

MILK AS FOOD FOR INVALIDS.

The value of milk as food for invalids is now generally recognized that we believe our readers, both professional and non-professional, will thank us for condensing the following practical suggestions concerning its use from an article in the *New York Medical Record*, by Dr. James D. Trask:—

The most common objection offered to the use of milk is that it produces "biliousness." In many instances this is due to a disregard of the fact that milk ought to be looked upon as an article of food, and not as a mere drink; consequently, to secure its perfect digestion, it should be always taken at one of the regular meals, or at a point as near as practicable midway between two meals, when something is required to bridge over this interval. Bread and milk eaten together, by both children and adults, being agreeable to the palate, is often hurriedly swallowed and in excessive quantities, and indigestion is the consequence.

Again, since modern chemistry has taught us the important part taken by the saliva in the preparation of all starch foods for digestion, we have a ready explanation of the failure of the stomach to digest bread that has been swallowed with milk without previous mastication. * * * When milk is given to either children or adults with feeble digestion, the bread should be first thoroughly mixed with the fluids of the mouth and swallowed by the child or invalid before the milk is taken; the young child must be watched as it eats, mouthful by mouthful, until the proper habit is formed.

The digestibility of milk depends, in many instances, upon the temperature at which it is taken into the stomach. This is particularly true in cases of nervous prostration. The digestive organs of those persons are almost invariably weak, and the temperature at which milk is ingested will determine whether it shall be gratefully received and readily digested, or, on the other hand, prove a source of discomfort.

On reflection it will at once appear that food, on being taken into the stomach, must first of all be warmed up to the temperature of the stomach, and this at the expense of vital heat. To raise a half pint of milk thirty or forty degrees involves the waste of considerable animal heat. This in a healthy person with vigorous digestion may not only be disregarded, but may be agreeable in its effects; but it is far otherwise with him whose digestive organs, under any of the depressing influences productive of nervous exhaustion, are taxed to their utmost to furnish fresh supplies of enriched blood to the feeble nervous centres. In these cases, milk at ordinary temperatures will be felt as a cold, foreign body long after it is swallowed, and its ingestion will probably be followed by acidity and headache. It is manifestly far more economical of vital force, in these cases, to heat the food upon the kitchen range, rather than in the patient's stomach.

These remarks are especially applicable to the use of food by such persons in cold weather. In summer, when the temperature of the atmosphere and surrounding objects approximates that of the human body, drinks may be generally taken without being first artificially heated. On the return of cold weather the stomach again becomes conscious of the additional duty imposed upon it, and artificial heating again becomes necessary.

Much has been said of the value of external heat as a vital stimulant. Few, however, seem rightly to appreciate the value of heat introduced into the system as a vital restorative. No more acceptable mode of accomplishing this can be devised than the drinking of hot milk. Milk heated to much above 100° F. loses for the time a degree of its sweetness and its density. No one who, fatigued by over-exertion of body or mind, has ever experienced the reviving influence of a tumbler of this beverage, heated as hot as it can be sipped, will willingly forego a resort to it because of its having been rendered somewhat less acceptable to the palate. The promptness with which its cordial influence is felt is indeed surprising. Some portion of it seems to be digested and appropriated almost immediately; and many who now fancy they need alcoholic stimulants when exhausted by fatigue, find in this simple draught an equivalent that shall be abundantly satisfying, and far more

during its effects. * * * * * The following statement is a gratifying confirmation of the value of these suggestions:— A lady, whose nervous system had been severely overtaxed by the supervision of a large school for girls, and whose digestion had become seriously impaired, went to Europe for her health. She eventually consulted Sir Thomas K. Chambers, and in answer to his inquiries stated that she had made repeated attempts to take milk of ordinary temperature as an article of food, but it had never been tolerated. At the suggestion of Dr. Chambers she began to drink it after being heated, in the same quantities as before. This proved the turning point in her case. The heated milk was well borne, and her convalescence dated from that time.

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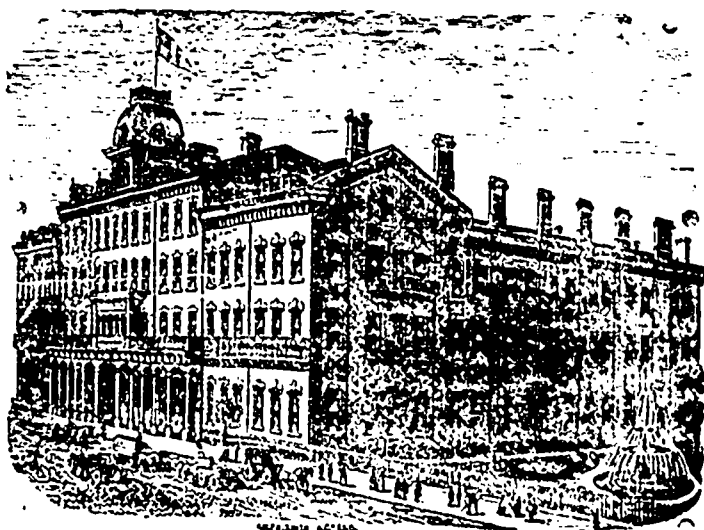


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