

## HINTS ON THE PROPER MANAGEMENT OF THE SKIN.

BY A FAMILY DOCTOR.



OR obvious reasons I cannot, in this paper, enter into a minute description of the anatomy and physiology of the skin, interesting though it would be to many. I must refer the reader who needs or desires information on such a subject to the standard authorities.

I have before now endeavoured to explain how extremely important are the functions which the skin has to perform; how that, independent of actual and visible perspiration, an insensible transpiration or exhalation is continually going on from the surface of our bodies, and how on this account the skin is the great regulator of the animal heat; how the skin is the repository of the sense of touch and feeling, and the protector of all the parts that lie beneath it; how the amount of fluid that passes from each of our bodies during four-and-twenty hours would average about three pints, and how, in this evaporating fluid, many substances find their way to the surface of the body, which if retained in the system would act injuriously, if not indeed as positive poisons: such, for example, as the acids that cause both gout and rheumatism.

I will now try to explain to my readers the conditions which are necessary, in order to obtain so desirable a result; and I think I shall be doing right to first and foremost say a word or two about the proper nourishment of the body, for upon this to a very large extent depends the health of the skin.

We nourish our frames, then, from the food we eat. The first meal of the day, presuming one is in fair health and strength, should be, to use a common phrase, "a hearty one." Mind, I do not advise any one to eat to repletion—only pigs may do this, and they live but to eat and sleep; but man has work to perform, and no meal of the day should be a heavy one. But a person is certainly not in good health who has not a good appetite for breakfast; there must in such a case be a screw loose somewhere, and the more speedily it is seen to the better, or evil will be the result. Our forefathers drank sack for breakfast: our forefathers lived much more in the open air than we do, and so their sons and daughters must content themselves with the milder beverages, tea and coffee. And nothing can be better if they are properly made and served. IF—but alas! and alas! how seldom one gets a cup of either good tea or coffee. A word about each. Plain black tea is the best; if a fair price is paid for it, it will come far cheaper in the long run; never, after adding the water, set the tea-pot on the hob to simmer for any length of time. Here is how I advise the infusion to be prepared:—Take a silver or brown earthen tea-pot, and having heated it,

put in the tea, and set it on the hob to heat and dry for about a minute without the lid, just until you can scent the aroma arising. Have the water *boiling* ere you pour it in; you may then put on the lid, and replace the tea-pot on the hob for three minutes, and no longer. It should now be drunk, else instead of an infusion you will have a decoction—instead of imbibing the good qualities of the tea alone, you will swallow also its deleterious, not to say poisonous, properties.

Brain-workers, especially literary men, often need some refreshment during their labours, and in my opinion there is nothing so grateful as coffee, drunk either cold or hot, with or without sugar and milk. Those who have to travel long journeys by train, would do well to take in their bags a bottle or two of well-made tea. There is no stimulant so exhilarating; the effects of beer or spirits on the tired body are only transient, they soon pass off, and leave one more tired and weary than before. Milk may be drunk in the coffee or tea for breakfast, but I doubt whether elderly or even middle-aged people should drink milk cold at any time; it is often most indigestible, although it may be taken in small quantities, mixed with soda-water, even by the most delicate. A patient of mine, only last week, some hours after partaking freely of cold milk was attacked by sickness and vomiting, which resisted all treatment until the third day, when relief seemed to be brought about by his bringing up a vast white cheesy mass, very much larger than he could have swallowed. Milk, I grant you, is the most nutritious aliment which we possess, but even milk must be partaken of with due consideration. Cocoa is also highly nutritious.

Dinner, I have often said, should be partaken of early by those who value their health. The luncheon of the present day is in very truth nothing else than a dinner, and, as that, it does well, but the evening meal deserves no other name than that of supper: and a very heavy and indigestible one it often is too, requiring all kinds of wines and stimulants to effect its digestion and produce subsequent sleep. No wonder that people who live in this way as a rule, and eat more stimulating food than is good for them, age before their time, and suffer from ekzema and irritation of the skin in their later years.

Let me now seriously advise any reader who may suffer, or who is apt to suffer, from skin irritation to abstain from the use of too much animal food, strong soups, or such stimulating food as goose, duck, or pork; to eat a due proportion of green vegetables as well as potatoes, and not to use either beer or spirits.

