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FAT IN THE ANIMAL BODY, ITS FUNCTIONS AND ORIGIN.

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This evening I would invite your attention for a few moments to the discussion of a subject that lies on the borderland between chemistry and physiology. We are to consider the nature of fat as revealed by chemistry, its origin and the role that it plays in the animal economy.

What does the word fat convey to your mind? Have you ever thoughtfully asked yourself what fat really is? Ladies handle it every day, men are very often annoyed at the stains it leaves on their clothing as evident proofs of their carelessness, and yet very few enquire into the very nature of that most common substance.

If I were to ask you, what is fat? Some undoubtedly would answer me with Webster that fat is "an oily substance," and if I were to question you further and ask what is an oil, you would again follow Webster and inform me that "an oil is an unctuous substance expressed or drawn from various animal or vegetable substances." Of course, I would have to be satisfied with this definition, which is the only one given in the dictionary.

A true student, anxious to understand the very nature of the substance he has to deal with, is, however, not satisfied with such an ambiguous empty definition. I am positive that the members of this Club who are always so active in scrutinizing nature, are not satisfied with such a hazy knowledge. Let us, therefore, try to elucidate the question of the nature of fat.

To a chemist a fat is a glyceride of a fatty acid. In the formation of a fat two things therefore are necessary, namely, glycerine and a fatty acid. The fatty acids are a series of acids