

The public must necessarily judge food very largely by the eye. Green coloured apples are difficult to sell, even when of fine quality, but a bright red apple will usually fetch a good price because it looks superior, even though the actual flavour may be but little better than that of a turnip. Almonds in the shell are bleached with sulphur fumes to make the shells pale, as if the pale colour of the shell were an indication of high quality of kernel. The reverse is more likely to be true. Rice, in order to make it attractive, has to be coated with glucose and powdered talc by which it gets a fine gloss. Pearl barley is also sometimes faced with talc. Butter must be yellow to please the purchaser, and is therefore frequently coloured with a yellow dye. But the public demands wheat flour in as white a form as possible and hence it has often been bleached to remove its natural yellow tint.

Common sense is not very conspicuous in some of these demands of the public, but every one must sympathize with the desire to have all food products of clean appearance and handled and offered for sale in a careful and cleanly manner. We must not attempt to say, however, just what degree of refinement in any food product is really the most wholesome. Some serious mistakes have been made and unnecessary expense has been incurred in supposed purification. Desirable ingredients of foods have sometimes been lost in this way, and more or less objectionable chemicals have been added to the food without any corresponding advantage to the consumer.

The inevitable reaction against too much artificiality in foods set in a few years ago, and has gone to extremes in some cases. But the majority of our people have scarcely yet been sufficiently influenced by it. The bogies of "adulteration," "substitution," "bleaching," and "falsification" are often heard of, and any demagogue can catch the public ear when he discusses such subjects almost as readily as when he speaks of "profiteering"; that is to say, profits made by other individuals than himself. So-called "purification" has certainly been seriously overdone, and a return to coarser and more natural forms of food is desirable for several reasons. We need not, however, become fanatical on the subject. Foods in Canada are very pure and carefully prepared, and the writer would not endorse the "back-to-nature" cry on the ground that our foods are as a rule in the least degree unwholesome. The greater part of what has been said about over-refinement and adulteration of foods is false; yet the adverse criticisms of modern products cannot be entirely dismissed. Some of them have a foundation in fact. We are getting a little too far from nature, and the modern saying, "A salad a day keeps the doctor away," is timely if not quite true. This saying, by the way, varies in form, and the word "apple", "orange", "banana", or "carrot" might be substituted for "salad". The latter, however, is a particularly good word in this connection, because a salad includes various uncooked fruits and vegetables. We all require a certain amount of natural, raw food and the best health cannot long be maintained, much less can satisfactory growth be secured, when we are fed entirely on a limited diet, almost free from coarse and uncooked products.

The main nutritive requirements of the human body are, as has long been known, protein, carbohydrates and fat, but in addition to these, small quantities of various mineral and other constituents must also be taken. Only recently it has been recognized that certain bodies (to which the name "vitamines" has been given) which are absolutely essential to growth and health, are present in very varied proportions in different foods. Further, it is generally recognized that, for mechanical reasons, a certain amount of coarse material must be eaten in order to aid assimilation, and to prevent constipation which is so common a complaint, especially among people of sedentary habits. The proper development of the teeth and jaws, and particularly of the palate, in growing children undoubtedly depends not only on obtaining a sufficient quantity of mineral matter in the food, but also on the proper exercise of the muscles in mastication. To a certain extent this need for activity is perceived by young people, whose desire to chew gum is not altogether as illogical and absurd as