

A Treatise on Bread and Bread-Making: And Bread-Making (American Antiquarian Cookbook Collection)

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PREFACE.

THERE are probably few people in civilized life, who—were the question put to them directly—would not say, that they consider bread *one* of the most, if not the most important article of diet which enters into the food of man. And yet there is, in reality, almost a total and universal carelessness about the character of bread. Thousands in civic life will, for years, and perhaps as long as they live, eat the most miserable trash that can be imagined, in the form of bread, and never seem to think that they can possibly have anything better, nor even that it is an evil to eat such vile stuff as they do. And if there is occasionally an individual who is troubled with some convictions that his bread is not quite what it should be, he knows not how to remedy the difficulty; for it is a serious truth, that, although nearly every human being in civilized life eats bread of some kind or other, yet scarcely any one has sufficient knowledge of the true principles and processes concerned in bread-making, and of the actual causes of the bad qualities of bread, to know how, with any degree of certainty, to avoid bad and secure good bread.

I have thought, therefore, that I could hardly do society a better service, than to publish the following treatise on a subject which, whether people are aware of it or not, is, in reality, of very great importance to the health and comfort of every one.

It has been prepared for the press with more haste, under more embarrassments from other engagements, and with less severity of revision, than I could wish. Yet, whatever may be its defects of arrangement, method or style, I have taken care to have the principles correct, and the instructions such as, if attended to, will enable every one who is heartily devoted to the object, to make good bread.

I must, however, acknowledge, that I have very little expectation that proper attention will be paid to this subject, so long as the dietetic habits of society continue to be what they are. While the various preparations of animal food constitute so important a portion of human aliment, the quality of bread will be greatly disregarded and neglected, and people will continue almost universally to be cursed with poor bread.

Nevertheless, I trust some good will be done by the little work I now send out; and I am not without hope, that it will be the means of a considerable improvement in the quality of bread, and, as a natural and necessary consequence, an improvement in the health and happiness of those who consume it.

That it may prove thus beneficial to my fellow creatures in a high degree, is my hearty and fervent desire.

S. GRAHAM.

NORTHAMPTON, APRIL 12, 1837.

TREATISE ON BREAD.

HISTORY OF BREAD.

Primitive food of man. Bruising and grinding grain. Baking. Invention of leavened bread. Bread among the Greeks and Romans—among the Hebrews. Simplicity of the bread now used in many

countries.

IN the English version of the sacred scriptures, the term Bread is frequently used to signify vegetable food in general. Thus in Gen. iii, 19, the Lord says to Adam—"In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread (or food) till thou return to the ground." See also Gen. xviii, 5, and xxviii, 20, and Ex. ii, 20.

The most extended sense of the word, however, according to general usage, comprehends all farinaceous vegetable substances which enter into the diet of man; such as the farinaceous seeds or grain, nuts, fruit, roots, &c. And in this extended sense, Bread, in some form or other, has been the principal article in the diet of mankind, from the earliest generations of the human race, to the present time; except among the few, small and scattered tribes, which have, perhaps, ever since the days of Noah, in different parts of the earth, subsisted mainly on animal food.

It is nearly certain that the primitive inhabitants of the earth, ate their food with very little, if any artificial preparation.

The various fruits, nuts, seeds, roots, and other vegetable substances on which they fed, were eaten by them in their natural state, with no other grinding than that which was done by the teeth.

As the human family increased, and population became more dense and extended, and providential measures more necessary, the condition and circumstances of society gradually led to the invention and adoption of the simple, and, at first, rude arts of domestic life. Among these, was that of bruising the harder articles of their food, such as nuts and seeds, or grain, on flat stones, selected and kept for the purpose. By constant use, these stones in time became hollowed out; and being thereby rendered more convenient, men at length began to form mortars and pestles from stones; and probably the next step was the construction of the rude kind of hand-mills, which continued in use for many centuries; and indeed, which, with the stone mortars, have, throughout all ages and in almost every portion of the earth, been used in the ruder states of society.

When men became acquainted with the use of fire, they probably often parched their corn or grain before they pounded it; and afterwards, they learned to mix it with water into the consistency of dough, and to bake this, in an unleavened or unfermented state, on flat stones before the fire, or in the hot ashes or hot earth, or in the rude ovens which they formed, by digging holes in the earth, into which they put heated stones, and slightly covered them with leaves or grass, and then laid in the article they wished to bake, and over this strewed some leaves, and then covered the whole with earth.* *

Graham's *Treatise on Bread and Bread-Making* includes a history of bread, discussion of various grains and which make the best breads, preparation of flour and other ingredients, the process of fermentation, how to prepare and bake bread dough, and discussion of bread varieties. The book describes Graham's preference for unadulterated flour that is free of chemical additives (used even in those early times to make bread whiter in color). He believed that firm bread made of coarsely ground whole-wheat flour was more nutritious and healthy. The treatise enthusiastically supports making bread in the home instead of buying commercial products, and the recipes were so popular that after publication, Graham was attacked by a mob of angry bakers in Boston. This edition of *Treatise on Bread and Bread-Making* was reproduced by permission from the volume in the collection of the

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