

**THE COST OF
FOOD; A
STUDY IN DIETARIES**

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The cost of food; a study in dietaries by Ellen H. Richards

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ELLEN H. RICHARDS

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PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

IN reply to the many questions asked, the author wishes to state here that because the cost of the *accustomed* food of the average family has increased since the book was written, and because the price of board in restaurant and boarding-house has increased thirty per cent or more, it does not follow that all food has so risen in value. From the great variety and abundance of food materials offered to-day the purchaser may choose sufficient and nourishing food, which need not cost more than the prices given here. But it may not be just those materials to which the palate has been accustomed. Certain foods have gone out of fashion, corn meal is used very little, although in digestibility and palatability it outranks most of the prepared cereals sold for ten times as much per pound.

The morning cream is a costly viand, but sugar is still inexpensive. Butter may be had at a very little if any advance. It will not be "gilt edge," but it will be just as wholesome and nutritious. Olive oil may be found

at the Italian shops and many other foods may be purchased of the less known dealers.

Therefore it is pretty certain that the cost of nutrition has not advanced so much as the current opinion calls for. It is true, however, that it requires time and attention and a modification of one's tastes to secure this nutrition, and this modification is the most distasteful exercise the ordinary person is called upon to undergo.

Perhaps the most instructive comparison is that of the cost of food at Valparaiso, Indiana, given on pages 128-130, of this volume, from data obtained by the author during a personal inspection in 1892. It was then \$1.40 a week and room at 25 cents. Mr. George Kennan in *McClure* for March, 1908, gives the costs at \$1.88 and fifty cents for room. This is in accord with the general trend of things. External factors, table linen, service, decoration, lights, furnishings—in short, the refinements of living have increased the cost of living, often doubling it, and just so far as these factors come into play in the serving of food they increase the cost of *board*, but not necessarily the cost of the raw material which is used.

It is advisable to add a certain amount of this cost for the sake of refined living, but there is a limit to which the efficiency of the individual is increased by this addition.

There is nothing in the discussion of costs which the author wishes to "take back," and certain conclusions

are only confirmed by seven years' experience and observation. The study enjoined on page 13 is still needed, and the question at the bottom of page 68 is still pertinent. Some recent books are listed at the end of the Bibliography.

Boston, March, 1908.

