

the "Fly Amanita" and one or two more at least are as deadly as the venom of a tropical serpent. There appears to be some variation in the strength of the "Fly Amanita," perhaps due to the variety or its particular environment, and in some parts of the world its toxic power has been utilized without serious results. But as a rule it has been found to be deadly here, as *A. vernus* has been without any exception.

Moreover, there is evidence to show that at some times at least, the odor or handling of some amanitas has produced serious symptoms of poisoning immediately, and even a few hours after when absorption through the skin was suspected.

In addition it has been found that one poisonous fungus in a basket of good ones had communicated some of its poisonous properties to the others so as to make them poisonous. Such well attested cases show how careful we must be if we are to use the many delicious and nourishing species which are as valuable for food as the finest meat, as well as being specially appetizing.

Bearing all these points in mind, you can proceed with your study of the fungi more safely than before—in fact without any danger at all. And when you commence to observe next spring, be on the lookout not to be too free with any thing like the "Spring" or "Deadly" Amanita, even if you are only bringing it for examination to the schoolroom.

RULES FOR TESTING FUNGI.

(By W. Hamilton Gibson).

1. Avoid every mushroom having a cup or suggestion of such at the base of the stem (the volva of the Amanitas); the distinctly fatal poisonous ones are thus excluded.
2. Exclude those having an unpleasant odor, a peppery, bitter, or other unpalatable flavor, or tough consistency.
3. Exclude those infested with worms, or in advanced age or decay.
4. In testing others which will pass the above probation let the specimen be *kept by itself*, not in contact with or enclosed in the same basket with other species.

The modus operandi. Begin by a mere nibble, the size of a pea, and gentle mastication, being careful to swallow no saliva, and finally expelling all from the mouth. If no noticeable results follow, the next trial, with the *interval of a day*, with the same quantity, may permit the swallowing of a little of the juice, the fragments of the fungus being expelled as before.

No unpleasantness following for twenty-four hours, the third trial may permit of a similar entire fragment being swallowed, all of these experiments to be made on "an empty stomach." If this introduction of the actual

substance of the fungus into the stomach is succeeded by no disturbance in twenty-four hours, a larger piece, the size of a hazel-nut, may be attempted, and thus the amount increased day by day until the demonstration of the edibility, or at least harmlessness, is complete, and the species thus admitted into the safe list. By following this method with the utmost caution, the experimenter can, at best, suffer but a slight temporary indisposition as the result of his hardihood, in the event of a noisome species having been encountered, and will at least thus have the satisfaction of the discovery of an enemy or a friend.

It may be said that any mushroom, *omitting the Amanita*, which is pleasant to the taste and otherwise agreeable, as to odor and texture when raw, is probably harmless, and may safely be thus *ventured on* with a view of establishing its edibility. A prominent authority on our edible mushrooms, McIlvaine, applies this rule to all Agarics with confidence. "This rule may be established," he says: "All Agarics—excepting the Amanitas—mild to the taste when raw, if they commend themselves in other ways, are edible."

This claim is borne out in his experience, with the result that he now numbers over one hundred species among his habitual edible list out of the three hundred which he has actually found by personal test to be edible or harmless. "*So numerous are toadstools*," he continues, "*and so well does a study of them define their habits and habitats, that the writer never fails upon any day from April to December to find ample supply of healthy, nutritious, delicate toadstools for himself and family.*"

For the REVIEW].

The Study of the History of Art—A Suggestion.

The educational importance of the cultivation of taste is now so universally recognized that a suggestion for the systematic study of the History of Art can hardly be out of place in these pages.

Though a knowledge of technique may not be necessary to the enjoyment of Art, yet for the intelligent appreciation of the artist's motive and achievement some knowledge of his time and surroundings is indispensable. How utterly unjust it would be to compare the attenuated forms of Cimabue's Madonnas of the thirteenth century with the perfect drawings of Vedder and Abbey, and yet in our ignorance of what to expect we make just as foolish comparisons, laughing where we should reverence and criticising where we should humbly learn.

The History of Art teaches us what to expect in a picture, what to look for in a gallery, and why some of the least attractive looking works are the most valuable.