

CHEESE POISON.

The following is an abstract of a paper by Prof. V. C. Vaughan, M.D., Ph. D., read at the meeting of the Michigan State Board of Health, July 14, 1885. Dr. Vaughan presented a report of his investigations on poisonous cheese. It is well known that cases of severe illness follow the eating of some cheese. Such instances are of frequent occurrence in the North German countries and in the United States. In England they are less frequently observed; while in France, where much cheese is made and eaten, these cases are said to occur very rarely. A few years ago, the reputation of a large cheese factory in Northern Ohio was destroyed by the great number of cases of alarming illness arising from eating its cheese. Dairy-men know this cheese as "sick" cheese.

KINDS OF CHEESE THAT ARE POISONOUS.

A German author says: "The numerous kinds of soft cheese, prepared in small families, or on small farms, are generally the cause of the symptoms; while it is quite exceptional to hear of symptoms arising from the use of cheese prepared in large quantities." Some two years ago, a family in Alpena, Mich., was poisoned by eating of cottage cheese; but the cheese which poisoned so many in this State last year was made at one of the largest factories in the State, and by a thoroughly experienced cheese maker. The old foul smelling cheese, such as Limburger and Schweitzer, have never been known to be poisonous.

EFFECTS OF THE CHEESE.

The symptoms produced by "sick" cheese, as reported by German and American physicians, agree quite closely and are as follows: Dryness of the mouth and throat with a sense of constriction, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, headache, sometimes double vision, and marked nervous prostration. In rare instances the sufferer dies from collapse. As a rule recovery occurs in a few hours, or at most after a few days. The symptoms of cheese poisoning and those of sausage, canned meats and fish poisoning are very similar, though death results more frequently from the others mentioned than from cheese poisoning.

APPEARANCE OF THE CHEESE.

The samples of cheese examined had no peculiarities of appearance, odor or taste, by which it could be distinguished from good cheese. It is true that if two pieces of cheese—one poisonous and the other wholesome—were offered to a dog or cat, the animal would select the good cheese. But this was probably due to an acuteness of the sense of smell possessed by the animal and not belonging to man. Indeed if a person tasted a cheese knowing that it was poisonous, he might detect a sharpness which would not ordinarily be noticed.

HAVE WE ANY READY MEANS OF RECOGNIZING POISONOUS CHEESE?

There is no certain means aside from a chemical examination, by which a poisonous cheese can be distinguished from a wholesome one. The most reliable ready method is probably that proposed by Dr. Vaughan a year ago and it is as follows: Press a small strip of blue litmus paper (which can be obtained at any drug store) against a freshly cut surface of the cheese; if the paper is reddened instantly and intensely the cheese may be regarded with suspicion. When treated in this way any green cheese will redden the litmus paper, but ordinarily the reddening will be produced slowly and will be slight. If the piece of cheese be dry, a small bit should be rubbed up with an equal volume of water, and the paper should then be dipped in the water. Dr. Vaughan does not regard the above test as free from error, but as the most reliable ready means now known. Every groceryman should apply this test to each fresh cheese which he cuts. The depth of the reddening of the paper may be compared with that produced by cheese which is known to be wholesome.

EFFECTS ON THE LOWER ANIMALS.

Dogs and cats, at least, are not affected by eating poisonous cheese. This is probably due to the fact that they do not get enough of the poison from the amount of cheese which they eat. The pure isolated poison in sufficient doses would undoubtedly produce upon the lower animals effects similar to those produced on man.

NATURE OF THE POISON.

Dr. Vaughan has succeeded in isolating the poison, to which

he has given the name tyrotoxin (from two Greek words which mean cheese and poison). It is a product of slight putrefaction in the cheese which probably occurs in the vat, as the curd has been known to poison a person. By this slight putrefaction, or excessive fermentation, as it may be called, a large amount of butyric acid is formed, and this in the presence of the casein of the cheese is capable of developing poison. Different samples of poisonous cheese contain different amounts of the poison. The same weight of cheese from one cake furnished three times as much poison as that from another cake. The poison was obtained in long needle shaped crystals which are freely soluble in water, chloroform, alcohol and ether. The smallest visible fragment of a crystal placed upon the end of the tongue causes a sharp stinging pain at the point of application, and in a few minutes dryness and constriction of the throat. A slightly larger amount produced nausea, vomiting and diarrhea. The poison is volatile at the temperature of boiling water, and for this reason even poisonous cheese may be eaten with impunity after being cooked. The substance has also a marked, pungent odor, and through the nose one can obtain sufficient of the volatile poison to produce dryness of the throat. This is true, however, only of the isolated poison. In the cheese the taste and odor of the poison are both modified to such an extent that they would not be recognized as has already been stated.

The first step in the study of cheese poisoning has now been taken, by finding out what the poison is. Efforts will be made to ascertain the means for preventing its formation.

THE CLYNDOGRAPH.

The clyndograph of M. Moessard is a new panoramic photographic apparatus, which by a simple rotation of the objective gives the cylindrical perspective of the earth. A view furnished by the apparatus embraces an angle of 170 degrees, so that a complete turn of the horizon is obtained in two views and a fraction of twenty degrees range. The instrument is based on the principle that a lens or combination of lenses, constituting a photographic objective, may be subjected to any movement whatever without the image it produces on a screen changing its form or position, provided that the movement takes place around the nodal point, behind which it is maintained immovable. This follows from the known property of the nodal point being the point of view of the perspective produced. Suppose, then, there be (1) an objective suspended horizontally and turning round a vertical axis passing by its after nodal point; (2) two vertical shutters fixed behind to right and left of the objective, to limit the field in the horizontal direction and arrest rays too oblique; (3) a screen of cylindrical form vertically centred upon the axis of rotation, and having for radius the distance of the nodal point from the principal focus of the objective. In any position whatever of the objective the lie of the country comprised in the field of the instrument will be projected on the screen. If the objective be put in motion one gets successively for each point of the panorama an immovable image which impresses the eye or sensitive paper while the point remains between the two shutters. In M. Moessard's actual apparatus Taiebant sensitive plates are used to receive the impressions. The instrument is expected to prove useful in preliminary surveying and military operations.

NO PANAMA CANAL.

The London *Financial News* has been looking into Panama canal facts and figures and reaches some interesting conclusions. M. de Lessep's calculation was that, beginning in 1881, the canal could be built in eight years at not exceeding \$120,000,000 of cost. In June, 1883, the date of the last official report, \$43,900,000, or over one-third the total estimate, had been spent and just about one per cent. of the excavation was done. Up to June, 1885, the *News* learns, the total expenditure had been \$104,033,000, or five-sixths of the total estimate, and the work done was one-tenth of all that will be necessary. The *News* goes on, allowing for the heavy extra cost of tide locks, retaining walls against the Chagres river, etc., and concludes that not less than \$525,000,000 will be required, or would be, to complete the work. It thinks this never will be raised and that the canal will never be finished, and that, if finished, it could not pay.