

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.)

Medical Knowledge in Ancient Times.

In view of what has been said to disparage ancient medical knowledge and science at the time of the Exodus will be a very great mistake, and one entirely fatal as a foundation whereupon to build an argument against "healing by faith."

But suppose it could be shown that medical knowledge at that time was but little better than guess-work, what shall be said about the practice of medicine at the beginning of the Christian era?

Was it so powerless also that God was compelled again to undertake the cure of His people?

Dr. C. C. Bombaugh in his book called "Gleanings" under the head of "Nothing New under the Sun" says:

Hervy discovered the circulation of the blood in 1619; but from a passage in Longinus (chapter xxii), which the "Father of Critica" obtained from the "Timæus" of Plato, we learn that this fact was known at least two thousand years before. Dr. Bombaugh further shows, that the use of anaesthetics to deaden pain in surgical operations, was well known in the time of Christ. Dr. Morton of Boston, in 1846, first practically adopted the vapor of sulphuric ether in surgery, while Dr. Simpson of Edinburgh, in 1847, first applied chloroform; but, he adds, the idea of thus deadening the pain and torture under the knife, etc., by the use of juices of poppy, henbane, mandragora, and other narcotic preparations, disappears in the darkness of a remote antiquity. Herodotus, in the fifth century B.C., describes the Scythians as using the vapor of hempseed to produce stupefaction. From the account of our blessed Lord's crucifixion we know that "vinegar mingled with gall" (Matt. xxvii: 34), was one, at least, of the mixtures administered to alleviate the horrors of such a death.

Pliny, the naturalist, Dioscorides, a Greek physician of Cilicia, Apuleius of Madoura, all of whom lived in the first and second centuries of our era, describe the use of mandragora, rocket, and a stone called Memphis, which, when powdered and mixed with vinegar, was applied to those about to have a member "mutilated, burned, or saved."

The doctor also cites the Chinese, saying, "they understood, ages before they were introduced into Christendom, the use of substances containing iodine, for the cure of goitre, and employed spurred rye (ergot) to shorten dangerously prolonged labor in difficult accouchments."

They used moxa, and gave a preparation of hemp, when incisions or amputations were necessary, and quotes from one of their famous medical works, in the library at Paris, the following sentence: "After a certain number of days, the patient recovered, without having experienced the slightest pain during the operation."

In the winter of 1870, a physician, in the city of New York, said, "To show you that there is 'no new thing under the sun,' I will give you a bit of my experience." He then related how he had been for a long time perfecting a surgical instrument of complicated structure. Going down town one day, and being attracted by some photographs in a store window, he turned aside to look at them. To his complete astonishment he saw his own instrument, part for part, pictured amongst these "antiquities," dug out of Herculaneum and Pompeii. Eighteen centuries ago, therefore, the practice of surgery had reached a point where as complicated an instrument was required as in the same practice in 1870. When we consider the

length of time, experience and knowledge needed to produce such an instrument, we can see to what a state of perfection surgery had been brought at that time. This is a fact of great importance in such an inquiry as the present.

Such, then, in brief, is the testimony as to the extent of medical knowledge at the time when St. James wrote his epistle. Surely it does not appear, from the evidence, that God was obliged to heal Christians on account of any insufficiency in the "healing art."

We, in this nineteenth century, have an impression that we know all things, and look back upon the past as times of comparative darkness and ignorance.

Spiritually, we are the real "Ancients," for we stand upon the vantage ground of the Christian ages, and fulfilled prophecies, and have seen and heard those things, which "many prophets and kings have desired to see and hear." But, intellectually, we are in no way superior to the men of old.

The human mind came from the Creator's hand, fully armed and equipped.

The "Ancients" are yet our models in all that is known, and our superiors in the "lost arts." Because the remaining account of their knowledge in many particulars is limited, that by no means proves their ignorance.

In ancient times, learning was not the property of the many, but of the few. It was caste privilege, and was kept as a secret. Much of it was not committed to writing, and much that was, perished with the destruction of the great Alexandrine library.

But, as the classic saying had it, "Know Hercules from his foot," so from that which remains, we conclude what must have been the knowledge and attainments of those times.

