

**EATING AND LIVING.  
DIET IN RELATION TO  
AGE AND ACTIVITY**

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Eating and living. Diet in relation to age and activity by Sir Henry Thompson

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**SIR HENRY THOMPSON**

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BY  
SIR HENRY THOMPSON.

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## INTRODUCTION.

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HORACE, with his customary felicity of phrase, desired, as the highest earthly boon, *mens sana in corpore sano*, "a sound mind in a sound body." Modern science has taught us that one-half of the old Epicurean poet's aspiration is necessary to the other—that without a healthy body it is scarcely possible to be blessed with a perfectly sound and vigorous intellect. Good, robust health, which shall maintain all our powers in perfect working order, is consequently now more than ever recognized as the primal blessing of life. Modern science has also disclosed to us the fact that a correlation exists between the physical force supplied by our food and the mental energy manifested by the brain—that without an ample supply of pure and healthy blood the brain is incapacitated from doing its best work. The consequence is that in these days, when brain labor of the severest kind is so often an indispensable prerequisite to success in the battle of life, the question of diet has assumed an importance greater than at any previous period.

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in the history of the race. Correct ideas on the subject cannot be too widely disseminated, particularly among fathers and mothers, who have the care not only of their own health, but also of the health and physical and mental well-being of the generation which is to people this vast country in the near future. Thousands of children every year have their lives crippled and are unfitted for the struggle for existence, solely through the lamentable ignorance or culpable carelessness of parents in the matter of properly feeding them during those early years in which the foundations of their constitution are laid.

The present little work, in which the question of eating and living is treated in a novel fashion, and in accordance with the last results of science, possesses an intrinsic value such as books on subjects of less transcendent importance cannot lay claim to. The author, Sir Henry Thompson, has been the recipient of many honors from learned bodies in Europe, and is recognized throughout that continent, as well as in this country, as one of the highest authorities on medical science. Any work from his pen may be accepted with confidence as containing the latest and best knowledge on the subject of which it treats.

F. T. J.

## EATING AND LIVING.

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### DIET IN RELATION TO AGE AND ACTIVITY.

ENOUGH, and more than enough, perhaps, has been uttered concerning the prejudicial effects on the body of habitually using alcoholic beverages. It is rare now to find any one, well acquainted with human physiology, and capable of observing and appreciating the ordinary wants and usages of life around him, who does not believe that, with few exceptions, men and women are healthier and stronger, physically, intellectually, and morally, without such drinks than with them. And confessedly there is little or nothing new to be said respecting a conclusion which has been so thoroughly investigated, discussed, and tested by experience, as this. It is useless, and indeed impolitic, in the well-intentioned effort to arouse public attention to the



subject, to make exaggerated statements in relation thereto. But the important truth has still to be preached, repeated, and freshly illustrated, when possible, in every quarter of society, because a very natural bias to self-indulgence is always present to obscure men's views of those things which gratify it. While, in addition to this, an exceedingly clever commercial interest of enormous influence and proportions never ceases to vaunt its power to provide us with "the soundest," "purest," and—most to be suspected of all—with even "medically certified" forms of spirit, wine, and beer; apparently rendering alcoholic products conformable to the requirements of some physiological law supposed to demand their employment, and thus insinuating the semblance of a proof that they are generally valuable, or at least harmless, as an accompaniment of food at our daily meals.

It is not, however, with the evils of "drink" that I propose to deal here: they are thus alluded to because, in making a few observations on the kindred subject of food, I desire to commence with a remark on the comparison, so far as that is possible, between the deleterious effects on the body of

erroneous views and practice in regard of drinking, and in regard of eating, respectively.

I have for some years past been compelled, by facts which are constantly coming before me, to accept the conclusion that more mischief in the form of actual disease, of impaired vigor, and of shortened life, accrues to civilized man, so far as I have observed in our own country and throughout Western and Central Europe, from erroneous habits in eating, than from the habitual use of alcoholic drink, considerable as I know the evil of that to be. I am not sure that a similar comparison might not be made between the respective influences of those agencies in regard of moral evil also: but I have no desire to indulge in speculative assertion, and suspect that an accurate conclusion on this subject may be beyond our reach at present.

It was the perception, during many years of opportunity to observe, of the extreme indifference manifested by the general public to any study of food, and want of acquaintance with its uses and value, together with a growing sense on my own part of the vast importance of diet to the healthy as well as to the sick, which led me in the year

1879 to write two articles entitled " Food and Feeding."

And since that date fresh experience has, I confess, still enhanced my estimate of the value of such knowledge, which indeed it is impossible to exaggerate, when regarding that one object of existence which I suppose all persons desire to attain, viz., an ample duration of time for enjoying the healthy exercise of bodily and mental function. Few would, I presume, consider length of life a boon apart from the possession of fairly good health: but this latter being granted, the desire for a prolonged term of existence appears to be almost universal.

I have come to the conclusion that a proportion amounting at least to more than one half of the disease which imbitters the middle and latter part of life among the middle and upper classes of the population is due to avoidable errors in diet. Further, while such disease renders so much of life, for many, disappointing, unhappy, and profitless, a term of painful endurance, for not a few it shortens life considerably. It would not be a difficult task—and its results if displayed here would be striking—to adduce in support of these views a numerical state-