

The story of a stomach : an egotism / by a reformed dyspeptic.

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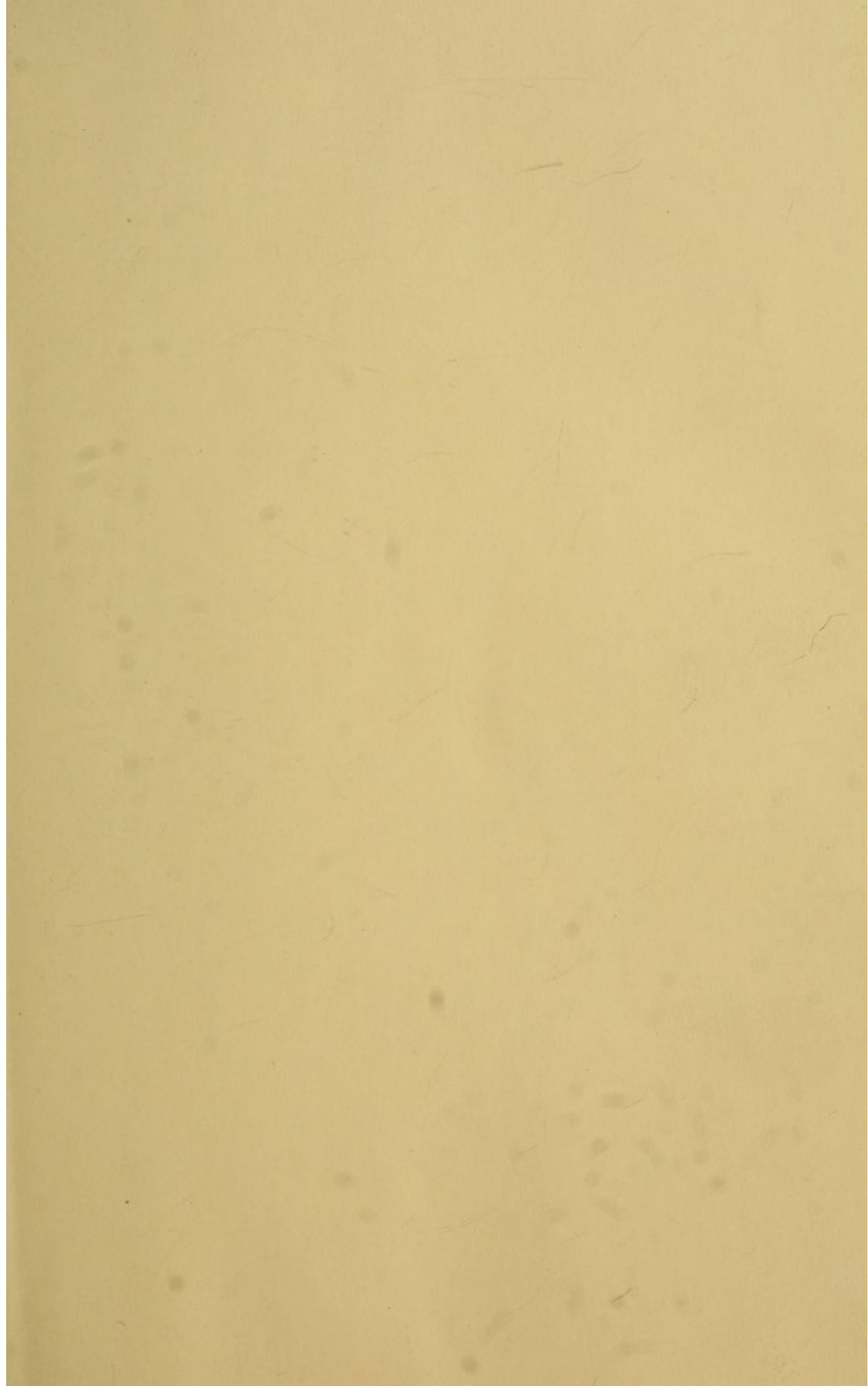
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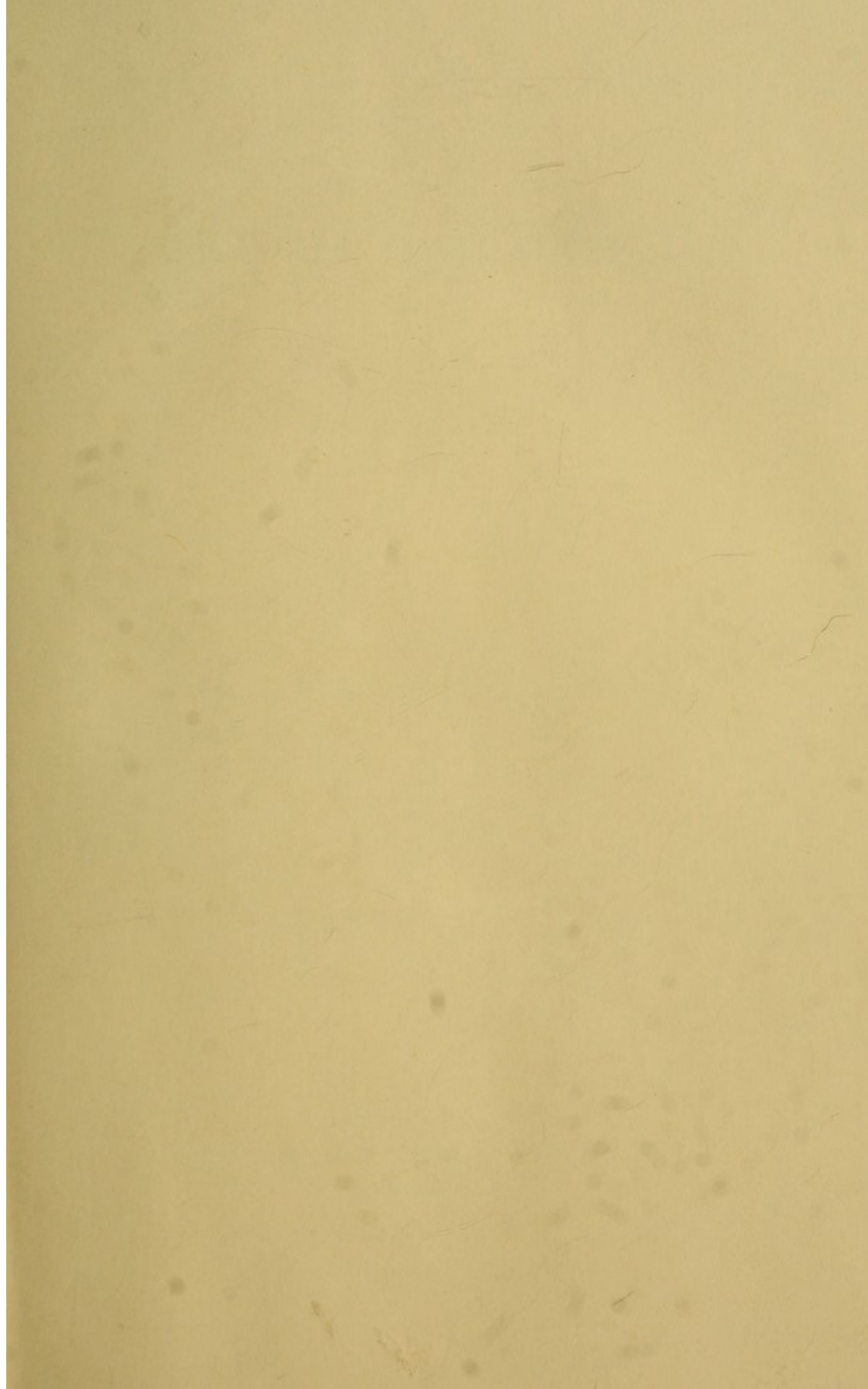
