

not had from those who, like Mr. Herbert Spencer, represent it as mere devil-worship, assuming that the sole object of the ascetic is to propitiate a fiendish deity by self-torture. This is a true account of Indian Fakirism, and of that form of Christian asceticism which was spawned from the mud of the Ganges, which produced the anchorites of the Thebaid, and of which the most typical and hideous representation was Simon Stylites. Substituting lethargy for pain the censure may be extended to the monkery of Athos, which again has a counterpart in the Llamaism of Thibet. But what the term denotes is, not self-torture, but the training of the spiritual athlete; and the aim of western Asceticism on the whole has been to give the spirit a complete victory over the lusts. Perhaps in the case of barbarians, it would have been difficult to do anything in this direction without the aid of formal and consecrated observance; just as it would have been difficult to limit their military propensities without the ecclesiastical laws forbidding arms to be carried in Churches, the prohibition of war on Church festivals and the Truce of God. Medical or intellectual reasons for abstinence, they would not have understood, any more than they would have understood an appeal to the love of peace and the hatred of war. But we are not barbarians, and we have better reasons for not gorging ourselves with flesh or getting drunk on metheglin all the year round, than an ecclesiastical rubric enforced by a Papal curse. Formal restrictions, imposed by external authority, are apt to stimulate almost as much as they repress: the natural accompaniment of Lent is the riot of the carnival, and the Turk, in Ramadan, having obeyed the Prophet by fasting till he is ravenous, falls to and eats like a beast. Far more deserving of attention than this revival of a nominal deference to the obsolete precepts of the Church respecting Lent, is the movement of dietetic reform, of which Dr. Dio Lewis is the vigorous and lively, though extreme apostle, and which indirectly gave birth to the eccentric experiment of Dr. Tanner. That we could do with much less food than we usually take; that we should do better with much less food than we usually