

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.]

Quacks and Patent Medicines.

The extent to which the use of patent medicines has attained since the beginning of the present century is enormous but whether the result has been good or bad there is a large diversity of opinion. In many cases, without a doubt, much harm has been done by the use of some of these quack medicines. The quacks give out that they can cure all diseases under the sun by the use of one or two medicines, or they have a certain remedy for a particular disease. That their first pretence is absurd and vain, every man of sense will allow, and that the second is dangerous we will endeavor to demonstrate. Supposing that they are (though the odds are they are not) proprietors of a good medicine, for some one particular disease; well, it is left to every man's judgment that makes use of it whether he have that disease, and how easy and frequent it is for men to mistake. They judge by their own feelings and symptoms, and if these, to their own way of thinking, correspond with those which they read are indicative of a particular disease, then they immediately jump to the conclusion that they are afflicted with that complaint, and proceed to treat themselves accordingly. They find that their symptoms are precisely the same as those described on the wrapper of their bottle of patent medicine, and even if one has not these symptoms it is a very easy matter, by reading about them and comparing one's own feelings, to fancy one has. Probably many people have experienced this and have found, in perusing descriptions of the symptoms of various diseases, that they are suffering from all these complaints!

No much for a man, entirely ignorant of the science of medicine and almost equally so of the anatomy of the human frame, diagnosing his own complaint.

Now, supposing a man has that very disease for which the medicine is proper (granting that a quack medicine can be proper for anything) yet how seldom is a disease alone or how seldom accompanied with precisely the same symptoms? Leaving out of the question the age, sex, variety of causes, late invasion or long standing of the complaint; all which circumstances it is next to impossible if not absolutely so that one medicine should be suited to. A man may have the very disease for which his quack medicine may be suited, but he probably has others to which it would prove an aggravation, and whilst the unfortunate victim is curing one minor distemper he is making two more ten-fold worse. He trusts implicitly (and if faith is worth anything in these cases he should certainly get well) in the cure-all properties of his wonderful medicines and finds too late that they are cure-nothings.

The man who is too stingy or too confident in his own wisdom to consult a competent physician and would rather pay twenty five cents or so for a bottle of one of these quack remedies than hand over a dollar or two dollars for the prescription of an experienced medical man, very often has to pay for his patent medicine first and for the services of a regular physician afterwards.

As there are no specifics for one disease

or for all diseases, there would be no hardship in suppressing secret medicines and in making it necessary that the ingredients of all quack nostrums should be made known on demand; and there should not only be a government office for labelling empirical nostrums but the law should also prevent the propagation of compounds as good for this or for that or all diseases, as one of the most flagrant kinds of the illicit practice of medicine.

Advice to Dyspeptics.

Dyspeptics should avoid anything which they (not others) cannot digest. There are so many causes for and forms of dyspepsia that it is impossible to prescribe one and the same diet for all. Nothing is more disagreeable or useless than to be cautioned against eating this or that because your neighbor "So-and-so" cannot eat such things. If we would all study the nature and digestion of food, and remember that air and exercise are as essential as food in promoting good health, we could easily decide upon the diet best suited to our individual needs. The diabetic should abstain from sugar and anything which is converted into sugar in digestion, such as all starchy foods, fine wheat flour, rice, macaroni, tapioca, liver, potatoes, beets, carrots, turnips, parsnips, peas, beans, very old cheese, sweet omelets, custards, jellies, starchy nuts and sweet sauces. He may eat oysters, all kinds of fish, meat, poultry and game, soups without any starchy thickening, lettuce, cucumbers, watercresses, dandelions, young onions, cold slaw, olives, cauliflower, spinach, cabbage, string beans, ripe fruit of all kinds without sugar, cream butter, milk sparingly, gluten, flour, oily nuts freely salted, eggs, coffee and cocoa. The corpulent should abstain from fat as well as sugar and starch. A diet of whole wheat, milk, vegetables, fruits and lean meat will produce only a normal amount of fatness; while an excess of sweets, acidic spices and shortening keeps the system in an unhealthy condition. Those who can digest fine flour, pastry, sugar and fats become loaded with fat, but are neither strong nor vigorous. Thin people with weak digestion should also avoid such food. For thin people are often kept thin by the same food which makes others fat. If they cannot digest the starch, butter, and fine flour, the system is kept in a feverish, dyspeptic state; they become nervous or go into consumption for no other reason than that the life is burned out by a diet that only feeds the fire and does not renew the tissues.

