

THE DISTRIBUTION OF AGARICS.

SOME REMARKS ON THEIR EDIBILITY.

DR. Hare's paper on edible Agarics (Feb., 1901) is interesting as showing the irregularity of the distribution of species of this class of plant, than which no other is more cosmopolitan. Besides the "fairy-ring," (*M. Oreades* Bolt), there are seven other species of *Marasmius* not rare in this part of the province, but I have never seen a living specimen of the acrid one (*M. urens* Bull.) against which Dr. Hare cautions the collector of "fairy-rings." Prof. Peck does not report it in New York State; Mr. Morgan finds it in Ohio.

The other species which collectors of "fairy-rings" are cautioned against, *Vaucoria Semi-orbicularis*, Bull., and which Dr. Hare says he has not found around Whitby, is common here. It may be seen in almost every old pasture in warm damp weather in June and is quite likely to be found near to or among "fairy-rings." Its gills are rust-colored, its cap is quite thin and its taste is suggestive of stale beech nuts.

Dr. Hare's paper is interesting also as being the first Canadian record of St. George's mushroom (*Tricholoma Gambosum* Fr.) The tricholomas are numerous in our latitude; Prof. Peck reports over fifty species in New York State, three of them being recommended as edible—indeed none of them are known to be poisonous—but his lists do not include *T. Gambosum*. It ought to be easily recognized from Dr. Hare's description. Dr. M. C. Cooke says of it that its odor is so strong that workmen employed in cleaning it out of English lawns have been obliged to desist, "overpowered by the heavy disagreeable odor." It would be interesting to discover how the species reached the Whitby College grounds. Possibly the mycelium may have

come among the roots of shrubs or plants from Europe.

In speaking of the properties of fleshy fungi, a distinction, if possible, should be made between those that are merely disagreeable or indigestible and those containing some poisonous alkaloid which enters the circulation. The same species seems to vary in the strength of its deleterious and other qualities according to soil and situation and probably age. I have received from Galt and Woodstock samples of *Lepiota naucinoides* Pk. taken from collections of that species alleged to have caused very serious nausea and vomiting. Most eaters of that species, so far as I know, have always enjoyed it. Again, certain fleshy fungi that are innocuous to most persons act, by a sort of auto-intoxication, as a poison in other stomachs. As an example of this, a woman at Aylmer was fatally poisoned a few years ago from eating *Gyromitra esculenta* Fr. while at the same time several other persons who had eaten more freely suffered no ill effects. As its name implies this species is regarded as esculent the world over and it is one that cannot be mistaken for any other. These and other instances that might be added teach the lesson that it is wise to partake sparingly at first of any new kind of mushroom or toadstool. It is better to leave them all severely alone than to eat an *amanita verna* for example by mistake.

In his future papers it is to be hoped that Dr. Hare will add after the account of each species such culinary notes as the one with which he closes the paragraph on the meadow mushroom. "Fairy-rings" may be cooked so as to be very delicious or they