

Food and Physical Culture.

Man is the noblest growth our realms supply,
And souls are ripened in our northern sky.—Mrs Barbauld.

I have noticed that most writers of books for young men have a good deal to say about diet and regimen, and physical culture, and all that sort of thing. Those knowing the least of those important subjects invariably being the most elaborate and specific in their treatment of them. There have been some awful sins committed in this business. All the spare curses I accumulate I dedicate to those white livered, hatchet faced, thin blooded scrawny reformers, who prescribe saw-dust puddings and plank beds, and brief sleep, and early walks and short commons for the rising generation. I despise them; and if there is a being who always touches the profoundest depths of my sympathy, it is a young man who has become a victim of their notions.

It is a hard sight to see a young man with the pluck all taken out of him by a meagre diet, his whole nature starved, degenerated, emasculated. I propose to apply a little common sense to this business.

If I have a likely Durham steer, which I wish to have grown into the full development of his breed, I keep him on something more than a limited quantity of bog hay. I do not stir him up with a pitchfork before he has his nap out, and insist on his being driven ten miles before he has anything to eat. I do not take pains to give him the meanest bed I can find for him. I know perfectly well that, that animal will not grow up strong and sound, fat and full, the pride of the farm and the stall, unless I give him an abundance of the best food, a clean and comfortable place to sleep in and just as long naps as he sees fit to take.

The horse, which in its organization more nearly approaches man than the steer, is still more sensitive to the influence of generous living. How much pluck and spirit will a horse get out of a ton of rye straw.

The truth is, that a good and abundant diet is not only essential to the highest physical health and development of man but it modifies very importantly the development and manifestation of the soul.

A man cannot acquire courage by feeding on theories and milk. An Englishman cannot fight without beef in his belly, and no more can any of us. It may be objected to this that we do not wish for a great animal development in man. I say we do. I declare that the more perfect a man can make his animal nature the better. The animal nature is the associate home servant of the soul. If it be not well developed in all its organs and in all its functions it will neither give a generous entertainment to the spiritual thing that dwells in it nor serve it with vigor and efficiency. If strong meat nurses your passions, let it, it does not nurse your passions any more than it nurses all the rest of you, and if you grow symmetrically where is the harm. Besides what would you be without passions. They are the impelling forces of life. A man with no passion is as useless in the world as if he were without brains. He cannot even acquire the possession of

virtue, but is obliged to content himself with innocence. If God gave passions to man, he gave them to him for a natural full development; and the grandest type of man we see is that in which we find fully developed and thoroughly trained passions; and a soul which has not these among its motive forces is like a sailor out at sea in a boat without oars. This idea that the body is something to be contemned, that its growth and development must necessarily antagonize with the best growth and development of the soul; is essentially impious. No matter where it started, it is all wrong. A perverted and perverting passion is a fearful thing, but a passion in its place is like everything God makes, "very good". I would have you properly understand this kind of talk. I counsel the use of no food that tends to the stimulation of one portion of your system more than another but I ask you to remember that the best food is not too good for you, and that unless you have a perverted appetite there is very little danger of you eating too much of it.

If I were to be charged with the special mission of degrading a nation, in mind and body, stunting the form, and weakening in the same proportion the mental and moral nature there is no way in which I could so readily accomplish my object as through food. No nation can preserve its vitality and its tendency to progress, with a diet on pork and potatoes. Nothing but the cerealia and the ruminantia will do for this, nothing but bread and muscle.

I wish I could take you to one of those institutions which will be found in nearly every state, where the outcast and pauper children are gathered for shelter, care and culture. They come from the gutters, where they have lived on garbage and cold potatoes. Their eyes are red around the edges and very weak, their muscles are flabby, their skin is lifeless in color and in fact, their minds are as dull as the minds of brutes, and their faces give the impression almost of idiotic stupidity. In six mouths, wheat and corn bread gives them a new body, and a new soul and it would be difficult to find a brighter set of faces than fill those crowded halls and illuminate the noisy playgrounds. Therefore, I say to you young man, however falsely you may deal with your back, be honest with your stomach. Feed well, as well as you can afford to feed. Sleep well. If Benjamin Franklin ever originated the maxim "six hours sleep for a man, seven for a woman and eight for a fool", he ought uniformly to have practiced by the rule of the last number. Young man, if you are a student, or are engaged in any severe mental occupation, sleep just as long as you can sleep soundly. Laying in bed from laziness is another thing entirely. Sleep is a thing that bells have no more business to interfere with, than with prayers and sermons. God is re-creating us. We are as unconscious as we were before we were born; and while he holds us there, feeding anew the springs of life, and infusing fresh fire into our brains, and preparing us for the work of another day. The pillow is as sacred as the sanctuary.

If any fanatic has made you believe that it is good for you to be violently awakened from your sleep at an early hour, and to go out into the damp, raw air, morning after morning, with your

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