# EATING TO LIVE. THE DIET CURE: AN ESSAY ON THE RELATIONS OF FOOD AND DRINK TO HEALTH, DISEASE AND CURE, PP. 2-88

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EATING TO LIVE.

# THE DIET CURE:

AN ESSAY ON

## THE RELATIONS OF FOOD AND DRINK



## HEALTH, DISEASE AND CURE.

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oak grows from a rock where its roots can reach no soil. The willow flourishes in sand if it have but water. Many plants live wholly upon air. The Canary bird lives best upon its canary seed; the parrot cares only for maize. The monkey revels on fruits and nuts. Horses, cattle, deer, and sheep, flourish in perfect health on grass, from which they draw strength, beauty, and the perfection of their life.

When our domestic animals become diseased from unnatural modes of feeding, what is the proper cure? The usual one is to send for a veterinary surgeon, and have them bled and blistered and drugged. The natural method is to turn them out to grass, and let nature cure them in her own way of the effects of artificial and depraving conditions. To keep well, or to get well, a horse needs only pure air, pure water, and a good pasture. To keep well, or to get well, a man needs precisely similar conditions—the air, water, and food best adapted to build up and sustain his daily life.

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## CHAPTER II.

### FOOD.

Let us consider this matter of diet, or food, beginning with the lower forms of life in the vegetable kingdom.

Vegetables, like animals, have life. They grow from germs. These germs are inconceivably minute; but each has its own individuality and power. From the microscopic fungus to the oak or pine of many centuries, each germ develops its own peculiar life by the absorption of matter from which its tissues and organs, and new germs, are formed.

The added matter of vegetable growth comes from the soil, from water, from the air. Earth, water, and air, are therefore food for plants. And in the soil which sustains vegetation, we have decayed vegetable and animal matter, which may be used over and over again in the processes of life. Thus animals live on vegetables, and vegetables on animals. It is said that the vegetable kingdom rests on the mineral, and the animal upon the vegetable. Primarily, vegetables grow by matter from earth and air; but some vegetables feed partly upon insects and upon substances used as manures. All animals may be said to feed upon vegetables; but some take the vegetable

matter at second hand. Cattle and sheep live on grass; but wolves, tigers, and sometimes men, live on cattle and sheep.

Each plant and each animal lives its best life—the life of health—on its own natural food. The turkey buzzard cannot live on grass, nor the sheep on carrion.

Plants live very largely, and some entirely, upon air, and what the air contains. What are called air-plants attach themselves to wood or bark, or a naked rock, and flourish, absorbing moisture from the air, and appropriating the carbon contained in the carbonic acid always present in the atmosphere.

Many years ago, a French chemist tried this experiment. He washed some sand very clean, dried it, and carefully weighed it. In it he placed a willow twig, weighed also, which he watered with distilled, and therefore perfectly pure water. The willow-twig grew to be a tree. Its root, trunk, branches, bark, and leaves were reduced to charcoal, and this weight of charcoal was the carbon it had gathered from the carbonic acid gas in the atmosphere. The millions of tons of carbon in the forests of the world, and the far greater quantity stored up in the coal measures scattered over the earth, are composed of carbon gathered by the leaves of vegetables from the air, and fixed by the chemical force of sunshine. Carbonic acid is therefore the principal food of plants. They gather their hydrogen and nitrogen from air or earth. Plants grow in water, because all water is full of air. Fishes breathe the air in water, and give to it carbonic acid, as animals do to air. Animals absorb what plants supply—plants absorb what animals supply. They live upon each other. Plants and fish flourish together in your aquarium, because the plant supplies oxygen to the fish, and the fish supplies carbonic acid for the plant.

