

RATION YOUR DRUGS!

(Written for "The Listener" by DR. H. B. TURBOTT, Director of the Division of School Hygiene, Health Department)

RATIONING is in the air, and has already affected parts of our body—the leg and the sweet tooth!

Japan has plenty to answer for already, but what if she interferes with our favourite drug or patent medicine or toilet preparation? How will you get on without your favourite laxative?

Japan was the world supplier of agar-agar, which is required by bacteriologists for making culture media, and used in medicine and patent medicines as a laxative. Japan has interfered with our supplies of menthol and camphor, used in toilet preparations as well as in medicines. She has interrupted the supply of quinine. A large proportion of drugs before this war came from non-British countries. Some of them are now being cultivated within the Empire, a few in our corner of it. It is not proving easy to establish medicinal plants, and a change of climate often alters the plant constituents. Canada supplies cascara from the bark of wild trees and from cultivated and carefully-pruned trees. An attempt to acclimatise cascara trees in East Africa has not met with much success because of a fungus. One plant grown in a foreign country for its essential oil, on transference to African soil, produced an entirely different oil. We were asked to collect ergot during the past summer, but most collectors were terribly disappointed with their efforts to gather a satisfactory amount.

Not Self-Supporting for Years

Australia is conducting experiments with her eucalyptus trees, and it may be possible to produce menthol and thymol commercially from this source. Java has been the main source of quinine, Brazil of ipecacuanha. India is now trying to grow these and many other drugs. New Zealand has started to collect seaweed, the kind necessary for the manufacture of agar-agar. A recent press article recounted New Zealand's attempts to grow several medicinal drugs, such as belladonna and digitalis. But the Empire cannot be self-supporting in drugs for years to come, and the only safe course for us is to be economical with the stocks held within the Dominion.

Quite a lot of drugs are already being rationed, and may not now be bought except on medical prescription—for example, quinine, caffeine, menthol, camphor. These were drugs you were accustomed to purchase as you pleased, and are common in many proprietary medicines and tablets. Formalin and permanganate are short. Liquid paraffin is scarce and other means of overcoming constipation will have to be adopted by habitués. Soft paraffin similarly is in limited supply. This will affect the manufacture of cosmetics; a little self-rationing will enable longer existence of the cosmetic market. Unnecessary cosmetics should not be used from now on. Cotton wool, lint, bandages, and rubber medical supplies are all getting very short: bandages, lint, etc. should be sparingly used, and where

possible, bandages washed and used over again.

Chase the Sunshine

A food-conscious section of our people have been used to purchasing vitamin preparations. All of these have to be imported. Self-prescribing of vitamins

should cease. These should be obtained from foodstuffs, and the vitamins left for doctors to prescribe where the need is greatest. The booklet "Good Nutrition" should be referred to when the elusive vitamins are sought; it is purchasable at booksellers and guides you to well-balanced, healthy diets. If cod-liver oil can't be bought, or a substitute, you will have to chase the sunshine whenever possible and make your own skin do the work of manufacturing Vitamin D, the only vitamin likely to be short in the properly planned New Zealand diet.

Sufferers from constipation are many in our country and they are not much longer going to be able to purchase a good many of their favourite proprietary medicines. This will be a blessing in disguise, for though difficult to believe, the majority of constipation victims can cure themselves by dieting according to modern knowledge.

War efforts are many and diverse. Here is one everybody can help with—economy in use of drugs, dressings, medical supplies, and toilet preparations.

(Next week: "What About Fish for Tea?" by Dr. Muriel Bell.)

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