



### INFLUENCE OF CLIMATE UPON HEALTH.

The following interesting extracts are from an article by Dr. M. Beard in a recent number of the *Atlantic Monthly* on "The Physical Future of the American People":

A fact of special note is that the exceeding cold of our winters compels us to pass a large part of our time not only in-doors, but in rooms overheated with dry air; thus one of the bad features of our climate plays into the hands of the other, reinforcing, extending, multiplying its capacity for evil. The high temperature and unnatural dryness of our closed rooms are both harmful, and are both made necessary by excessive external cold, and by the alternations of heat and cold that produce a sensitiveness of organization which can only find comfort in a somewhat high temperature.

Dryness of the air, whether external or internal, likewise excites nervousness by heightening the rapidity of the processes of waste and repair in the organism, so that we live faster than in a moist atmosphere. The rationale of this action of dryness on living beings—for it is observed in animals as in men—is as follows: Evaporation from the surface of the body is accompanied by dissipation of heat, and by the numerous and complex vital changes of which the evolution and dissipation of heat through evaporation are the results. In a moist atmosphere such evaporation takes place slowly, because the air, being already saturated with water, cannot rapidly take up the vapor that comes from the surface of the body; hence this vapor accumulates in the form of sensible perspiration. A dry atmosphere, on the contrary, is eager and hungry for the bodily moisture and rapidly absorbs it, so that it does not accumulate on the surface, but passes off as insensible perspiration. Hence the paradox that we perspire the least when we are apparently perspiring the most; on sultry August days our clothing is soaked, because the moisture of the body has no chance for ready escape, and consequently the vital changes that produce the moisture are obstructed and move with corresponding slowness. A day that is both moist and warm is hotter to the nerves of sensation and far more oppressive than a far warmer day that is also dry, for the conversion of the fluids of the body into insensible vapor, which process takes place so rapidly in dry air, is attended with escape of bodily heat, which gives relief.

Dryness of the air is the main cause of the long-observed leanness of the Americans as compared with the Europeans. We are taller, thinner, lankier, than the original stock in England and Germany, mainly because in our dry atmosphere we so rapidly evaporate; the animal fluids disappear into the aerial fluids; we have little chance to accumulate fat. Remembering that the body is composed mostly of water, it is clear that rapid evaporation must be attended by a rapid loss of bodily weight. A thousand Americans, taken at random, weigh less on the average than a thousand Englishmen or Germans of the same ages and social status; even the dark aborigines, in spite of their indolence, were almost always lean.

Our habits and institutions, so far as they are distinctively American,—rapid eating, eager quest for gold, exciting revivals and elections,—are the product of a dry atmosphere and extremes of temperature combined with the needs of a new country and a pioneer life. We are nervous, primarily, because the rapid evaporation in our dry, out-door air and in our overheated rooms, for reasons above given, heightens the rapidity of the processes of waste and repair in the brain and nervous system, and the exhausting stimulation of alternations of torrid heat and polar cold; and, secondarily, because this nervousness is enhanced by the stress of poverty, the urgency of finding and holding means of living the scarcity of inherited wealth, and the just desire of making and maintaining fortunes. We cannot afford to be calm; for those to whom the last question is whether they shall exist or die there is no time or force for acquiring plumpness of the body. Not how shall we live? but can we live at all? is the problem that almost every American is all his life compelled to face.

Susceptibility to alcohol and tobacco is one of the most striking characteristics of the many evidences of American nervousness. We cannot bear these stimulants and narcotics as our fathers could; we cannot bear them as can the English, or Germans, or French; indeed, all the Old World can both drink and smoke more than the Americans. Even coffee can be indulged in with freedom only by a minority of the population in the Northern States, and a cup of weak tea is for many a sure prescrip-

tion for a wakeful night. Foreigners travelling and sojourning here must be far more cautious than is their wont with the purest and mild liquors; while Americans, when long abroad, can often partake of the native wines, and a of stronger liquors, to a degree that at home would induce intoxication, perhaps lead directly to the symptoms of alcoholism. In truth this functional malady of the nervous system which we call inebriety, as distinguished from the vice or habit of drunkenness, may be said to have been born in America, has here developed sooner and far more rapidly than elsewhere, and here also has received earlier and more successful attention from men of science. The increase of the disorder has forced us to study it and to devise plans for its relief.

