

## FEEDING IN THE SICK ROOM.

BY A PHYSICIAN.

"EVERY man is a rascal when he is sick," said Dr. Johnson. Perhaps it would be true to say: every man is a dyspeptic when he is sick. Said Voltaire of President Henault, a man of fortune, highly endowed by nature: "It matters nothing—he can't digest." We read of Tantalus in water up to his chin, ever trying to quench his increasing thirst from the surrounding floods, which recede with every effort the sufferer makes. Such, in a measure, is the experience of the dyspeptic. "Give me an alms," said Lazarus to Dives, "I am so hungry." "Hungry!" exclaimed Dives; "How I envy you!"

A dyspeptic may be said to be a man who suffers from want of food, and then suffers because he has had it. The very sick are often the same. I have seen the harried patient put to sleep with a mouthful of proper food, and I have seen the fever raised at once by what was unsuitable. Many a patient, convalescent from typhoid fever, has taken a hearty meal, and put his head on his pillow never to raise it again. A poor woman's life has been in the balance with peritonitis for a week; she was on the mend; her husband gave her some champagne and gruel, and she forthwith became worse, and died in forty-eight hours. How a full meal belabours a diseased and weakened heart. How it "fires up" a tender liver or kidney. If you will let me feed a man as I like, I will produce suppuration in the best cared-for wound, I will prevent an ulcer from healing, and drive an inflamed joint to destruction.

Physiologists show us that our food is poison, and that the liver is a dam which prevents the poison being thrown upon the system too fast. If the meat taken at an ordinary meal were to be digested outside the body and thrown into the veins, it would prove fatal. Different animals are affected differently by different foods. A horse, for example, "has been known to eat eight pounds of belladonna leaves (deadly nightshade) with impunity; blackbirds feed freely upon the berries; and fifteen grains of its active principle are required to poison a rabbit, while a small dose would poison a man." To young infants, few things are more injurious than starchy food; to them, and to invalids generally, plain cow's milk (which curdles) should not be given.

We are led, then, to the importance of care in feeding in the sick room, and its importance is well laid down by King Chambers in his "Manual of Diet," who, after referring to acute disease, and particularly fever, says: "When life seems passing away under their eyes, the friends will often shrink from tormenting (as it seems to them) the sick man with food. Let them not despair; many a one has recovered after the doctor has taken his leave with a sad shake of the head, and without making a fresh appointment. And also let them be stimulated by this fact, namely, that the pains of death are aggravated, if not mainly caused, by the failure of nutrition. Even when apparently insensible, the dying suffer much increased distress from want of food though they cannot express their sufferings." Food is oftentimes a better medicine than drugs.

The three main foods of the sick room are perhaps milk, gruels, and meat soups. There are draw-

backs to them all which should not be overlooked. Cow's milk, as every one knows, curdles in the stomach, and in diarrhoea, dysentery, typhoid fever, peritonitis, infantile and dyspeptic conditions, may do irreparable harm. The danger is readily overcome, all that is necessary being to add to each pint a Fairchild Zymine Peptonizing Powder, which predigests it. The trouble with gruels is that the stomach cannot digest them, as they are starchy, but by adding a teaspoonful or two of the Kepler Malt Extract to each cupful, the starch will be rendered soluble in a moment.

As to beef-teas, in making them, the heat coagulates the nutritious ingredients of the meat, and only the stimulant principles are administered. Zymine should always be used in making beef-tea for invalids, as it digests out the insoluble but nutritious albumen.

## CHRONIC INDIGESTION.

THE chronic form of indigestion is due to errors in diet frequently repeated, to the impoverishment of the blood and consequent debility of the whole digestive apparatus, the result of long or frequent exposures to malarious influences, or to imperfect recovery from acute and exhausting diseases, or to continued indiscretion.

The *symptoms* are discomfort or pain in the region of the stomach, more or less intermittent and spasmodic, experienced usually within two hours after eating, attended often by much flatulence and eructations of hot sour fluid—sometimes by giddiness and headache. All these symptoms are much less severe than in acute indigestion. Sometimes they follow the meals at long intervals, at others not; at times they are accompanied by diarrhoea, alternating with constipation. The tongue is usually coated and sticky, the head uncomfortable, and the mental faculties depressed. In common parlance, the dyspeptic always feels the presence of his stomach. (Generally speaking, a *chronic* disease is one that lasts more than six weeks.)

*Remedial measures* should begin with simplifying the diet, taking food regularly, but often, and in smaller quantities than usual, using only meat that is easily digested; making some of the cereals, with milk, into gruels, or taking milk that has been predigested with Zymine, either alone or with egg custards. Plain wheat bread, *if good*, or toast, or biscuit may be added.

Vegetables and condiments should be discarded, except where there are *idiosyncrasies*, or peculiarities of constitution rendering their use advisable.

Where there is a sour stomach, the administration of two to six Sodium Bicarbonate Tabloids will afford immediate relief; though to cure the tendency to acidity, Potassium Bicarbonate Tabloids should be taken, and may be relied on.

For an ordinary case of indigestion, probably there is nothing better than a Peptonic Tabloid after each meal. For pain, Nux Vomica is the agent. Five to ten drops of the tincture may be taken in a wineglass of water. Its effects are felt at once. It should be noted that five drops of dilute muriatic acid in a wineglass of water, before meals, cures sour stomach. Quinine and Nux Vomica may also be taken. For those troubled with indigestion from starchy matters, a little Kepler Extract of Malt is the thing required.

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