

## Medical Matters.

### DECOMPOSED FOOD.



THE dangers which may result from eating food in a state of decomposition have only been understood within recent times; and they are forcibly exemplified by some investigations which have recently been carried out concerning the precise poisons which are formed by decaying tissues. How great the dangers from these may be, and how many cases of mysterious deaths may have been due to their presence, are evident when it is realised that the poisonous principle extracted from mackerel in a state of putrefaction, and which is called hydro-collidine, is so powerful that the seven-thousandth part of a grain injected under the skin of a mouse will cause immediate death. Sweetbread, when decomposed, yields a principle closely allied to that found in mackerel, and nearly as dangerous. Beef and other flesh meats yield a poisonous substance, to which the name of vendine has been given, and the well-known poisonous character of stale mussels is explained by the fact that in decay they produce a substance, a grain and a half of which is a fatal dose to a large dog. The extreme danger, finally, of the poisonous principle contained in decayed pork probably explains, to a large extent, the wisdom of the Mosaic interdict of the flesh of the pig; because, of course, decomposition takes place much more rapidly in hot climates than in more temperate latitudes.

### VEGETARIANISM.

IT has been stated that it would be impossible to maintain life upon a purely vegetable diet. Putting aside the salient facts that the formation of the human teeth proves that man was expected to consume animal food, and that a mixture of such food with a vegetable diet affords the most economical and satisfactory combination of the chemical substances which are required for the sustenance of the system, it is still beyond question that there are vegetables which supply all the requirements of bodily nutrition. It has, for example, been recently pointed out, not only that the fluid of the cocoanut is a not unsatisfactory substitute for cows' milk, and that the

cow-tree of South America provides a fluid so rich in fatty matter that it appears to be a perfect cream, but also that by crushing and mixing with water certain nuts a solution closely resembling milk can be made, which contains fat and albumen in proportions closely resembling those found in cows' milk. It has been found, moreover, that such a fluid, to which a small quantity of grape sugar has been added, furnishes a food which is in many respects more digestible for infants, and more nutritious, than any of the ordinary foods. This fact may be recommended to the careful attention of manufacturers, as it has hitherto not received the notice its importance deserves.

### ULCER OF THE STOMACH.

DURING recent years the treatment of this affection has become considerably more successful than formerly. The causation and progress of this disease is better understood, and by many practitioners the common-sense treatment of an internal ulcer on the same principles as those applied to the cure of a similar condition externally has proved rapidly effectual. Consequently the many drugs which were formerly given in this complaint are now but rarely used; the stomach is kept as much at rest as possible; the patient being fed by nutrient enemata and suppositories instead of by the mouth; and hot water containing some harmless antiseptic, or even boiled water alone, is administered so as to keep the surface of the ulcer cleansed and healthy, and so promote its rapid healing. Then again, the advances of surgery in these cases have been equally conspicuous. Formerly, the perforation of an ulcer through the wall of the stomach was almost invariably fatal, violent peritonitis being set up, and the patient rapidly succumbing. In several recent cases, when this accident has occurred, the abdomen has been opened just below the ensiform cartilage, the stomach perforation found and closed by fine stitches, the abdomen washed out freely, and the wound closed in the ordinary manner. In a very creditable proportion of instances, the patient has recovered rapidly and completely. This is, indeed, only another example of the great advances which have been made in modern times in abdominal surgery, and of the little respect which, under antiseptic conditions, is now paid to the peritoneum.

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