Ekzema is an ailment of the skin which is very common now-a-days in the old and middle-aged, and there is little doubt that it is very much aggravated by taking stimulants between meals. Beer especially seems to increase the trouble and inconvenience

caused by this tiresome complaint. If any stimulant is needed, claret should be used, and it need not be the most expensive either. If this disagrees, Tarragona may be tried. I earnestly urge young people to abstain entirely from drinking beer with their food, that is to say if they are at all particular about personal appearance, and wish to avoid a blotchy face and muddy complexion. And this leads me to say a word or two about a kind of acne of the face, from which ladies, either young or middle-aged, often suffer. It is commonly called the "rosy drop," and consists of red spots on the face, and even pimples which suppurate, or along with the redness there may be some thickening of the skin. It is worse after eating, especially if the person : suffering has been tired before she sat down, or has to hurry through the meal. It usually commences with simple flushing or reddening of the face—I do not mean blushing, the redness is more permanent by far than simple blushing. It goes and comes, but it cannot go and come long without causing permanent spots on the skin of the face, and after a time the redness changes to a bluish hue. Now this is a state of matters which is really very distressing, and the subject of which deserves our pity and commiseration all the more in that people so afflicted are often supposed to have brought it about through over-indulgence in stimulants. The cause is *debility*, engendered somehow. The digestion is generally weak or fickle, and this should be set to rights; bitter tonics should be taken along with some of the mineral acids, tincture of steel will also do good, and if these fail try the following, which a chemist must compound for you. I write it in English :—

Take of Fowler's solution of arsenic	...	...	half a fluid ounce.
„ the wine of iron	...	...	three fluid ounces.
„ syrup of oranges...	...	...	three fluid drams.
„ distilled water	...	...	five ounces.

Mix.

The dose for an adult lady is thirty drops three times a day, with or after meals, gradually increased to a tea-spoonful. It should be taken for a fortnight, then a day or two may be slipped, and afterwards the course repeated.

About a grain of corrosive sublimate in an ounce of eau-de-Cologne may be twice a day applied to the face. Juniper tar soap should be used for matutinal ablution, and the face may be washed in the same way at night, and afterwards the benzoated ointment of zinc should be applied, to be washed off again in the morning, the water used being cold. If it does not yield to this ointment, add to each ounce of it ten grains of the iodide of sulphur.

Supper often agrees best if solid instead of sloppy; if you would avoid a heated and easily irritated skin, however, it had best be partaken of two hours before retiring for the night. Supper, too, should be moderate, and over-much fluid should not be taken.

No one can retain a really healthy skin who does not take proper and sufficient exercise. The kind of exercise depends upon a great many things, on the age among others. Boys, for instance, must romp and

play, and the more wild the game they are engaged in the better. While boys play wildly let girls play merrily; have they not among other things the skipping rope, and the power and, if well, the will to dance—aye, and to sing? Parents ought in every way to encourage their children in singing; it strengthens both voice and lungs, and may even keep consumption itself at bay. Older people ought likewise to take abundant exercise, and they are never to forget that it must be of a kind capable of giving pleasure—exercise that interests them and withdraws their minds for the time entirely from all work and all worry. For adults, especially those of middle age, exercise should not be too fatiguing, or too long continued; for that *puts a strain upon the skin*, and may induce future ailments thereof.

As to clothing, its effects for good or evil upon the skin must never be overlooked. It would be a good thing for many if they would study *comfort* in clothing more and the fashions thereof less. Says Boerhaave, "Only fools and paupers suffer from cold; the latter not having money enough to buy clothes, and the former not having the sense to wear them." I mentioned the word *comfort* with reference to clothing, and your *feelings*, believe me, *must be your guide* as to what kind of clothing, and how much or how little to wear, whether abroad by day or in bed by night. Now, remembering that the skin is continually undergoing a change, the outer or scarf-skin constantly passing off and being replenished from the inner structures; remembering, too, how much deleterious matter, both unctuous and saline, passes through the skin, and which if not removed by washing will tend to form a pellicle which will interfere with the free action of the skin, surely I need adduce no other argument in favour of daily and complete ablution of the whole body, either in tepid or in cold water, or in both.

The skin is so important an emunctory that even the impartial performance of its functions is incompatible with healthful existence; and, to put it in plain straightforward language, whenever I meet with a being who is a stranger to the bath, I pity him in my own mind just as much as I would a creature with only one lung; neither the one nor the other can enjoy life fully.

I have come to look upon the soap bath as almost a prophylactic against skin disorders. It is so simple, too, and is the perfection of a matutinal or ante-prandial bath; for it strengthens the body and exhilarates the mind, while it soothes the jaded nerves, banishes every feeling of weariness, and restores the appetite. A basin of hot water, a flesh-glove, and a piece of plain soap, with the usual morning tub and big sponge, is all that is required. The body is first thoroughly lathered and well rubbed all over. This should not occupy more than two minutes, and then the cold or tepid sponge bath is taken. And those who can stand it should use cold water rather than tepid water; the reaction and the feeling of exhilaration is more perfect after the former.