The Cheese Factory.

The tendency of modern improvements is to lighten labor and increase its effectiveness. By the introduction of various kinds of machinery, men engaged in agriculture are enabled to do in one day as much as could be done in a week without them. What the mower, reaper, and thrashing machine have done for farmers, the cheese factory has done for their wives and daughters. Years ago the work of the farmer's wife was never done. The first to go to work in the early morning, she was the last to rest, late in the evening, and after taking her share in the milking and the care of the milk, the churning and cheese-making, with all the slopping, and washing of pans, pails, cans, tubs, churns, and cheese-presses, were added as additional duty to the already sufficient cares of the household. The invention of the factory system changed all this, and relieved the women of the farm, not only from the care of the milk, but in a great measure from the milking as well. In the farmers' households there is now much more of comfort, leisure, and culture, than there was before all the labor-saving improvements were adopted, and where these are made the most of, there is more profit than formerly. There is more money passing through the dairy farmer's hands now than ever before, and the location of a cheese factory in a dairy district is to be considered as a decided benefit. The market for cheese is only opened as yet, and before it can be fully occupied, the number of cheese factories may be greatly multiplied. The home demand for this form of food has never been cultivated, the foreign market having received all the attention. There has been no desire to consult differing tastes, and but one kind of cheese, and good, bad, and indifferent of the kind, has been manufactured. An exacting purchaser of cheese might travel over a considerable portion of a large city, without finding any choice beyond an ill-flavored, leathery product which goes by this name, unless he found, by mere accident, some foreign cheese, or some of American make put up in the form of the foreign article, and intended to compete with it. It is a question whether the makers or the consumers are most to blame in this. But it is rarely that a good thing goes a begging for purchasers; on the contrary, a supply of it at once creates a remunerative demand, and which rapidly enlarges as the commodity becomes known. If we had a plenty of cheese of different qualities and shapes, calculated to please the palates and the eyes of purchasers, there is no doubt that our home market would soon increase so largely, that many new factories would be required to supply the demand, and that the prices obtained for the best product would be very profitable.

The process of making factory cheese differs in no respect from that of the old dairy methods, excepting that much labor-saving machinery is used, and that the milk of 600 or 1,000 cows is made into cheese, with very little more cost for labor and utensils, than the milk of 20 or 30 cows would require in the old-fashioned home dairy. The product, if not equal to the best of the farm dairy cheese, is at least of even quality, and is better than the average of that formerly made in dairies. By the use of steam power, and an economical distribution of labor, the cost of making cheese is reduced to the lowest limit, and the return to the farmer for the milk, is greater than he could realize in any other way. An average of 2 cents per quart, or a gross sum of $40 to $50 for the season is the satisfactory and profitable income from each cow, when well managed; and this is paid in cash as the cheese may be marketed, without the loss of time that would be necessary in seeking a market. As the cheese factory is open but a portion of the season, this income therefore represents not much more than three-fourths of the product from each cow, and during the remainder of the time she adds to the amount of this income. As a rule, each dairy cow may be made, by the help of the factory, to yield the income stated in cash, besides furnishing some butter for family use or sale during the winter, when the factories are closed, if proper arrangements are made for this. With all their manifest advantages, it is strange that there are not more factories in districts where cows could easily be kept, as well as that dairymen should be contented with cows of so poor an average quality as are common. The experience of the past year, however, during which market gardening has been a losing business, has turned the attention of many farmers to the keeping of cows and the production of milk, and it is reasonable to expect that several factories will be erected in the neighborhood of the large cities where various articles of food, richly productive of milk, can be cheaply procured.

