

## The Household.

## An Invalid's Eating and Drinking.

BY A FAMILY DOCTOR.

It would be mere assumption on my part to say that most aged men or women are, to some extent, invalids. Many, indeed, who are long past the allotted span are as healthy, happy, not to say hardy, as other people are at fifty. But in age the digestion is weaker, for the powers of life are on the decline. It behooves, then, those advanced in years to live by rule, not merely with a view to prolonging life, but to living in comfort, and enjoying good sleep and freedom from aches and pains.

In the aged the powers of life are feeble, recuperative power is lessened, and the processes of nutrition are slower. But there is less need for corporeal constructive materials, the wear and tear and waste in the body being now not so great as formerly.

For these reasons alone, old people should eat more sparingly, use less solid food, and see that what they do eat is both well cooked and tender.

To eat slowly and masticate well is imperative on the aged, and those who have suffered from decay of teeth ought to have the defects made good by wearing artificial ones.

I am quite convinced that a great deal of the discomfort that aged people suffer from, and many of their aches and rheums, arise from errors not only in diet, but in eating. Says the immortal bard, Burns—

"Ah! life has weary days,  
And nights o' sleepless pain;  
Thou gowden time o' youthfu' prime,  
Will never come again!"

Now, with all due respect to the memory of the poet, I must say he is talking here of what he knows nothing about. There is no absolute necessity for age having weary days or nights of sleepless pain. I know quite a number of very old people who are quite as free from anything approaching pain as they were at forty, and as to wishing the days of their youth back again, they do nothing of the sort. They are dreamily happy and contented, and willing to die when Heaven in its mercy sees fit to call them.

As for sleep, elderly people need less, and do not think a long day so very long because their hours of slumber are curtailed.

Well, then, I have a little further to say on the diet which the aged should use. The tenderness of the meat and good cooking are essential to comfortable digestion; slowness of eating should become a habit with them; soups are good, especially for supper; pastry, cheese, and raw milk should be avoided. The stomach must not be overloaded even with fluid, and for this reason beer or stout is often objectionable, and if alcohol in any form be needed to calm the nervous system or give freedom from fret, a little good wine or spirits is better than ale. I cannot help mentioning the fact, however, that old people are much better without alcohol stimulants of any kind.

In cases of acute illness or fever, our object must be to support the system by the most easily digested food we know of, and this must be given on the little-and-often principle. Do not be led away by the oft-quoted saying, "Starve a fever." So far as solid food is concerned, you may starve it, for it is impossible for a di-

gestion, weakened by acute illness, to assimilate solids; they will only tend to increase the fever, for they pass down into the bowels, and there decay, causing flatulence and diarrhea and general sickness. Good beef-tea is invaluable, so are raw eggs—the freshest of the fresh, new-laid in fact—and milk, mixed with a little lime-water or soda-water.

Few people know how to make beef-tea or barley water, chicken broth or Scotch broth, nutrient, easily-digested puddings, the various invalid "teas" and "wheys" and drinks, to say nothing of gruel and arrowroot, and last, but not least, how to cook and serve a pigeon, partridge, or other bird (quail or lark, for instance) so as to make it appetising to an invalid or convalescent patient.

Now, there are certain things which perhaps do not digest easily; let the invalid remember them, and remember only to avoid them as poisons. If solid food cannot be well borne without after-discomfort, nourishing soups, fish, game, eggs, rice-puddings, &c., should be eaten. The appetite must be encouraged and the bowels kept regular by plenty of exercise in the open air, and living in scientifically and sufficiently ventilated rooms. Breathing dust-laden air, either out of doors or in-doors, is most pernicious in cases of this kind. The temperature of the body must be well kept up by wearing warm, but not heavy, clothing, and sleep obtained by every lawful means.

