Likewise the external application of urate of ammonia, represented by guano, has recently proved beneficial in consumption, as also for obstinate leprous skin diseases.

VEAL (*see* BEEF).

VENISON.

THE word Venison, from the Latin *venatio*, hunting, is now restricted to the flesh of deer, but was formerly applied more generally to anything taken in the chase. Thus Jacob told his son Esau to go and get venison such as he loved (*Genesis* xxvi., 3).

As a viand of to-day it is generally thought to be particularly digestible because of its looseness of fibre, and texture, which allows of such ready access to the gastric juices. But lovers of venison usually prefer that it shall be hung for tenderness until more or less tainted before it comes into the cook's hands. Hence the risk of corrupt ptomaines being formed afterwards in the body, unless the digestion and fœcal evacuation are quickly performed, is certainly incurred.

"*Quod olfactu fœdum est, idem est esu turpe,*" says the *Comic Latin Grammar*; that which is foul to be smelled is also nasty to be eaten (except venison, onions, and cheese). "All venison," writes Burton, "is melancholy and begets bad blood, though a pleasant meat in great esteem with us at our solemn feasts; for we have more parks in England than there are in all Europe besides. 'Tis somewhat better when hunted than otherwise, and well prepared by cookery: but generally bad, and seldom to be used." Several of the Elizabethan writers condemn venison for its "hardness," and accuse it of

breeding melancholy. Robert Lovell (1661), tells that the flesh of the buck is cold, and dry, and causeth the hæmorrhoids, except used with pepper, cinnamon, and mustard. In *The Country Housewife*, by R. Bradley, Cambridge, Professor, (1732), we read: "If venison stinks when you receive it, wash it with vinegar, and dry it; then pepper it, and having wrapped it in a dry cloth bury it in the ground, three feet deep at least, and in sixteen hours it will be sweet, fit for eating; then wash off the pepper with vinegar, and dry it with a cloth, and hang it where the cool air may pass, and the blue flies cannot come at it." "The fat of venison," as Fuller writes lovingly, is conceived to be (but I would not have our stealers hear it) of all flesh the most vigorous nourishment, especially if attended with that essential addition which Virgil coupleth therewith "*Implentur veteris Bacchi, pinguisque ferinæ.*" In the *Rich Storehouse of Medicines* (1650), is given, "A pretious good restorative syrop for him that is in a consumption." "Take stags' hearts, or sheep's hearts, cut the fat clean away; then soak them in fair water two or three hours; then cut them into round thin slices, and soak them in rosewater till the bloud be clear out; then take them from the water, and strew sugar in the bottom of a pipkin, and lay a lein of hearts, and then strew another lein of sugar, and thus do till all be done; then cover it close with paist, and set it into a pot of boyling water, and there let it boyle untill it come to a sirop; then strain it through a cloath into a vial; and take thereof as often as you please a spoonful at a time, either alone by itself, or in jelly, or in broth."

The Roman ladies ate venison as a preserver of youth, and a lengthener of days; but the Salernitan school has taught:—

"Persica, poma, pira, lac, caseus, et caro salsa,
Et caro cervinā, leporina, caprina, bovina,
Hæc melancholica sunt: atque infirmis inimica."

"The peach, the apple, pear, milk, cheese, and salted cheek
Of pig, with flesh of buck, hare, goat, and ox-beef steak,
All these are melancholy foods, which hurt the sick, and weak."

South African hunters esteem as a great delicacy when camping out "the liver of the bok (buck) just killed, either grilled on a gridiron, or roasted on large flat stones made red hot in a wood fire."

"Venison," says Dr. Yeo (*Food in Health and Disease*), "from young deer is tender, short-fibred, dark-coloured, being highly savoury, and very digestible; it is, however, rather too stimulating and full-flavoured for delicate stomachs. It consists of water seventy-four parts, albuminates (very little gelatin) nineteen parts; and fat one part, decimal three per cent." In the *Merry Wives of Windsor*, Mistress Ann Page bids Sir John Falstaff and other gentlemen welcome! "We have a hot venison pasty to dinner: come, gentlemen, I hope we shall drink down all unkindness." The umbles were the entrails of a deer, and became perquisites of the gamekeeper, or were made a dish at the second, or lower table; so that the phrase "To eat umble pie," thus took its origin. The actual pie was concocted from buck's umbles with beef suet, apples, sugar, currants, and spices. As venison is found when eaten freely to engender melancholy its animal extract if properly prepared may be well supposed remedial against this infirmity of disposition; likewise for the relief of piles. Formerly venison was seldom served without furmity, made from wheat (*frumentum*): which dish is popularly supposed to have been that wherewith Joseph regaled his brethren in Egypt, giving to Benjamin a double portion of the same.