We live on air; it is our first necessary of life. We eat from time to time, and we can live for many days without our usual food—for weeks, in some cases—but we must breathe night and day. The blood demands its constant supply of oxygen. Without this supply, it grows dark, and becomes foul. If the air contains foul gases, we must inhale, and, more or less, absorb them. They may poison the blood, and thereby the whole body. Pure air, such as we get on the mountains, on great plains, and by or on the sea, we feel to be invigorating and full of life. The air of narrow streets, darkened courts, filthy places, crowded rooms, unventilated bed-rooms, dwellings, theatres, churches, schools, hospitals or prisons, we find to be depressing, weakening, diseasing, and full of death. We live on good

air; we die of bad air; and as, in a certain and important sense, animals and vegetables live on air, we cannot exclude it from our considerations of Diet, and the Diet Cure.

## CHAPTER III.

### WATER.

DRINK, of course, belongs to diet, and the liquid portion of our food is a matter of great importance. If we are poisoned with the air, or the filthy gases it often contains, we may also be poisoned by the matters contained in the liquids we drink.

An average man weighs 150 pounds. Of this weight, 130 pounds at least is water. A man contains over 16 gallons of water. This is quite within bounds, for the solid matter of the human body, perfectly dried, really weighs about 12 pounds. All the rest is water. Blood, brain, nerves, mucous, serum are 95 per cent., or more, water; muscle, 75 or 80 per cent.; bone itself has a large percentage of water.

The food we eat is also largely composed of water. Milk, on which all the young mammalia are nourished and built up, contains about the same proportion of water as the blood from which it is formed, and into which it is again transformed. Beat up the white and yolk of an egg—you see how liquid they are, and how large a proportion of water they must contain; yet from this matter is formed the entire chicken as it comes from the shell—bones, muscles, brain, nerves, skin, feathers—quite a perfect little creature, ready to run about and pick up its living.

Milk and eggs are types of perfect food, because, being formed of blood, they readily make blood, and hold all it contains of matter to build up the body.

Fruits and vegetables contain 70 per cent. or more of water. Even what we call dry bread contains a considerable proportion of water, as we can see by weighing it and then *perfectly* drying it, and finding how much it has lost.

The water contained in fruits and vegetables is soft and pure. Nature takes care of that. The water dissolved in the atmosphere, which we see condensed in mist, fog, and clouds, and which comes down in rain, is distilled water rising from earth and sea, perfectly soft and pure. But the air contains

dust, vegetable fibres, animal particles, spores, germs, smoke, and poisonous gases of various kinds. A London fog, for instance, is sensibly pervaded with the qualities of London smoke and London air. The rain that falls through such an atmosphere purifies it, washes it clean; but becomes thereby itself more or less impure, and needs to be well filtered before it is fit for use.

By nature's method the rainfall is filtered by the carbon of vegetable mould and the sand and gravel through which it sinks to form springs. If this sand or other earthy matter is insoluble, the water is soft and pure, like that of the Malvern hills. If water percolates through limestone or chalk, it dissolves a portion of the lime, and becomes hard.

If our houses were built with gently sloping roofs, and the tiles, slate, or concrete covering had upon it a layer of gravel, then sand, then loam and turf, the whole rainfall would be filtered, and might be stored in a cistern for use. This would be an imitation of nature, and give a good supply of pure, soft water. Artificial springs might be similarly constructed upon any piece of sloping ground.

The water supply of London and of many large towns is very bad. The rivers which supply the metropolis of England with water are the open sewers of millions of people, with local drainage, and the wash of countless factories, farm-yards, stables, slaughter-houses, etc. This water is often reported to be full of organic matter. It is believed to be a vehicle for germs of various diseases.

Considering that water, taken into the stomach, is quickly absorbed into the current of the blood and circulated over the whole body, its purity and its freedom from any kind of diseasing matter must be a thing of vital importance.

Pure, soft spring water, where it can be procured, is very favourable to health. The Malvern springs, which are almost chemically pure, have been renowned for ages for their sanitary virtues. The chief of them are "the Holy Well," bottled by Messrs Burrow, and sent over the kingdom; "St. Ann's Well," close to Aldwyn Tower; and the Haywell—supposed to be a corruption of "Eye Well"—which supplies one of the public baths. But all the water from the Malvern hills—pure, filtered rain water, is of nearly the same quality.

