

Health and Home.

NOTES IN REGARD TO DIET.

A correspondent of the *New York Sun*, in a letter defending an exclusively vegetable diet, in support of his views, says that in Dr. Hall's *Journal of Health*, a few years ago, the following statement of the amount of nutriment in various articles of food was given:

"Raw apples, 10 per cent; boiled beans, 87; roasted beef, 20; baked bread, 80; butter, 96; boiled cabbage, 7; raw cucumbers, 2; boiled fish, 20; fresh milk, 7; roasted mutton, 30; roasted pork, 24; roasted poultry, 27; boiled potatoes, 13; boiled rice, 88; sugar, 96; boiled turnips, 4; roasted veal, 25; and boiled venison, 22."

From this loose statement of Dr. Hall he makes the following deductions:

"The cheapest articles of food, except butter, are the most nourishing. A pint of white beans, costing a few cents, contain the same amount of nutriment as 3½ pounds of prime roasting beef, which is twelve times as expensive. Furthermore, a pound of Indian meal will go as far as a pound of fine flour."

We called it a loose statement, and so are all the statements made in various books in regard to the comparative nourishing qualities of various kinds of food, as they are all based on some false premise; so, for instance, on the percentage of nitrogen in the food, others on the amount of water in it, &c. The result is an erroneous comparison, and the deductions drawn must be false. Thus in the above table, sugar is 96 per cent, and turnips 4 per cent, making 24 pounds of turnips equivalent to 1 pound of sugar; rice 88 per cent and roasted beef 26, making 1 pound of roasted beef not much more nourishing than 4 ounces of boiled rice. The whole assertion is simply absurd and the table worthless, as every one will maintain who properly attends to the duty of selecting his food judiciously in regard to the wants he feels.

We deliberately call it a duty to be careful in selecting our food; we even go further, and call it a crime not to feed well, or to be negligent in our selection, eating or drinking things we dislike, or, what is worse than all, eating when we have no appetite, simply because it is time for meals.

The correspondent above referred to closes his article thus: "I remember reading in the *Tribune*, while Horace Greeley was editor, that one pound of cracked Southern corn, boiled nine hours, adding water and stirring occasionally, to keep it from burning, would form a glutinous, nutritive mass of nine pounds when cold, and that a person could live and keep healthy on ten cents' worth of corn a week."

To this we remark that very few constitutions can stand a corn diet. In most cases corn has a tendency to sour on the stomach, and by its continued use chronic dyspepsia and premature death result.

Man, and especially civilized man, needs a variety of food. The man who does a great deal of brain work requires different food than the man who only works with his muscles, as the one consumes more nervous material, and the other muscular; and as different as the chemical composition of the brain and nerves is from that of the muscles, equally different must be the character of the food needed to supply the waste.

A THEORY IN REGARD TO FOOD.

The *Pall Mall Gazette* says: "A German physician has started a new theory with regard to food. He maintains that both the vegetarians and meat-eaters are on the wrong track. Vegetables are not more wholesome than meat, or meat than vegetables, and nothing is gained consuming a compound of both. Whatever nutritive qualities they may possess, he says, are destroyed in great measure, and often entirely, by the process of cooking. All food should be eaten raw. If this practice were adopted, there would be little or no illness among human beings. They would live their apportioned time and simply fade away, like animals in a wild state, from old age. Let those afflicted with gout, rheumatism and indigestion, try for a time the effect of a simple uncooked diet, such as oysters for instance, and they will find all medicines unnecessary, and such a rapid improvement of their health, that they will forswear all cooked articles of food at once and forever. Intemperance would also, it is urged, no longer be the curse of civilized communities. The yearning for drink is caused by the unnatural abstraction from what are termed 'solids' of the aqueous element they contain—uncooked beef, for example, containing from 70% to 80% and some vegetables even a larger proportion of water. There would be less thirst,

and consequently less desire to drink, if our food were consumed in its natural state, without first being subjected to the action of fire. Clothing, our adviser also thinks, is a mistake, but he admits that the world is not yet far enough advanced in civilization to go about undressed. Whatever differences of opinion may exist as to this anti-cooking theory, there cannot be a doubt that in getting rid of the kitchen with all its abuses, including the cook, housekeepers, would be spared a vast amount of worry, and probably on this account alone would live to a greater age than at present."

ARE FAT PEOPLE HEALTHY.—Why are fat people always complaining? asks some one who entertains the popular though erroneous notion that health is synonymous with fat. Fat people complain because they are diseased. Obesity is an abnormal condition of the system, in which the saccharine and oleaginous elements of the food are assimilated to the partial exclusion of the muscle-forming and brain-producing elements. In proof of this, it is only necessary to assert the well-known fact that excessively fat people are never strong, and seldom distinguished for mental powers and activity. Besides they are the easy prey of acute and epidemic diseases, and they are the frequent victims of gout, heart disease and apoplexy.

ALUM.

Alum, familiar to every one as a white, crystalized, astringent saline substance, is what is called a double salt, being composed of the sulphates of alumina and potash, and comes largely from Civita Vecchia, from the alumstones of the mines of Tolta, and from the coal mines of Hurlett and Campsie, near Glasgow, whose shales are rich in alum, and also from the alum slates of Whitby, in Yorkshire, cliffs of which extend for thirty miles along the English coast. These slates and shales are calcined and lixivated, and the "mother liquor," as it is called, allowed to crystalize. The first product is largely colored by iron, and the finer qualities are re-dissolved and crystalized until pure. Alum is chiefly used as a mordant to fix dyes in textile fabrics, owing to its excess of alumina, which has a strong attraction for such tissues. It is also used in tanning leather, is a powerful astringent for arresting hemorrhage and other excessive discharges, and owing to the beauty of its crystals is largely used in crystalizing vases, baskets, grasses, seed vessels, etc. Owing to the large amount of its "water of crystalization," it has been used as a packing for fire-proof safes and vaults, which give out steam for hours in the centre of conflagrations, and repel heat instead of becoming red hot. Its use by bakers to give bread a snowy whiteness and firm consistence can not be too highly reprehended, but it is a useful cement when simply melted for securing the tangs of knives and forks, and lamps, knobs and other glass objects in their sockets.

FRESHLY PAINTED ROOMS.—The impression that those who inhabit rooms freshly painted are in danger of lead poisoning has been shown by Dr. Clement Biddle to be quite unfounded. He bases this statement upon the result of the following experiment: He introduced into a close box a number of sheets of paper saturated with white (lead) paint, and upon the bottom of the box placed a shallow dish of pure (distilled) water, previously tested to make sure of its perfect freedom from impurities, and from lead in particular. After an exposure to the atmosphere of the box for three days, the water-dish was removed, acidulated with nitric acid, and treated with sulphureted hydrogen, when not a trace of lead precipitate occurred. Dr. Biddle therefore attributes the colds and other unpleasant consequences experienced by sleeping in freshly-painted apartments, to the irritating action of the vapors of turpentine on the lining membrane of the air-passages.

DANGEROUS HOUSES.—Houses that have been empty may become fever breeders when they come to be reoccupied. An English sanitary officer alleges that he has observed typhoid, diphtheria, or other zymotic affections to rise under these circumstances. The cause is supposed to be in the disuse of cisterns, pipes and drains, the processes of putrefaction going on in the impure air in them, the unobstructed access of this air to the house, while the closure of windows and doors effectually shuts out fresh air. Persons moving from the city to their country homes for the summer, should see that the drains and pipes are in perfect order, that the cellar and closets are free from rubbish, and the whole house thoroughly aired before occupying. Carbolic acid used freely in the cellar is a cheap and good disinfectant.