

Instances continually occur where one food will fail and another when substituted for it succeed. And yet these successes are merely temporary, and the mortality in children thus fed always remains far above that of those fed upon breast milk.

It is certainly wise and economical not to spare expense and trouble in arranging the infant's food, for, as we have seen, the period of active growth of an organ is the time when its function is readily weakened, and when once weakened the digestive function is a prolific source of annoyance and expense in childhood and adolescence. Cheap foods and cheap methods of feeding should not be tolerated either in infant or in adult life.

What are the general factors of the problem which constitute nature's method of feeding? We have first a receptacle, the human breast, which mechanically provides a fresh supply of food at proper intervals, absolutely prevents fermentation of the food before it enters the infant's mouth, forms the mouth by the process of sucking, incites to action the necessary digestive fluids, avoids a vacuum by collapsing as it is gradually emptied—thus allowing the food to flow continuously, and finally is practically self-regulating as to the amount of food, according to the infant's age. Secondly, the food itself is adapted to the infant's digestive function and for its development, by its temperature, its alkaline reaction and chemical composition.

Given these factors, how nearly can we approach them artificially? Human ingenuity has not been able to devise anything which approaches the perfection of nature's receptacle, and the very best we can do to offset this failure is to adopt that which is exactly the reverse, viz., a receptacle of absolute simplicity.

One of the grand objects in the artificial feeding of the infant is the proper sterilization of its food. It is our province to see that the child's food is deprived of all developed bacteria before it goes into the infant's stomach. In sterilizing we must see that it does not alter the chemical attributes of the food, as is essentially the case where the sterilization is accomplished by boiling. In Rotch's steaming or hot water process the receptacle is sterilized as well as the food. It has been shown that healthy milk from the healthy human breast can be kept free from bacteria for several hours, and days, in sterilized tubes. But on the contrary, in women whose temperature was raised from fissures and excoriations of the nipples and by general puerperal infection, bacteria were found in abundance.