

Health Department.

[A certain space in each number of this journal will be devoted to questions and answers of correspondence 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.]

Clean Your Cellars.

By a beneficial arrangement of Providence, the gases and odors most prejudicial to human life, are lighter than the air which surrounds us, and, as soon as disengaged, rise immediately to the upper atmosphere, to be purified, and then returned to be used again.

The warmer the weather, the more rapidly are these gases generated, and the more rapidly do they rise, hence it is, that in the most miasmatic regions of the Tropics, the traveler can with safety pursue his journey at mid-day, but to do so in the cool of the evening, or morning, or midnight, would be certain death. Hence also the popular but too sweeping dread of "night air." To apply this scientific truth to practical life in reference to the cellars under our dwellings, is the object of this article.

In the first place, no dwelling ought to have a cellar. But in large cities the value of land makes them a seeming necessity. But it is only seeming, for during many years' residence in New Orleans, we do not remember to have seen half-a-dozen cellars. But if we must have them, let science construct them in such a manner, and common sense use them in such a way as to obviate the injuries which would otherwise result from them.

The ceilings of cellars should be well plastered, in order most effectually to prevent the ascent of dampness and noisome odors through the joints of the flooring.

The bottom of the cellar should be well paved with stone—cobble stones are perhaps best; over this should be poured, to the extent of several inches in thickness, water lime cement, or such other material as is known to acquire in time almost the hardness of stone; this keeps the dampness of the earth below.

If additional dryness is desired for special purposes, in parts of the cellar, let common scantling be laid down, at convenient distances, and loose boards be laid across them for convenience of removal and sweeping under, when cleaning time of the year comes.

The walls should be plastered, in order to prevent the dust from settling on the innumerable projections of a common stone wall.

Shelves should be arranged in the centre of the cellar, not in the corners, or against the walls; these shelves should hang from the ceiling, by wooden arms, attached firmly before plastering—thus you make all safe from rats.

To those who are so fortunate as to own the houses in which they live, we recommend the month of June, but to renters, the great moving month of May, in New York at least, is the most appropriate time for the following recommendations.

Let everything not absolutely nailed fast, be removed into the yard, and exposed to the sun, and if you please, remain for a week or two, so as to afford opportunity for a thorough drying.

Let the walls and floors be swept thoroughly, on four or five different days, and let a coat of good whitewashing be laid on.

These things should be done once a year, and one day in the week, at least, except in mid winter, every opening in the cellar, for several hours, about noon, should be thrown wide, so as to allow as complete a ventilation as possible. Scientific men have forced on the common mind, by slow degrees, the importance of a daily ventilation of our sleeping apartments, so that now, none but the careless or most obtuse neglect it, but few think of ventilating their cellars, although it is apparent that the noisome

dampness is constantly rising upwards and pervading the whole dwelling.

Emanations from cellars do not kill in a night; if they did, universal attention would be forced to their proper management, but it is certain, from the very nature of things, that unclean, damp and mouldy cellars, with their sepulchral fumes do undermine the health of multitudes of families, and send many of their members to an untimely grave; especially must it be so in New York, where the houses are generally constructed in such a manner, that the ordinary access to the cellar, for coal, wood, vegetables, etc., is within the building, and every time the cellar door is opened, the draught from the grating in the street drives the accumulation of the preceding hours directly upwards into the halls and rooms of the dwelling, there to be breathed, over and over again, by every member of the household, thus poisoning the very springs of life, and polluting the whole blood.

Lung Gymnastics.

If I should say that very many healthy people do not use all their lungs for respiration, and that this is so habitually, some of you may be surprised. Yet this is very true, and especially so with men of sedentary habits, students and women. Some of these may be "too lazy to breathe," yet not fully conscious of it. It may be better to say they are "too careless to breathe," or have never considered its full importance. Dr. J. H. Tyndall ("Treatment of Consumption," p. 85) has well said: "The importance of knowing how to breathe can not be over-estimated. No line of treatment (of lung diseases) at home or by change of climate should be inaugurated without thorough instruction in lung gymnastics, in the mechanism of breathing. Until you have paid close attention to the subject for a number of years you will never know how many human beings do not know how to breathe, and through which organ to breathe. Respiration, this most important of all functions of life, is by some carried on superficially, by others pervertedly and contrary to physiological requirements."