There is probably no disease on which doctors differ more, or understand less of its causes and treatment, than rheumatism. The name itself conveys little or nothing to the mind, and if we knew more about the ailment, would very likely be changed. If a doctor tells you that rheumatism is occasioned by an excess of lactic acid in the blood, and proceeds to pour alkalies into you in order to neutralise the acid, you may be excused for laughing in his face. "Doctor," you might ask him, "aren't you merely treating a symptom? If the rheumatism that I suffer from is caused by excess of lactic acid in the blood, what causes the excess? Hadn't you better remove the cause?"

Well, leaving the medicinal treatment of rheumatism an open question for the time being, we can do a deal by diet to prevent its advent. People who are subject to the complaint should not live too high, either in the matter of stimulants, meaty food, or condiments; they should take moderate exercise, but be most careful to avoid fatigue; and they ought to keep the temperature of the body well up to the normal point by wearing sufficient clothing day and night, and avoiding cold and draughts, and especially cold and damp feet, or, indeed, anything that is apt to give a chill.

Convalescents from acute illnesses should be most careful how they return to their ordinary diet, for the craving for food is, in their case, no criterion as to the amount that should be taken. I should not object to their having anything they took a fancy for, but even of that they must not eat to satiety. Let the food be easily digestible, and "little and often" the guide.

Without being actual dyspeptics, a great many people suffer from what is termed weak digestion. The symptoms of such a condition of stomach and intestines are only too well known; the feeling of uneasiness after eating,

with probably some degree of distension and flatulence, acid eructations, constipation or the reverse, or the one state alternating with another, discomforting or alarming sensations about the region of the heart, swimming in the head, noises in the ears, sleeplessness or non-refreshing slumber, occasional head-aches, general ennui and weariness, and lastly, nervous symptoms of any or all kinds, not the least distressing of which may be some of the many phobias that afflict people with weak digestions, from cardiphobia to hydrophobia. I have had patients whom no amount of reasoning would convince that they were not suffering from heart disease; others who suffered—they said—from incipient softening of the brain; some who had no lungs, others minus liver.

"I don't believe," a patient told me only the day before yesterday, "that I have an ounce of liver left."

Well, such people at all events have my sincere sympathy, and my advice to them in the matter of diet is somewhat as follows:—

Eat moderately; on no account take what may be called a full meal.

Take food whenever hungry; for instance have breakfast immediately after getting up, merely going out of doors for five minutes previously. If hungry about twelve, have a cup of cocoa; dine at two o'clock off a tender joint, or steak, or chop, with potatoes sparingly and greens, a little soup, and tapioca or rice pudding. No pastry, or sweets, or cheese. Take no fluid until you have nearly finished the solids.

Vary the food every day. Fish only, if quite digestible, which it oftentimes is not; no veal or pork, but mutton, beef, game, and fowl.

Fruit before breakfast, but not after dinner.

## Curing a Cancer by a Hot Bath.

The Kansas City (Mo.) Times narrates a remarkable case in which a cancer was removed, "root and branch," without pain, in fourteen days. The patient was a Mr. Chace, freight agent at Kansas City of the Hannibal and St. Joseph Railroad. About three weeks since, all other remedies having failed, he was placed in a Turkish bath for two hours each day for seven days, with a temperature of 170°, when it was found that the cancer was dropping out, root and fangs entire. It first became red on one side and then burst the skin. Mr. Chace applied, by advice, a poultice, which aided in drawing the cancer from the cheek. "Yesterday morning," says the Times, "the patient himself brought the cancer in a small vial to Prof. Kellogg, and it had fallen out clean, and with all its roots and fangs attached, leaving nothing except the ugly indentation in the face where the cancer had been. He will now continue to take the baths until the cheek is healed. The cancer as extracted is about the size of a hazel nut."

A story is told of an old gentleman who always took notes of his minister's sermons, and on one occasion read them to the minister himself. "Stop! stop!" said he, at the occurrence of a certain sentence, "I didn't say that." "I know you didn't," was the reply; "I put that in myself to make sense."