

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.]

Colors of Dress Fabrics and Health.

It is not generally known, or if known not fully appreciated, that the colors and hues of the clothing exert a very considerable influence on the health of the wearer. With many, and especially with the fair sex, the color of the garment to be worn is much more a question of fashion than of health. So much is this the case that there are many ladies who to-day are suffering from chronic diseases of one nature or another, who, if they were a little more careful in wearing clothing made from materials the colors of which are known to be beneficial, would be strong and healthy. It is a well known fact that a white surface throws back or reflects heat which comes in contact with it. For this reason, white or light-tinted garments are better adapted for summer wear, as they reflect the sun's rays and, to a degree, ward off heat. But whilst this fact is well known, as regards white for summer clothing, it is not so universally conceded in reference to light colors for winter wear. There is a tendency to make black for both summer and winter wear too much of a standard. There is an influence exerted upon the health by white or black clothing of far greater importance than that relating to heat.

The practice of wearing black as a symbol of mourning is to many attended with serious results. Everyone knows that black absorbs or extinguishes all the rays of light, and reflects none. Now, all should know that light is absolutely essential either to the preservation or restoration to health. A lady clad in black is surrounded by an atmosphere destitute of light by just as much as is absorbed by her black dress, and the long-continued wearing of black deprives the wearer and all who come near her of certain elements necessary to physical and mental health. This fact soon declares itself by a debilitated condition of both mind and body. In short, it will engender physical conditions which have for their sequence unpleasant thoughts and feelings, born of the lack of light. If people would only consult common sense and duty the senseless practice of wearing sombre colors for months and years after the death of a relative, would soon be discontinued. It does not necessarily follow that because one does not indulge in a public display of grief and sorrow that grief and sorrow are not felt. It would be paying quite as much respect to a deceased friend of those left behind would endeavor, by every means in their power, to preserve the health of their own bodies and those under their care, as if they for an indefinite period clothed themselves in sackcloth and gave way to a passionate, nerve-exhausting season of mourning.

Sanitary Rights of Tenants.

The frequency with which people go to court for redress from injury suffered through poor plumbing, makes the following comment of one of the New York City judges quite appropriate.

"It would seem, however, from the number of cases which come before the court for determination, that plumbing is deemed exceptional in its character.

"The roof may leak, the plastering give way, the doors and windows be broken, and other misfortunes incident to housekeeping may occur, and no claim is made that an eviction has been established, or a right of action has accrued against the landlord for the tenant's ill health; but if a pipe becomes filled up (by neglect or otherwise), or if the solder becomes loosened, or the pipe itself becomes deranged, or the main sewer is in such a condition as to empty the traps, the tenant for some reason claims that a different rule applies.

"Now, if a tenant elects to hire a house which empties into a sewer, with ramifications through his sleeping apartments, he does so with all the liabilities that such a selection engenders, and with full knowledge that no plumber has yet been able to keep out the gas or prevent the smell.

"The repairs of a sewer-pipe are not different from the repairs of a window or a door, and the distinguishing injury arising from such neglect is not only incidental and remote, but, as a matter of fact, is the result of the tenant's own election. He hired the premises with full knowledge of these connections, and the landlord is not chargeable with such consequential injuries as may arise from any defect that time and use produce. Under such circumstances, smells and even sickness are not only not extraordinary, but are inevitable; and I fail to see how this furnishes any ground of action against the landlord.

The charge of concealment and deception in this class of cases is undoubtedly an outgrowth of anger, which has its source from the painful effects of such defect; but the law in its present state furnishes no remedy to the tenant that I know of, and it rests with the legislature to make landlords and builders liable in such cases, for the common law throws the responsibility upon the tenant, and I know of no provision which exempts the plumbing or the sewer fixtures from these well-settled provisions."

Take Care of Your Eyes.

A very important but extensively neglected branch of school education is, how to use the eyes in reading and study without abusing them. This bit of physiological training should commence early and be pursued intelligently, both in school and at home, till the pupil is thoroughly trained into the best modes of economizing and preserving eyesight. The common school slate with its scratching pencil is a very objectionable piece of school furniture on account of the indistinctness of its markings and the effort often required to discriminate them. The modern use of plaques and pads of paper with lead pencils is greatly to be preferred for convenience, cleanliness, permanency of record, and ease to the eye.

The pupil should be early and persistently taught to read and study by day, with his back to the light. School-rooms are usually as badly constructed for light as for ventilation, and important rooms in county buildings, legislative halls, and church pulpits, are equally faulty. We have seen churches where the preacher encountered a blaze of light full in his eyes from a huge ornamental window in the end of the building opposite the pulpit, and other churches where the lights of the sacred desk were placed in such position in the rear or at the side of the speaker as to throw his features into shadow and thus deprive the discourse of all the power derivable from the play of facial expression.

Architects have much to learn in the way of lighting homes, school-rooms, churches, and public buildings generally. The best light is that from above. Pupils should be taught to use shaded lights by night, and, above all, steady lights, such as do not flicker. In this the German student lamp and other forms of Argand burners are superior as steady lights to gas, which is apt to be unsteady.

Certain studies should be pursued by daylight only: Greek and algebra for instance; and fine print should be avoided by night lights. No individual can judge for another. Some eyes, like stomachs, will bear anything. Other eyes will complain, and eye complaints should be instantly heeded and assiduously attended to. If the eyes itch at

the corners, water and blur with certain kinds of strains, that strain should be seasonably taken off. Pocket bibles, pocket Shakespeares, and pocket dictionaries should be replaced by books of larger print, and should be consulted under proper lights.

Probably one of the worst habits of the day is reading in the cars, especially the finer printed columns of the newspaper. The cars usually have the advantage of strong daylight falling upon the page at the right angle, but the swaying and tremulous motion must keep the sensitive retina in a state of unhealthy agitation, and end in impairing its usefulness. The habit of car-reading should be indulged with moderation and discretion.

