

Diet and Medicine in China.

A writer in the *Cornhill Magazine* remarks that the commonly received opinion that the Chinese as a nation habitually feed on rats and mice is quite erroneous, though in the city of Canton "spatchcock" rats—that is, rats split open and dried—are commonly sold in the streets for edible purposes. Boiled rat is supposed to be good for rheumatism and chills, and also to make the hair grow more rapidly. The flesh of camels, donkeys, and goats, is regularly eaten, without much regard being had to the manner in which the animals meet their death; birds' nests of gelatinous nature and sea slugs are invariably present at first-class Chinese feasts, and human milk is hawked about for sale in Amoy, old men being the purchasers. Turtles' sinews are considered good for pains in the joints, and in Nanking there is a local custom of chewing horses' sinews. The skin and bones of deceased elephants are kept for the Emperor's consumption when unwell, and His Majesty's father is said to have been cured of some malady by means of donkey's skin, whilst ground rhinoceros horn is considered to be of great therapeutic virtue. Sharks' fins are nearly always given with a big dinner, and castor oil is said to be sometimes used in cookery. Wild Manchurian ginseng is described worth its weight in gold. It is used as a food tonic, and marvellous "repairing" qualities are attributed to it.

Preserving Leeches.

The *Pharmaceutische Zeitung* recommends the following manner of keeping leeches. A thin layer of coarse washed sand is strewn on the bottom of the container, together with some clean washed straw. This requires renewal every six months, and according to the season, the water—of which about one litre suffices ten leeches—must more or less frequently be replaced, thoroughly cleaning the jar each time. Treated in this manner, the leeches retain their vitality almost indefinitely, so that a loss is only very rarely met with.

Poisoning by Areca Nut.

Dr. E. H. Cook records a case of dog poisoning by powdered areca nut. A tablespoonful was mixed with half a teacupful of castor oil, and divided amongst four Dachshund puppies. In less than five minutes they experienced great difficulty in breathing, coughed slightly, and fell down on one side. An emetic of salt and water had the desired effect in two cases, but the other two puppies gradually got weaker and died in ten minutes. A third dog died five hours later, in spite of the successful administration of the emetic. An alkaloidal substance was subsequently found in the dogs' stomachs, but in too small quantity to ascertain whether or not it was arecoline. No other injurious substance could be detected. —*Chemical News*.

Witch Hazel Extract.

The following is taken from a recent number of *Claffin's Druggist*, a monthly issued by a drug jobbing firm: As a household remedy witch hazel extract is valuable only when properly made from the true witch hazel shrub, gathered at the proper time of the year, distilling it with pure spring water, and then adding the proper quantity of pure grain alcohol. We know that much inferior witch hazel extract has been sold to grocers, department stores, and to others who have no way of testing the quality of the goods. We know that wood alcohol, which is a poison internally and an irritant externally, is often used instead of grain alcohol, and as wood alcohol costs eighty-five to ninety cents a gallon less than grain alcohol, the inferior witch hazel is often sold at a much lower price than that made with pure grain alcohol. We also know that much of the witch hazel sold as 15 per cent. is not over 10 or 12 per cent. proof, and in many cases wood alcohol at that. We know that many who are travelling to sell the article do not know a good article from a poor one, and they cannot tell how it is made, or from what part of the shrub, or the process of making; in fact, they are selling goods they know nothing about, and for which the buyer has to stand all the responsibility. Some makers of witch hazel claim they add the alcohol to the shrub before distilling, thus getting a stronger extract. Buyers of witch hazel should not be taken in by this claim. We very much doubt if this is ever done. Even so, anyone who knows anything about distilling knows that as soon as the still is started the alcohol would separate at once from the witch hazel shrub, making a loss of alcohol and waste of labor. Witch hazel is often offered at a less price per gallon than the genuine article would cost if fortified with grain alcohol.

Yohimbebe Bark and Yohimbin.

The natives of Cameroon have long understood the powerful aphrodisiac properties of the rind of a tree known as the yohimbebe, and make use of it for such purposes. The rind is of a chocolate brown color, extremely hard, and ranges from half an inch to an inch in thickness.

Professor L. Spiegel has succeeded in isolating an alkaloid which he named yohimbin. When employed as an aphrodisiac, yohimbin produces remarkable effects on the human frame. The alkaloid crystallizes from an alcoholic solution, in white needles of a dullish lustre, which melt at 231° C. They dissolve with difficulty in water, but are readily amenable to most other solvents.

In addition to this alkaloid, a second base, yohimbimin, melting between 105° and 106° C., has been found. —*Chemiker Zeitung*.

Toxicity of Picric Acid and Its Salts and other Derivatives.

Th. Bokomy reports that free picric acid is a strong poison to algae but not to fungi. Ammonium picrate is poisonous to the lower organisms, as is the potassium salt. They are almost as active as the free acid, the toxicity of which to the higher animals and to man has not been satisfactorily determined. *o*-nitrobenzoic acid is very strongly poisonous to algae and the lower animals, its potassium salt is decidedly injurious to the higher plants, algae and infusoria, also nitrobenzene, *o*-nitrophenol, and *p*-nitrophenol are poisonous in a greater or less degree. All the author's experiments confirm Læw's conclusion "that the action of the nitro-group becomes enfeebled when strongly negative groups as the carboxyl or sulpho group are present in the molecule." —*Süddeutsche Apotheker-Zeitung*.

The Costliest Thing in the World.

The announcement that charcoal thread used as filaments in incandescent electric lamps, costing about \$12,000 a pound, was the dearest substance in the world, has elicited considerable discussion. A Chicago authority states that gallium is vastly more expensive than the carbon filament, 1 1/2 grains of it being worth \$25, or about \$100,000 per pound. He also furnishes a list of the rare metals, with their approximate prices per pound:

Beryllium and lanthanum.	\$.10,000
Rhodium and thorium.....	6,000
Didymium and rubidium.	4,000
Indium and tantalum	3,500
Erbium, niobium and yttrium	3,000
Rhutenium and vanadium	2,000

—*Key Stone*.

Sign Painting on Glass.

According to *Neueste Erfindungen*, a new process has been devised, whereby the design is drawn full size on paper. The letters are then cut out, taking care to keep the edges clean and sharp, and pasted on the glass, in the same position they occupy on the drawing. The glass inside of the boundary of the sign is then painted with the background color, cutting in sharp round the edges of the pasted-on letters. When the paint is dry, the paper is removed by moistening, and gold or aluminum leaf applied to the vacant spaces, or colored mica or thin scales of mother-of-pearl may be scattered over the semi-dry gold size, and finally backed up by a coat of lacquer. Of course, this applies to sign work on the inside of glass windows, or similar places.

The Mexican maguery tree (century plant) furnishes a needle and thread all ready for use.