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### PRESERVATION OF HEALTH.

#### FOURTH ARTICLE.

#### VARIETY OF FOOD.

A judicious variation of food is not only useful, but important. There are, it is true, some aliments, such as bread, which cannot be varied, and which no one ever wishes to be so. But apart from one or two articles, a certain variation or rotation is much to be desired, and will prove favourable to health. There is a common prepossession respecting *one dish*, which is more spoken of than acted upon. In reality there is no virtue in this practice, excepting that, if rigidly adhered to, it makes excess nearly impossible, no one being able to eat to satiety of one kind of food. There would be a benefit from both a daily variation of food and eating of more than one dish at a meal, *if moderation were in both cases to be strictly observed*; for the relish to be thus obtained is useful, as promotive of the flow of nervous energy to the stomach, exactly in the same manner as cheerfulness is useful. The policy which would make food in any way unpleasant to the taste is a most mistaken one; for to eat with languor, or against inclination, or with any degree of disgust, is to lose much of the benefit of eating. On the other hand, to cook dishes highly, and provoke appetite by artificial means, are equally reprehensible. Propriety lies in the mean between the two extremes.

#### BEVERAGES.

The body containing a vast amount of fluids, which are undergoing a perpetual waste, there is a necessity for an occasional supply of liquor of some kind, as well as of solid aliment. It remains to be considered what is required in the character or nature of this liquor, to make it serve as a beverage consistently with the preservation of health.

It is scarcely necessary to remark how men in all ages, and almost all climes, have indulged in liquors containing a large infusion of alcohol, or how widespread in our own society is the custom of drinking considerable quantities of wine, spirits, and beer, both at meals and on other occasions. Against habits so inveterate it is apt to appear like fanaticism to make any decided objection; yet the investigator of the laws which regulate health is bound to consider, above all things, how any particular habit bears upon the human constitution, and to state what is the result of his inquiries, however irreconcilable it may be with popular prejudice or practice.

'The primary effect of all distilled and fermented liquors,' says Dr. Combe, 'is to stimulate the nervous system and quicken the circulation.' They may thus be said to have a larger measure of the effect which animal food has upon the system. It is therefore the less surprising that 'those tropical nations which live most on farinaceous diet are also found to be those which have the least propensity to the drinking of ardent spirits; while those northern nations which live most on animal food have the exactly contrary inclination with respect to liquor, the Scandinavian tribes being notoriously the greatest sots that have ever been known.' Dr. Combe admits that in some conditions of the system, when the natural stimulus is defective, it may be proper to take an artificial supply in the form of ardent and fermented liquors. 'There are,' he says, 'many constitutions so inherently defective in energy, as to derive benefit from a moderate daily allowance of wine; and there are many situations in which even the healthiest derive additional security from its occasional use. If, for example, a healthy person is exposed to unusual and continued exertion in the open air, or to the influence of anxious and depressing watchfulness, a moderate quantity of wine with his food may become the means of warding off actual disease, and enabling him to bear up uninjured, where without it he would have given way.' But Dr. Combe at the same time declares, in the most decided language, that when the digestion is good, and the system in full vigour, the bodily energy is easily sustained by nutritious food, and 'artificial stimulants only increase the wasting of the natural strength.' Nearly all physicians, indeed, concur in representing ardent liquors as unfavourable to the health of the healthy, and as being, in their excess, highly injurious. Even the specious defence which has been set up for their use, on the ground that they would not have been given to man if they had not been designed for general use, has been shown to be ill-founded, seeing that *vinous fermentation*, from which they are derived, is not a healthy condition of vegetable matter, but a stage in its progress to decay. Upon the whole, there can be little doubt that these liquors are deleterious in our ordinary healthy condition; and that pure-water, toast-water, milk, whey, and other simple and unexciting beverages, would be preferable (the first being the most natural) if we could only consent to deny ourselves further indulgence.

#### CLEANLINESS.

To keep the body in a cleanly condition is the third important requisite for the preservation of health. This becomes necessary, in consequence of a very important natural process which is constantly going on near and upon the surface of the body.

The process in question is that of *perspiration*. The matter here concerned is a watery secretion, produced by glands near the surface of the body, and sent up through the skin by channels imperceptibly minute and wonderfully numerous. From two to six pounds of this