

DIET II.

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In the last paper we discussed the food question in a general way; in the present one I hope to indicate a few ways and means of using our food so that it may prove the blessing it was meant to be, instead of the curse it not seldom is to us. All foods come under one of two heads: They are either tissue or force producers. They may be both, and very often are so. The former class of foods renew the substance of the body, and are commonly called *porteids* or *albuminoids*. They contain carbon, hydrogen, nitrogen, and oxygen, with a small amount of sulphur, and generally phosphorus.

The latter class supply the combustible material, the oxidation of which generates heat and energy in the body. They contain carbon, hydrogen, and oxygen in varying proportions.

Water forms an important article of diet, though not coming under the above headings; it aids largely in the process of digestion, and in the formation of the digestive juices. Common salt is essential to the formation of gastric juice and bile, and the salts obtained from milk, muscle, vegetables and fruits are also needful for the growth of bone, and for the maintenance of health. The oxygen of the air, in a broad sense, forms one of the foods of the system; and it is essential to good digestion; hence eating out of doors is, where possible, a most desirable habit, and one conducive to the enjoyment, as well as to the full assimilation of food.

The flesh of various animals is one of the main sources of our nitrogenous or proteid food. Of the two kinds of meat, red and white, the latter are more digestible (with the exception of pork). The flesh of young animals is inferior to that of older ones, hence veal and lamb are unsatisfactory articles of diet. The flesh of birds is good food, being easily digested, and containing phosphates. Fish, a too often neglected food, is most valuable for the phosphates it contains, and for the ease with which it can be digested.

In this connection, it is necessary to mention the subject of vegetarianism, a cult professed by many on the grounds either of humanity or of health, or both. It is true that all the elements required for the building up and maintenance of the human frame can be obtained from the vegetable world, but at the same time the undigested refuse is greater than with an equal quantity of animal food. A longer time, more exertion of the digestive organs, and a greater bulk of food is required in the case of a purely vegetable diet. Animal food is more convenient. Man not being an eating machine, he requires food that can easily and quickly be converted into body substance, and that is supplied by a flesh diet in moderation. At the same time, there is a great tendency to over-indulgence in a meat diet, and the effects of this error are to increase oxidation and waste, and to hasten the wearing out of the body substance. Meat should not be eaten