

**THE BREATH OF LIFE OR MAL-
RESPIRATION. AND
ITS EFFECTS UPON THE
ENJOYMENTS & LIFE OF MAN**

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The Breath of Life Or Mal-respiration. And Its Effects Upon the Enjoyments & Life of Man by
George Catlin

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By

Geo Catline.

Author of "Notes of Travels amongst the North Amn. Indians."

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Preface.

No person on Earth who reads this little work will condemn it: it is only a question how many millions may look through it and benefit themselves by adopting its precepts.

THE AUTHOR.

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District of New York.

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BREATH OF LIFE.

THIS communication being made in the confident belief that very many of its Readers may draw from it hints of the highest importance to the enjoyment and prolongation of their lives, requires no other apology for its appearance, nor detention of the Reader from the information which it is designed to convey.

With the reading portion of the world it is generally known that I have devoted the greater part of my life in visiting, and recording the looks of, the various native Races of North and South America; and during those researches, observing the healthy condition and physical perfection of those people, in their primitive state, as contrasted with the deplorable mortality, the numerous diseases and deformities, in civilized communities, I have been led to search for, and able, I believe, to discover, the main causes leading to such different results.

During my Ethnographic labours amongst those wild people I have visited 150 Tribes, containing more than two millions of souls; and therefore have had, in all probability, more extensive opportunities than any other man living, of examining their sanitary system; and if from those examinations I have arrived at results of importance to the health and existence of man-

kind, I shall have achieved a double object in a devoted and toilsome life, and shall enjoy a twofold satisfaction in making them known to the world; and particularly to the Medical Faculty, who may perhaps turn them to good account.*

Man is known to be the most perfectly constructed of all the animals, and consequently he can endure more: he can out-travel the Horse, the Dog, the Ox, or any other animal; he can fast longer; his natural life is said to be "three score and ten years," while its *real, average length*, in civilized communities, is but half equal to that of the brutes whose natural term is not one third as long!

This enormous disproportion might be attributed to some natural physical deficiency in the construction of Man, were it not that we find him in some phases of Savage life, enjoying almost equal exemption from disease and premature death, as the Brute creations; leading us to the irrefragable conclusion that there is some lamentable fault yet overlooked in the sanitary economy of civilized life.

The human Race and the various brute-species have alike been created for certain respective terms of existence, and wisely supplied with the physical means of supporting that existence to its intended and natural end; and with the two creations, these powers would alike answer, as intended, for the whole term

* As the information contained in this little work is believed to be of equal importance to all classes of society, and of all Nations, the Author has endeavoured to render it in the simplest possible form, free from ambiguity of expression and professional technicality of language, that all may be able alike to appreciate it; and if the work contains several brief repetitions, they are only those which were *intended*, and such as always allowed, and even difficult to be avoided, in conveying important advice.

of natural life, except from some hereditary deficiency, or some practised abuse.

The horse, the dog, the ox, and others of the brute creations, we are assured by the breeders of those animals, are but little subject to the fatal diseases of the lungs and others of the respiratory or digestive organs; nor to diseases of the spine, to Idiocy or Deafness; and their teeth continuing to perform their intended functions to the close of natural life, not one in a hundred of these animals, with proper care and a sufficiency of food, would fail to reach that period, unless destroyed by intention or accident.

Mankind are everywhere a departure from this sanitary condition, though the Native Races oftentimes present a near approach to it, as I have witnessed amongst the Tribes of North and South America, amongst whom, in their *primitive condition*, the above-mentioned diseases are seldom heard of; and the almost unexceptional regularity, beauty, and soundness of their teeth last them to advanced life and old age.

In civilized communities, better sheltered, less exposed, and with the aid of the ablest professional skill, the sanitary condition of mankind, with its variety, its complication and fatality of diseases—its aches and pains, and mental and physical deformities, presents a more lamentable and mournful list, which plainly indicates the existence of some extraordinary, latent cause, not as yet sufficiently appreciated, and which it is the sole object of this little work to expose.

From the Bills of Mortality which are annually produced in the civilized world, we learn that in London and other large towns in England, and cities of the Continent, *on an average*, one half of the human Race die before they reach the age of five

years, and one half of the remainder die before they reach the age of twenty-five, thus leaving but one in four to share the chances of lasting from the age of twenty-five to old age.

Statistical accounts showed not many years past, that in London, one half of the children died under *three* years, in Stockholm, one half died under *two* years, and in Manchester, one half died under *five* years; but owing to recent improved sanitary regulations, the numbers of premature deaths in those cities are much diminished, leaving the average proportions as first given, no doubt, very near the truth, at the present time; and still a lamentable statement for the contemplation of the world, by which is seen the frightful gauntlet that civilized man runs in his passage through life.

The sanitary condition of the Savage Races of North and South America, a few instances of which I shall give, not by quoting a variety of authors, but from estimates carefully made by myself, whilst travelling among those people, will be found to present a striking contrast to those just mentioned, and so widely different as naturally, and very justly, to raise the inquiry into the causes leading to such dissimilar results.

Several very respectable and credible modern writers have undertaken to show, from a host of authors, that premature mortality is greater amongst the Savage, than amongst the Civilized Races; which is by no means true, excepting amongst those communities of savages who have been corrupted, and their simple and temperate modes of life changed by the diffusions and vices introduced among them by civilized people.

In order to draw a fair contrast between the results of habits amongst the two races, it is necessary to contemplate the two people living in the uninvaded habits peculiar to each; and it

would be well also, for the writer who draws those contrasts, to see with his own eyes, the customs of the native Races, and obtain his information from the lips of the people themselves, instead of trusting to a long succession of authorities, each of which has quoted from his predecessor, when the original one has been unworthy of credit or has gained his information from unreliable, or ignorant, or malicious sources.

There is, perhaps, no other subject upon which historians and other writers are more liable to lead the world into erroneous conclusions than that of the true native customs and character of Aboriginal Races; and that from the universal dread and fear which have generally deterred historians and other men of Science from penetrating the solitudes inhabited by these people, in the practice of their primitive modes.

There always exists a broad and moving barrier between savage and civilized communities, where the first shaking of hands and acquaintance take place, and over which the demoralizing and deadly effects of dissipation are taught and practiced; and from which, unfortunately, both for the character of the barbarous races and the benefit of science, the customs and the personal appearance of the savage are gathered and portrayed to the world.

It has been too much upon this field that historians and other writers have drawn for the exaggerated accounts which have been published, of the excessive mortality amongst the savage Races of America, leading the world to believe that the actual premature waste of life caused by the dissipations and vices introduced, with the accompanying changes in the modes of living in such districts, were the proper statistics of those people.