

NOTE ON THE FOOD VALUE OF CERTAIN MUSHROOMS

By FRANK T. SHUTT.

In the minds of most of us, no doubt, mushrooms are regarded rather as a delicacy than as an article of food. Their peculiarly agreeable and somewhat piquant flavour when properly prepared and carefully cooked has established for many species of edible fungi a world-wide reputation for the making of ragouts, sauces, and as "flavourers" generally; but, speaking broadly, most have failed to recognise their highly nutritious character. Their price in city markets is undoubtedly out of all proportion to their value as food, but we must conclude that the well-nigh general neglect to gather and use them in districts where they occur in abundance, is due chiefly to ignorance of their nature from the standpoint we are now considering them.*

Analysis shows them to be characterized by a comparatively speaking large percentage of nitrogenous matter (crude protein), a considerable proportion of which exists in the form of true protein or albuminoids. The function of this latter class of constituents of foods is to repair the daily waste of the body and build up its tissues, and hence the proteids are commonly known as flesh-formers, and are consequently to be regarded as the most important of the nutrients, whether in animal or vegetable foods.

Last autumn, in order to obtain data that might be of interest in this connection, a partial analysis was made of certain species that are found in abundance on the lawn of the Experimental Farm, Ottawa. These comprised the Fairy-ring Champignon (*Marasmius oreades*), the Grey Coprinus or true Inkcap (*Coprinus atramentarius*), and the Shaggy Coprinus or Horse tail Mushroom (*Coprinus comatus*), commonly known as "Umbrellas". The results are as follows :—

*There are, we know, many persons who have a dread of all fungi, for fear of being poisoned, and it is only natural that they should hesitate to avail themselves of these nutritious delicacies.