

CHAPTER II

RETAIL FOOD PRICES

FOOD constitutes the most important part of the wage earner's budget because of its indispensability and the necessity of obtaining the maximum nourishment at a minimum cost. Active physical exertion requires a consumption of food which is considerably in excess of the requirements of persons engaged in other work, and the physical worker must maintain his bodily vigor to preserve his efficiency. Although we are told that in an approaching synthetic age we shall be able to carry a week's nourishment in a small box which will easily fit in the pocket, present conditions call for less concentration and more quantity, and the American workman gets a satisfaction from his three square meals a day which is not dulled by lack of variety or apprehension of an approaching era of tablet nourishment.

The variety and amount of food consumed by the average family is influenced by personal taste and custom, as well as by the money available for this purpose. Apparently, families live on a comparatively restricted and relatively expensive diet, for in the cities visited butchers repeatedly remarked upon the tendency of housewives to buy more expensive cuts of meat, although the cheaper cuts were equally nutritious and tasty.

METHOD OF COLLECTING FOOD PRICES

In the present study of the cost of living an effort has been made to prepare a well-balanced food budget, based largely on the less expensive foods, although a few of the more expensive items are included. Staple articles, available at all seasons of the year, form the bulk of the food allowances, but seasonable fruits and vegetables may be substituted when they are most plentiful and at the lowest price.

Price quotations were secured for forty items and were obtained for a quality which was ordinarily purchased by