Epithelioma.

This word—now so sadly familiar from the case of our great fellow-citizen, General Grant—is one of the names of carcinoma, or cancer. It is used because most cases of cancer are connected with the epithelium, the membrane which lines most of the internal organs and cavities of the body,—or with the epidermis (scarf skin), which covers the outer surface and is essentially of the same nature.

All our tissues—muscles, membranes, nerves, fat, bones, etc.—are built up by, and consist mainly of cells. These cells select from the blood, transform and assimilate the elements essential to their activity, growth and perpetuation. They multiply by division. Tumors result from a morbid multiplication of cells.

Benign tumors simply crowd—as they grow by the multiplication of cells—against the adjacent parts. In malignant tumors the multiplying cells infiltrate into the adjacent parts, and thus constantly enlarge their deadly area; or the are taken up by the bloodvessels and lymphatic vessels, particularly the latter, and borne to distant glands, where they set up the same deadly action.

A cancer, of whatever kind, is always malignant, though a hard cancer, of which an epithelioma is one, is not so malignant as a soft cancer, in which the cells preponderate over the fibrous tissue. What is now called a sarcoma, which was once thought to be a cancer, is a benign tumor generally, but may be malignant. It differs from a cancer mainly in having its cells separated from each other by intervening substance. In the latter the cells lie against each other—several hundred of them perhaps—in (other wise) empty spaces, or nests. The microscopist alone distinguishes between the two—the cancer and the sarcoma.

A cancer may long remain simply a hard, painless tumor, with its true character unknown. If it can be cut out then, it may never recur. This, therefore, is the time for its extirpation.

A cancer due solely to local irritation is quite likely to be cured when operated on early. When due to hereditary taint, it is more like to recur under some new irritation.

The age at which cancers appear is generally after forty. Hence the occurrence of a hard tumor, say from forty five and onward, should awaken attention. But comparatively few tumors are cancerous.

In cases where extirpation is impracticable, medical treatment may still do much for the general health, the relief of distressing symptoms, and averting the progress of organic disease.

Catarrh.

Catarrhs should receive careful consideration, instead of the neglect which they generally meet with until they have fastened on the part affected so much as to excite the attention, and perhaps alarm, of the sufferer. Here, however we propose to say a few words about the causes of chills.

A person in good health, with fair play, easily resists cold. But when the health flags a little, and liberties are taken with the stomach or the nervous system, a chill is easily taken, and accordingly to the weak spot of the individual, assumes the

form of a cold, or pneumonia, or, it may be, jaundice. Of all causes of "cold," probably fatigue is one of the most efficient. A jaded man coming home at night from a long day's work, a growing youth losing two hours' sleep over evening parties two or three times a week, a young lady, "heavily doing the season," and young children at this festive season overfed, and with a short allowance of sleep, are common instances of the victims of "cold."

Luxury is favorable to chill taking. Very hot rooms, soft chairs, and feather beds create a sensitiveness that leads to catarrhs. It is not, after all, the "cold" that is so much to be feared as the antecedent conditions that give the attack a chance of doing harm. Some of the worst colds happen to those who do not leave the house, or even their beds; and those who are most exposed to changes of temperature, and who, by good sleep, cold bathing, and regular habits preserve the tone of their nervous system and circulation.

Probably a good many chills are contracted at night or at the far end of the day, when tired people get the equilibrium of their circulation disturbed by either overheated sitting-rooms or overheated bedrooms and beds. This is especially the case with elderly people. In such cases, the mischief is not done instantaneously, or in a single night. It often takes place insidiously, extending over days or even weeks. It thus appears that "taking cold" is not by any means a simple result of a lower temperature, but depends largely on personal conditions and habits affecting especially the nervous and muscular energy of the body.—*London Lancet.*

Poison on the Floor.

It is not always expedient to lie low, especially in a bed-chamber, where a poisonous gas rests upon the floor. A writer makes this fact the basis of an appeal to the charitable. She writes: "Of the air we breathe there are two kinds—the breath we take in which is, or ought to be, pure air, composed on the whole, of oxygen and nitrogen, with a minute portion of carbonic acid, and the breath we give out which is an impure air, to which has been added among other matters which will not support life, an excess of carbonic acid.

"This carbonic acid gas when warm is lighter than the air and ascends. When at the same temperature as common air it is heavier than that air and descends, lying along the floor, just as it lies often in the bottom of old wells or brewers' vats, as a stratum of poison, killing occasionally the men who descend into it.

"Hence a word of admonition is addressed to those who think nothing of sleeping on the floor.

"The poor in all great cities are too apt in times of distress to pawn their bedsteads. Those who go about doing charitable work among them should never let this happen. Keep the bedstead, whatever else may go; save the sleeper from the carbonic acid stratum which lies close on the floor in cold weather."

The Therapeutics of "Horizontal Position."

Dr. R. H. Gunning, of Edinburgh, tells us that it is enough to look at the veins on the back of the hand or inside the leg, to see the effects of hydrostatic pressure. The limbs being perpendicular, the veins swell; placed horizontal, they become again normal. If so in the limbs where the veins have valves, more so in the veins where there are no valves, as in the lower intestine and in the reproductive parts. How easy to prevent varix, varicocele, piles, and leucorrhoea, by reclining sufficiently; or to develop them by over-standing or over-walking. This is what he thinks is not sufficiently estimated in books nor in practice. Too much is expected from local applications or operations of one kind or another, and too little is trusted to the help of position, or physical law.

Then we must not forget that the force of the heart and general circulation is also diminished by the recumbent position. The pulse increases in frequency by sitting up, and more by standing up.