

MONDAY AFTERNOON LECTURES. Nos. 7 & 8.

THE CHEMISTRY OF FOOD.

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(Two Lectures delivered Feb. 23rd, and March 2nd, 1891.)

He, indeed, would be an unreflecting and unthankful individual who would not be willing to admit that the higher civilization of later times has given us great and innumerable blessings. We might, perchance, find such an one among those who have grown up amid the comforts and luxuries of wealthy modern life, an unconscious recipient of good things and ignorant of the life of our forefathers; or among those who, from long-continued poverty or degradation, can hardly be said to enjoy those blessings. To recount the triumphs of science and enterprise—not to speak of other and not less important factors of our civilization—during the last fifty years would be a more than Herculean task. Triumphs of the Natural and Applied Sciences—great triumphs in the art of healing and no less great in electricity, and mechanics, and agriculture, and a host of sister sciences—triumphs that have added to our comforts and have alleviated our sufferings, attend and surround us on every side.

But yet, while confessing all this with ready lips, a moment's serious reflection tells us that there is scarcely a blessing without its concomitant evil—an evil too often the result of the abuse of the blessing. Evils whose origins may easily be traced to the wrong or excessive use of things in themselves good and wholesome, pervade all ranks of society. It is only when we view exclusively this side of the picture—as too many of us occasionally do—that we are apt to conclude that our boasting of the achievements of the nineteenth century and the so-called betterment of the race, is worse than vain.

But what has all this to do with the subject under discussion—the chemistry of food? A little careful thought may show us the applicability of these remarks as an introduction to a lecture on such an important matter as food; for although my title might be considered, strictly speaking, to confine me to the composition of foods, I propose to incorporate with the chemistry somewhat of the physiology of food.