"Breathing is a function which should be exercised slowly and profoundly; a requirement which can only be fulfilled by breathing through the nose. Breathing through the mouth leads to superficial and often rapid breathing; still oftener to snapping off the air."

We are often called on to prescribe for patients or give advice for relief of those who are of sedentary habits, as bookkeepers, clerks, women or students, who will complain of pain in the upper half of the chest, or of at least a very uncomfortable feeling of depression in the breast or lungs. These patients often express a fear of organic lung trouble, and that consumption is threatening them. In such cases we will very often note a languid expression or a semi-melancholic appearance. It is also not at all uncommon to note a sallowness of skin, a feeling of inability for any considerable manual effort, dyspnea when the effort is made, or that the patient becomes quickly exhausted, is constipated, has hebetude of mind, and very little disposition to do more than absolute duty demands.

But in such cases I believe we have, in forced respiration, a valuable means with which to accomplish complete relief, or to at least assist in reaching such a desirable end. Let a patient who comes with soreness of breast or lungs, a little cough, dyspnea on exercise, lassitude, easily exhausted, rapid pulse on slight exertion, constipation, mental hebetude, etc., commence at once these forced inspirations and expirations, and practice this for ten to fifteen minutes from four to six times every day, and with proper measures otherwise he will soon feel like a new man. He will need very little medicine, often only a placebo, and will need mostly hygienic management as to diet, hours of work, exercise, sleep, etc.

Tyndall says (loc. cit.), "Lung gymnastics proper should be carried on in the open air, while at work if possible, or while walking or standing still, or in a well-ventilated room. The exact limits to which actual gymnastics should be carried on at home or in a gymnasium often tax the best judgment

of the physician. Nearly all performance require more or less severe straining of the pectoral muscles, and sudden calls upon the heart for increased action."

"While walking, the patient should as frequently as possible (say, every ten or fifteen minutes) take deep inspirations and expirations without straining, from six to eight times in succession; which act completely empties and refills the lungs.—*Medical and Surgical Reporter.*

Bad Air.

When a person has remained for an hour or more in a crowded and poorly-ventilated room or a railroad car, the system is already contaminated to a greater or lesser extent, by breathing air vitiated by exhalations from the lungs, bodies and clothing of the occupants. The immediate effect of these poisons is to debilitate, to lower vitality, and to impair the natural power of the system to resist disease. Hence it is that persons who are attacked by inflammatory diseases, as pneumonia or rheumatism, can generally trace the beginning of the disease to a chill felt on coming out of a crowded room into the cold or damp air, wearing, perhaps, thin shoes and insufficient clothing. If these facts were generally understood and acted upon, thousands of lives might be saved every year. It is a well-known fact that men who "camp out," sleeping on the ground at seasons of the year, seldom have pneumonia, and that rheumatism, with them, comes, as a rule, only from unwarrantable imprudence. There are two facts that should be learned by every person capable of appreciating them, and should never be lost sight of for a moment.

One is that exhalations from the lungs—the breath—are a deadly poison, containing the products of combustion, in the form of carbonic acid gas, and if a person were compelled to rebreath it unmixed with the oxygen of the air, it would prove as destructive to life as the fumes of charcoal.

This is an enemy that is always present, in force, in assemblies of people, and only a constant infusion of fresh air prevents it from doing mischief that would be immediately apparent. The other fact is that pure air is the antidote to this poison.

The oxygen of the air is the greatest of all purifiers. Rapid streams of water that pass through large cities, receiving the sewerage, become pure again through the action of the air after running a few miles. Air is the best of all "blood purifiers." Combined with vigorous exercise to make it effective it will cure any curable case of consumption.

Treatment of Measles.

