

THE GROWING OF MUSHROOMS.



MUSHROOMS are anything but widely appreciated as food in America. And yet there is no country richer in mushroom food, growing spontaneously, than is ours. Were the people of Germany, Italy, France, or Russia to see our clearings during the autumn rains they would feast on the rich food which in many places here goes to waste. It is the epicures of America, in fact, who appreciate this food, paying fancy prices for it in the markets.

The economic value of mushroom diet is placed as second to meat alone. With bread, and mushrooms properly prepared, a person may neglect the butcher during the season when this growth may be gathered. Mushrooms, as Professor Palmer has stated, make the same use of the air we breathe as is made by animals: when cooked they resemble no other form of vegetable food, and in decay their odor in some cases cannot be distinguished from that of putrid meat. Certain it is that the parasol-like growth used for food, and which springs up in a night, is not a plant in any sense. It is rather analogous to a flower, bearing, as it does, the spores that are analogous to seeds. The true plant

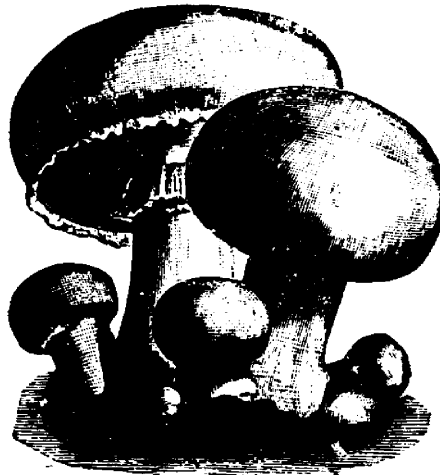


FIG. 721. --THE COMMON MUSHROOMS (*Agaricus campestris*).

which feeds, grows and finally prepares to flower, is the network of whitish threads which form what is commonly known as the "spawn," or, botanically, the mycelium of the mushroom.

It is to the garden or indoor culture of the Common Mushroom, *Agaricus campestris*, shown in our engraving, that we desire here to call attention. There is an ease and novelty about this business which should make it attractive, not