

Health and Home.

WHAT FOODS ARE MOST ECONOMICAL ?

With an advance of 20 to 100 per cent, and more, in the price of staple foods, the above is now a most important question to over forty millions of our people, and one of much interest to seven or eight millions more. Probably there are not two millions who take no thought or care as to the cost of their daily diet. Meal, flour, potatoes, corn-meal, and milk, are the main articles of sustenance for the great masses. Fish, rice, beans, and oat-meal (recently), with lesser amounts of some other articles, are consumed ; but these altogether do not, we judge, constitute one-tenth of the food of the entire people, perhaps not more than five or six per cent.

Dried or smoked beef, ham, and cheese, rank high, but dried fish outranks all others. The nutritive value of dried codfish is remarkable, and it deserves special attention, 100 lbs. of it supplying as much nutriment as 341 lbs. of beef ! It is cheap and abundant everywhere, because very portable, and easily kept. It yields labor-sustaining aliment at from one-third down to one-ninth of the cost of beef in different sections of the country. It is easily digestible, and if properly freshened and cooked, it can be made palatable and acceptable to a very large class needing to practice economy.

FLESH-FORMERS—HEAT-PRODUCERS.

The occupation of any class of persons has much to do with deciding the most economical foods. It is estimated that, in a temperate climate, an average man needs, each 24 hours, simply to sustain life without increasing his weight, about 11½ ounces of heat-producing, and 4½ ounces of flesh-forming foods. Laborers, and those putting forth much exertion, need most of the flesh-forming foods, such as lean meats of all kinds, eggs, cheese, fish, beans, peas, oat-meal, bread, cabbage, roots, etc.

Those exposed to cold, need more of the heat-producing foods, as fat meats, corn-meal, and generally those articles containing large amounts of oil or starch or both, of sugar, etc.

Those working hard, in cold weather, need much of both kinds combined, as in pork and beans.

Wheat contains about 69 per cent. of heat-producing, and 11 per cent. of flesh-forming elements. Indian corn about 70 per cent. of heat-producing starch and oil, and 9 per cent. of flesh-formers. Beans and peas, about 52 per cent. of heat-producing oil and starch, and 25 per cent. of flesh-formers.

Milk admirably combines flesh-forming curd or cheese, and the heat-producing oil (butter) and sugar. All kinds of cheese, including the cottage or sour-milk cheese, are excellent strength-giving food. All skimmed milk may be very economically used in supplying cottage or soft cheese as a strength-giving human food. This soft cheese is, in utility and value, very like lean meats.

SUNDRY FOOD ITEMS.

Maccaroni makes an excellent variety in the scarcity of vegetables, and should be much better known, and more used by the masses here. It is the staple food of the common people in Italy, indeed of most classes. It is made of strongly glutinous wheat flour ; hence is flesh-forming, while its starch supplies heat. It may be cooked tender in boiling water, seasoned with salt, and eaten with or without cream sauce, or milk or butter. —After boiling it can be put in a pudding dish, with about a quarter of its weight of grated cheese sprinkled over it, and lightly baked. The addition of cheese makes this diet about equal to lean meat as a flesh-former.

Ripe Peas should be more commonly used. A bowl of good pea soup is as satisfying as a hearty dinner on a cold day. To make a gallon of it, wash a pint of peas and soak them over night ; then boil in five pints of water, gently simmering three hours or so, until thoroughly soft. With a potato masher rub the soup through a colander or wire sieve. A pound of beef or ham bone may be boiled with the peas. The soup may be seasoned in various ways—with onions, cloves, pepper, sugar, or any or all of them, to make them most palatable.—Bean soup may be made similarly.

Stewed Carrots are a far more nourishing and economical human food than is generally known, and they should not be mainly left for animals. Scrape the roots, chop into small pieces, and stew in water until very tender. They may be seasoned with flour-and-butter sauce—all the better with cream added—and in various other ways. Some like them made piquant with a dash of Cayenne.—*American Agriculturist*.

