

The Household.

Food for the Sick.

The preparation of food for the sick is one of the most necessary and graceful accomplishments. Like other accomplishments, it requires time and skill and patience to acquire it, and it requires suffering also—for those who have been sick themselves can best enter into the feelings of the invalid and cater to his preferences, and they know how to avoid the thousand little things, unnoticed by the well, which torment the sick.

Sickness sharpens and refines all the senses and quickens marvellously the susceptibility to pain and annoyances of every sort. The leisure which it enforces on the patient and the sense of himself which it compels act with microscopic power on all his surroundings, and especially upon whatever discomforts may be in them. The disordered body seems to seize hold on whatever is in sympathy with itself in respect to disorder, and take less notice than is normal of agreeable things. This is a part of the sickness.

The style in which food for the sick is served is scarcely second in importance to the food itself. The same articles served in a careless way may create distaste for food that, spread in an appetizing and inviting style, would create a relish for them. Dainty china, spotless napery, shining silver, are by none better appreciated than by the invalid. The three meals a day are the chief events that break the monotony of his existence, and if they are delicately and carefully prepared and served, his intellectual and æsthetic taste will be gratified if the palate has no aptitude for pleasure. If the appetite is slender, as it is in most sicknesses, the quantity prepared and brought to the patient should be very small, so as not to overpower his imagination. The food should be freshly prepared each time, and as soon as the patient has eaten what he wishes it should be removed from the sick-room. A small table placed beside the bed is better than a tray placed on the bed, and this table may be set with flowers and china and silver and glass, so as to be very attractive. Unless the patient has expressed a wish for some particular dish, the articles served should be a surprise to him and capture his appetite, if possible, without any show of resistance.

The articles of diet suitable for the sick-room are only variations of the food used in health. Of the meats, venison is said to be the most easily digested and assimilated; mutton comes next, then beef, then poultry. Veal, pork and all fats should be avoided. Stale bread is better for invalids than fresh bread, and baked potatoes better than potatoes boiled. Fruits may be served in their season, as there is relish for them and they are found wholesome.

Mutton broth is served thus: To a pound of meat cut in small pieces put a quart of cold water. Boil slowly three or four hours in a closely covered kettle till the meat falls in pieces. Strain, remove all fat, and put in two tablespoonfuls of rice that has been soaked half an hour; simmer until the rice is well cooked. Season with salt, and serve with toasted cracker. Chicken broth is made in the same way. Enough broth and gruels may be prepared at one time to last for several meals, and just enough warmed and served at one time.

Beef tea is made in several ways. One is to cut a pound, more or less, in small pieces, put it

into a bottle or glass can and cover tightly, put it in a pot of cold water with a plate at the bottom. Heat gradually and simmer two or three hours. Pour off the juice, season with very little salt, and remove all oily particles from the surface. A slice of bread may be laid over the surface to absorb them. Or, soak the beef in the cold water for half an hour, squeezing it occasionally, then put it over the fire, covered, and boil slowly for ten minutes. Remove the scum and the fat and serve hot. Boiled rice may be added if desired. Beef juice is a pleasant change from beef tea, and is thus prepared: Take a nice juicy steak, remove all fat, broil it over a bright coal fire long enough to heat it through. Then with a meat squeezer press out the juice into a cup set in hot water. Remove any fat that may be in it, shake the salt-box over it slightly and serve.

Toast, nicely prepared, is relished by most invalids when it is perfectly made. The bread must be cut thin, the crust trimmed off and then the slice held in the toaster over a bed of coals and turned from side to side till all the moisture is removed, then allowed to become a rich golden brown. Serve it on a hot plate the moment it is done.

Gruel made after the following directions is a most nutritious and palatable dish for the convalescent: Pour a quart of hot water into a clean earthen or tin vessel, over a brisk fire. When it boils stir into it two tablespoonfuls of corn or oatmeal mixed smoothly in just water enough to make it a thin paste; put a small lump of butter in and stir frequently for half an hour; then add a gill of sweet milk, and when it boils again throw in the upper crust of hard-baked bread cut in small pieces; let it boil ten minutes, then add a shake of black pepper, a little salt, a pinch of grated nutmeg and a little more butter. The yolk of an egg boiled hard and mashed makes an agreeable addition as the appetite improves. In cases of severe illness the butter and spice should be omitted, and as health returns the ingredients may be varied to suit the demand.

