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## Editorial.

### CO-OPERATIVE CATERING.

The present age is one in which the individual worker must join hands with others if he is to maintain his efficiency, and in no sphere of work is the need for this more evident than in the catering departments of our hospitals. On the purity of the food supply the nutrition of the patient depends, and his adequate nutrition may determine the balance between life and death. The health of the resident medical, nursing, and domestic staffs also depends greatly upon their proper nutrition, and therefore the importance of this department cannot be over-rated. Yet it is generally considered sufficient in smaller hospitals that the Matron—usually a very overworked official, responsible for the supervision of the nursing, the training of the nursing staff, and a multitude of other duties—should also act as housekeeper, and be responsible for the catering. In the largest hospitals an Assistant-Matron, Home Sister, or Housekeeper may relieve her of the details of the work, but in few cases have these officials had adequate instruction in food values and dietetics, in the art of catering, and in the pitfalls which beset the most conscientious amateur by the supply of worthless substitutes. Three months' insight into the housekeeping department of a hospital is usually all the housekeeping experience available for a trained nurse taking up such a position, and her subsequent value as housekeeper, is equivalent to that of a three months' probationer in the wards. In the wards the Matron is provided with highly trained Sisters as expert assistants, why not with skilled helpers on the housekeeping side? If food is to be pure, and a caterer successful and economical, a thorough apprenticeship is essential.

We print in another column the report of an interesting Conference convened by the National Food Reform Association, and in a recent issue we published an address by Mr. John Foot, Chief Inspector for the Borough of Bethnal Green, before the National Pure Food Association, in which he showed the exceeding difficulty of securing an unadulterated food supply. Thus "high class" jams are adulterated with the pulp of apples, turnips, and marrows, Demerara sugar with crystals coloured with aniline dye, pepper with rice flour, white flour is ground in a way which deprives it of its chief nutriment, and mixed with alum, ground bones, and sometimes plaster of Paris, while boracic and salicylic acid are in constant use as preservatives, so that with almost every meal in milk, cream, butter, sausages, corned beef and other articles of diet, we are being drugged by the butter factor, the grocer and other tradesmen from whom we obtain our food supply.

Why should not the hospitals of the Metropolis co-operate to obtain a pure food supply through a central expert agency, supplied with home grown meat, with poultry, milk, eggs, and jams from the products of its own farms, and with bread, cakes, flour, groceries and other necessaries, the purity of which has been, in the interests of the hospitals committees, tested and guaranteed by trained experts at the central depôt?

We commend to notice the action of the Committee of the Infants' Hospital, Vincent Square, S.W., who—in order to obtain the pure milk supply, which is the staple food of the little patients—have arranged for its supply from a farm established by the Treasurer, Mr. Robert Mond, under the direct control of the Committee and Medical Staff. Why should not this principle of securing pure food be applied to all

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