This is an acute inflammation of the skin, both external and internal, combined with an infectious fever. The symptoms are chills succeeded by great heat, languor, and drowsiness, pains in the head, back, and limbs; quick pulse, soreness of throat, thirst, nausea, vomiting, a dry cough, and high colored urine. These symptoms increase in violence for three or four days. The eyes are inflamed and weak, and the nose pours forth a watery secretion with frequent sneezing. There is considerable inflammation of the larynx, windpipe, and bronchial tubes, with soreness of breast and hoarseness. About the fourth day the skin is covered with a breaking out which produces heat and itching, and is red in spots, upon the face first, gradually spreading over the whole body. It disappears in the same way, from the face first, then from the body, and hoarseness and other symptoms disappear with it. At last the outside skin peels off in scales. In a mild form nothing is required but a light diet, slightly acid drinks, flaxseed or slippery-elm tea. Warm herb teas and frequent sponge baths with tepid water; some put a little acetic acid in it to serve to allay the fever. A pack carefully given followed by an oil-bath, keeping them warmly protected in bed afterward, will bring out the rash nicely. Great care must be taken that during the time of disease and for weeks, even months after, the patient takes

no cold, as after-effects are most serious. We once heard an old physician say that "for three months mothers must be over watchful," and that unless such care was exercised he dreaded measles more than small-pox.

False measles, or rose-rash, appears with the same general symptoms as measles, and continues about five days; or sometimes comes and goes for several weeks. The rash appears in small, irregular patches, paler than those of measles, and of a more roseate color. Treatment as in measles, except if rash assumes a darker red, and the patches are more elevated a tonic is needed.

Light in Sick-Room.

It is the unqualified result of all my experience with the sick, that second only to their need of fresh air is their need of light; that, after a close room, what hurts them most is a dark room, and that it is not only light but direct sunlight they want. You had better carry your patient about after sun, according to the aspect of rooms, if circumstances permit, than let him linger in a room when the sun is off. People think that the effect is on the spirits only. This is by no means the case. Who has not observed the purifying effects of light, and especially of direct sunlight, upon the air of a room? Here is an observation within everybody's experience. Go into a room where the shutters are always shut (in a sick-room there should never be shutters shut), and though the room be uninhabited, though the air has never been polluted by the breathing of human beings, you will observe a close, musty smell of corrupt air—of air unpurified by the effect of the sun's rays. The mustiness of dark rooms and corners, indeed, is proverbial. The cheerfulness of a room, the usefulness of light in treating disease, is all important. It is a curious thing to observe how almost all patients lie with their faces turned to the light, exactly as plants always make their way towards the light.

Tenants May Vacate Unsanitary Houses.

A case has recently been decided in New York justifying the right of a tenant to vacate a house and refuse to pay rent on the ground of unsanitary conditions. The case was: "In a suit for rent claimed to be due from a tenant of a suite of rooms in an apartment house, it appeared that the tenant's wife and servants were taken sick by inhaling a malarial or poisonous gas in the apartments occupied by them; that this unhealthy condition of the apartments was owing to a defective condition of the general plumbing work of the house, of which the landlord was notified by orders of the Board of Health, requiring him to have changes made in the plumbing work, and which unhealthy condition could have been removed if he had complied with these orders, that the defendant waited for two weeks, and finding that nothing was done on the part of the landlord, left under the apprehension that he was imperilling the health of himself and family by remaining." The case was appealed to a higher court and confirmed. It is to be hoped the practice will become general.

To Get Fat.

Do you want to get fat? Eat supper just before going to bed. The food so taken goes all to fat. A nap after each meal is also conducive to the same end, but gentle exercise should be taken between meals to promote appetite. Large doses of fresh air, avoidance of envious thoughts, entire contentment with one's lot in life, one's children, husband, relatives, and friends complete the same great end. There is one great advantage derived from the craze on fat or no fat. It is a poor rule that don't work both ways, and many of the laws for gaining or losing flesh are the same, and are great health promoters. The formation of tennis, skating, swimming, and walking clubs, and the patronizing of them by both stout and thin alike, is adding greatly to the health of our women.

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