VIPER (*see also* ADDER).

THE Viper (*Vipera berus*) is the only venom snake found in England, and has been already described under its commonly known name, the Adder. Dr. Salmon (1696) said: "In the viper's person there is nothing venomous but the head and the gall; whilst the flesh, liver, and bones have no poyson in them. The flesh being eaten or drunk cures the French pox and the leprosie, eating half a viper at once and fasting five or six hours after it. So also they cure all old ulcers, clear the eyesight, help the pulse and strengthen the nerves. The whole viper in powder (the head and gall excepted) cures perfectly the gout and king's evil, taken twice a day to a teaspoonful or more. Viper wine is to be made by drowning the vipers in the wine. It is powerful against leprosies and all impurities of the flesh and blood. The biting of the viper is sometimes mortal, and kills within three days at furthest if not speedily cured. At first the poyson may be sucked out by applying the fundament of a hen to the part after scarification." In this country we have varieties of the Common viper, the black, the red, and the blue bellied kinds. The creatures are torpid during the winter. About Devon the Viper is popularly known as Long cripple.

Dr. Quincy (1728) wrote: "That the Vipers are balsamic, and restorative, is confirmed by experience: through causing a free perspiration they render the skin smooth, and beautiful. For this reason they are given in all cutaneous foulnesses, against the Itch, Leprosy, and worst eruptions, and deformities of the skin, such as can arise from venereal causes. They in a wonderful manner invigorate the organs of generation, and render the impotent prolific. For this purpose the Viper Wine is in prodigious esteem, being very commonly made in

Italy, and in other parts where these animals abound. The fat which comes in plenty from the entrails is much commended by some in struma; as likewise for dimness, or decay of sight, gently to rub the eyebrows with it. Antonius Musa, the famous physician to Octavius Cæsar, ordered, as Pliny relates, the eating of Vipers for those whom he met having inveterate ulcers; and by this means they were quickly healed. Galen tells very remarkable stories of the cure of the Elephantiasis, or Lepra, done by the Viper Wine. Physicians in Italy and France do very commonly prescribe the broth and jelly of Viper flesh to invigorate, and purify the mass of blood exhausted with diseases, or tainted with some vicious and obstinate ferment."

Dr. Quincy further directs how to prepare "the distillation of vipers; the volatile salt of vipers (to which are attributed many great and wonderful virtues); the essence of vipers; the rectified oil of vipers; the compound tincture of vipers, blended with sulphur; the ethereal essence of vipers; troches of viper, with oil of nutmeg; and viper wine, made from live vipers put into Canary, and let to stand, close stop't, without any heat, for six months. This last is a wonderful restorative, and greatly renews the whole constitution, so as to provoke much to venery, as well as to other actions of vigor; it is an infallible remedy in skin eruptions, and even in a confirmed leprosy. It will to admiration repair the decay'd juices, and fill again the veins with a warm, generous, nutritive blood. In the last decays of life it will still supply the vital Lamp with some recruits."

In classic times the snake was consecrated to Æsculapius, the god of medicine; and the figure of a viper has often been sculptured on the busts of

eminent physicians in token of the skill which could avert danger from persons bitten by this reptile and its kindred. Formerly to eat a snake was a charm for growing young. Against venomous bites the treatment of the ancients, if the wound were severe, was cupping, or, if slight, the plaster of Diogenes was applied, or a salt fish bound over the wound. One of the favourite charms of the early Britons was the snake's egg (*anguineum*), which was thought to be produced from the saliva of snakes, and to possess special healing properties. This *ovum*, adderstone, or *glair*, was perhaps made now and again from some sort of glass, or of earth glazed over, being either white or variegated. Several such have been found at different times in Druidical barrows, or cromlechs. There is one in the Aldborough Museum, Yorkshire. Pliny, Galen, and other ancient medical writers were unanimous as to the remedial properties of vipers' flesh when eaten. "*Fiunt ex viperâ pastilli qui theriaci vocantur a Græcis.*" They who ate the flesh were thought to acquire the gift of understanding the language of animals. Sir Kenelm Digby (1650) used to diet his beautiful wife, Venetia Stanley, upon capons fattened with the flesh of vipers.

In Dr. Donne's *Devotions* (1624), occurs the prayer: "Thou, O Lord, who hast imprinted all medicinal virtues which are in all creatures, and hast made even the flesh of vipers to assist in cordialls." In Madame de Sévigné's letters is an order for ten dozen vipers, two to be taken every day in the stuffing of a fowl.

