

food, while men were working in the open air on the farm, was usually well assimilated. But as commercial life developed and people got indoor and more sedentary occupations, such concentrated diet acted more and more disastrously on the digestive organs. The combination of heavy feeding with sedentary habits is especially fatal to those that by nature are endowed with a particularly fine digestion. This is one of the most interesting chapters in the hygiene of nutrition, and is best illustrated by a concrete example:

A man past forty-five years of age had a very active occupation before the great fire in San Francisco. He liked good eating, and especially peppery dishes, and also took many drinks of Scotch whiskey throughout the day. His elimination was excellent, and pleasure, not pain, was his portion. After the fire the natural slowing down of elimination at his time of life was accentuated by a more sedentary occupation. Burke has said that there are two things we must guard against as we grow older, the pleasures of the table and a love for accumulating money. This aphorism held true of my man. The quantity of food consumed did not decrease, but the elimination did. The superfluity had to break out somewhere. His face became more full and florid, and its natural wrinkles disappeared, giving him a fictitiously robust appearance. He acquired a catarrhal affection of the bronchial tubes, and a constant cough and clearing of the throat, that is called by the Spanish, "La tos de ricos," the cough of the rich. Rheumatic swelling of some of the finger joints and rheumatic pains arose, and intensely itchy patches of papular eczema appeared. These were the first symptoms of degeneration, which were bound to augment. Is anyone so foolishly optimistic as to suppose that this man will cease whipping up his digestive organs with alcohol and pepper? On the contrary, with the increase of his misery, the use of stimulants will tend to increase. That in the long run such excitation does not ameliorate, but rather tends to drive one farther into trouble, the ordinary man does not know, or knowing, does not heed.

It is the observation of such cases that makes me regard the beginning of the fifties as a particularly critical time of life, the dangers of which may be accentuated by many fortuitous circumstances. For instance, in one of Guy de Maupassant's stories the author depicts a character as a man with a most vigorous digestive system, forced into physical inactivity by having had his feet shot off in the Franco-Prussian War. The author describes him as getting himself into a railway carriage. De Maupassant says: "He was perhaps fifty-three years of age,