

Science Notes

BY WILLIAM G. HAYNES.

SIDE-STEPPING STOUTNESS.

By Edwin F. Bowers, M.D.

"What causes obesity, and how may it be prevented?"

A moderate excess of fat is one of our very best forms of life and health insurance. It is a storehouse of food and energy—a fuel reserve for times of stress. If we are to remain healthy, every tissue of the body, except the nails and teeth, must contain more or less of some form of it.

If we are stricken by fever, or any wasting disease, we have thirty per cent. better chances of recovery if we are comfortably plump than if we are spare and emaciated. Fever burns fuel; physiologically, it is cheaper to give it fat to oxidize than it is to let it burn up more vital tissue.

Each ounce increase in the consumptive's weight increases his prospects of ultimate recovery. Many neurasthenics are physically as well as nervously bankrupt, and one of the most successful methods of restoring their nervous balance is to fatten them.

Yet there is a point beyond which fat is excess baggage; for no man who has to rock his abdomen to sleep in his lap is properly qualified for the hurdles of life.

In obesity the heart and lungs must work harder, and fatty degeneration of important internal organs is not unusual. Fat folk are especially liable to heat prostration, hardening of the arteries, dropsy, skin eruptions, diabetes, asthma, apoplexy, gallstones, and gout. They stand operations poorly, and lack resistance to acute infection. They are very prone to anemia and conditions resulting from lack of red cells in the blood.

Yet there are some things worse than being too plump. These are the methods sometimes used to eradicate the condition. Remedies and methods that "just make the fat fly" are extremely likely to make the owner of the fat fly also.

The only two internal remedies that have any certain value as "fat reducers" are so uncertain as to what else they may do that they should never be used except on medical advice. Most other remedies are valueless.

This was demonstrated by the Bureau of Chemistry of the United States Department of Agriculture, which recently "tested out" a series of "fat-reducing" nostrums. Two subjects were obliged, after the second week, to stop taking a "favorite specific" of a great obesity specialist. If they hadn't stopped, the "cure" might have killed them. Another subject gained two and a half pounds on a "guaranteed discovery."

Another method of being swindled getting slim consists of placing Epsom salts, washing soda, or other alkalis in the bath. These are similar innocuous compounds are the basis of most of the obesity cures—where you simply put a few cents' worth of something for which you paid a dollar into the bath water and the fat is "washed away"—vanishing with a chuckling gurgle down the waste-pipe.

But, it will be asked, is there no way of parting amicably with this dangerous surplus? There are ways. But they lie over the rough and arduous path of self-denial.

First, it must be recognized that there are certain diseases in which excessive corpulency is merely a

symptom, among which are dropsy and disturbance in the pituitary and other glands. Before fat reduction is attempted these causes must be excluded.

The Cure—Diet and Exercise.

Failing to find such a cause, we may remember that fat is derived from food; and, no matter how little food we may be eating, we are getting either the wrong kind or too much of the right kind. So it requires merely that we reduce the fuel intake of food to a point below the expenditure of bodily activity, or else increase bodily activity until more than the daily intake of food energy is consumed—or both. In short, the cure for obesity is less eating and more exercise.

While the system can make fat out of only food-stuff, it makes it with almost ridiculous ease from starches and sugars. Alcohol, also, by unduly hastening the conversion of albumins, sets free fat-producing substances that materially assist in padding the blanket of fat.

Yet it is not necessary to punish one's self dietetically or to risk certain dangers to acquire svelteness. It is merely necessary to eliminate all surplus and to limit the amount of food to that required to maintain strength.

This is accomplished by relying upon lean meats, with liberal amounts of green vegetables. These may include lettuce, celery, tomatoes, onions, parsley, and sour fruits. Also salads without oil.

Pork and all fat meats, oily fish,—such as mackerel and salmon,—potatoes, rice, pie, tapioca and all farinaceous puddings should be avoided. Also beer and malt liquors, rich gravies and sauces, cakes, pastries, ice cream, beets, sweet fruits,—as figs, prunes, dates, grapes, and oranges—candies and all sugars, so far as possible.