While our argument does not require us to assert that ancient medical knowledge was the equal of that of modern days, we, nevertheless, have no hesitation in saying, that it was equal to all the requirements of the times.

For there is a final argument from the very necessity of the case. Men have always been subject to sickness, accidents, and disease. Either then they died in appalling numbers, or else they were healed and helped.

The former is contrary to known facts, hence the latter must be true.

As God has always worked for the good of His creatures generally, so it is to be believed that He would help them in this respect also, by bringing to men's knowledge the medical properties residing in plants, minerals, etc. Of this there can be no doubt.

But when God undertook to become the "Great Physician" of His "Peculiar People," it was not nearly so much for medical purposes, as for spiritual reasons.

Healing the body is one of His methods of gaining possession of the heart, and soul, and spirit (as experience shows). He wishes also to become ALL things to those who will love and trust Him fully and unreservedly.

Thus have I briefly attempted to answer an objection which might work harm to the cause we advocate.

About Cellars.

The *Dominion Family Journal* has the following important advice about the proper care of cellars. At this time of year the dangers referred to cannot be too carefully considered.

We have, on former occasions, referred to the probability of a time in the future when man will entirely dispense with the relics of savage life, or of pre-historic man—holes, or caves in the ground, and instead, construct his habitation, his home—so above ground that the air may have the freest circulation under it, as free, indeed, as about it. But so far are we from being at that time that there is hardly a dwelling house to be found without a cellar.

In a large proportion of dwellings the cellar is the receptacle of decomposing organic matter, when it ought to be about the last place about the premises in which such matter should be permitted to lie, for there is no other place where the elements of decomposition can so readily pervade the entire dwelling above.

We frequently find, in our many exchanges, a report of an outbreak of diphtheria in a

family, in which the only cause that could be discovered was the decaying vegetable matter—potatoes, cabbages, &c.—in the cellar of the dwelling. It would seem as if the contagions of the disease had in some way been conveyed to this prolific soil, and there developed and spread.

We would therefore, urge upon our readers the great importance at this season of the year, of looking after the condition of the cellar. Have every trace of decaying matter removed so that every part of the cellar—every corner and crevice—shall be perfectly clean and sweet as any other part of the dwelling. If necessary, as is most likely will be after the winter's use of the apartment, have water, soap, disinfectants and lime-water freely used. Above all, let in fresh air and sunlight freely.

We have recently drawn attention to the importance of dryness in the cellar—as by a system of tile drains. This is indispensable to health. If health officers, inspectors or officers could be appointed to visit every cellar in the land, and have them thoroughly cleaned, it would doubtless save many lives during the next few months, especially of little ones, which we fear may otherwise be sacrificed to either ignorance, indifference, or procrastination.

Animal Food.

It is only necessary to examine the stomach of a lion, for instance, to compare it with that of an ox, in order to see how much more simply it is constructed. It is a single hollow sack, whereas that of the ox is a compound organ, in fact, four stomachs, through each of which the food must pass after having been returned to the mouth for additional mastication before it is fit to be converted into animal substance. If a flesh feeding animal be killed three or four hours after it has eaten a full meal, the stomach will be found empty; while in the sheep, the ox, and other vegetable feeders the digestive process has in that period hardly passed through its first stage.

Herbivorous animals really serve as the assimilators for those that eat flesh. They convert vegetable into animal matter, and hence save that labor to the stomachs of those that are omnivorous, as is man, eating substances that come both from the vegetable and the animal kingdom. It is apparent, therefore, that when the stomach is weak, as it generally is in weak persons, it should not be subjected to the unnecessary work of converting vegetable substances into a form fit for assimilation so long as it can, by being supplied with animal food, be spared that task.

Second, animal food is more nutritious to the nervous system and to the body generally than that derived from the vegetable kingdom. As we ordinarily meet with it, it consists of nitrogenous matter, in union with certain mineral substances and with fat. We have therefore in it all the essential elements for the formation of the tissues of the body, as well as those for the maintenance of the animal heat, and on it alone it is perfectly possible for man in any climate to exist, and to continue in a normal condition. In cold climates the principal part of his sustenance is derived from this source, and indeed in polar regions vegetable food is never ingested by the inhabitants.