PAPER BED CLOTHES.

It has long been well known that a covering of newspapers was an admirable heat retaining agent for a cold winter's night. Many attempts have been made to utilize this general idea and provide paper comforts and blanket, but the material would crackle, and it was next to impossible to secure the proper ventilation under this sort of bed clothes. Therefore but little beyond experimenting had been done till the "Chartaline" blanket was recently invented in England. The paper for this is made from strong fiber, which, being prepared by a special process, is freed from the stiffness or brittleness that produces the crackling or rustling sounds. When new there is a slightly crisp feeling, but this presently wears off and the blanket becomes very soft and quite noiseless.

The new bed covering is made of two sheets of paper, between which a layer of wadding, chemically prepared, is inserted in such a way that it can not gather together in lumps. The edges are strongly whipped, so that there is no possibility of the separation of the two pieces taking place.

In respect to the ventilation, it seems to be as perfect as the ordinary blanket. In respect to strength, while there is yet something to be desired, the blanket is found to be quite durable. It looks there is scope for very considerable improvement, but the material can easily be made ornamental in shape as well as by figures printed or painted upon it. In respect to warmth it far surpasses the old cotton or woolen article—particularly when the size and weight of the two are contrasted. But the largest gain is in cost. The paper article can be afforded at a rate which seems almost ridiculous.

ABOUT POTATOES.—EXPENSIVE FOOD.

It is estimated that New York city alone daily consumes 20,000 bushels of potatoes ; or one bushel to each 75 or 80 of the resident and transient population ; or 4½ bushels each per annum. The wholesale price now (Dec.) by the car or boat load is \$2.50 to \$3.00 per barrel, or fully \$1 per bushel, and the retail price considerably higher. Shrewd dealers and speculators have for some time past been buying up all available supplies in many localities. Ordinarily, the greater weight of potatoes for the same money value, and the frost embargo for at least three winter months, prevent the transfer of potatoes from regions of plenty to those of scarcity, as is done with grain ; but active transportation over long distances is now going on.

POTATOES ARE ALWAYS AN EXPENSIVE FOOD.—That is to say, comparatively. A bushel of potatoes (60 lbs.) contains nearly 50 lbs. of water and only about 10 lbs of solid nutriment, which is mainly starch. At present wholesale prices here, this is nearly 10 cts a pound for the food they yield. Fair wheat flour, at \$8 a barrel, is only 4 cents a pound. Corn at 80 cents a bushel (56 lbs.) has nearly 50 lbs. of nutriment, costing less than 2 cents per lb. Taking the country altogether, and the prices of potatoes, corn, wheat, etc., high and low, from year to year, the average nutritious food obtained in the form of potatoes costs 4 to 5 times as much as it does in the consumption of corn or beans, and 2½ to 4 times as much as in the form of wheat flour, or oatmeal, beans, rice, etc.—*American Agriculturist*.

LET THE FROST HELP YOU.

Few fully appreciate how much a freezing of the ground does to set at liberty the plant-food locked up in almost all soils. Water in freezing, expands about one-eight of its bulk, and with tremendous force. Water, if confined in the strongest rock and frozen, will burst it asunder. The smallest particles of soil, which are in fact only minute bits of rock, as the microscope will show, if frozen while moist are broken still finer. This will go on all winter in every part of the field or garden reached by the frost ; and as most soils contain more or less elements that all growing plants or crops need, a good freezing is equivalent to adding manures or fertilizers. Hence it is desirable to expose as much of the soil as possible to frost action, and the deeper the better, for the lower soil has been less drawn upon, and is richer in plant-food. Turn up the soil this month wherever practicable. If thrown into ridges and hollows, in field and garden, the frost will penetrate so much deeper. Further, plowing or spading the soil now, exposes insects and weed roots to killing by freezing. Still further, soils thrown up loosely will dry out earlier in spring, and admit earlier working, which is often a gain when a day or two may decide in favor of a successful crop. *American Agriculturist*.