

APERIENTS, THEIR USE AND ABUSE.

WE verily believe that some people are so peculiarly constituted that they are never really happy but when they are taking one nauseous or purgative mess or another. This habit—for habit it is, as much as that of morphia or cocaine—is really so senseless and unnecessary in the majority of cases that it becomes a positive duty to point out how harmful it may be, and to sound a note of warning. One would naturally suppose that this would have been sufficiently evident to any sane person, without having it specially pointed out, but, as the insane practice of needless purging still goes on, a word or two of caution seems absolutely called for.

It has been asserted, on what seems to be rational ground, that, in a very large number of instances, chiefly among the gentler sex, one of the main, if not the chief, causes of hæmorrhoids has been the wanton and too free use of strong purgatives; not only so, but that vain and useless laxatives have done more than anything else to perpetuate and aggravate this complaint when once established.

We wonder if it be possible to convince these otherwise estimable folk (so aperient-mad) that a more rational mode of living, more in accordance with nature's dictates, would accomplish more, with less inconvenience and far less disturbance of important functions, than this constant recourse to a habit which the commonest of common sense prohibits. The artificial mode of living into which so many of us have drifted is, I suppose, but the natural outcome of what is euphemistically termed modern civilization, and we become a highly-strung, nervous community as our muscularity wanes.

One of the most prevalent symptoms of neuropathic affliction is constipation; not as a cause, be it remembered, but as an effect; an effect which is bound to follow the too prevailing neglect of muscular exercise, and our slavery to sedentary ways. This state of things having been once set up, we at once fly to the palliative—the purge; and the ease with which one can find relief, if it be only temporary, from a condition bodily, as well as mentally, oppressive only makes rational reform the more difficult, and our own crusade, perhaps, the more hopeless. In the first place, we would like to say that there are, of course, many circumstances in which it is a matter of urgency under medical guidance to exhibit brisk and effective depletives, but in cases of simple constipation a drastic dose generally results in such a strong reaction that the patient is worse off than before.

We have found that a change, a radical change, such as from a meat régime to a vegetable, and the regular administration of a tabloid of Cascara Sagrada, or one of compound Cascara, at bedtime every night, or every other night, often work as a charm not only in producing the effect immediately sought, but in materially reducing the complaint. It seems necessary to say, after our experience, that constipation is not to be remedied by harsh measures, and we must recognize that in dealing with affections of the human system, that which slowly supervenes, is

if it is to be naturally treated, only to be removed in an equally slow progression.

We would specially recommend the Cascara treatment for this reason—that, after a while the natural function having been well re-established, patients are able to dispense with it altogether without fear of a relapse.

THE TEETH IN SICKNESS.

ON reading over manuals on nursing, one is struck by the absence of directions in most of them for the patient's comfort anent a most important point, viz., care of the teeth during sickness. On all other points explicit rules are enjoined, and when one considers the immense amount of comfort or discomfort that this part of the human organization can engender, the omission of such suggestions seems inexplicable. When we remember that apart from the bad influence which mal-formation and incomplete development of the jaws, deficient nutrition, and faulty structure of the teeth have upon their health, and that the result also of general diseases, like scrofula, dyspepsia, fevers, &c., is to produce caries in the mouth, it is certainly a logical inference that increased attention should be devoted to the teeth during illness.

Local and general diseases which acidify the saliva (one of the causes of caries) should command the greatest attention, and when it is impossible for a patient to make use of the toothbrush, some sort of antiseptic lotion to wipe out the mouth should be used. According to an extract from a paper read before the International Congress of Hygiene and Demography by Dr. George Cunningham, of Cambridge, "The chief exciting cause is the chemical change produced by micro-organisms in the fermentable matter lodged upon or between the teeth." Therefore, it can be understood that where a disease like an infectious fever holds a patient in thrall, the increased temperature, the changed diet, portions of which must necessarily remain in the mouth unless regularly cleansed, are all highly favourable towards the increased activity of bacteria.

Where patients are in a comatose condition the mouth can be wiped out with a soft cloth, wetted in some antiseptic solution; but for ordinary cases, and where the patient can sit up in bed, either using the wetted toothbrush, upon which two or three drops of lotion have been poured, or rinsing the mouth thoroughly into a hand-basin which the nurse will hold in a convenient position on the bed, will be found to answer every requirement of cleanliness, health, and personal comfort.

As to the antiseptic lotion to be used, it is well known that many are advertised to clean and whiten the teeth, and do so most effectually by affecting the enamel with the acids they contain. It is, therefore, absolutely necessary to have a reliable article, and as regards that quality, a preparation better calculated to please than Salodent would be hard to find.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)