All of the above reasons apply to the Northern and Eastern portions of the United States, far more than to the Southern States or to Canada. In the South, particularly in the Gulf States, there are not the extremes of heat and cold, nor the peculiar dryness of the air, that have been described. The Southern winters are mild, with little or no snow and abundance of rain and dampness, while the summers are never as intensely hot as in the latitude of Boston and New York. Throughout the year the Southern climate is both more equable and more moist than that of the North. Herein is explained the most interesting and suggestive fact, that functional nervous diseases of all kinds regularly diminish in frequency and variety as we go South. Canada has extremes of temperature, but more of steady cold than the States, while the air is kept moist by numerous rivers, lakes, and the wide extent of forest; it does not therefore share, to any marked degree, in the nervousness of the Northern United States.

### THE MEDICINAL VALUE OF FLAX-SEED.

At the recent meeting of the American Dermatological Association, Dr. Sherwell read a paper on "The Use of Linseed and Its Oil as Therapeutic Agents in Diseases of the Skin." Every dermatologist, he said, had seen the necessity of introducing fats into the system, and hitherto almost the only available hydrocarbon had been cod-liver oil. This disagreed with many patients, and was also open to a number of other objections; while, in the more palatable form of the commercial emulsions now frequently employed, he did not consider it trustworthy. A more assimilable fat was therefore desirable, and he thought he had discovered it in the flaxseed. Linseed tea is a well-known remedy in cases of dryness of the skin. He had been induced to try its use by observing the beneficial effects of linseed cake upon cattle and horses, both in making their coats sleek and improving their general condition; and his experience had shown that the agent was of equal service to the human economy. He was in the habit of employing it in a threefold administration. 1. If the patient were a male and had sound teeth, the seed itself was the best form in which to take it. The man could carry about ten ounces of this in his pockets, and would probably consume a teacupful in the course of a day. The ordinary domestic linseed was small and dark in color, and contained only about twenty per cent. of oil; while that from Bombay or Calcutta (which was the kind recommended) was larger, lighter in color, and contained about thirty per cent. of oil. 2. In the case of women or children the ground seed, mixed with milk in the form of a porridge, was more desirable, and was unpalatable to very few persons. 3. In certain cases it could be given in the form of bread, although he did not consider this method quite so efficient as the others. The bread could be made by mixing linseed meal with flour in any proportion desired. This was suggested by Dr. Piffard.

When linseed was eaten, a natural emulsification was performed with the recent oil found in the stomach, and it had been established by chemists that a recent oil was much more active than one which had been long exposed to oxidation. The hulls also served to stimulate the peristaltic action of the intestines. He believed that it had specific virtues in dry and scaly diseases of the skin both on account of its special action upon the sebaceous secretion and its effect in improving the general condition of the patient. Dr. Sherwell gave four cases of skin disease of great obstinacy and severity, in which its curative influence was most happily shown. The seed was given internally in one of the forms above mentioned, and the oil applied externally. The lubricating effect of the latter was most admirable and it had the advantage over most other oils of not becoming rancid when exposed to degraded epithelium. In eczema he was in the habit of wrapping the parts affected in a number of folds of linen saturated with it. He believed that flaxseed is a specific remedy for the sebaceous glands, increasing their secretion when it was diminished, and restoring it to its natural character when it had been altered by disease. Dr. Van Harlingen, stated that he had used linseed in one case in the form of oil internally; but however stated he

