

nor can one expect it. But there is one thing the constituted authorities might prevent, viz., the taking of a half-dozen nurslings by one peasant woman. And this is frequently done by women who are by no means endowed with a robust physique; one is confronted every now and then by a brood of youngsters pigging—there is no other word for it—in styes which the parents of the said youngsters would think unfit for their poodle dogs.

I saw some specimens once at Samoia and Franconville, about thirteen miles from Paris, whither I had gone for a country walk. Apart from the defective drainage and bad smells that prevail in every country district throughout France, the avoidable filth, slovenliness, and brutish way of living are sufficient to make an English coal-heaver or navy sick. On the pretext of seeking a nurse for a motherless nephew, I entered no less than eight of those crazy tenements. There was not a pin to choose from between them, and I involuntarily thought of poor Betty Higden and her minders, so sympathetically and graphically portrayed by Dickens. Three or four wooden cradles along the wall, their should-be occupants crawling along the floor, their companion a large mongrel dog, the rest of the furniture not worth mentioning, but the whole apartment pervaded by a faint musty smell, to dispel which the sweet summer air coming in from the open door, struggled in vain. In the course of the conversation I elicited that the mother's milk was doled out once a day to each of her charges—she meanwhile doing hard rough work in the fields; the supplementary food was supplied from a feeding bottle. Of baths and hygienic appliances of even the most primitive kind there was not the slightest trace.

### Science Notes.

#### ON EATING AND DRINKING.

THE subject of food is one in which everybody feels capable of giving advice, and that given unprofessionally is perhaps frequently accompanied with the least misgiving on the part of the adviser. A correspondent of this paper only the other day challenged all and sundry to show good reason why she should not go on drinking tea several times a day and wearing a corset, both of which things she had been in the habit of doing with entire satisfaction to herself. So far no professional reader has felt called upon to try to convince the correspondent of the error of her ways, and it was hardly to be expected. The letter did not state anything as to the strength of the tea used. It is only the thoughtless who repeat, parrot-like, "It is very bad for you to drink tea four or five times a day." A little reflection must convince them that if there be a poisonous principle in tea, a single cup of strong infusion may contain more of it than many cups of a weak infusion. Then there is individual idiosyncrasy to be taken into account. There is a great deal of truth in the old saying "what is one man's meat is another man's poison." A wise physician once wrote concerning the uselessness of persons recommending to others certain articles of diet because they themselves had benefited by them; the writer even went so far as to say that a man might as well try to induce all his friends to wear hats

or boots of his own size because he had found them so well suited to him.

Dr. Tom Robinson, lecturing at the College for Working Men in Great Ormond Street only last Saturday, quoted the case of a woman who had a great antipathy for mutton. A rissole of rice and minced mutton was given to her, and she ate it, not knowing what it was, with the result that it acted as an irritant poison. The above case is, of course, very remarkable, perhaps isolated, but the practical importance of it is considerable, for may we not well believe that between this extreme case and that of a person who relishes mutton there are all degrees of antipathy. It is painful to reflect that there are still persons who will not permit what they call "ridiculous fancies" with regard to food in children or others for whom they are responsible.

As most Nurses well know, the theory that what is good for herself must be good for everyone else is often carried into practice by the ignorant mother in feeding her baby. A lady travelling by train once watched in silence, as long as she could, a mother trying to feed her little toothless baby on dry herring. When the lady asked gently if the mother did not think it very unsuitable food for the little one, she was met with a haughty look, and the mother, drawing herself up, replied, "I ought to know what is good for my child I hope; I've buried nine."

The principle of individual idiosyncrasy is perhaps recognised in the saying that "at forty every man is either a fool or a physician," but as a journalist once remarked, the author of the saying did not take into account that he might be both. It is only natural that matters of such importance as health and food should be made the subject of numerous proverbs in all languages, but the Japanese are responsible for one of the most scientific we have ever heard—"That a man lives by what he digests, not by what he eats."

### Notes on Art.

#### ROYAL SOCIETY OF BRITISH ARTISTS.

(Second Notice.)

MR. ROBERT CHRISTIE'S picture, called "Critics" (No. 17), is obviously a portrait piece. The three girls represented are clothed so much in the prevailing fashion, that it is to be feared they will soon look "out of date." The picture is, however, clever in drawing and grouping; what the critics are criticising is by no means clear.

"Totteridge Pond" which hangs near (John E. Jacobs, No. 19) is a charming representation of a charming place. I wonder how many Londoners know of this quiet corner—this little untouched bit of Arcadia among the suburbs? Half an hour will take you there from King's Cross, and you may wander over broad pastures, and beneath huge trees, to Mill Hill or High Barnet, and be as much surprised to see the Alexandra Palace front your gaze, as though the "stately pleasure dome" at Xanadu had suddenly risen at the decree of Kubla Khan before you.

The "Traitor's Wife," Fred Roe (No. 29) has been a good deal praised. I found it somewhat disappointing; the traitor's wife is hardly interesting enough to arouse our interest, though one must feel for the little son whose hand she holds.

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