

Science Notes

BY WILLIAM G. HAYNES.

COLD BATHS AND HORSE SENSE.

By Edwin F. Bowers, M. D.

"What, if any, advantage has a cold bath?"

The advantage of a cold bath over the ordinary or bath-room variety of bath is that it demonstrates either an indomitable will or a superabundant vitality and recuperative power.

One of the axioms of medical science is that "there is no action without reaction." And upon whether the reaction is beneficial or not depends the value of the cold matutinal tub.

If, after a bracing plunges in the icy water and a skin-reddening bout with a coarse towel, there is developed a genial feeling of exhilaration and a fine wholesome glow, the cold bath is health-giving—provided that it doesn't produce rheumatism and stiffness.

If, however, the "dip" is taken, not because the full-blooded body exults in the caress of the tingling water, but because the family expects the hero to perform, the bath will probably do no good, and may do much harm.

If there results a direct shock, leaving one irritable and nervous, the rigor of the temperature should be abated. If the "reaction" consists in a livid face, blue lips and chattering teeth, a fit of shivering, and a large assortment of goose-pimples, the cold bath has proved itself not only harmful, but perhaps an actual source of danger.

For when the blood is driven from the surface by the chill impact, and the vaso-motor nervous system, heart, and arteries lack the "punch" to drive it back again, an added weight or overstrain is placed upon the great internal blood-vessels which may, by over-dilation, weaken them permanently.

When delicate nerves are lashed by the cruel whip of cold, and the warm, rich blood fails to rush back to calm them and to provide extra nutriment to repair their waste, it means that sooner or later—if the practice is persisted in—this bath enthusiast is going to go nervously bankrupt.

The business man who finds himself "snapping" at his clerks, the workman who catches himself twitching and "jumping,"—with that peculiar sudden jump that starts from nowhere in particular and ends in the same place,—the mother who "gets out of patience" on the slightest provocation, or on no provocation at all—all these may be suffering merely from cold-bathitis.

WARM BATHS FOR RHEUMATICS

But, granting that none of these symptoms obtrude themselves, the sudden chilling of the surface and the blood remaining in the surface blood-vessels may throw out of solution a portion of the overload of uric acid that the blood frequently carries, even in healthy individuals, depositing it, in the form of sharp crystals, in the muscular tissues or in the joints.

It is quite true that the daily cold plunge is one of the finest forms of health insurance ever devised, a regular ne plus ultra "toughener"—provided one is tough enough to stand it.

If one derives increased vitality from it, rest assured that it stimulates a truly wholesome and desirable form

of vitality, and can in no way result in harm—either at the time or in the future.

However, if one desires a bath for cleansing purposes, for the eminent satisfaction of feeling fresh and wholesome, there can be no question but that the warm or even hot bath should have the preference.

But if one wants a bath to brag about, to drag by the ears into every topic of conversation on wintry mornings, there is nothing in the world that even roughly approximates—much less equals—an icy cold bath.

"ICE IS FOOD."

Of course "ice is food in Kansas," as the attorney general of that state announces in a recent ruling on the subject. Ice is food everywhere else in America, too, as anybody knows who has seen the small boy or girl gleefully grab a splinter and convert it into an all-day sucker while it lasted.

There is a peculiar joy in eating ice. Really, nothing else in the line of food consuming quite compares to it. There are refreshments which bite back, and some with a delicious thrill—to say nothing of a few which possess a kick that is a caution. But ice is all this, yet different. You can't eat it very rapidly, although you feel the necessity of doing so because it is melting in your eager grasp. It chills while it delights—you squeal with happiness while you shriek from frigidity, and in the same breath. And as you munch your little chunk of congelation, somebody else slips a sliver down your back—so that you are iced within and without, like a modern theater with a cooling system. And as you flip your fragment from one grimy paw to the other, meanwhile trying to wriggle away from the avalanche coursing down your back, the bliss you experience is of the kind so aptly described as "something different."

Yes, ice is food. It always has been since boys and girls came across the first shattered piece in the street where the iceman of Eden or those early Chaldean cities, or somewhere else in long ago made history,

had been chopping off 5 cent's worth for an economical customer. And it always will be food, we ween, until the inventiveness of a more modern age makes humanity self-icing by birth, and spoils a lot of fun that we of this age recall so happily.

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