

NEWS OF LIL.

A LITTLE bird, a little love,
Flew down to me from skies above,
And lighting on my window-sill,
A sweet surprise, it sang of Lil.

The crimson feathers round its throat
Were stirred with every thrilling note
Of carol music soft and clear :
A sight to see, a song to hear.

It came but once and flew away ;
But now I know, from day to day,
That we are close, though far apart—
Close to each other, close at heart.

A little bird, a little love,
Came flying down from skies above,
And perching on my window-sill,
It tapped the pane with news of Lil.

J. R. EASTWOOD.

HOW TO MAKE TEMPTING FOOD FOR INVALIDS.



THE sick-room—what echoes does not the very name awaken in the memories of the past! There are few moments in our lives' history more solemn than those when we have watched by the bedside of one we love, whose life is trembling in the balance, and whose soul and body seem held together by so slight a thread

that a breath of wind would part them. What vows have we not vowed, what good resolutions have we not formed, and how chastened have our minds been in these our hours of agony! for of very truth "adversity doth best discover virtue."

Then—the doctor's visit. With what an anxious look will the wife, wearied with watching, try and read his eyes as he feels the pulse of the languid patient! what a rush of joy fills her heart as she sees the doctor smile! for hope is brightest when it dawns from fears. The crisis is past, the patient is pronounced much better, and is ordered some good strong beef-tea. With burning eyes and bursting heart the thankful wife now turns away to give the necessary orders, not forgetful, let us trust, of her vows vowed, of her resolutions made, or of the Great Physician who alone can cause the blind to see and the lame to walk.

Like a calm sea to the tempest-tost, like a draught of water after parching thirst, like a bed of down to the wearied traveller, do these sweet hours of convalescence follow after those weary ones of watching, when hope deferred made the heart sick—

"Oh! these were hours, when thrilling joy repaid
A long, long course of darkness, doubts, and fears."

What pleasure, too, to watch the patient take his first cup of beef-tea or his first chop with evident enjoyment, and to see the faint tinge of colour return to the pale cheeks, foretelling of returning health and strength, as surely as the first blush of dawn upon the eastern mountain-tops foretells the coming day!

Again, too, the refreshment taken, the first long sound sleep, nature's great restorer, how different to watch now, to when the restless patient tossed and turned and muttered, and seemed to suffer more than when awake! There is something very beautiful in a calm and tranquil sleep—

"An infant when it gazes on the light,
A child the moment when it drains the breast,
* * * * *

Feel rapture, but not such true joy are reaping
As they who watch o'er what they love while sleeping.

"For there it lies, so tranquil, so beloved,
All that it hath of life with us is living,
So gentle, stirless, helpless, and unmoved,
And all unconscious of the joy 'tis giving."

But let us leave the convalescent chamber with the watcher and the watched, and descend to the kitchen, and see what we there can do to help on the recovery so happily going on above.

First let us take that probably most valuable of all invalid's preparations—viz., beef-tea. The quickest and best method of preparing good beef-tea is as follows:—Take a pound of good lean gravy beef, cut it up into little pieces, pour over them a pint of *cold* water, and add a little salt. Then take a fork and squeeze these pieces in every direction, in order, as much as possible, to extract the juices out of the meat. Next place it all—*i.e.*, both water and meat—in an enamelled saucepan, and put it by the *side* of the fire, not on the fire, and gradually heat it, taking the greatest care that it does not boil. Having continued this process for about an hour and a half or two hours, during the last half-hour keeping the beef-tea hot without even simmering, strain the whole off through a strainer, pressing the meat again with a spoon, so as to squeeze as much as possible all the goodness out of it. Then remove all the fat. This can be done by carefully skimming it, or, if time will allow, by letting it get cold, when the fat will harden on the top. Now to my mind good beef-tea is one of the nicest things we

can take when ill, but sick persons often tire of it, and loathe it. When this is the case, very often by adding a little sherry, and allowing it to get cold (when if properly made it will be a jelly), patients will take it in this form when they could not in the liquid state.

Veal-broth and mutton-broth are made on exactly the same principle as beef-tea, of course substituting either veal or mutton for the beef, and taking equal care to remove all the fat, and not to let the liquor boil.

Another method of making beef-tea very simply in a way in which no careful watching is required, is to cut up a pound of gravy beef as before, and simply put it with a pint of water into a stone jar, and place the jar in the oven; if the oven is not too hot—*i.e.*, not hot enough to absolutely make the liquid boil in the jar—this way will be found to be very good. Or the jar may be tied over with a cloth, and placed in a large saucepan of hot water on the fire, the water in the saucepan to be kept gently simmering.

