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Original Communications.

HYGIENE.

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CHAP. III.—DIRT, OR MATTER OUT OF PLACE.

Before attempting to describe a thing it is well to know what it is, in so far as it can be found out, and the reader will excuse an attempt to be precise as well as accurate.

In using the terse old Anglo-Saxon word of 4 letters *dirt*, though not so polished or euphonious as others, yet it conveys a very distinct impression inclining to accuracy rather than polish.

The same idea might be expressed by a Defective Hygiene—Insanitary conditions, noisome products, etc., etc., but to the writer's fancy the correct scientific meaning is "matter out of place."

Let us analyze it:

When on a railway train, and a particle of iron rubbed off the wheels get into the eye, there is no hesitation in calling it *dirt*; but in its proper place in the wheel no such idea is suggested. Or if these particles light on the sandwich at lunch they would be *dirt*, but if given as a powder in prescription as "ferrum pulveratum," they would be

highly esteemed, and so we might give instances by the thousand.

We may also have invisible dirt. Carbonic acid in quantity in the air we breathe would be dirt, but in "aerated water" is highly valued: or it may be a living thing, as a fly in the soup, dirt—but on carrion fulfilling its life's duty it is a benefit to all living things; to vegetables by assisting in preparing their food; to animals by removing a probable source of disease.

Since then *matter* IN or OUT of place means perfect Hygiene or its converse, then our whole subject is bound up in this consideration. In this also we must combine the two kingdoms of nature, vegetable and animal, as they are interdependent.

Scientific research is often indefinite, even contradictory; but one biological fact is accepted *nem con.*, viz.: "That the products resulting from the retrograde metamorphosis of tissue—be they solid liquid or gaseous—the substances which have undergone a change in their automatic relations as a result of the process called life, or using simpler expressions, such as tissue waste or excretory products, all or any are poisonous to the life that produced them, be it animal or vegetable, if they be retained for any time in contact therewith." As an illustration—

The *torula cerevisiæ* gives alcohol and carbonic acid as the result of its life action, and the presence of 10 per cent. of alcohol or a sufficiency of carbonic acid, arrests its living functions, and in larger quantity destroys the