

SCARLET CAP (*Russula emetica*, Fr.). REPUTED TO BE MILDLY POISONOUS.

This fungus occurs very commonly in the woods from summer till autumn. It gets its name from the bright scarlet cap. (Fig. 20.) It is hot and peppery to the taste, and some report it to be mildly poisonous, while others say that it is edible.

The cap is 1.5 to 3 inches wide, thin, brittle, deep pink to rich red; furrowed near the edge, rounded when young, depressed in the centre when old.

The stalk is 2 to 3 inches long, white or tinged with yellow. Very brittle.

There is no ring and no volva or poison cup.

Besides the scarlet cap, some of the forms with milky juice are mildly poisonous. They are very hot and the milk is not reddish, as with the Orange Flow (*Lactarius deliciosus*), described under edible mushrooms.

There are some mushrooms which have tubes in place of gills. Some of these are edible and others poisonous. The poisonous ones have a flesh that changes color when cut or broken or have tubes with red mouths. There are a few mushrooms that have clay-colored gills and a cobwebby veil that should also be avoided.

Many mushrooms are wholesome when fresh, but become dangerous when they begin to decay, or show evidence of the work of insects or worms.

GATHERING WILD MUSHROOMS.

When one is gathering wild mushrooms a basket is the best receptacle for carrying them, as different compartments may be made for holding the various kinds and thus keep from crushing and spoiling the more tender ones.

When collecting mushrooms for the table they should never be pulled up or broken off. In the deadly poisonous mushrooms the most marked characteristic, the poison cup or volva, is deeply buried in the soil. If the plant is pulled up or broken off the poison cup is lost, and it is impossible to distinguish the poisonous kinds from certain edible ones. After a mushroom has been carefully dug up and examined and the collector is certain that it is edible, the lower part of the stalk may be cut off to get rid of the dirt. It is often very difficult to determine mushrooms from the young or button stage, so that all small buttons are accompanied by mature plants they should generally be avoided. In case of doubt the fungus should be discarded or the complete specimen shown to one who knows mushrooms very thoroughly.

RULES TO BE OBSERVED IN GATHERING WILD MUSHROOMS.

It is impossible to give a simple rule or test for detecting poisonous mushrooms. Care must be taken to observe the characteristics of each mushroom gathered.

The following rules, if carefully followed, will enable one to avoid the poisonous forms:—

- (1) Avoid fungi when in the button or unexpanded stage; also those in which the flesh has begun to decay, even if only slightly.
- (2) Avoid all fungi which have stalks with a swollen base surrounded by a sac-like or scaly envelope, especially if the gills are white.
- (3) Avoid fungi having a milky juice, unless the milk is reddish.