

# **THE CAUSES AND TREATMENT OF IMPERFECT DIGESTION**

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The Causes and Treatment of Imperfect Digestion by Arthur Leared

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**ARTHUR LEARED**

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CAUSES AND TREATMENT  
OF  
IMPERFECT DIGESTION.

BY  
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# IMPERFECT DIGESTION,

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## CHAPTER I.

### THE CAUSES OF DYSPEPSIA.

THE digestive power may be compared to the physical strength. Every individual can without inconvenience carry a certain weight, while any addition to it is accompanied by a proportionate sense of oppression. In the same way, what is called indigestion is often simply a result of excess. The amount of food which each man is capable of digesting with ease has always a limit. This limit is altogether relative, being strictly proportionate to his age, constitution, state of health, and habits.

For undisturbed digestion there are two



essential conditions: a proper relation of the aliment to the digestive organs, and a healthy state of the organs themselves. The first is generally within direct control; but obviously with the second, the case is different; and when, as frequently happens, both conditions are imperfectly fulfilled in the same person, more or less dyspepsia ensues.

Bearing in mind these general views, let us examine particular causes; and first, as regards the influence of age.

Appetite, or the natural desire for aliment, indicates that the waste of the body requires to be replenished—that the outlay begins to exceed the income.

From birth to the moment of dissolution, throughout the longest as well as the shortest life, waste and supply are in active operation. The rapid growth of the infant requires food at short intervals, and the energy of the process of waste as well as of repair is shown by the activity of the excreting organs. So long as growth continues, the same conditions, in a lessening degree, may be observed.

When the stature and form of the body are

matured, the demands for nutrition are less urgent, and, after middle age, this is still more the case. The practical inference is, that the man of advanced years does not require, and should not partake of, as much food as the young man.

How this instinct was recognised by a profound thinker, may be read in Cicero's "Essay on Old Age." He expresses himself gratefully, that while advancing years increased his desire for conversation, they had diminished the necessity for food and drink.\* Notwithstanding the boasted intelligence of modern times, such reflections are seldom made, and still more rarely acted upon.

At all stages of adult life, but particularly during its decline, the appetite is over-stimulated by condiments, and tempted to excess by culinary refinements.† Dyspepsia is not the

\* "Habeo senectuti magnam gratiam, quæ mihi sermonis aviditatem auxit, potionis et cibi sustulit."

† Abernethy, in his peculiar style, insists that civilized man "eats and drinks an enormous deal more than is necessary for his wants or welfare. He fills his stomach and bowels with food which actually putrefies in those organs."

worst result of this. Gout, and still more serious maladies connected with an impure state of blood, closely follow.

Infringements of the laws of digestion are constantly and in many instances unconsciously committed. One man digests with ease an amount of food which would be fatal to the comfort of another. Animal food is easily digested by some persons twice, or even three times daily; while, if taken by others more than once, it is sure to induce suffering. Nevertheless, the diet of persons associated together is too often the same, and a sufficient individuality in matters of eating and drinking is seldom observed.

When the general health is impaired from any cause, digestion infallibly suffers. In many instances it is sought to prop up the one by overtaxing the powers of the other, and dyspepsia is often thus permanently added to the old disorder.

The proverb "custom is second nature," is to a great extent true of the human constitution. Health may be maintained, by gradual usage, under circumstances which would be