— Hospital Dietaries. —

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Food is too often bought by contract, by commissioners and others who never even see the people who eat it. The details of selection are frequently left to the sellers, who are often both shrewd and unprincipled enough to send materials that cannot be disposed of to the individual buyer, knowing full well that once within the Institution there they will remain, that no one will take the trouble to send them back, or perhaps notice the difference between the good and the bad.

Usually the cook holds much the same relation to the eater that the buyer does, often not knowing anything whatever of those for whom he labours, and therefore having no incentive to please or to take vital interest in the work. The personal element is lacking.

Cooks are human beings who in order to do well need instruction, encouragement and criticism. They should at times be told when a dish is good or when it is bad, and if possible why it is so; otherwise the best of them fall into a state of drudgery, whose round of duties consists in the mechanical turning out of so much bread, meat and vegetables with but little regard to the quality and acceptability of them.

Second, there is an alarming degree of ignorance in regard to the necessity of cleanliness in the care and preparation of food. I have seen a baker smoke day after day as he moulded and mixed bread, and in the afternoon when his work was done he was in the habit of taking a nap on the moulding board, which during other moments of rest served him as a chair. I have seen quarters of beef taken from the bottom of a none too clean cart, thrown upon the filthy floor of a store-room, whence they were carried to a block bearing all the signs upon its surface of the incipient putrefaction of the remains of many previous quarters of beef, chopped up in the presence of a swarm of flies which had been foraging during the morning in all sorts of decaying matter, and transported to the kettle without further care. I have seen large stationary soup-kettles washed out with the broom with which it was customary to sweep the floor. These are among the mildest illustrations that I could find in my long list, as the details of many are too unpleasant to relate. Many a woman who would be shocked at a speck upon the snowy whiteness of the table napery, eats bread mixed and moulded by hands whose owners know not the meaning of the word "bath," who are as guileless of soap and water as the wandering savage; and many a man who can give to delighted audiences the fascinating accounts of the life and history of the infinitely tiny forms of life which his microscope reveals, who can tell you the number of millions of bacteria that may be found in a gram of butter, that the dreaded typhoid-fever bacillus finds a comfortable home in milk, that the germ of Asiatic cholera may live in varying times from one hour to twenty days upon bread, roast meat, in water, milk, and butter, on the surface of fruits, on the bodies of flies, etc., has not yet thought of taking the kitchen as an experimental field, where certainly there is opportunity for much interesting research.

Æsthetically the thought of this is not pleasant; hygienically, it is without doubt one of the serious factors in the food question. That fermentative and putrefactive changes take place with great rapidity, under favorable conditions of warmth and moisture, in all kinds of both cooked and uncooked food, is an established principle. Of the nature of these changes and of the products which result from them we are not yet well informed, but experiments are constantly being made in this direction, and the day is not far distant when we shall have sufficient proof to speak with positiveness on more of these subjects.

A recent work—"Lehrbuch der Intoxikationen," by Dr. Rudolph Kobert, Stuttgart, 1893—contains interesting matter on this point. According to him, sausage poisoning, which frequently occurs in Germany and sometimes in this country, depends for the most part upon a mixture of bases of which ptomatropin is the most important. Its formation is due to the action of a bacillus. About 40 per cent. of those attacked die. The systems of the poisoning are fully described, and then he adds: "Wholly analogous symptoms have followed the eating of fish no longer fresh, corned beef, tainted ham, old roast fowl (goose and duck), decomposing beef and crabs. It is probable that the same poison, ptomatropin, is the active agent."

The poisoning resulting from the use of canned meats is often bacterial in origin. Poison may also occur, according to the same authority, (1) *in meat from healthy animals which has been improperly prepared or kept too long;* (2) *in meat from animals which during life have suffered from bacterial infection.*

There are many examples. In man, the eating of such food, *even though it has been boiled or roasted,* gives rise to severe symptoms which Bollinger calls intestinal sepsis. The symptoms are due to the action of the poisons on the intestines and their absorption thence. Dozens and sometimes hundreds of men have been attacked at once from the use of such food.

A sufficient number of similar experiments have been made by Vaughan in this country, and others, to enable us to infer that poisonous substances of deadly

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