

This custom has in practice developed into an abuse which in not a few cases has had injurious effects, for many patients who scrupulously comply with this rule acquire in time such a distaste for white meat that their consumption of meat in general becomes restricted to the smallest amount, the proportion of albumen taken sinks more and more; and because, in consequence, the appetite in general and the entire consumption of food is lessened, there results a disturbance of nutrition and loss of strength.

What particular significance attaches to the prohibition of dark meat is shown by the fact that in such cases, with return to a varied mixed meat diet, the appetite comes up and the lowered strength is increased.

In the last two years several observations of this kind have been made by me. These are from a practical standpoint, but from a scientific point of view I might add the remark that the distinction between the white and dark meats for the nutrition of renal patients has been anything but exactly established, and at the least has been greatly exaggerated. I have not found in all literature a single exact clinico-experimental confirmation of it, though there is no lack of hypothetical assertions concerning the greater contents in dark meats of substances that are irritating to the kidneys, especially nitrogen, containing extractives. As regards these last I might, on the other hand, bring forward the fact that our textbooks on physiologic chemistry state that the highest certain values are in the white meat of chickens and rabbits; they exceed in these three or four per cent. per thousand, while in the case of beeves, for example, the same values never reach three per cent. per thousand. The essential difference between white and dark meats is in their content of coloring matter, the chemical constitution of which is not yet known with entire exactness, but we have no ground whatever for classing them among the injurious substances.

To the assertion that there is a special harmfulness in dark meats for renal and also for gouty patients, unsupported by chemical or experimental evidence, and handed down from one treatise to another, I am able to oppose at least one observation, showing that a patient with chronic parenchymatous nephritis in one five-day period under the daily use of one-half pound of chicken excreted exactly the same amount of nitrogen, and even a little more albumen, than in a following five-day period in which, instead of chicken, she received an amount of beef, having the same content of nitrogen.

The second most important question which I would here discuss concerns the allowance of liquids. How shall we regulate this in patients with contracted kidneys?

Eleven years ago H. von Bamberger reported in a short clinical paper that in the treatment of certain special cases of disease he