

Notes on Health and Sanitation

MONEY DISEASE DISTRIBUTOR.

AMONG the numerous evils for which money has long been held responsible is included that of transmitting disease. On general principles it seems that an old, begrimed, greasy bill must be loaded with deadly disease germs, particularly when we remember the questionable company it keeps during its peregrinations. And yet some exhaustive investigations made recently prove that even very dirty money is not an undesirable commodity, at least from a sanitary standpoint.

"Theoretically," runs the report of this investigation, "dirty money, especially paper currency, handled by all kinds of people and by people suffering from or in close contact with contagious diseases, should transmit disease; but it has not been found to do so. Bank men and Treasury Department men who handle large amounts of gold and dirty money do not contract disease. This does not excuse the disgusting practice of putting coins in the mouth, or of wetting the fingers with the tongue in counting bills."

Apparently, then, the diseases that money engenders are of a moral, rather than of bacterial nature.

It is true, however, that many kinds of bacteria are found on bills; and also on stairways, balustrades and car straps. But fortunately such bacteria are of the harmless variety almost without exception.

Sugar in the Antarctic.

Sir Ernest Shackleton, the antarctic explorer, has recently reported some interesting things about foods and diseases observed in the Antarctic. He has this to say:

"To show you how valuable sugar is to the explorer, there was an occasion when we marched 321 miles, drawing laden sledges, in 14 days and a half. Every two hours we each took two or three lumps of sugar. Within 10 minutes of eating them we could feel the heat go through our bodies. The highest temperature of that march was 62 degrees below zero.

"Catching cold" is almost unknown in the polar regions. The only time we ever suffered from colds was just after we had opened a bale of English clothes to serve them out for winter wear. The germs, apparently, were lying dormant among the clothing. They 'woke up' on being heated. The men whose duties took them into the open recovered in a day. The others suffered for four or five days."

Contagion From Body Eruptions.

Since the skin eruptions of certain diseases such as smallpox transmit the contagion, it is a natural assumption that most of the other eruptive diseases are also transmitted in this manner. Such does not appear to be the case, however.

Thus the desquamated skin of scarlet fever during the "peeling" process has long been supposed to be peculiarly infective; and the fine scales from the eruption of measles were also strongly suspected. But it seems pretty clearly determined now that the infections of these two diseases are only transmitted through the discharges from the membranes of the nose and throat, and suppurating ears.

The discovery that diseases are transmitted almost exclusively by direct contagion makes it certain that clothing and baggage are rarely, if ever, agents of such transmission. The only reason for fumigating such objects, therefore, is on the supposition that they may have come in contact with some of the secretions of infected persons.

Poisoning From Cheap Dentistry.

Besides being responsible for unnecessary extractions, improper treatment, and disfigurements, incompetent and unscrupulous dentists are responsible also for a still more dangerous condition, copper poisoning. This poisoning may be caused by bridge work or crowns made of gold and copper alloy of inferior quality.

There appears to be no danger when the alloy contains the usual percentage of gold. But when the amount of gold is small there is danger of copper poisoning in a chronic form, which is a serious condition not readily detected. Professor Erich Hamaek, of Germany, has just reported cases of this type of poisoning which resulted from the absorption of copper from bridge work made of an alloy which "was only eight carat fine." When this cheap bridge work was moved, the symptoms of poisoning quickly disappeared.

FLOUR AND APPENDICITIS.

A FEW years ago when the epidemic of appendicitis started in America, later to become almost as prevalent in Europe, all manner of things were suggested as causing the infection. None of these was satisfactory; and the actual cause of this prolonged epidemic is still puzzling the surgeons. Recently attention has been called to the fact that the appendicitis epidemic began just after the introduction of "new process" flour in America—that is, flour made with steel rollers instead of the old-fashioned millstones. And that as this new American flour made its way into Europe, appendicitis became increasingly prevalent there.

The question has been raised, therefore, as to whether this new kind of flour is responsible for the epidemic, and if so, in what way?

A writer in the Medical Record has recently offered an explanation. Since in the process of making the flour by the new method, minute particles of steel must inevitably get into it, he suggests that possibly these particles lodge in the appendix occasionally, or in its immediate vicinity, and form foci of infections which result in appendicitis.

It should be understood, of course, that the case against the steel roll has not been proven, and is offered only as a tentative suggestion. Nevertheless it is a fact that the popularity of steel-rolled flour and appendicitis developed at about the same time.

Cause of "Gift Spots."

Most persons know that the little white spots found in the fingernails are known as "gift spots." But the cause of these familiar little giftlets is often a mystery.

In some instances these spots appear to be congenital, and have no significance whatever so far as can be ascertained. In other cases the spots make their appearance after severe illnesses, such as typhoid fever, malaria, or certain types of nervous diseases.

Many cases appear to be caused by assiduous manicuring, where the cuticle knife is used rather too freely. In such cases the spots disappear when the severe manicuring is discontinued and sufficient time is given the nails to grow out.

However, there are certain cases that cannot be accounted for on the score of severe illness or manicuring—cases in which the spots make their appearance, and persist, without any apparent cause, in nails that have been free from them hitherto. But it is strongly suspected that in these instances the spots are an indication of a rheumatic or gouty tendency, as the spots sometimes disappear when the underlying condition is treated.

A Case of Superheroism.

William Mitchell, an Englishman, was drowned recently in the Thames, while attempting to save a fellow-countryman. The British Medical Journal calls his act one of superheroism, and for this reason:

Mitchell was a consumptive who had been undergoing treatment for several months, this treatment consisting of having nitrogen gas pumped into his thorax—a painful, tedious operation. He had undergone 11 of these treatments, the last one just before he took the fatal plunge.

It was not a case of a doomed man risking a life already forfeited, however, but quite the contrary. For Mitchell had just been told by his physician that no more treatments were necessary—that his tuberculosis had been conquered. He had left the doctor's office, therefore, with a new and hopeful outlook on life, although he was still so weak that he could not make any unusual exertion without shortness of breath. Yet he did not hesitate to plunge to the aid of a drowning man—an act which he must have known meant certain death.

Sudan Grass Adaptable.

Sudan grass is by no means limited to Texas, but may be grown successfully all over this country from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean. Two cuttings of hay may be had the same season in Virginia. It does well in Oregon, South Dakota, Minnesota and Ohio, where tests have been made. Alabama makes good report on Sudan grass, and Kentucky plantings yielded a fine stand and good seed crop. In Maryland the dairymen are much interested in Sudan grass. In California and Florida it will grow through the average winter. The greatest yield of seed so far has been made under irrigation in Colorado, California and Arizona, the maximum being 2250 pounds per acre.



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