

Editorial

RACIAL WISDOM IN FOOD SELECTION

IT IS PROBABLY TRUE that a race under comparatively primitive conditions will, in time, select as a group, those foods in their environment which provide the best nutritive advantages. Crude trial and error methods no doubt result, after many generations, through the law of survival of the fittest in food traditions and eating habits which best suit the individuals living under constant conditions of climate and work. This idea of *safety* in an evolutionary system of food selection has long been considered probable and it gains a very great deal of support as a result of the excellent and fundamental work in food analysis being carried on, over a period of years, at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, because this work has already demonstrated, in scientific fashion, that some of the primitive peoples of Mexico and of Middle America, whose foods differ from the American diet most radically, obtain from their herbs and plants much better supplies of nitrogen, calcium, iron, carotene, thiamine, riboflavin, niacin and ascorbic acid than we obtain from our customary urban diets. The Otomi Indians in the Mezquital Valley of Mexico, although partaking of very few of the foods which are considered essential to a good nutrition pattern, seldom showed pronounced clinical nutritional

deficiency. The consumption of meat, dairy products, fruits and vegetables was extremely low. As Dr. Robert S. Harris points out, "there are many parts of the world where the American pattern of good nutrition should not be advocated because the food stuffs which assure good nutrition for us are not often those which can most effectively and economically nourish the people of other countries."

Not only should this lesson be learned by us but we ought to understand also that in a complex industrial nation such as ours, many of the foods which we select have been modified, sometimes drastically, by the methods of processing them, so that we may lose some of the virtues of an early American diet which reflected the racial wisdom of our own continent. Probably we do not as yet know the full story of the nutritional value of foods and there may still be important, undetected vitamins and food principles, to say nothing of the unexplored physiology of the trace elements. A "back to nature" movement will receive impetus whenever we discover that civilization brings error as a counterpart of its growing complexity. Our pride in a new science of nutrition ought not to displace reverence for the very fundamental value of racial wisdom in food selection.

ERRATA

In the January 1948 issue on page 6, under Discussion in the first sentence of the second paragraph, the word "leucopenia" should read leucocytosis," and in the last paragraph, "leucopenia with" should read "leucopenia in."

Book Reviews

TREATMENT BY DIET. By Clifford J. Barborka, M.D., 5th edition. 784 pg. 13 color plates, one black and white plate. (\$10.00) J. B. Lippincott, Philadelphia. 1948.

Barborka has used the fifth edition of his book "Treatment by Diet" to rewrite many chapters and to improve the book on a wide scale. Since the last edition in 1939, the knowledge of vitamins in diet has advanced and Barborka takes, of course, this opportunity to give detailed, new suggestions. The daily allowance and therapeutic dosage of vitamins is discussed. Tables to recognize vitamin deficiencies are given and a new chapter with many illustrations has been included.

The section on liver diseases has been rewritten to incorporate the newer conceptions of the application of protein. Besides, it describes the use of choline and other food factors utilized in treating cirrhosis of the liver, chronic hepatic diseases, and hepato-cellular jaundice. In the chapter on diabetes mellitus, all diets with less than 100 grams of carbohydrates have been eliminated. Tables are added for up to 250 grams of carbohydrate intake.

Very important chapters have been added on diet treatment of skin diseases and on preoperative and post-operative care.

Among the chapters which we consider of im-