

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.—E.D.]

Evils of Mouth Breathing.

Many people sleep with the mouth open, and thus make this organ perform a duty which should be transacted by the nose. There are many objections to this, and Dr. Wagner clearly points them out. The air in passing through the channels of the nose, for instance, is raised to the temperature of the body before it reaches the larynx. Thus breathing, no matter how low the temperature may be, the sense of cold is never felt below the border of the soft palate. But when a person breathes through the mouth on a cold day the sensation proceeds as far as the larynx, and an irritating cough may be caused. Then, again, the nose breathing the air is moistened by the natural secretions which cover the turbinated bones in a condition of health, and the short, bristly hairs at the entrance of the nostrils act as a filter to arrest impurities and reduce the likelihood of laryngeal, bronchial, or pulmonary disease. Infants, athletes, savages, and animals breathe through the nose—the ordinary civilized man employs the mouth to an unnecessary and often to a very injurious extent.

The causes of mouth breathing are myriad. Complete or partial closure of the passages, polypos, congenital bony closure, enlarged tonsils, protruding teeth, adhesion of the soft palate to the posterior wall of the pharynx—all these are sufficient causes of mouth breathing. The indications are not so subtle as not to be readily recognized. Retracted lip, pen-mouth, receding gums, protruding teeth, shrunken alae, decreased size of the nostrils' orifices, wrinkles at the eyes' outer angles, and lines extending from the alae to the mouth angles, are the predominant signs. The effects of mouth breathing upon the pharynx are often most deplorable. The mucous membrane becomes much irritated. A chronic engorgement of the blood vessels may take place, until permanent dilatation of the vessels is produced, and so until the disease known as *clergy man's sore throat* is produced. The writer devotes a part of his space to showing the bad results of sleeping with the mouth open, and suggests an appropriate remedy. If all snorers were to adopt it one of the most disagreeable noises of the night would be silenced, for people who breathe through their nose habitually while sleeping rarely snore, and when they do it is because of some abnormal condition of the mucous membrane that interrupts the flow of air.—*Phrenological Journal*.

Poisoning.

In the year 1881 there were 539 deaths recorded in England alone from poisoning, while the year 1882 shows a record considerably in excess—this, viz., 559, or one in every 868 of the total deaths registered. Fully two-fifths of these cases are classified under the heading "Accident and Negligence;" the remainder are suicides, and as it is not too much to assume that in nearly every instance such cases are preventable, we purpose calling attention to some of the more common causes of the fatalities, in the hope that the suggestions and warnings thrown out may not be without their influence in producing more care in the handling and use of these dangerous substances. Glancing over the various poisons, we find that the well-known preparations of opium, laudanum, and morphine—opium itself being included—lead the list, having caused 55 deaths through accident or negligence. This might have been expected from preparations so largely used in domestic remedies; but

the 78 deaths from lead poisoning which follow do surprise us, in view of the fact that the conditions which produce as well as the conditions which mitigate or counteract the effects of this subtle poison are now so well known. Lead is followed by the four stronger acids—hydrochloric, nitric, sulphuric, and carbolic—which among them have caused 34 deaths under the same category. Arsenic, again, caused 9; phosphorus, 11; chloroform, 6; chloral, 14; chloroform, 4; soothing syrup, 4, with a host of casualties from substances of minor importance. Reading between the lines of the Registrar-General's report, which it is not difficult to do with the help of the medical journals, we will find that there are two prolific causes of these accidents—first, the giving or taking of overdoses of certain remedies containing poison, and, second, the substitution of one bottle or substance for another, as, for example, where a number of substances are congregated together, as in the case of the domestic cupboard. In the first class may be instanced the giving of overdoses of opiates or soothing preparations to children; the taking of overdoses of narcotics or soothing compounds, such as chloral, by habitual drinkers, and the general familiarity which the handling or using of these powerful agents frequently begets in those habitually using them. In the second class may be instanced such mistakes as the substituting of one bottle containing, say, a poisonous liniment for a mixture intended for internal administration; the hasty and foolish practice of quaffing off a draught from any jug, bottle, or dish without examining the contents, and, lastly, mistakes caused from accumulating within easy access powerful medicines in the hope that they may come of future use.—*Chambers Journal*.

Tobacco-Smoke.