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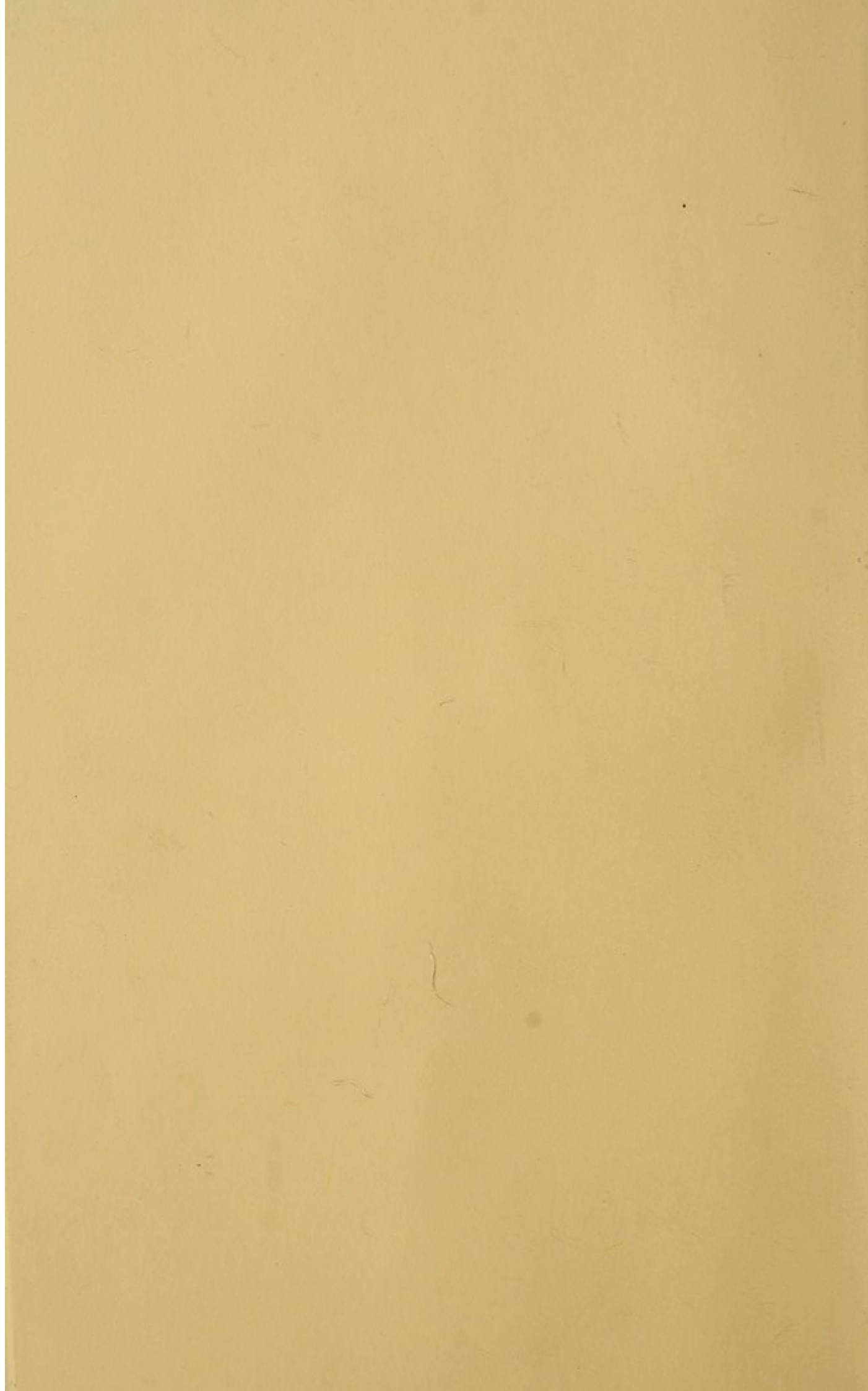