Curing a Cold in the Head.

The best way to treat this troublesome complaint is to take a "hot drink." An orange sliced and put into a large cup with a little sugar sprinkled over it, and boiling water poured upon it, and then drank as hot as possible, is both pleasant and beneficial. The feet should be put into hot water, with or without a little mustard. This foot bath should be taken at the bedside; the patient should be well wrapped up, and a blanket placed across his knees should be drawn outside the bath, so as to confine the steam. After keeping the feet in the water for from five to ten minutes, the patient should lose no time in getting into bed, where he will probably derive great benefit from the general feeling of warmth, and from the flow of perspiration which has been induced. If possible, at this stage, the patient should remain in bed for two days, with a fire in his room, which should be well made up at night, so as to keep alight till morning. But keeping in bed will do little good if the patient persists in holding a newspaper or a book to read, for thereby he is more dangerously exposed to cold than if he were up, dressed and going about as usual. The main point is to keep thoroughly wrapped up and contentedly warm. Even an uncomfortable degree of heat may be beneficial.

A small piece of camphor chewed and sucked is very good. So is the inhalation of sulphuric acid. Buy two ounces of sulphuric acid (dilute) from a chemist, and

then take out the cork and inhale—through the nostrils only, of course—the pungent gas which is given off. To avoid an unpleasant exhalation of the nose and upper lip during the course of a cold in the head, they should be often washed thoroughly with soap and lukewarm water, and a little vaseline should be applied.

Predisposition to Disease.

Many persons are predisposed to some particular ailment. This predisposition may have come down from remote ancestors, perhaps, a generation now and then; or it may have originated in the immediate parents. On the other hand, it may have begun within the life of the individual. In either case, however late in life the attack of the actual disease, the person may show no sign of the tendency in that direction, though frequently such tendencies are clearly indicated. But to bring about the attack, there must also be an exciting cause—a condition of things favoring its development.

This fact is of great practical worth. It puts one's health, after all, in his own keeping. A bad inheritance does not necessarily doom one to premature death. He may, notwithstanding, die with old age. He may, too, through carelessness or recklessness, precipitate a fatal attack. It is desirable, therefore, that each person should know his particular predisposition.

Suppose one has inherited a consumptive tendency. He need not necessarily die of the disease. His life should be as far as possible an outdoor one. His sleep should be in well-ventilated, sun-disinfected rooms. His food should include a good portion of fat, and be specially nourishing. His life should be active rather than sedentary. He should avoid occupations that involve much dust. Neither his home nor his place of business should be in a low, damp locality.

If the person tends to gout and apoplexy, his safety will lie in avoiding a luxurious life. If to acute rheumatism, in guarding against violent atmospheric changes and all chills after prolonged exertion. If to asthma, in rendering the system as far as possible unsusceptible to "colds" (bronchitis), since, in a large majority of cases, these start the attacks.

The predisposing cause of many infectious diseases is a lowered vitality, or a temporarily exhausted condition. The general health must be looked after.

How to Keep Well and Live Long.

Don't sleep in a draught. Don't go to bed with cold feet. Don't stand over hot-air registers. Don't eat what you do not need, just to save it. Don't try to get cool too quick after exercising. Don't sleep with insecure false teeth in your mouth. Don't start the day's work without a good breakfast. Don't sleep in a room without ventilation of some kind. Don't stuff a cold lest you be next obliged to starve a fever. Don't try to get along without flannel underclothing in winter. Don't use your voice for loud speaking or singing when hoarse. Don't try to get along with less than eight or nine hours' sleep. Don't sleep in the same undergarment you wear during the day. Don't toast your feet by the fire, but try sunlight friction instead. Don't try to keep up on coffee and alcohol when you ought to go to bed. Don't eat snow to quench thirst: it brings on inflammation of the throat. Don't strain your eyes by reading or working with insufficient or flickering light. Don't use the eyes for reading or fine work in the twilight or evening or early morn. Don't wear close, heavy fur or rubber caps or hats if your hair is thin or falls out easily. Don't eat anything between meals excepting fruits or a glass of hot milk if you feel faint. Don't take some other person's medicine because you are troubled somewhat as they were.