thought there was no beneficial result from it. This, he said, might possibly have been due to the fact that he used the ordinary domestic oil, and not that made from Bombay linseed. Dr. Piffard said he had used the linseed oil internally, and he thought it was better than cod-liver oil in many respects. Cod-liver oil itself was fattening, while the iodine which it contained was just the reverse of this; and he thought this might explain why it was that it was impossible to fatten some persons on cod-liver oil. The linseed, he believed, contained no starch, and it was, therefore, especially useful in diabetic patients with skin trouble, as well as affording an agreeable range of diet to them. The taste of this seed was not agreeable, to many individuals at first; but it was at all events much more agreeable than cod-liver oil. Dr. White remarked that the so-called leads for diabetics invariably contained a certain amount of starch, and, therefore, if linseed was really free from starch, it was an important point to remember.

IN THE BIOLOGICAL SOCIETY of Paris, Dr. Blauay has recently communicated a series of investigations he has made concerning the curious partiality all civilized nations show for the "right side." We read and write to the right, we turn to the right when passing somebody in driving or riding on horseback; we like to have the wall to the right, when walking or running in an enclosed room; we deviate to the right from the straight line when walking blindfolded, etc. This partiality, however, the Doctor does not consider a mere incidental agreement, but as a natural instinct. It begins to show itself when the child has reached the third year of age, and it does not leave man until he becomes debilitated by old age or insane. With insane people the instinct is reversed; they keep to the left, and in lunatic asylums it is generally considered a good symptom, an indication of a return to the normal state, when the partiality for the right side reappears with a patient. Some of the applications which M. Delaunay makes of this instinct are rather fanciful, but others are very interesting. Thus, we do not doubt that he is to some extent right when he asserts that it has played a certain role in the migrations of mankind. Placing one's self with the face to the south, to the sun, whence the light comes, west is to the right, and to the west all migrations have gone, certainly from other reasons too, but instinct.—*N. Y. Times.*

THE INFLUENCE OF BRAIN WORK ON THE GROWTH OF THE SKULL AND BRAIN.—Messrs. Lacassagne and Cliquet communicated in an interesting paper on the subject to the *Société de Méd. Publique et d'Hygiène Professionnelle*. Having the patients, doctors, attendants, and officers of the Val de Grace at their disposal, they measured the heads of 190 doctors of medicine, 133 soldiers who had received an elementary instruction, 90 soldiers who could neither read nor write, and 91 soldiers who were prisoners. The instrument used was the same which hatters employ in measuring the heads of their customers; it is called the conformator, and gives a very correct idea of the proportions and dimensions of the heads in question. The results were in favor of the doctors; their frontal diameter was also much more considerable than that of the soldiers, &c. Nor are both halves of the head symmetrically developed: in students, the left frontal region is more developed than the right; in illiterate individuals, the right occipital region is larger than the left. The authors have derived the following conclusions from their experiments. 1. The heads of students who have worked much with their brains are much more developed than those of illiterate individuals, or such as have allowed their brains to remain inactive. 2. In students, the frontal region is more developed than the occipital region, or, if there should be any difference in favor of the latter, it is very small; while, in illiterate people, the latter region is the largest.—*London Medical Record.*

SLEEP IS THE BEST STIMULANT.—The best possible thing to do when you feel too weak to carry anything through is to go to bed, and sleep for a week if you can. This is the only recuperation of brain-power, the only actual recuperation of brain-force, because during sleep the brain is in a state of rest, in a condition to receive and appropriate particles of nutriment from the blood, which take the place of those which have been consumed in previous labor, since the very act of thinking consumes or burns up solid particles, as every turn of the wheel or screw of the steamer is the result of consumption by fire of the fuel in the furnace. The supply of consumed brain substance can only be had from the nutritive particles in the blood, which were obtained from the food eaten previously; and the brain is so constituted that it can best receive and appropriate to itself those nutritive particles during a state of rest, of quiet, and stillness of sleep. Mere stimulants supply nothing in

themselves. They goad the brain and force it to a greater consumption of its substance, until that substance has been so exhausted that there is not power enough left to receive a supply, just as men are sometimes so near death by thirst and starvation that there is not power enough left to swallow anything, and all is over.