Le bouillon de vipère was to be thus made "*Composé avec l'animal privé de sa tete, de sa peau, et de ses intestins.*" It was an energetic remedy in obstinate urinary purulent running, as well as a sexual restorative. Also

for an enlarged neck, even now in Essex, a snake is killed, and its skin, first sewn in a piece of black silk, is worn round the throat, when by degrees the swelling will disappear.

In 1876 Dr. Jitzki told the Imperial Society at Wilna (Russia), the important fact that a savage dog, after having been repeatedly bitten by vipers and bearing marks of the wounds, when subsequently bitten by a dog undoubtedly rabid, remained nevertheless perfectly well. He learnt that a woman living in the same locality had noticed a similar experience in her own case, and he was led to believe there is an antagonism between the virus of hydrophobia and that of vipers. "If this were true," said he, "young dogs might be inoculated and thus made insusceptible, and why not likewise the human subject?" Dr. Jitzki's savage dog was bitten by a mad dog which had also bitten several horned cattle, all of whom perished rabid. More than forty years ago (*vide Lancet*, August 18th, 1855), there was reported a striking instance of empirical knowledge possessed at that comparatively remote date about animal extracts acting curatively. At Cuba M. Humboldt found that the sting of a small reptile caused symptoms closely resembling those of yellow fever. He contrived to have a piece of sheep's liver bitten by six of these small vipers, and then he inoculated dogs with the liquid expressed therefrom. After some feverish symptoms had occurred and subsided, nothing further happened to the animals. Then the experiment was extended to six human beings under sentence of death, who felt at first a sort of feverish ague, and then recovered their previous state of health. More than two hundred persons were afterwards inoculated in this way, and escaped yellow fever for the next three years.

In 1862 Dr. Hastings made an enquiry into the medicinal value of the excreta of reptiles in consumption and some other diseases, these excreta consisting of solid urine which represents the fœcal excrement as well. "A gallon of water," said he, "will scarcely dissolve two grains of the same; yet half a teaspoonful of the solution rubbed over the chest of a consumptive patient will give instantaneous relief to his breathing." Dr. Hastings has given a long list of nine snakes, five lizards, and two tortoises, whose excrement he administered as medicine in singularly small doses with marked success for consumptive disease of the lungs. "The dung consists of urate of ammonia, plus some special animal matter which is supposed to confer the virtue. Bromine increases the solubility of the excrement and heightens its efficacy, the dose being a two-hundredth of a grain of the dung with about an equal quantity of bromine. The solid urine is found to contain a certain amount of phosphate of lime, and some hair, with perhaps an infinitely small residuum of fœcal matter which is of wonderful virtue." The heart of a snake or serpent being close to the head renders a severe "bruise" there fatal: "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head."

Brazilian wood was, and is thought a specific remedy against the bites of serpents. The Countess of Salisbury, in the reign of James the First, had a bedstead made of this wood, and on it was carved the legend, "*Honi soit qui mal y pense.*" Country persons, especially in the Isle of Wight, suppose the sting or bite of the dragon-fly (*libellula varia*), to be as poisonous as that of the snake or adder, and therefore they give to this insect the name, "Snake stanger"; and the same fly is said to distinguish the good children from the bad when they

go fishing. That the eating of snakes afforded a receipt for growing young was a prevailing notion in Massinger's day (1656), who wrote in his play, *Old Law* :—

> "He hath left off o' late to feed on snakes;
> His beard 's turned white again."

Viper fat is still used in agricultural districts for cuts, sprains, and bruises.

"Snake pennies" are yearly levied from most of those cottagers who inhabit the New Forest for their right of cutting peat and turf as fuel in the waste of the Forest.

WASP.

THE Common Wasp (*Vespa*), though generally obnoxious to man and persecuted by him, is a creature of untiring energy and industry. Our British wasps are of two distinct kinds, the Social wasp, and the Solitary wasp, which is frequently called "Sand wasp," or "Mason wasp," and does not often come into our houses. It is with the Social wasp we are more familiar, and of which we are so apprehensive, though this may be tamed and made a pet of, as Sir John Lubbock has shown. The Social Wasp will rarely attack unless provoked; yet it is not an easy matter to maintain an attitude of composure or indifference when the creature is buzzing about one's head, splendidly painted though it be with bars of gold and black. Wasps catch living insects in large numbers, especially flies. It has been observed in France that butchers are very glad to have wasps attend their stalls for the sake of their usefulness in driving away the flesh fly; and in some parts of the United States (say Kirby and Spence) farmers are so well aware of the hornet's utility (first cousin to the wasp) in the same respect that they suspend in their sitting room a nest of these insects, which prey upon the