SIMPLE REMEDIES.

TO CURE THE STING OF A WASP.—Apply oil of tartar, or solution of potash, to the part affected, and it will give you instant ease.

A VALUABLE RECEIPT FOR TIC DOLOREUX.—Take half a pint of rose water, add two teaspoonfuls of white vinegar, to form a lotion. Apply it to the part affected three or four times a day. It requires fresh linen

and lotion each application; this will, in two or three days, gradually take the pain away.

TO PREVENT INFECTION FROM TYPHUS FEVER.—Six drachms of powdered saltpetre, six ounces oil of vitrol; mix them in a tea-cup by adding one drachm of the oil at a time. The cup to be placed during the preparation on the hearth, and to be stirred with a tobacco-pipe. The cup to be placed in different parts of the room.

AN EXCELLENT REMEDY FOR SPRAINS.—Put the white of an egg into a saucer, keep stirring it with a piece of alum about the size of a walnut until it becomes a thick jelly; apply a portion of it on a piece of lint or tow large enough to cover the sprain, changing it for a fresh one as often as it feels warm or dry; the limb is to be kept in a horizontal position by placing it on a chair.

Medicinal Value of Lemons.

The way to get the better of the bilious system without blue pills or quinine is to take the juice of one, two, or three lemons, as appetite craves, in as much water as makes it pleasant to drink without sugar, before going to bed. In the morning, on rising, at least half an hour before breakfast, take the juice of one lemon in a goblet of water. This will clear the system of humor and bile with efficiency, without any of the weakening effect of calomel. People should not irritate the stomach by eating lemons clear; the powerful acid of the juice, which is always most corrosive, invariably produces inflammation after a while, but properly diluted, so that it does not burn or draw the throat, it does its medical work without harm, and, when the stomach is clear of food, has abundant opportunity to work over the system thoroughly.

MEDICAL QUERIES.

Queries.—Persons wishing to have medical questions answered in these pages should address their correspondence to the Editor, Health Department of TRUTH; if this is not done their questions will not be attended to.

Persons sending no questions to be answered will confer a great favor by stating their age and general habits.

JACK MCLEAN, Toronto:—Go to a doctor, even if you don't want to. Yours is not an out-of-the-way case; too common altogether.

G. A. P., Georgetown, writes:—"I have been advised to bathe my eyes, which are inflamed, with warm water; please tell me what the temperature should be?" Ans.—The temperature should be that most agreeable to the sensation of the part affected.

"JOHN," Milton, says:—"I am a young man with a sandy beard; ought I to shave or not?" Ans.—Certainly, if your beard is so sandy that impolite people would call it carotty; but please yourself; we don't care much whether you shave or not.

D. B. HAYNES (no address given) asks:—"Is it good for the eyes to sit as far as possible away from the lamp when reading?" Ans.—No. Have the lamp at the distance most agreeable to the eyes, and, if possible, let it shine from behind you. Proper care of the eyes consists in using without abusing them—a principle applicable to all living organs and structures.

J. W., Alvin, N. Y., writes:—"I have been deaf in one of my ears for the last 16 years but have never tried anything for it; if came on with a ringing in the ear when I was eight years old; can anything be done for it?" Ans.—Soak a piece of cotton batting in sweet oil and keep constantly in the ear, except at such times as you remove it to syringe the ear thoroughly with warm water. If this does not relieve you, have the ear examined by a medical man.

GEORGE E. R., Amherstburg, says:—"I am, and have been for two years, troubled with salt-rheum in the palms of the hands and inside of the instep; also on my chest. I have tried many lotions and ointments, but don't get any better. Can you suggest anything?" Ans.—To begin with avoid alcoholic liquors; keep the skin perfectly clean. Take a tablespoonful of the following mixture three times a day: Liquor arsenicalis, 30 minims; iodide of potash, one drachm; fluid extract of sarsaparilla, one ounce; water, eight ounces. Take this steadily for a fortnight, then cease taking for two weeks, when commence again for another two weeks, and so on. Apply to the skin, where the disease appears, either zinc or diachylon ointment, and use castile soap when washing.