

Medical Matters.

THE UTILISATION OF FOODS.



Dr. Edward F. Willoughby, lecturing at the Institute of Hygiene last week, said that one of the most serious errors in the dietary of most persons was that they drank too little. Water, he pointed out, is not only the chief constituent of the body but it is also, what is far more important, the vehicle in

which those innumerable chemical changes taking place in the tissues are conducted.

Without water no elimination of waste matter can take place by way of skin, kidneys, or alimentary canal. It is truly the basis of life, for without it, even in the midst of plenty of all other foods, life cannot be sustained for any length of time. As a matter of fact, entombed miners who had water but no food lived longer than those who had food but no water.

When we consider, urged the lecturer, that it is required by every tissue of the body, for the elimination of the poisonous products of waste by the skin and kidneys, to say nothing of the amount demanded by the various glands engaged in digestive operations, we can only marvel that so little as we consume can do so much. There is in most people a shortage, with the consequence that urea and other waste matters accumulate in the tissues of the body, giving rise to rheumatism, gout, dyspepsia, and kindred ailments, merely for the want of a solvent to carry poisons out of the system.

Part of this error is due to the scare that has been created concerning the drinkable character of tap water, even with all the modern contrivances for ensuring its purity and goodness. Our ancestors, who were dependent upon the village pump, with its attendant typhoid, probably suffered less mortality from disease, brought about by impure water, than do we from our dread of the pure article that is now so lavishly provided.

It is, said the lecturer, another kind of hydrophobia, against which no preventive measures have yet been taken—far more potent for widespread evil than the terrible scourge against which so many measures have been adopted by a well-meaning and beneficent Government.

THE BENEFITS OF HOT WATER.

Drs. Ephraim and John Ashburton Cutter writing in the *Dietetic and Hygienic Gazette* on Food and its Relations to Health and Disease, extol hot water as an article of diet. They

say:—There is no medicine that will cause downward peristalsis so effectively, promptly and injuriously as hot water. Dry heat outside of the abdomen does good, but not as the hot water internally. Again medicines given for specific actions are increased in force by administering with hot water.

This is not all that hot water does. It washes down and out the stomach, the intestines, liver, pancreas (sweet bread), kidneys, skin; it thins the thickened blood so that its capillaries and veins (there is rarely much trouble with arteries) allow of healthy flow; all the glands secrete better with a plenty of hot water; it helps to dissolve calculi, gallstones, gravel of lungs, kidneys, and bowels, and sometimes the calculous concretions (intestinal) are enormous in size; it paves the way for good digestion, assimilation and appropriation of food and thus gives the system more force to run it happily; it becomes a spiritual food, as the spirit cannot work in a body all anæsthetised, hypnotised, if not paralysed by the gases of the alimentary canal fermentation which are the bane of the nerves and cause troublesome dreams, hallucinations, stir up bad memories, put the sleeping spirit into a state of terrible unreal trouble; it gives a feeling of refreshment at once; leaves no trail behind like alcohol and causes no abnormal appetite, nor takes away the senses, nor causes locomotor ataxia (acute) nor produces organic disease like alcohol in fatty degeneration; if habitually drunk removes the desire for ice water in the hottest days in summer; in other words, it cools; distilled, it should help to arrest the fermentation of tartar on teeth; it warms cold extremities so that in reality it does what it is claimed that alcohol does for toppers, it warms in winter and cools in summer; it promotes normal sweating (diaphoresis), an important thing for the twenty-five miles of sweat ducts in adult man; it has benefited man for ages, else why the general domestic use of hot decoctions; if heat is life and cold is death, then hot water has a precedence over cold. The uses of hot water as an outside application are many and various, and its powers excel any medium in the *materia medica*; for example, it has been found in nephritic colic that baths, as hot as could be borne, cause the cartilaginous ureter to soften and the terrible powers of the secreting kidney epithelia to expand the goose quill tube so that the calculi were passed into the bladder; this after all the resources of anodyne and anæsthetics have been found to fail.

It will thus be seen that both in the old and the new worlds the benefit of water as an article of diet is emphasised.

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