost the same interest in this class of subjects as does the educated physician. We face with comparative equanimity the thoughts of other disorders; we care little for medical discussions concerning their pathology; or symptoms of disorder. Cerebral excitement thrills the finely organized brain, and under the extreme tension caused by the high-pressure of the struggle for existence, for fame and for money, excitement becomes congestion; the brain is over-burdened. The results that follow are seen in every civilized community; brilliant men are smitten down in the full swing of their powers; softening of the brain, paralysis, apoplectic seizure and a multitude of obscure cerebral affections seem each year more common.

But it is said by the best authorities that in most cases the approach of these disorders is slow, insidious, and within the province of cure if taken in time. Organic disintegrations of the delicate nerve vesicles begin to show themselves in debilitated memory. The patient forgets the most trifling as well as the most important things. His mental grasp is fluctuant. Indeed, no test of the condition of the brain is equal to the memory. The vigorous cerebrum acts with unerring skill, reproducing in a thousand forms the events of the past, the infinity of operations that go to make up the life of even a single day. But a flaw in the brain-surface in the impairment of certain classes of impressions. Hence the morbid psychological features of impaired memory, the curious vagaries, the unaccountable eccentricities that are revealed. It is related in medical works that an old soldier having lost brain-matter from an operation, was found to have no knowledge whatever of the numbers five and seven. A school-teacher who had brain fever forgot the letter F. One of the oddest impairments of memory was in the case of a Scotch farmer, early in the century, who had a paralytic fit, and as a result he became unable to recollect proper names or substantives.

The faculties of the brain deserve more

universal study. The hidden wand of "unconscious cerebration" has solved many a difficulty for much puzzled students. The healthy brain can select and arrange facts by means of an elimination process going on unconsciously. It is not conscious at night, but it is an operation of the mind by which in secrecy and silence the grain is sifted from the chaff.—[The Hour.

Strength and Health.

It is quite a common idea that health keeps pace with strength. I know intelligent persons who really think that you may determine the comparative health of a company of men by measuring their arms—that he whose arm measures twelve inches is twice as healthy as he whose arms measure but six. This strange and thoughtless misapprehension has given rise to nearly all the mistakes thus far made in the physical-culture movement. I have a friend who can lift nine hundred pounds, and yet is an habitual sufferer from torpid liver, rheumatism, and rather low spirits.

There are many similar cases. The cartmen of our cities, who are our strongest men, are far from the healthiest class, as physicians will testify. On the contrary I have many friends who would stagger under three hundred pounds that are in capital trim. But I need not elaborate a matter so familiar with physicians and other observing people. No test of health would prove more faulty than a tape-line or a lift at the scale beam.

Suppose two brothers—bank clerks—in bad health. They are measured round the arm. Each marks exactly ten inches. There are the scale-beams. The bar raises at exactly three hundred pounds with each. Both seek health. John goes to the gymnasium, lifts heavy dumb-bells and kegs of nails until he can put up one hundred and twenty-five pounds, and lift nine hundred and his arm reaches fifteen inches.

Thomas goes to the mountains, fishes, hunts, spends delightful hours with the young ladies and plays cricket.

Upon measuring his arm we find it scarcely larger than when he left town, while he can't put up sixty pounds nor lift five hundred. But who doubts Thomas will return to the counter the better man of the two? John should be the better man, if strength is the principal or most essential condition of health.

A Cheap Disinfectant.

In workshops, factories, and places generally where numbers of people are congregated together, the removal of foul smells and evil odors is often not only a matter affecting the comfort of a great many persons, but is frequently of the utmost importance on sanitary grounds. The knowledge, therefore, of how to obtain a cheap disinfectant at a trifling cost, may prove of service to a great many, and cannot, in fact, be too widely spread.

Many solutions of metallic chlorides are useful for this purpose, owing to their ready decomposition, and without being open to the same objection as the so-called "chloride of lime," so generally used, the smell from which, however, is to many people as offensive, or even more so, than the smell it is intended to destroy.