### DOMESTIC.

FRUIT UPON THE TABLE.—Good fruit upon the table is an excellent appetizer, says Coleman's *Rural*. It adds largely to the pleasure of eating. It promotes good health, kind feelings, and makes one more social and talkative at meal time. We should be glad to see the time arrive when ripe fruit would come as regularly upon the table as bread and butter. It would make people healthier, happier and better. Really, farmers have no excuse for not raising most kinds of fruit. They have the land on which to plant them. They can find a little time to plant and care for them, and they will be better paid than if the time had been devoted to almost anything else.

BAKED CHICKEN PIE.—Line a deep dish with a moderately thick paste. Having cut up your chickens, and seasoned them to your taste with salt, pepper and (if you like it) mace and a little grated nutmeg, put some pieces of cold ham between the chicken, and if you have some oysters you will find them a great addition to your pie; also a few yolks of hard boiled eggs. Fill the dish two-thirds full of cold water and pieces of butter rolled in flour. Put the top crust on, cutting a hole in the centre of it. Cut out of the paste some handsomely shaped leaves, which lay around the edge of your pie. You may also form a rose to lay in the centre.

FIRM BUTTER WITHOUT ICE.—In families where the dairy is small, a good plan to have the butter cool and firm without ice is by the process of evaporation, as practiced in India and other warm countries. A cheap plan is to get a very large sized, porous, earthen flower pot, with extra large saucer. Half fill the saucer with water, set it in a trivet or light stand—such as is used for holding hot irons will do; upon this set your butter; cover the hole in the bottom of the flower pot with a cork; then dash water over the flower pot, and repeat the process several times a day, or whenever it looks dry. If set in a cool place, or where the wind can blow on it, it will readily evaporate the water from the pot, and the butter will be as firm and cool as if from an ice house.

A COMBINATION DINNER.—If possible buy a round of solid beef, the larger the better, as the meat will always be useful afterwards; say ten pounds. If an inferior piece of meat must be put up with, tie it securely with twine, as nearly as possible in the shape of a round, and trim it neatly. Put it in the stock-pot, with cold water in the proportion of a gallon to every three pounds of beef. Let it come to a gentle boil, skim it well and add a little water from time to time to bring up the scum. When thoroughly skimmed add two or three onions with a clove stuck in each, four carrots, four turnips, a parsnip, and two or three heads of celery. Let all boil gently for about three hours. Then take the meat out and put in a moderately hot oven to brown. Let the broth boil a little longer, skim carefully and strain through a cloth, and when the meat is nicely brown both are ready to be served. The soup is improved by slices of bread slightly toasted, being served in it; and if cabbage is liked, a large cabbage may have been boiled in the soup, and served afterwards with the carrots and turnips neatly ranged around the beef. The cabbage should be boiled in salt water for five minutes before being put in the broth, in order to remove the strong odor. The beef may be served without being put in the oven at all, but it is greatly improved in appearance by being nicely browned. There is one other kind of soup which I shall describe, as being very analogous in nature to the *pot-au-feu*, and as offering the same convenience of supplying two dishes in one. It is the Scotch broth, and has the same use in Scotland, and may have in this country as the *pot-au-feu* has in France. Many people like boiled mutton who do not like boiled beef. And the manner of preparing Scotch broth substitutes the mutton for the beef. The mode of procedure is nearly the same as in the *pot-au-feu*, but the soup or broth obtained is not as good. Put a piece of the neck or breast of mutton in the stock pot, add cold water in the proportion of a quart of water to a pound of mutton, and an ounce of barley for every quart of water. Let it boil slowly, skim carefully; then add carrots, turnips, onions and celery as before, and a bunch of herbs, and let it simmer for an hour only. Serve the soup and meat separately as before; or if desirable, the meat may have been cut into squares an inch thick and served in the broth.—*Christian Union.*