

lightened and scientific, there might be a modification of the diet during training, and that tables for muscle-making pros. and tables for brain-working Sisters and Staff Nurses might become the order of the day, or that nurses who did badly in examination might be treated to a special diet! Meanwhile, the best thing to do is to supply a varied diet and leave the individuals to use it as required. I think we require variety in *kind* of food, as well as in dishes, and it is the recollection of nurses with a tendency to rheumatism, biliousness, and other affections who are told not to eat much red meat, which turns my thoughts to nourishing dishes made with little or no meat. At present this class of dish is represented almost entirely by macaroni cheese, which is generally popular. Foreign cookery would not be altogether suitable for our climate, but we have a good deal to learn in the use of macaroni, spaghetti, maize, rice, etc., from the French and Italians, and also, I am told, from the Americans. We also make very little use of our vegetables, both green and root, compared to the use made of them by our Continental neighbours. From the Germans we might also learn something of sweets. A real *sweet* would sometimes be better than an ordinary pudding.

Very little is usually given in the way of sweets, and it is often noticed that nurses eat a great deal of sugar, so much so that it is evidently a want in the dietary. Old established ideas as to the relative expense of certain ingredients are in need of modification. Some are looked upon as luxuries quite unnecessarily, and one can but think that in the making of dishes, the cook often "spoils the ship for a ha'porth o' tar." The saving of an egg here and a little butter there is not worth while if the dish is to be less appetising, or, if by adding them to cheap food like beans or macaroni, a tasty nourishing dish can be made and the meat bill reduced.

The cooking is more at fault than the ingredients, as it is in hundreds of private houses. I have lately seen a suggestion that hospital managers might learn that "quite uninstructed women" could be taught to prepare delicious dishes. No doubt, but not in a busy hospital: there is no one at liberty to teach, and the diners cannot wait while the cook learns her work. In no place is a small error in cooking more disastrous, for it affects so many people, and the small failure which is passed over in courteous silence in a private house may be the occasion of much trouble in a large institution.

I am sure that better cooking is the thing most required, and that it will be best obtained

by employing more highly educated women as head cooks. More hands are also needed to prepare it, and more time in which to consume it. Better instruction in the art of catering should be available, for those who take up institution management, and more time for supervision, which is the only way to prevent wastefulness.

I am ready and willing to adopt any justifiable and real economy, and nurses do not expect luxuries, but I am sure that it is false economy to relieve one section of the community at the expense of the health of another.

DISCUSSION.

MISS COX-DAVIES, Matron, Royal Free Hospital, who opened the discussion, said that the consideration of the daily diet sheet so that it might give variety without increasing expenditure occupied a great deal of a Matron's time. From some statements in the Press it would almost appear that the public believed that nurses were fed on almost prison diet, and that the Matron of a hospital was a lazy official. She believed few nurses were not ready to say that the food supplied to them was as appetising as that they were accustomed to at home, but the point was that their work was so exacting that they required better food. She referred to the difficulty of serving food daintily, quickly, and efficiently, and contrasted the service of the present day with the meal provided in a small provincial hospital twenty-one years ago, where black-handled knives and forks were supplied to eat the cold potato-pie and the loaf was placed on the table-cloth. The comment of the staff nurse to the new probationer was, "It's no good to look dainty; what is good enough for me is good enough for you, and if you don't like it you can go without."

She spoke of a useful piece of work by the Ladies' Committee at the Royal Free Hospital, which provides the hospital with hampers of fresh vegetables daily from a circle of forty-five country friends. The scheme has now been working admirably for four years, and the speaker suggested that included in such schemes might be the supply of new-laid eggs and home-made jam.

MISS BARTON, Matron, Chelsea Infirmery, said that under the Poor Law the officers had rations, and the higher the position of the official the larger his supposed appetite; thus the Matron was supposed to eat much more than the probationers. The food was good, and there was plenty of it, but in many Poor Law institutions the catering was done in the steward's office, and nurses' food was a woman's question. At Chelsea Infirmery a slate was placed on the mantelpiece inviting suggestions from the nurses as to variations in their diet, but they did not often make them; it was easier to grumble than suggest.

MISS E. M. BÖGE, Superintendent, Q.V.J.I., Shoreditch, said that the feeding of district nurses approximated to that of a private family. She had nurses from many hospitals, and the general testimony was that the food was admirable; but there was some monotony, and good food might be badly cooked. All nurses needed a good meat dinner in

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)