Dr. Goulden, of St. Thomas' Hospital, London, first brought into notice a solution of chloride of lead as being inodorous, more effective, and procurable at almost infinitesimal cost. Purchased in the form of chloride of lead, it would cost about fifty cents per pound, but may readily be obtained from the nitrate of lead—which may be purchased at about twelve cents per pound—and common salt, as follows:

Take half a drachm of nitrate of lead, dissolved in a pint or more of boiling water, and dissolve two drachms of common salt in a pail or bucket of water. Pour the two solutions together, and allow the sediment to subside. The clear, supernatant fluid will be a saturated solution of chloride of lead.

"If the general public," says Dr. Stone, "would have their areas and dust-bins disinfected with the above solution, it would conduce materially to the health and comfort of the community at large."

A cloth dipped in this solution and hung up in a room, will sweeten the atmosphere instantly, and it will also have a similar effect on sinks, etc.

Pain in the Chest.

Pain in the chest may be stinging, burning, or lacerating in character; it may be dull and continuous, or sharp and only occurring at intervals. Patients also frequently complain of weight, oppression, constriction, and tightness in the chest. Sharp pain is most often due either to neuralgia or pleurisy. Dull pain in the right or left side, beneath or between the shoulders, may be due to affections of the liver, spleen, or stomach, as well as to pulmonary disease. A stinging or burning pain beneath the breast-bone is one of the symptoms of chronic bronchitis.

Treatment.—The best remedy for pain in the chest is the application of hot fomentations once or twice a day; and if the pain is chronic, the application of a warm compress to be worn through the night. Extensive pain in the chest may require a chest pack. A stitch in the side and the acute pain of pleurisy are often very greatly mitigated by the application of a soft woolen bandage, drawn tightly about the chest, in such a way as to restrain the movement of the affected part in respiration. The same end may be reached by applying a large pitch plaster or several adhesive strips over the affected part.

MEDICAL QUERIES.

J. B. D., PARK HILL.—Q. Can you give me a remedy for rough skin; peels off in small thin white scales; skin very rough and dry? A. Take of orange-flower water 19 fluid ounces; best glycerine 1 fluid ounce; borax $\frac{1}{2}$ of an ounce. Mix. This is an excellent skin preservation and wash.

C. L., LECESTER.—Q. Will hydropathy or mesmerism cure sciatic? A. "Sciatica," like other forms of neuralgia, yields to the hot air bath, and other forms of hydropathy. Electricity or Mesmerism will cure it. In all these cases nervous exhaustion leads to nerve diseases.

A. J. S., LONDON.—Q. A friend of mine suffers greatly from dyspepsia, but refuses to take medicine for it. What diet would you recommend me to give him? A.—You may probably find the diet he needs in good brown, toasted or rusked, a small portion of milk eaten with bread, and some good fruit—baked or raw apples, stewed raisins, stewed figs, etc. This diet cures many dyspepsies, and favours the cure of many ailments.

A Simple Dietary.

According to Count Rumford, the Bavarian wood chopper, one of the most hardy and hard-working men in the world, receives for his weekly rations one large loaf of rye bread and a small quantity of roasted meal. Of the meal he makes an infusion, to which he adds a little salt, and with the mixture, which he calls burned soup, he eats his rye bread. No beer, no beef, no other food than that mentioned, and no drink but water; and yet he can do more work, and enjoys a better digestion and possesses stronger muscles than the average beef-eating Englishman or sausage-eating Dutchman.

Those who talk about starvation diet when a man simply excludes flesh and a few unwholesome condiments from his dietary, should consider facts of this sort before becoming too loud in their denunciations.

Glycerine for Goryza and Hay Fever.

The season for hay fever is past, but acute colds in the head are now in order. An East India physician claims to secure relief in these cases by the application of plugs of cotton wool saturated with glycerine, retaining them a few minutes after each application.

Santonine.

When used as a vermifuge, should always be mixed with castor oil, which renders it more efficient in destroying the vitality of the parasites, and prevents its absorption into the system, thus precluding the possibility of poisoning.

Ladies.

I wonder how I
The berries in
How can I tell
There must be
choices.

If there a part
I dare to play
I choose with
And life is not

A partner for
Whose faults
I care,
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