What we want of water is that it should be pure, and so fitted to dissolve all matters of nutrition and keep the blood at its proper standard. Thirst warns us that the blood is too

thick, or that it contains some acrid matter that needs to be washed away. Thus, salt food makes us thirsty. When we perspire freely, we may need water to dilute the blood and supply the loss by perspiration.

Water is the *only* drink. Whatever is mixed with water is food, or flavour, or poison—something which is not drink. Milk is water and food. Wine is water and alcohol, with small proportions of sugar, acids, and flavouring matters. Tea and coffee are watery infusions of leaves and berries containing narcotic stimulants. Of all these, the one element we need to dissolve our food and give fluidity to our blood is water, and the more pure and perfect that element is the better.

If we have an abundance of juicy fruits, like pears, apples, melons, oranges, or grapes, we might never need to drink. Even watery vegetables, like beets, turnips, etc., are largely composed of water. But if we require water, and cannot get it soft and pure, it would be well worth the trouble to have a still and use only distilled water.* Dr. Lambe drank distilled water for many years, and prescribed it to his patients. His testimony to its purifying, and therefore curative properties, is very strong. He says it dissolved stone and gravel, and that, with a pure diet, it cured cancer and other malignant diseases.

## CHAPTER IV.

### OF THE BLOOD.

Now, let us come to the matter of food, commonly so called.

"The blood is the life," and the blood is made of the food. As is the food; so is the blood. Pure food makes pure blood; pure blood builds up a healthy body. The vital character of the blood is very strongly asserted in the Scriptures, and confirmed by the researches of Harvey, Hunter, and the best physiologists.

"But flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat" (Gen. ix. 4).

"For the life of the flesh is in the blood." "For it is the life of all flesh; the blood of it is for the life thereof; therefore,

* Dr. Nichols has invented a self-supplying still, which, with a jet of gas, or a spirit or petroleum lamp, will supply a stream of pure water night and day for any length of time.

I said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall eat the blood of no manner of flesh, for the life of all flesh is the blood thereof" (Lev. xvii. 11-14).

Let us begin at the beginning. The very germs of all animals are made from the blood of those animals, and the blood from their food. Germ cells and sperm cells, in the female and male, are made of the elements supplied by food. When these elements unite to form the living being, it is built up by matter elaborated from food. In the seeds of plants this matter is stored around the perfect germ; it fills the shells of eggs for the formation of the bird; while the mammalian fœtus is nourished directly by the blood of the mother.

We can see how important must be the daily food of the mother, which makes the blood from which the germ is made, and by which it is nourished until the period of birth.

The constitution of the child comes from its father and mother, and in some degree also from its more remote progenitors. From conception to birth, it is the food of the mother that nourishes and builds up the child. In the natural order, for about a year the food of the mother, converted into her blood and then into her milk, still nourishes the body of the child.

Is it possible to exaggerate the importance of a pure, healthy, natural diet for the mother, through all this period, to the health of her child?

Now, the statistics of mortality prove that from twenty-five to fifty children of every hundred born die in infancy. In some places and in some classes the mortality is much greater than in others. If we put the average at one-third—say that one in every three children born dies before it is five years old, we shall not be far from the truth. And this mortality depends more upon diet than any other cause. Considering air as food, diet covers nearly the whole ground of the causes of this terrible premature mortality.

When the child no longer depends upon mother or nurse for food, it has yet to get its growth, and then supply the daily waste of nervous and muscular action.

The matter of the body changes from hour to hour. At every breath we give out matter which comes from the most distant portions of the body. The myriad pores of the skin are constantly throwing out this matter. It gathers upon the cuticle; it fills and fouls our clothing, it loads the air of unventilated rooms. The excretions of the human body by lungs