The various mashies are all made in the same way. Cornmeal, oatmeal, hominy, are thrown into *salted boiling water*. When they have boiled a few minutes they should be removed to a place on the stove or range where they will cook slowly and without need of frequent stirring.

Tapioca jelly is sometimes relished by the invalid. Soak a half-cupful in two cupfuls of water for four or five hours; then put it in a farina kettle and steam until it is well done and clear. Then add the juice and grated rind of a lemon, and sugar to taste. Pour into moulds, and serve with sweetened and flavored cream.

Rice jelly may be made of rice flour or of the grain. Boil the grain until it is thoroughly soft and transparent. A stick of cinnamon boiled with it flavors it agreeably. Add loaf sugar, and pour into moulds. Serve with cream and sugar.

A fresh egg broken into boiling water and cooked till the white is congealed, then laid on a piece of nicely-toasted bread, dipped in hot milk and buttered, is an appetizing dish for the convalescent. A sound, well-flavored apple, peeled and baked slowly, served with cream and sugar, is a toothsome dish. Sweet oranges, with peel and everything removed but the pulp, and this cut in small pieces, served with powdered sugar, are agreeable to most invalids.

For drinks, lemonade is pleasant to the fevered patient. It should be made of lemon pulp dives-

ted of the peel and seeds. If tea is given it may be made at the bedside in a dainty little teapot, and served in a small cup of egg-shell china. There should be in every family a service of nice china for special use in the sick-room. Canned blackberry juice and canned grape juice may serve as a basis of agreeable acid drinks, and so of the various jellies. Wine whey is sometimes useful as a liquid food; it is thus prepared: Set over the fire in a saucepan a pint of milk; when it is near boiling pour it in white wine, stirring all the time, till the curd separates from the whey and the whey seems clear. Boil up once, then pour off the whey, add half as much boiling water, and sweeten it to taste. Lemon whey is less heating than wine whey, and is made by using lemon juice in milk instead of wine. Buttermilk is said to be an excellent drink for consumptive patients. It is more easily assimilated if made from sour cream rather than from sweet. Weak green tea with lemon juice in it instead of milk is said to be refreshing for fevered patients. Apple water is good, and is made by pouring a quart of boiling water on three or four large apples sliced and put in a jug. Cover tightly till the liquid is cold; then strain and add a little lemon juice and sugar to taste. Ice broke in small pieces and used to allay thirst, is very useful in case of inflammation of the bowels, sickness of the stomach, sore throat and cankered mouth.

Waste Paper for Household Use.

Few housekeepers have time to black their stoves every day, or even every week. Many wash them in either clear water or dishwater. This keeps them clean, but they look very brown. After a stove has once been thoroughly blacked it can be kept looking perfectly well for a long time by rubbing it with old paper every morning.

If I occasionally find a spot of gravy or fruit-juice that the paper will not take off, I rub it with a wet cloth, but do not put on water enough to take off the blacking. I find that rubbing with paper is a much nicer way of keeping my tea-kettle, coffee-pot and tea-pot bright and clean, then the old way of washing them in suds. The inside of coffee and tea-pots should be rinsed in clear water and never in the dishwater.

Rubbing with dry paper is also the best way of polishing knives, spoons, and tinware after scouring. This saves wetting the knife-handles. If a little flour is held on the paper in rubbing tinware and spoons, they shine like new silver. For polishing windows, mirrors, lamp chimneys, etc., I always use paper in preference to dry cloth.

Preserves and pickles keep much better if a brown paper, instead of a cloth, is tied over the jar. Canned fruit is not so apt to mould if a piece of writing paper cut to fit the can is laid directly on the top of the fruit.

Paper is much better to put under a carpet than straw. It is warmer, thinner and makes less noise when walked upon. A fair carpet can be made for a room that is not in constant use, by pasting several thicknesses of newspaper on the floor, over them a layer of wall paper, and giving it a coat of varnish. In cold weather I have often placed newspapers between my bed quilts—knowing that two thicknesses of paper are as warm as a quilt. If it is necessary to step upon a chair, always lay a paper on it; this saves rubbing the varnish off. Children easily learn the bad habit of doing so.