THE INFANTS' FOODS IN THE MARKET.

MOST OF THEM NOT SUITABLE, BUT INJURIOUS TO YOUNG INFANTS.

IN the last number of MAN was a brief notice of some analyses of infants foods, with a promise to give this month something further in relation to them. Regarding many of these foods with suspicion, I, last December, urged upon the Department here the desirability of having a number of them examined and analysed by the public analysts. This was accordingly done, and, though I was prepared to find some of them unsuitable as food for the young, the result of the analyses has been somewhat surprising, on the whole. It is not that the foods are adulterated,—that is not shown, but the contrary, but that for the most part they are not at all proper food for infants. It is to be feared that they are regarded by the proprietor in a similar way to that which many regard "patent medicines"; as substances calculated, doubtless, not to do harm; thrown upon the market and freely advertised with the view of making money out of them,—depending for sales on puffing rather than on any virtues possessed by the foods. But, like patent medicines, they often do a vast amount of harm—of vital injury, at the most susceptible period of life, the infantile.

This question of infants' food is a very serious one. On the food depends largely the life of the child. The public should take warning and be on their guard.

As before stated, many of these foods, as reported by the public analysts, contain a large proportion of starch, in many cases "unbroken," which is stated by the best authorities to be absolutely indigestible in the infant stomach during the first few months of its life; and it is not only indigestible, but, therefore, innutritious and irritating, and gives rise to intestinal derangement.

Nestle's Milk Food, for example: One analyst reports a sample of this examined by him, as containing only 2·8 per cent. of fat; not a sufficiently large proportion for an infant's food,—no greater proportion, even in this solid state, than poor milk. Microscopical examination showed a "well baked food with a small proportion of wheat starch, unbroken." Another analyst reported a sample as containing 3·5 per cent of fat (less than good cow's milk), with 55 per cent of insoluble starchy matter." Microscopical examination revealed "wheat starch." A third analyst found a sample to contain 2·90 per cent. of fat and 48·5 per cent. of "cellulose, starch and insoluble albumenoids," with 32·42 per cent.—nearly one-third—of sugared matter. The cellulose would be much more irritating than the starch, and quite indigestible and innutritious in any human stomach, or about as much so as paper or cotton fibre. Infant poison. A fourth analyst found 4·5 per cent. of fat; 38 per cent. of dextrine and 32 per cent. of starch. These two latter ingredients might be regarded as 60 per cent. of starch with less than half of it (28 per cent. of the total) converted by heat into dextrine. There was in this sample 3·7 per cent. of milk sugar and 16·5 per cent. of common cane sugar. In a fifth sample, examined by another or fifth analyst, there was 69 per cent. of starch, with 7·5 per cent. of dextrine (formed from starch by long boiling with water). There was in this sample 3.7 per cent. of fat.

One might reasonably wonder why this is called "Milk" food. Milk contains no starch whatever, nor starchy matter of any kind. Is it to deceive the public? And at the cost of infantile life?

Let us see what is reported by the public analysts of another "popular" food for infants,—"Ridge's:" The first report I take up reads,—under microscopical examination,—"Shows a large proportion of wheat flour partially cooked." This should be enough. The sample contained but a small proportion it would seem of converted or cooked sugar and starch, in the form of sucrose, lactose and dextrine. Another sample from another analyst contained 44·5 per cent. of insoluble starch. Microscopical examination showed "mixed cereals." From a third analyst another sample gave over 80 per cent. of starch and cellulose, the latter, as I have stated, about as digestible and nutritious as paper or cotton rags. A small amount of starch had been converted into dextrine, making 3·5 per cent. of this substance, which is more digestible than starch. There was less than 5 per cent. of sugared matter and less than