The first food taken by man is derived from the animal kingdom, and it—milk—simple as it appears to be, contains all the elements necessary to the growth of the human body, and to its maintenance in a state of health. The same cannot be said of any one article of vegetable food.

Dietary.

A point to be insisted upon in a dietary for nervous persons, is that it should contain a more than usually large proportion of fat. The form in which this should be employed may generally safely be left to individual preference. Generally, perhaps, it is best taken as cream or butter, but the fat parts of beef or mutton are very well with most persons. Many nervous people appear to have an instinctive craving for fat, and I have known many a one to eat as much as half a pound of butter a day, besides drinking a tumbler of rich cream at breakfast,

The nervous system consists largely of fat, and this substance must be supplied in some form or other, in order that the brain and other nerve structures shall be properly nourished.

But it is possible to get all the fat required without taking a single atom of it into the stomach. The digestive organs convert sugar and starch into fat, but in nervous persons in whom as I have said, these organs are weak, it is generally preferable to get the fat required, ready formed, from the animal kingdom, than to compel the enfeebled stomach, intestines and pancreas to make it out of starch and sugar.

Nervous persons require ordinarily a larger quantity of water than those whose brains and nerves are strong. Water not only enters into the composition of every tissue of the body, but it aids in the digestion of the food by helping to render it soluble. Moreover, it seems often to have a directly tonic effect. A quart or two of water, not too cold, and certainly not hot, for nothing can be more relaxing to the stomach than hot water,—may be drunk in the twenty-four hours, and in warm weather double this quantity will be well borne.

Only a Headache.

Perhaps no form of human suffering is more common than that indicated by our heading, but for a girl or woman to become subject to either neuralgia or headache is a very serious matter. School girls are especially liable to such attacks from over work, over anxiety, or a badly ventilated school room. A walk in the open air, change of thought and subject, will frequently bring relief; but if such sufferings assume a chronic form it means that life is rapidly becoming a most unendurable evil. The patient at such times undergoes a mental paralysis. Nothing is enjoyable, and only a darkened room, and the soothing influence of a deadly opiate seem desirable. "Health is the vital principle of bliss," and every other possession pales in comparison. Of what use is education when mated with ill-health? If we must choose between the two for our daughters, let us decide for less book knowledge, rosier cheeks, elastic step and beaming eye. Happiness we must have for our children if possible, and a sick girl cannot be a happy one. Perhaps too rich food is responsible for the aching head. Whatever the cause may be, do not rest until you have ascertained it and then, if necessary, change every habit. Our ancient friends gave a magnificent physical training to their girls, and in return Greek mothers bore the finest children in the world, and wonderfully preserved their beauty to extreme old age.

The Sun Cholera Mixture.

Now that it has been ascertained that the cholera has appeared in Europe, prescriptions are in great demand by correspondents, who write to the editor as if he were a personal friend and the family physician. For more than forty years what is known as "The Sun cholera medicine" has stood the test of experience as the best remedy for looseness of the bowels ever yet devised. As was once vouched for by the *New York Journal of Commerce*, "no one who has this by him and takes it in time will ever have the cholera." Even when no cholera is anticipated it is an excellent thing for the ordinary summer complaints, colic, diarrhoea, dysentery, etc., and we have no hesitation in commending it. Here it is: Take equal parts of tincture of cayenne, tincture of opium, tincture of rhubarb, essence of pepper mint, and spirits of camphor. Mix well. Dose, fifteen to thirty drops in a wineglass of water, according to age and violence of the attack. Repeat every fifteen or twenty minutes until relief is obtained.

SALT RHEUM.—A friend of TRUTH very kindly sends for publication the following remedy for salt rheum, which, she writes, has been the means of curing her. Will others, who may try it, report the result? 1 oz. mercury (quick silver), 2 oz. nitric acid, 1 pound lard. Dissolve the mercury in the acid, and leave the cork out while dissolving. Melt the lard and pour all the ingredients together, stirring them briskly at the same time.