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P. O.

THE
STORY OF A STOMACH:

AN EGOTISM.

BY
A REFORMED DYSPEPTIC.

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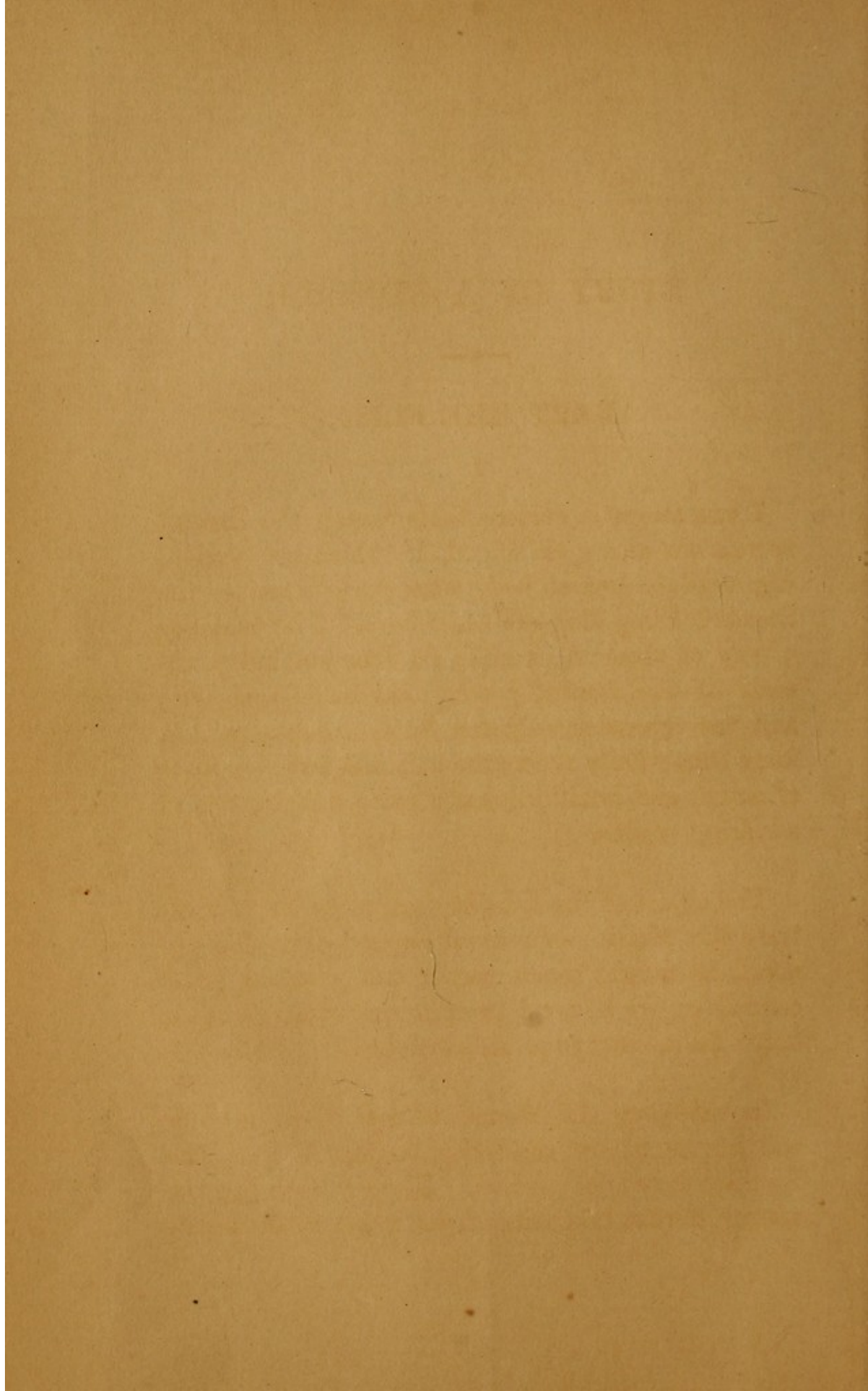
DEDICATED

TO

MY WIFE,

WHO IS PRINCIPALLY INTERESTED IN MY REFORM, AND WHO MAY
LEARN SOMETHING FROM A PERUSAL OF MY STORY.

R. D.



STORY OF A STOMACH.



PART THE FIRST.

I.

I REMEMBER a curious fable among the literary recreations of my childhood, in which the various organs of the human body were made actors, — the Stomach being king and chief hero. The inability of any of these to exercise its function independently of the central power, was happily shown; and the repentant subjects, lately resolute rebels, were successfully reconstructed, and left in a state of active and healthy loyalty quite edifying to the admiring reader.

The object of the fabulist seemed to be to illustrate the doctrine of mutual dependence. To my mind, he taught much more; and gave the great central organ a royal prominence which it were better for us always to acknowledge.

In selecting the theme of my story, nobody will accuse me of pandering to popularity. The Stomach is not the *fashion*. Regnant though it be among its vital brotherhood, yet it can by no means

be said to be a favorable subject for literary enthusiasm. So far as I know, novelists never choose it as a basis for imaginative architecture; nor do poets often idealize its sober history in stately iambs, or playfully illustrate its moods for the responsive lyre.

