

PUBLISHERS DEPARTMENT.

NERVES AND FOOD.

Sir Henry Thompson, writing in the *Nineteenth Century*, makes the following remarks upon the altered diet which has become necessary, owing to the extraordinary changes affecting man in every rank of life and his surroundings in all parts of the civilized world, which have taken place during the last sixty years: "It is difficult—perhaps impossible—for the present generation to realize the contrast presented in respect of the demand now made on man's activity, especially that of his brain, during, say, the last thirty or forty years, with that which was required by the routine of life as it was in the 'thirties.' The wear and tear of existence has enormously increased, and the demand for rapid action and intense exertion by the nervous system is certainly tenfold greater now, to make a moderate estimate, than it was then. A railway appeared in the first year of the decade named; the penny post and the electric telegraph not until its close; while the press, both daily and weekly, now gigantic, was then, by comparison, insignificant and diminutive. For the great majority, even of business-men, life was tranquil and leisure plentiful, while competition was almost unknown; I need not attempt to describe what it is now. Such changes have naturally been the cause of permanent injury to many whose powers sufficed for the quiet time but gave way in large and increasing number under the inevitable struggle which issues in 'the survival of the fittest.' The necessary result of this extreme demand for brain activity, since that organ is the sole source of energy on which all the functions of the body, including that of digestion, depend, is an insufficient supply for this important process. Under these circumstances nothing can be more important than to provide food of a kind and in a form which will economise the work of the stomach. It must not be bulky; much of it may be advantageously soluble in form so as to be readily and easily assimilated, even pre-digested sometimes, and when solid not requiring much mastication. I have found nothing which fulfils these conditions so completely as the various concentrated extracts of meat which are now so extensively used. A teaspoonful of sound beef extract in a breakfast-cup of hot water when the brain is fatigued and the stomach unfit for work is often the best antidote possible, reinvigorates the system, and prepares it for a light meal or for a little more work, as the case may be—a result far too frequently sought through the pernicious habit of obtaining temporary relief in a glass of wine or spirit."

Several features of striking interest will be found in the opening numbers of *THE LIVING AGE* for the new year. The number for January 7 contains, among other things, a pungent and wholesome lecture on Art and Morality, by M. Ferdinand Brunetiere, which is translated for the magazine and copyrighted by it; the first instalment of *The Etchingham Letters*, which are attracting wide notice in *The Cornhill* by their cleverness, and the beginning of a short serial. The number for January 14 gives the full text of Lord Rosebery's recent address on Literary Statesmen, which has been the subject of general comment; an article from *Blackwood's* on *The Ethics of Conquest*, which relates to the Philippines; and a bright paper on *The Madness of Mr. Kipling*.