M Zulinsky has recently published, says the *British Medical Journal*, in a Polish medical paper, the result of a large series of experiments on men and animals, made for the purpose of ascertaining the physiological action of tobacco smoke on animals. He has found that the smoke is a powerful poison, even in very small quantities. In the case of man, tobacco-smoke, when not inhaled too freely, is deleterious only to a limited extent. M. Zulinsky declares that the poisonous character of the smoke is not entirely due to the nicotine which it contains. Tobacco smoke rendered free from nicotine remains poisonous, though not to so great a degree as before. The second poisonous principle is alkalioid—collidine. Carbonic oxide, hydrocyanic acid, and other noxious principles are also contained in tobacco-smoke. The bad effects of excessive smoking depend very much both on the kind of tobacco consumed and on the manner of consuming it. In cigar smoking the greatest amount of poison is inhaled, in cigarettes much less, in pipes still less, while those who indulge in the nargileh, or any similar luxury where the smoke is drawn through water take tobacco in its least mischievous form. Such are M. Zulinsky's conclusions. There can be little doubt that many of the light-colored tobaccos have been partially bleached in order to give them that pale tint which moderate smokers believe to be an infallible indication of mildness. The discoloring agent is suspected to be in many places a deleterious chemical compound. Some of the light tobaccos smoke exceedingly hot, owing to the quantity of woody fibre which they contain. This is especially the case with "birds-eye," which is cut near the stalk of the leaf, the slices of the mid-rib, thick in this part of the leaf, giving this variety of tobacco the characteristic appearance whence it derives its name. "Birds-eye" is apt to cause slight inflammation of the tongue, on account of the irritant character and heat of its smoke, and, together with other light tobaccos, must act very prejudicially in elderly smokers, who may be prone to cancer of the tongue or lip. Dark tobaccos are readily adulterated; but, when pure, they are probably the most healthy for pipe-smoking.

Premature Baldness.

O. Lassus has continued his observations on the nature of premature baldness, and has further convinced himself of the communicability of at least the form associated with dandruff. When the hairs which fall off in such cases are collected, rubbed up with vaseline, and the ointment so made is rubbed among the fur of rabbits or white mice, baldness rapidly makes itself visible on the parts so treated. That this is not due to the vaseline was shown by anointing other animals with the vaseline alone, which produced no effect whatever. He considers that the disease is spread by hair dressers, who employ combs and brushes on their customers, one after another, without any regular cleansing of these articles after each time they are used. During frequent visits to the hair dressers it can scarcely fail that brushes are used which have been shortly before dressing the hair of one affected with so common a complaint as scaly baldness. Females, he thinks, are less often affected with this form of baldness, because the hairdresser more frequently attends to them at their own homes, and their uses their combs and brushes. In order to prevent as far as possible the commencement of alopecia prematura, the hair should be cut and dressed at home, and with one's own implements, and these thoroughly clean. When it has begun, the following mode of treatment is suggested: The scalp is to be daily well soaped with tar or fluid glycerine potash soap, which is to be rubbed in for fifteen minutes firmly. The head is then to be drenched with first warm water, and then gradually colder water. A two per cent. corrosive sublimate lotion is next to be pretty freely applied. The head is then to be dried, and the roots of the hair are to have a one-half per cent. solution of naphthol in spirit rubbed into them. Finally, a pomade of 1½ to 2 per cent. of carbolic or salicylic oil is to be used on the head. This treatment has now in many cases brought the disease not only to a stand, but the hair has been to a considerable extent restored.

Premature Deaths.

Strong men lose their lives by imprudent acts, while the weak, compelled to take care of themselves, often live to old age. Few men live as long as they should, because few abstain from violating some law of health. The late Dr. Marion Sims, the founder of the Woman's Hospital in New York, said that most men die prematurely, even when they die of old age.

Among these premature deaths he mentions that of Peter Cooper, who imprudently exposed himself at the age of ninety-three, took cold, and died of pneumonia. Capt. Labouche, who died a few years ago in New York at the age of one hundred and eleven, also died prematurely from a cold caused by imprudent exposure.

Dr. Sims says that his own father died prematurely at the age of seventy-eight, because he did what he ought not to have done. One hot day in July, he rode thirty miles in the saddle. Having stabled his horse, he began chopping wood.

