

Medical Matters.

THE REMEDY FOR PATIENTS WHO CANNOT DIGEST MILK.

Dr. Stephen Smith writes in the *Dietetic and Hygienic Gazette*:—

In the early years of practice I was much surprised to learn that there were so many persons who could not digest milk. Mothers stated that their children were made sick on taking even a small quantity, and vomited hard masses of curd. Adult persons often declared that milk was to them a poison, making them sick and bilious.

As milk is the only natural food universal among animals it was a singular anomaly that so many human beings could not use it, and for a time the explanation was impossible. In the course of reading a new edition of the aphorisms of Lord Bacon I came upon the following singular statement:—

"Many persons declare that they cannot take milk as a food, and the reason is that they do not take enough."

No explanation of this remarkable statement was given, and there seemed to be no rational ground of belief in its truth. But as Bacon was a very accurate observer of natural phenomena I accepted his maxim and practiced accordingly with most satisfactory results. Mothers were horrified at my direction to give the child a half pint to a pint of milk instead of an ounce or two, but the result always proved the accuracy of Bacon's observation. Old dyspeptics laughed at my remedy for their life-long fear of milk, but they found that a half pint of milk after each meal not only did not make them bilious but rendered the meal even more digestible.

Later, reflecting upon Bacon's unexplained maxim, an experience as a child at our farmhouse gave me the clue to the proper solution of the remedial action of a large quantity of milk when a small quantity proves hurtful. Noticing that in making cheese the operator weighed first the milk, then the "rennet," and recorded the result, I had the curiosity to inquire why so much accuracy was required. I was informed that if there was too much "rennet" for the milk the curd would be so hard that it could not be pressed into a cheese, and that if there was too much milk for the "rennet" the curd would be so soft that it could not be pressed into a cheese.

In this lesson, learned in boyhood, was the solution of the problem which Bacon had formulated. The formation of a curd in the stomach depends upon the acidity of the fluid of the stomach at the time of taking the milk and the relative amount of milk ingested. A

very soft curd is necessary for healthy digestion, while a hard curd prevents the penetration of the digestive fluids. In the child the hard curd is a source of irritation of the stomach, with nausea and vomiting, but with the less sensitive adult it passes undigested into the upper bowel and produces the so-called "bilious" habit. While we cannot determine exactly how much milk is necessary to secure only a soft curd in any stomach, it is always safe to assume that the patient who complains that milk is a poison to him will be cured of that disability if he will follow Bacon's directions and drink enough of it.

THE QUESTION OF WET NURSES.

The results of theoretical and practical studies conducted at the "Säuglingsschutz" (Infants' Institute) in Vienna have, says the *Lancet*, recently been published, and some of the conclusions arrived at may be mentioned here. Certain leading principles are recommended for adoption by legislation for the welfare of the public. (1) No woman should be allowed to hire herself out as wet nurse unless her baby is at least six weeks old and weaned. This would not only insure better prospects for the baby and its health but it would also enable any symptoms of disease or weakness in either the wet nurse or her child to be detected. Syphilis is the special danger which threatens babies who are handed over to wet nurses. If the nurse's baby is suckled by the mother for six weeks without any syphilitic symptoms appearing one may be nearly convinced of the absence of the disease. Therefore, the next recommendation is (2) the examination of the baby of the nurse before hiring the nurse should be a matter of obligation, or a testimonial by a medical man should be produced. (3) Private people should not be allowed to do business in the shape of finding wet nurses for families. This should be done only by "infants' institutes" whereby conscientious adherence to the rules of science would be insured. On the other hand, the would-be wet nurse should be induced to leave her child with the infants' institute, where it could be looked after much better than by a foster mother. The danger for these, mostly illegitimate, children is enormous: the mortality among them is twice as high as that of children cared for by their own mother. The imminent regulation of medical studies together with the proposed new "Public Health Act" will give the medical men in Parliament ample opportunity to bring this matter to the notice of the legislators.

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