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Criticism and News.**

Communications solicited on all Medical and Scientific subjects, and also Reports of Cases occurring in practice. Advertisements inserted on the most liberal terms. All Letters and Communications to be addressed to the "Editor Canada Lancet, Toronto."

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THE MILK DIET.

For a long time past the belief has been propagated by the medical profession that milk is a food suitable for all ages and conditions of man. But it is quite possible to overdo even a good thing and that is just what we believe has happened in regard to milk as a diet. To make this statement good requires but little reflection, and less scientific information. If for no other reason, individual idiosyncracies will always stand in the way of any attempt at setting up a uniform diet. That this has been the tendency for a generation all must admit. Milk has been persistently extolled and held up to all, whether in sickness or health, as the food of foods. The young, the middle aged and the old are recommended to use it. When sickness overtakes us the injunction becomes imperative, and now we must partake of it, and live on it, whether we have been able to do so before or not. A milk diet is all the rage—the fashionable diet, and even in the calm domain of medicine fashion is not wanting in power and contagiousness.

In making these remarks it is not intended to disparage milk as an article of diet, but rather to ascertain its proper place as food. A thing good in a general sense, may be bad in a particular sense. To this rule, milk is not an exception to the extent that present opinions and practices would lead us to think.

Nature designs milk as the first aliment for the

young. Its constituent elements are exactly suited to the wants of the organism. For a time these conditions work out this design. Soon a change comes over the infant organism, usually ushered in by the process of dentition. Slowly but surely, the child voluntarily and instinctively relinquishes its favorite food. Gradually too, nature's generous fountain dries up, and the child is left to draw on other forms of food allotted to man's use. This looks very much like a hint from nature not to use milk after the period of complete dentition. From these facts we learn at least two things. First, that the infant organism is *peculiarly* adapted to the assimilation of milk. Secondly, that this peculiar adaptation is in a large measure diminished during and after the period of dentition. It follows, as a natural consequence, that adults have a smaller capacity than children for the assimilation of a milk diet. We know well, that many adults are unable to digest milk in any form. Some young children, even, are unable to do so. Most persons can dispose of a moderate quantity, but this affords no proof of adaptability.

These remarks are also supported by evidence taken directly from nature herself, by the common people. The cheese-maker never searches for the true ferment of milk in the stomach of the bullock. He always goes direct to the stomach of the calf, where he knows he will find it in greatest abundance. Here, we have a scientific explanation of facts, known from observation and experience. It is not assuming too much to say, that this gastric ferment, in the young, is assisted in the work of assimilation by the other secretions of the alimentary tract. Notwithstanding these unquestioned advantages, there are times in the history of the young, in severe cholera infantum, for example, where the continuance of milk is certain death. In drawing our comparisons, we should also bear in mind, the great difference between human and cow's milk. The former containing less casein coagulates much less firmly, and altogether is more easily digested. Nevertheless, experience has proved that children may do very well on cow's milk, with proper care and attention.

If our points are well taken, caution would seem to be suggested in recommending the use of milk to adults, even in a state of health. This is especially true of sweet or uncoagulated milk. The artificial coagulation of cow's milk is much