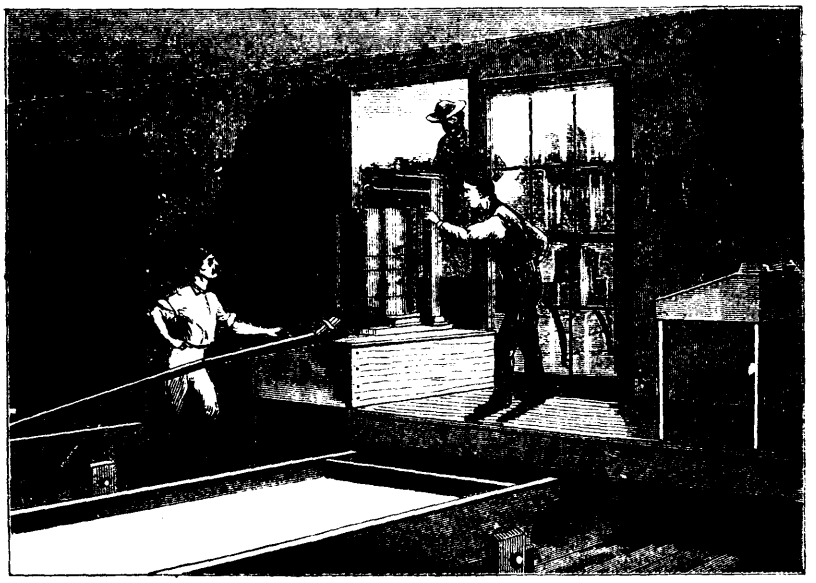

Fig. 1.—CHEESE FACTORY.—RECEIVING AND WEIGHING THE BUTTER.

The cheese factory routine is very simple, and is reduced to a very thorough system in which everything is conducted by strict rule. The milk brought to the factory by the patrons is weighed in a large receiving can, (see fig. 1), and is then run through a strainer and a tin spout into the vats, where it is brought by steam heat to the proper temperature for adding the rennet. The different processes through which the milk passes before it finally appears in the finished shape in the curing room, are referred to elsewhere. The last stage is by no means an unimportant one. The curing process needs to be managed with the greatest care. The curing house in which the cheese are kept to ripen, and await a purchaser, (shown in figure 2), is constructed so as to maintain an even temperature. The walls are double, and the space between them is filled with sawdust, or other non-conducting material. Steam pipes for heating the room in cool weather are fitted around the walls in many factories, and ample ventilation is provided for. The windows of the curing room are shaded with blinds, or what is preferable, should be made only upon the north side of the building. This room is generally situated above the "make-room," but in some factories a separate building is provided, where the stock of cheese can be kept free from all the effects of dampness, changes of temperature, or the partly vitiated atmosphere from below; as the quality and value of the cheese depend upon the perfectness of the curing.

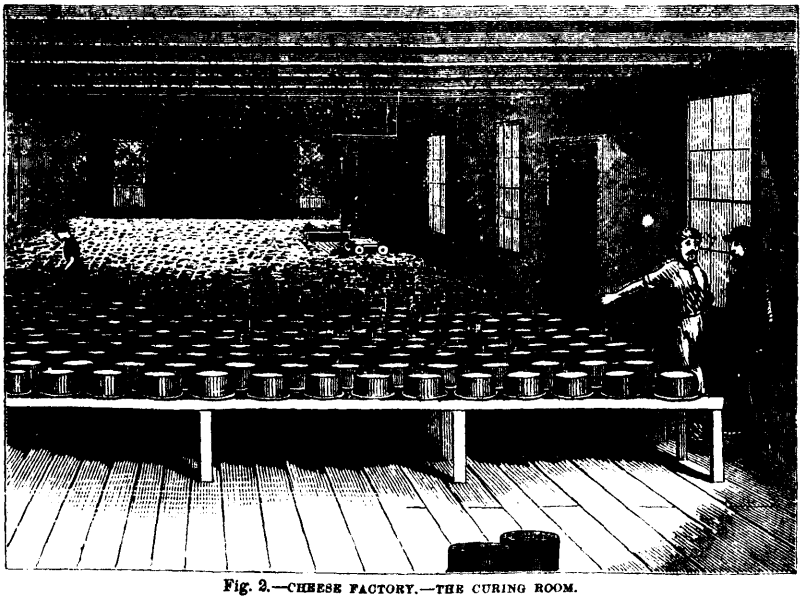

Fig. 2.—CHEESE FACTORY.—THE CURING ROOM.

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