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DISEASE AND ITS CAUSES, AND THE VALUE OF HYGIENE.*

Health is that condition in which all actions or functions proper to the body are performed in the most perfect and harmonious manner. This necessitates a perfect and natural state of the organs of the body. The perversion or partial cessation of one or more of the functions or processes of life constitutes disease. And anything which prevents, or interferes with, the perfect and harmonious performance of these functions, or which obstructs any of the vital processes, is a *cause* of disease. The continued operation of any such cause will sooner or later give rise to *altered organic structure*, and we then have diseased organs as well as functions. Health is an active and unimpeded renewal of the body and prompt elimination of worn-out substances, giving rise to the highest development of life in every part and organ. Disease has been termed a partial death. The human organization is of the highest complexity, and is therefore very liable to derangement, and its functions to perversion, by the many and various causes of disease by which we are surrounded.

The necessary conditions of health and life are a supply of air, water, and food, and also sleep, clothing, exercise, and bathing. These conditions or agencies of health and life are very liable to changes. The air around one becomes impure from the breath; foods are often improperly prepared; or one may take too much or too little exercise. Now as the functions of the body are directly dependent upon these agencies, when any one of them is deteriorated, and not good and appropriate, it is at once a cause of disease, and more or less functional derangement—disease, will assuredly speedily follow its use.

Nearly all causes of disease, and of premature death are, in fact, intimately associated with these agencies or essentials of life; or, in other words, they are to be found in perverted conditions of these agencies, which of necessity all are continually making use of.

* Extract from "Elementary Hygiene," now in press.