

it can be shown to have done harm, twenty cases will be found in which it has done good.

Medicines—so-called—are in general so far inferior to a fragrant and savory cup of food, as peptic persuaders, and I have seen many patients suffering with nausea and loss of appetite, who have been speedily relieved by the mere omission of the bitter and disgusting tonics which have been forced upon their reluctant stomachs. It is true that, under the circumstances referred to, now and then good medicines do good and improve the appetite, and their occasional abuse or unskillful exhibition is no reason why they should never be used. Nevertheless, I wish to say, very emphatically, that the abuse of medicines is more than "occasional." It is alarmingly frequent. It is a simple elementary truth, that there are many diseases and surgical injuries in which recovery takes place as speedily without medicines as with medicines; and if any medical man has not learned this, and continues to give drugs from day to day for every form and grade of human ailment, so much the worse for him and for his patients.

But if men can live and recover from disease sometimes without medicine, no man can live or recover from disease without food. Organs which are maimed and struggling must have food, or they will soon cease to labor, and will die. A wound will not heal nor a bone unite without nutriment. In every human malady and surgical accident, repair and recovery wait on nutrition.

It is not improper, then, to say that as a means of restoring the sick and wounded, when both may be needed, good food is of more importance than good medicine. Large armies have always suffered more from a deficient supply of proper food than from a deficient supply of proper medicines.

One conclusion to which my statement of facts and process of reasoning leads me is that hospitals and dispensaries ought to have the means and appliances for supplying to the sick, infirm, and maimed who come to them for help, not only medicines and skilled medical and surgical services, but also an abundance of nutritious food; indeed, that the question of food ought to be the first, where it is generally the last consideration.

There is an impression among many laymen, who have the charge of hospitals, that "extras," including eggs, milk, etc., with the services of the "diet kitchen," ought to be reserved for the few who are very seriously ill, and that all the slightly ill or convalescent should be content with the "ordinary" diet of the hospital, which is seldom very attractive to even a sound stomach. Those who have had experience in the United States army hospitals know that this was never the theory or practice of these hospitals; but that all of the regular rations were commuted, and with the money thus obtained nothing but what might be termed "extras" were purchased.

If a man is able to eat hard-tack and salt pork, or tough beef and unsavory soups, he is able, generally, to go to work, and ought not to remain in the hospital. Though well in other respects, and detained only because his broken limb is not thoroughly repaired, it does not follow that he can eat and digest what he could easily master when working out of doors, and carrying brick-hods to the top of five story buildings. If it is an object to get these men speedily out of the hospital, and thus save the tax-payers; if it is desirable to restore them soon to their families, of whom they may be the sole support, then it will be necessary to give them food which will encourage an appetite, and be easily digested by a stomach weakened by long confinement, sickness, and anxiety. They must be treated in this respect in the hospitals, as we—you and I—are treated at home, where the utmost care is taken to see that our food is suitable and appetizing; where, although we may have ceased to take medicine, so long as we find ourselves unable to return to our usual out-door duties, we are fed only upon "extras." These same poor people, inmates of the hospitals, if they were at home, in their own humble apartments, would be fed better, so far as the quality and mode of preparing the food is concerned, than they are in most public hospitals. No pains are spared, generally, to furnish the poor all the medicine they need; but what they want most, and get the least, is good food.

The medicines and liquors dispensed at Bellevue Hospital during the six months ending July 1, 1877, cost \$7,750; and for all the charities and prisons under the charge of the Commissioners of Public Charities and Correction, these two articles cost, for the year 1876, \$40,892; about one-fourth of which, the apothecary informed me, was for liquors; leaving a balance of about \$32,200 as having been expended for other medicines than stimulating liquors. Possibly a much larger sum has been expended for "extras" in the same institutions. Upon this point I am not informed, but my long connection with this, and other civil hospitals, enables me to say that it is generally more difficult to obtain proper food, and a supply sufficient for the demand, than it is to obtain good medicines and in sufficient quantity.

In these remarks there is no imputation upon those excellent and humane gentlemen who are in charge of these institutions. In my opinion we are alone responsible for this state of facts, inasmuch as we have hitherto failed to urge upon them and the public the greater importance of nutriment and the comparatively less importance of medicine.

Some intelligent men and women, not of our profession, have seen the want before we have, and they have established in various parts of the city diet kitchens, to supply the very want of which I am speaking, and which are properly made sub-