Very often young children, and even babies, are ordered beef-tea. Now all mothers know the difficulty at times of inducing sick children to take anything, and beef-tea by no means recommends itself to a child's appetite. Forcing food down a child's throat against its will should never be resorted to, save as a last resource, and at the doctor's order. There are many means, however, whereby little children can be persuaded to take things, which sensible mothers probably know of. In the case of beef-tea an admirable plan is, instead of using salt, use a little sugar, and make the beef-tea sweet. Grown-up persons would probably consider such a mixture nasty to a degree, not so however the child. Young children have a natural taste for sweet things, and a natural dislike to salt.

In very early life the food that nature has supplied for children is sweet. Salt, on the other hand, is decidedly an acquired taste. Our dear old friend, Robinson Crusoe, had considerable difficulty in inducing his man Friday to eat salt; and when he did, it was only in very small quantities.

The next dish of importance for consideration is arrowroot. First I would strongly recommend the Bermuda arrowroot, and not the St. Vincent; the latter is cheaper, but very inferior in quality. Bad arrowroot is absolutely unwholesome, and a good deal of the bad arrowroot, too bad in fact to be sold as arrowroot at all, is, I fear, used to mix with and adulterate corn-flour.

The first point to ascertain is whether the patient will take the arrowroot thick or thin; some persons have strong prejudices on this point, and thick arrowroot will require double the quantity of thin. Arrowroot is also made with water and milk, but the method is the same for both. Take a spoonful or two of cold water or milk, as the case may be, and mix in the powdered arrowroot in the cup or basin, and stir it up thoroughly; then pour the boiling water or milk slowly on to it, keeping it stirred the whole time. A little sugar may be added, and of course, when allowable, a little wine or brandy is a great improvement.

When made with milk, some grated nutmeg on the top also vastly improves the compound both in flavour and appearance.

A great deal of the prepared cocoa sold is simply cocoa and arrowroot mixed, consequently when the boiling water is poured on, the arrowroot causes the cocoa to look thick and nourishing. If you want to make a good cup of chocolate out of cake chocolate, all you have to do is to mix a little arrowroot in the cup with it, and the result will be that the chocolate will appear to be ten times as strong as it would otherwise do.

With regard to chicken-broth, that fashionable invalid's preparation many years ago, we ought to say a few words, and these few will be unfavourable. There is, comparatively speaking, but little nourishment in it. In any case, however, should you make any, bear in mind that it is the bones and not the flesh that make the broth; so instead of wasting the whole towl over the broth, cut off the meat, which can be made into nice rissoles or mince, and use the bones only for the broth.

Now minced mutton or chicken is often recommended for invalids, as being easily digested; but pray remember that invalid mince is very different from the ordinary mince of every-day life. In the first place, we all know that in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred mince is made from meat that has been cooked before. Now mince so made, though very nice and wholesome for persons and children in ordinary health, yet is by no means so easy of digestion—*i.e.*, the remains of a leg of mutton minced the second day would be less digestible than the cut off the joint on the first day, the warming-up process having naturally a tendency to harden the meat.

To make nice mince for an invalid, the meat must be minced raw. It must then be sprinkled with a little salt, moistened with a little good broth, and warmed slowly with the greatest care, as should the broth boil for one second, the mince will be rendered tough and indigestible. It is obvious that made this way it differs enormously from the ordinary mince. A very few minutes are sufficient, if the meat has been minced fine, to cook it—in fact, as soon as it is hot it is done.

Mince made in this manner is exceedingly nutritious, and it will often be found that weak digestions can take this when they can take nothing else.

Our two next preparations will be barley-water and toast-and-water. Two very simple things, it will probably be thought, and very unnecessary to describe. I will describe them, however, first as they generally are, and next as they ought to be.

How very often do you find the barley-water dirty! For instance, when you drink it out of a tumbler, you come to some black-looking stuff at the bottom. Again, how often do you find the toast-and-water thick, instead of bright! and far less appetising is it when it is so. Now both these defects arise from thoughtlessness or want of care.

