

LIFE OF AN OYSTER.—But the life of a shell-fish is not one of unvarying rest. Observe the phases of an individual oyster from the moment of its earliest embryo life, independent of maternal ties, to the consummation of its destiny, when the knife of fate shall sever its muscular cords and doom it to entombment in a living sepulchre. How starts it forth into the world of waters? Not, as unenlightened people believe, in the shape of a minute, bivalved, protected, grave, fixed, and steady oysterling. No; it enters upon its career all life and motion, flitting about in the sea as gayly and lightly as a butterfly or a swallow skims through the air. Its first appearance is as a microscopic oyster cherub, with wing-like lobes flanking a mouth and shoulders, unumbered with inferior crural prolongations. It passes through a joyous and vivacious juvenility, skipping up and down as if in mockery of its heavy and immovable parents. It voyages from oyster-bed to oyster-bed, and if in luck so as to escape the watchful voracity of the thousand enemies that lie in wait or prow about to prey upon youth and inexperience, at length, having sowed its wild oats, settles down into a steady, solid, domestic oyster. It becomes the parent of fresh broods of oyster cherubs. As such it would live and die, leaving its shell, thickened through old age, to serve as its monument throughout all time—a contribution towards the construction of a fresh geological epoch, and a new layer of the earth's crust—were it not for the gluttony of man, who, rending this sober citizen of the sea from his native bed, carries him unresisting to busy cities, and the hum of crowds. If a handsome, well-shaped and well-flavored oyster, he is introduced to the palaces of the rich and noble, like a wit, or a philosopher, or a poet, to give additional relish to their sumptuous feasts; if a sturdy, thick-backed, strong-tasted individual, fate consigns him to the capacious tub of the street fishmonger, from whence, dosed with course black pepper and pungent vinegar, embalmed partly after the fashion of an Egyptian King, he is transferred to the hungry stomach of a costermonger, or becomes the luxurious repast of a successful pickpocket.—*Westminster Review*.

SPONTANEOUS FERMENTATION.—Dough, as it contains both gluten and sugar, when moistened, is capable of fermentation without adding another substance. If simple flour and water be mixed and set aside in a warm place, after the lapse of several hours it will exhibit symptoms of internal chemical action, becoming sour from the formation of lactic acid, while minute bubbles appear, which are owing to a gas set free within the dough. These changes are irregular and uncertain, according to the proportion and condition of the constituents of the flour. They also proceed with greater or less rapidity at the surface or in the interior, according as the parts are exposed to the cooling and oxidating influence of the air. Bread baked from such dough, is sour, heavy, and altogether bad. Yet the true vinous fermentation may be spontaneously established in the dough by taking measures to quicken the action. If a small portion of flour and water be thus mixed to the consistency of batter, (its half fluid state being favorable to a rapid chemical change) and the mixture be placed in a jar or pitcher, and set in a vessel of water kept at a temperature from 100 to 110 degrees, in the course of five or six hours decomposition will have set in with a copious production of gas bubbles, which may be seen by the appearance of the batter when stirred. If this is mixed and kneaded with a large mass of dough, moulded into loaves and set aside for an hour or two in a warm place, the dough will swell or "rise" to a much larger bulk; and, when baked, will yield a light, spongy bread. A little salt is usually added at first, which promotes the fermentation, and hence bread raised in this manner is called "self raised bread." Milk is often used for mixing the flour, instead of water; the product is then called "milk emptyings bread."—*Yeomans*.