

# THE CANADA LANCET.

**A Monthly Journal of Medical and Surgical Science  
Criticism and News.**

*Communications solicited on all Medical and Scientific subjects, and also Reports of Cases occurring in practice. Advertisements inserted on the most liberal terms. All Letters and Communications to be addressed to the "Editor Canada Lancer," Toronto.*

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## OVER-EATING AND UNDER-EATING.

We cannot imagine a closer connection between any two things than that which exists between life and nutrition. The continuance of life is dependent on the continued supply of nutrition. Even the quality or kind of life, speaking of life in an unrestricted sense, is largely influenced and moulded by the quantity and quality of nutrition supplied. Consequently we notice variations in the form and life of the plant, or the individual, according as nutrition has been normal, insufficient, or in excess. Every living thing calls for its own peculiar and natural supply, and flourishes best when a normal standard is regularly maintained. Insufficiency and superfluity of food are both usually followed by marked departure from the normal life standard. No one need be told that insufficient alimentation, in both kingdoms, is followed by a train of consequences very much similar—that the plant, or the individual, soon shows loss of health and vigor, gradually diminishes in size, and if the process of decay is permitted to proceed, finally dies. Owing to the more complex nature of the organs of assimilation in animals, and other causes needless to mention, the results of excessive alimentation are not so uniform in their operations as those of insufficient alimentation, as applied to the two kingdoms. There may be, and doubtless there are exceptions, still the rule is, even in the vegetable kingdom, that excessive alimentation is an evil to be avoided. The over-nourished wheat-stalk grows

coarse and rank, but the grain is either wanting or is poor in quality. The rule more than holds its own when we ascend to the animal kingdom. Every one must be aware that even brutes suffer harm from over-feeding. But it is not till we arrive at man, that we witness all the baneful consequences of excessive alimentation.

An honored teacher of medicine, the late Dr. Rolph, used to say to his class: But few eat too little; most eat too much. The truth of that laconic remark is known to every observant person. We all know that the largest eaters are not necessarily the largest nor strongest of the race. The very opposite is nearer the mark, notwithstanding a few notable exceptions. No homely aphorism was ever truer than this one: "He eats so much that it makes him poor to carry it." It is a fact that a large majority of the lean and sickly amongst us are immoderate eaters, while a majority of the healthy and robust are moderate, or small eaters. The reason of this is easy to find. He who eats more than nature demands, imposes a heavy strain on the organs involved in the process of digestion and elimination. The stomach has a more or less definite digestive capacity, which if unduly overtaxed results in imperfect digestion, impure blood, disordered function, and gradual decay. Just as certain as we exceed the natural bounds set by nature, and overtax our stomachs to please our palates, so surely do we begin to sow the seeds of disease. True, the stomach is elastic, and marvellously accommodating, and bravely resists the assaults imprudently made on its inherent rights; but like the stone, under continued dropping, it gradually wears out.

While no reasonable person will take exception to these remarks, it is open to question, whether medical men generally are so impressed with the importance of the truth they embody as its importance merits. We hear a great deal said about "abundance of nourishing food," but very little about over-abundance. If the patient be reduced in flesh, it is too readily assumed that what he most needs is plenty of beef and other good things, while the truth may be that he has been by far too well supplied all along. Let any medical man keep a record of those chronically affected who apply to him for relief, and he will soon find that the vast majority of them have good appetites—too good in fact, and eat "abundance of nutritious food." He will find that the vast majority of this class of pa-