First, then, barley-water. Take a couple of ounces of pearl barley and wash it thoroughly, then place it in

some boiling water, and boil it for about ten minutes. This has the effect of dissolving the outside of the barley. Strain it off, put it into a couple of quarts of fresh boiling water, and let it boil gently till it has nearly half boiled away. Then strain off the liquor, and flavour it with a little sugar and lemon-juice, putting in a small piece of peel. Barley-water is often made too thick. Patients, especially feverish ones, want something to drink. By adding water to it, it can, of course, be made as thin as wished. Barley-water should be kept in a jug, with a spoon in it, and stirred up each time before it is poured out, and only the quantity required poured out, as it settles and does not look nice—milky at the bottom and watery at the top.

Next, toast-and-water. First, "how not to do it." You will find a servant generally cut off a knobby piece of crust, stick a toasting-fork into it, and toast it very black, put this in a jug, and pour boiling water over it, and this great hunk of bread will be floating at the top. This toast-and-water will be poor, muddy-looking, and have a slightly floury taste. The proper method is to cut the bread *thin*, and toast both sides *thoroughly*, and also have plenty of it. Let the bread be toasted through—*i.e.*, so as to be thoroughly dried up. Then pour the boiling water on it, and, if liked, add a small piece of lemon-peel. Let this be carefully drained off, so that no crumbs remain in the fluid after it has got cold; and this toast-and-water, which will look bright like sherry, will be a welcome draught to the feverish invalid.

To make bread-and-milk, you must cut the bread up into small square pieces, and pour boiling milk on them. There are a good many persons who do not fancy bread-and-milk, who yet will take toast-and-milk. To prepare the latter you must pour the boiling milk over small pieces of toast similar to those that would be handed round with pea-soup.

In making bread-and-milk for infants, it is usually recommended to pour boiling water on the bread, then drain it off, and add the milk, as the boiling water renders the bread softer; and as medical men generally recommend a little water to be mixed with the milk for very young children, it will not be weaker. It is not for me to put up my opinion against the medical profession, but in London I would recommend mothers to give their children the milk pure when they have to buy it.

Another very refreshing drink for invalids, especially in hot weather, is lemonade. This is too often made by simply squeezing a lemon into a tumbler, picking the pips out with a spoon, and then adding sugar and cold water. The best method of making lemonade is to peel the lemons, or otherwise the lemonade will be

bitter; cut them into slices, taking away the pips, and then pouring boiling water on the slices, adding, of course, sufficient sugar to sweeten. This, after being well stirred, and the pulp pressed with a spoon, must be carefully strained through a piece of fine muslin, and allowed to get cold. When cold, a piece of ice is a great improvement. Cold, weak lemonade made this way, not too sweet, is one of the most refreshing drinks possible for hot weather; and in cases where there is a tendency to take fluids too often, a tendency we fear rather of the age in which we live, a large jug of lemonade, made in the manner we have described, will often prove a harmless substitute for a glass of sherry, or a little drop of cold brandy-and-water, or a glass of beer, as the case may be.

Gruel is a compound which I should despair of making palatable; nevertheless, fortunately, all palates are not alike. A table-spoonful of groats—or, as I believe they are pronounced, grits—must be mixed in a little cold water, and worked smooth with a spoon. About a pint of boiling water must then be poured on them, and the whole quantity boiled gently and stirred over a clear fire for about a quarter of an hour. Gruel can, of course, be made with milk, or flavoured in a variety of ways. For a bad cold, a table-spoonful of treacle is sometimes serviceable, or a little sweet spirit of nitre, or a table-spoonful of rum—some sugar being of course added.

As a rule, in cooking for *real* invalids, the aim should be nourishment combined with the greatest simplicity of flavour. There are however, of course, many cases where the palate has to be tickled, while at the same time the digestion has to be consulted. In these cases the cook's art is often put to the test. In many cases of diseases that may be termed wasting, really rich but, at the same time, light dishes are requisite. We would instance sweet-breads, stewed oysters, calves' brains, lambs' tails, &c.; but to enter into an elaborate account of the proper method of preparing such delicacies would be out of place in an article on invalid food which is of necessity cursory.

Objections have, however, oftentimes been made to cookery as an art, when the object in view has been simply to stir up the jaded appetite in the over-fed, whose proper treatment would be in accordance with the famous advice of Abernethy to the dyspeptic alderman—*viz.*, "Live on a shilling a day, and earn it." When, however, our object is to alleviate the condition of those who suffer from disease, and who loathe food unless brought to them in a palatable form, even those who lead lives that may be termed severely simple will admit, skill in the preparation of food may at times vie with, and even excel, skill in the preparation of drugs.