Graham bread and gems, or dry toast, may be substituted for white bread.

Fluids should be limited in quantity, but not so limited that the system will suffer from lack of one of its principal sources of elimination. A cup of hot or cold water, with the unsweetened juice of half a lemon, on rising, and another in the afternoon, helps to keep the liver active, and sometimes aids fat reduction.

The use of plain soups, which are filling but not fattening, should be encouraged. Buttermilk or soured milk, if taken slowly, a small mouthful at a time, makes a nourishing and satisfying meal. If the food is thoroughly chewed, much less of it will satisfy the appetite. Masticate each mouthful until swallowing becomes almost an involuntary act.

Cold-water baths, if they do not cause rheumatism or nervous shock, are an excellent aid in fat reduction. It is well to avoid sleeping too much, and it is especially advisable to forego the doubtful luxury of the afternoon nap. We build tissue faster during sleep than we do while active or awake. Six or seven hours of uninterrupted sleep—provided one feels recuperated—should be enough.

Exercise of all kinds is indispensable. When it can be indulged in, swimming is probably the best form, as it exercises the little used muscles of the abdomen as well as nearly every other muscle in the body. The cold water also melts away the fat.

All outdoor activities, and forms of gymnastics than can be practiced in well ventilated rooms, are very beneficial. In fact, all muscular exertion that does not put too much strain upon the heart and circulatory apparatus is helpful.

Other Helpful Exercise.

Some derive benefit from "rolling." Others crawl, bend, stretch, stoop, twist, and turn. Others gallop about on all fours, to the great confusion of fat. Lying upon the back and slowly raising the legs with stiffened knees, then lowering them with equal deliberation, discourages embonpoint. That classic exercise known as "picking pins," in which the devotee stands with stiffened knees and, with outstretched fingers, touches the floor repeatedly, also punishes ponderosity.

Kicking is good for hips and bad for fat. High kicking, a la ballet dancer; front kicking, ostrich fashion; and side and back kicking, mule fashion, are all effective.

Turkish baths will reduce flesh; but people who are strong enough to withstand their debilitating influence are strong enough to get rid of their excess fat in safer ways.

Depend rather upon the tape measure than upon scales for affirmative evidence that you are parting with your too bountiful store. For fat is of a sponge-like texture and very light in weight.

But remember that any method that produces irritability, restlessness, weakness, or an uncomfortable craving food, is doing far more harm than are the few extra pounds of peaceful adipose.—Washington Star, Magazine Section.

A GOOD CHANCE TO HELP SOME FAMILY

To the Editor of The Monitor:

Will you kindly furnish space in your paper for the following suggestion and appeal:

As Christmas is drawing near and everybody is making preparations to make not only those around their own fireside happy, but to contribute to the happiness of the less fortunate ones, I desire to suggest through your paper that any of our people who feel disposed to help some family among our own people, should phone the Associated Charities, Douglas 2287, and the name and address and needs of a worthy family will be given them to whom cheer and happiness and substantial help can be given on Christmas day.

I have taken up this matter with a representative of the Associated Charities and they say that this is the method being employed by many of the white citizens, and they feel that we should have a share in this good work for the sake of sweet charity.

Thanking you in advance for your courtesy, I am

Yours respectfully,
JOHN GRANT PEGG,
Insp. W. & M.
Omaha, Neb., Dec. 14, 1915.

REPLY TO TELEGRAM OF CONDOLENCE.

Tuskegee, Ala., Dec. 9, 1915.
Rev. John Albert Williams, Chairman of Committee, St. Phillip's Episcopal Church, Omaha, Neb.
My Dear Sir:

I am writing to express to you and the other ministers who signed the telegram, and through you to the colored citizens of Omaha for Mrs. Washington, and for the officers, teachers and students of Tuskegee Institute their grateful thanks for the message of condolence you so kindly sent them upon the occasion of the death of our lamented principal, Dr. Washington.

Your expressions of sympathy are a great solace to all of us.

Sincerely yours,
EMMETT J. SCOTT,
Secretary.

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