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"Plus apud nos vera ratio valet, quam vulgi opinio."

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## ON DIET.

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(Continued from our last.)

Albumen is first coagulated, and then dissolved by the gastric juice; gelatine is simply dissolved, and thus passed onwards, as chyme, to be absorbed into the blood. The nutritiousness of animal food is generally calculated by the quantity of albumen it contains, and hitherto there has been a disposition to consider that gelatine only afforded material for cartilage and bone, and not for muscles. This opinion rested upon some experiments of the French commissioners appointed to investigate the qualities of different aliments, who succeeded in starving dogs by giving them nothing but pure gelatine to eat. However, these experiments, at once unphilosophical in their conception and cruel in their execution, are entirely refuted by the fact, that dogs not only lived, but thrive and fattened upon a diet consisting of nothing but bones; a fact corroborated by the history of every convalescent who is nourished by arrowroot and pure soup, as Mulder remarks. Why dogs thrive upon bones, and starve upon the pure aliment the bones contain, is a problem of which there are many examples, some of the most curious of which are several instances where horses on a voyage pined away under the exclusive use of grain as food, and, impelled by the instinctive requirements of their organism, tore and eat all the dry wood within their reach; on this hint they got chips of wood, and very soon recovered

their flesh and spirits.\* From this we gather that the vital processes, as well as the chemical products, are necessary for the maintenance of health, and it should make us hesitate before we subscribe to any diet-table submitted to us by the chemist, unless it be in accordance with the findings of popular experience. It may be that hereafter the chemist shall discover the value of some of those substances, such as kreatine, which exists in very small quantity in animal food, but which, as its name implies, is supposed to be a sort of incarnation of flesh—if the phrase be allowable; and it may be, as the slight chemical difference in the amount of sulphur and oxygen makes the distinction in the laboratory between fibrine and albumen, so equally minute portions of chemical ingredients may induce totally different forms of the aggregation of the atoms from which the various tissues are evolved; and it is impossible not to recognise here how very small quantities of medicinal agents, properly administered, may exercise an enormous effect upon the development of the organism. How great may be the effect of Sulphur, of Phosphorus, of Silica, for example?

While the nutritiousness of food depends upon the quantity of albumen and gelatine it contains, its digestibility seems to depend upon the form in which they are presented to the system. Various attempts have been made to classify the ordinary articles of animal diet, and some writers, such as Robertson,† give a regular schedule, beginning with mutton and ending with pork. It is enough

\* Graham's Lectures, &c.

† Robertson on Diet and Regimen.