Suddenly the axe dropped from his hands, and he was paralyzed. The long ride in the sun had over-heated and fatigued his body. The violent chopping overtaxed heart and lungs, and threw the blood too forcibly to the brain. A blood-vessel in the brain gave way, letting out the blood, which, forming a clot, produced paralysis.

"As all this occurred as the result of an imprudent and unnecessary act," says Dr. Sims, "I am justified in saying that father died prematurely at the age of seventy-eight; for I am sure that without this he would have lived to be ninety-five, as his grandfather did before him."

The strength of the strong is often their weakness, while the feebleness of the weak is their strength.

How to Remove Scars.

Scars on the face are always unsightly, and may occasion pain or inconvenience on account of their propensity to contract as they become older. The pressure on the nerves of the neighboring tissues by their constriction is sometimes an occasion of severe pain. Dr. Wark, of New York, as-

serts that scars may be removed or much altered by manipulation, which he directs to be made as follows: Place the ends of two or three fingers on a scar, if it be a small one, and on the margin, if it be large and vibrato the surface on the tissues beneath. The surface itself is not to be subjected to any friction; all the motion must be between the integument and the deeper parts. The location of the vibratile motion should be changed every ten or fifteen seconds until the whole scar has been treated, if it be of moderate size. If the scar be the result of a large scald or burn, the margins only should be treated at first; the advances towards the centre should be deferred until the nutrition of the margins has been decidedly improved. Only a little treatment should be applied to any one spot at the same time, but the vibrations should be repeated as many as twenty times a day, but never with sufficient frequency to severity to cause pain. If the scar be very irritable, suspend treatment until it subsides. In the course of two or three weeks, if faithful of treatment, the surfaces of the scar moderate size become more movable, and will begin to form wrinkles like true skin when pressed from side to side. All these changes are due to improved nutrition, consequent on better blood circulation—the development of new sets of blood-vessels in the cicatricial tissue.

Precautions in Taking Stimulants.

Never take stimulants in moments of extreme exhaustion. That is precisely the time and state when there is especial need of discharging the last remains of energy and leaving the nervous centres to exhaust and powerless to recuperate. Then is in nervous action, as in mechanical action, a dead point at which inertia becomes imminent. Never take more of a stimulant than will suffice to stir the energies gently. If you want to incite a horse to action you must not whip him more than will suffice to rouse him. If more than this be done strength will be exhausted by irritation. Never forget that stimulants are excitants, and only when they excite to recuperation, i. e., to the formation of new reserved strength, as well as to the consumption of the strength in the hand—can they be useful or even safe. Never persist in the use of stimulants for the alleviation of feelings of mental or muscular weakness or weariness, if the relief obtained is followed by "depression of spirits," "coldness of the feet," or "prostration" either of mind or body; because when these consequences ensue after a temporary revival of tone and power it is manifest that the recuperative faculty is either not properly stimulated or is itself exhausted, and harm instead of good is being done by the stimulation.

MEDICAL QUERIES.

A. McG., St. George.—Q. I have had a running car for over twenty years, cured by scarlet fever. Could you recommend a cure? The hearing is entirely gone. There is no hope, I fear, for your case.

BATAVIA.—My wife is troubled with ache in her stomach at intervals of from 1 to 30 hours, no regular time and not always in the same place. She says that she cannot explain it better than to say it is like the jumping toothache. We would like to have your opinion on the matter, whether you think it dyspepsia, neuralgia, or what else it could be, as well as the remedy. In all probability it is dyspepsia. The safest plan would be to consult some reliable homoeopathic physician without delay.

S. SALINGROVE, Pa.—1st Q. Can you give me best remedy for a broken-down nervous system, both through excesses in youth and dyspepsia, weak urinary system, and enlarged liver, and weak digestive organs? 2nd Q. A sea voyage, or a season at a pleasant watering-place, such as Saratoga or Ballston, Spa. Take a tablespoonful of the following mixture three times daily before your meal: Tincture of nux vomica, dr. 1; dilute phosphoric acid, dr. 2; infusion of quassia, oz. 8. 2nd Q. I have a relative who has much pain in the lower lip. There are many small red and blue veins in the lip. Is it cancer? If so, what should be used? If not, what is it? Scars are on inside. 2nd A. It is probably cancer. Should consult a surgeon. If cancer, it will cut out.

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