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D.D. PRESCRIPTION





Advice on Health (No. 79)

STORED SUNSHINE

(Written for "The Listener" by DR. MURIEL BELL, Nutritionist to the Department of Health)

HE Eskimoes, though confined to dark huts in lands which L for half the year are subj∈ct to the arctic night, do not develop rickets. Their dietary of fish and of the fatty flesh of fish-eating animals and birds protects them from this disease. However, rickets occurs among the Eskimoes as soon as our foods are substituted for theirs. Our ordinary food is poor as a source of vitamin D, the fat-soluble vitamin which prevents rickets. Eggs (when available) are capable of supplying us with a reasonable quota; their content, however, is variable, depending on the way in which the hens have been fed, and on whether they have had plenty of sunshine. (A new thought for the Internal Marketing Division—to grade eggs on their vitamin content-further headaches! Fortunately this is not a serious suggestion.) Certain oily fish (for example eels), butter, milk, liver, make contributions of vitamin D; but a diet like the average New Zealand diet furnishes only a small amount of vitamin D.

In countries where the sun is bright, and where children are not kept indoors, rickéts is seldom seen. Yet, even in sunny lands like Italy, Turkey, Palestine and Algiers, rickets commonly occur through the operation of one or more of these factors: -- Overcrowding, narrow sunless streets, or the practice of purdah; the sunshine which abounds is not allowed to reach the children who need it. This condition of affairs is not unknown in New Zealand; rickets occurs here when children are continuously kept indoors. The signs are usually seen as bow-legs, knock-knees, flat feet, round shoulders, pot-belly, pigeon chest, protruding forehead, cranium wider than the face, or lateness in walking.

We are now fully aware that if sunshine (in moderation) falls directly on to the skin, without the intervention of clothes, window-panes, or smoky atmosphere, the ultra-violet light in the sun's rays is capable of transforming into vitamin D certain constituents of the fat present in our skins. Thus, in summer, if our bodies are exposed to the sunshine (but, please note that too much sun-bathing may actually be harmful), we make quite an amount of vitamin D which is then stored for future use. This 'stored sunshine" lasts for a month or two, but by about April, children for whom this vitamin is essential, should be safeguarded by a daily dose of cod-liver oil or its equivalent. Babies, children, adolescents, expectant and nursing mothers should always take a teaspoon of cod-liver oil per day in the winter months, in order to provide enough vitamin D for the proper formation of bones and teeth.

But, you will say, supplies of cod liver oil have all been diminished by reason of the war. "Oleum vitaminatum" which is a suitable substitute is also in short supply. What should we use instead?

Our own New Zealand fish are capable of yielding the fish-liver-oils necessary to supply our own needs. A committee has been formed, consisting of representatives from the following departments: Industries and Commerce, Scientific and Industrial Research, Agricultural Chemistry Research, Fisheries



Research. This committee will supervise any schemes for the local production of fish liver oils. In my next article, we shall see what our New Zealand resources in this respect really are.

(Next week: "Toddlers' Teeth", by Dt. Turbott.)

Mrs. Luce Goes To Washington

LONDE, beautiful and brilliant" (according to Time), where the average Congressman is "bald, baggy and bumbling," Claire Booth has now entered Congress as Republican member for Connecticut. The wife of Henry Luce, editor of the magazines Time, Life and Fortune, Claire Booth has had a bril-



liant career as author and playwright (European Spring, The Women, Margin for Error, Kiss the Boys Good-bye).

When first asked to run for Congress, she declined, saying "When you go to Washington you either break your heart or rot your brains . . . It takes a dashing personality to get office, and it takes brains properly to discharge the duties. Holding office and getting it are not the same." And it is in no picnic spirit that Mrs. Luce goes to Washington. "In these puzzling and heartbreaking days," she wrote, after her nomination as Republican candidate, gressman must assume a heavy burden of responsibility. I knew this job was a challenge to stouter hearts and better brains than mine. Nevertheless, I felt, in all humility, that should I be nominated and elected to Congress I was more qualified to deal with it than any other candidate who had so far presented himself in Fairfield County. I have seen the horrors of total war close at hand on the battlefronts of the world. I have eye-witnessed the tragic mistakes of European politicians who have made these horrors inevitable for their people . . ."