When I consider our total dependence on its action for all that is effective and enjoyable, I confess some resentment of this neglect. Think what we owe to good digestion, and say if my impulse be not right. Without the vitality which it generates, not only would Reason flounder hopelessly in the mire of its own weakness, but even the poetic flames of Imagination would expire and leave but dead embers. All the admirable operations of body and brain find in the Stomach their origin and support. History, Invention, Romance, Chivalry, Art, — all owe to the inspiration of health, their grandest achievements, sublimest conceptions, most resplendent glory, and most eloquent recital. Good digestion assisted Napoleon to the empire of Europe; its failure caused his first great defeat, and helped to rivet the chain that bound him to St. Helena. I imagine that Prometheus typifies a gastric calamity, and that the remorseless vulture which devoured his unfortunate liver, was emblematical of a perpetual dyspepsia. Fastened to *his* rock, he seems an antetype of the great Corsican, with the fatal cancer gnawing his vitals. Can you imagine Pericles without a capable Stomach? or a

dyspeptic Helen, in place of that glorious creature whose magnetism crazed two nations, and even convulsed the empire of the gods?

I affirm the Stomach to be one parent of all excellent thought and action. Not only is the physical health dependent on its integrity, but the moral also. It is the source whence the brain derives its power for clear thought, and the nerves and muscles for strong action. All outward causes of inspiration fail when opposed by its defection. A fit of colic will neutralize the finest effects of eloquence; and all the sublimities of Milton are but vapors when your nerves are torn with the headache occasioned by last night's debauch. On the other hand, when the Stomach is in full force, what prodigies of labor will the body perform! what miracles of conception leap forth from the brain!—a single large thought sometimes setting civilization ahead a full century.

The arrogant brain is guilty of a usurpation of honors; and therein the Stomach hath great wrongs. In its appreciation, the reflective world of to-day is not fairly up to the mark of *Æsop*; the æsthetic world knows not the Stomach at all; and the world in general utterly fails to comprehend the source of its immortal power. The strength generated by its fine alchemy is spent in searching all the dark corners of the universe for remote facts, which, when found, often prove but so

much rubbish in the storehouses of knowledge. Instead of penetrating our own organic mysteries, a full comprehension of which would so greatly augment our power for achievement in all other departments of science, we contemptuously neglect the study of our vital mechanism, and ignore that cunning union of spirit and matter which affords the greatest miracle offered for our contemplation.

To realize all this, we should suppose to be not only easy but inevitable. No one will deny that the finest nerves, the most highly organized brains, are dependent for much of their excellence upon perfect nutrition. Yet observe the ill-usage which we remorselessly lavish on the Stomach; stuffed, as it is liable to be to-day, with atrocious compounds of misdirected art, and, to-morrow, absolutely starved into exasperation, if not feebleness. Appetite, whim, fashion, and the fancied necessities of business, by turns become its tyrants. Seldom is it treated with the consideration due to its paramount importance, till its functions become so impaired by abuse as to disable it from fulfilling our unreasonable requirements. Its final exhaustion, entailing disorder and loss of power, and often acute wretchedness, on the entire system, compel a recognition of its rights, and an acknowledgment, in our persistent efforts toward amendments, of the singular folly of which we have been guilty. This acknowledgment is wrung from us by necessity; and we consent to atone our errors, through

a base homage to fear, when we perceive that our sins have invoked for our torment the presence of that impalpable but terrible demon — *DYSPEPSIA*.

In curious illustration of our anxiety to ignore the rights of the Stomach, is the saying that we ought, in daily life, to be unconscious of its existence. As sensibly might a man ignore his eyes or ears. So common have the evils of indigestion become, that I suppose those who use this saying, regard a freedom from actual dyspeptic sufferings as the perfection of health. Of course the *natural* action of no organ ever causes discomfort; but this negative blessing of exemption is not all that we are entitled to ask of that which *should be* a source of actual pleasure. Because the eye or ear is sometimes the seat of pain, who would therefore forego the delights of the nobler senses, and, content with a simple immunity from suffering, renounce the exquisite pleasure inspired by a fine landscape, and the ravishment that thrills every nerve when Mezzolini or Morensi translates, by voice, the divine conceptions of the masters of song?

The truth is, the Stomach should always be so healthful as to make the exercise of its functions a source of positive enjoyment. To this end,

Its education, in civilized life, should be made an art, like that of other organs, which we already recognize as fit subjects for æsthetic culture.

Unquestionably, in the estimation of men, the enjoyment of a good dinner ranks in importance with pleasures social and intellectual. We go to Delmonico's as we would visit the academies of Music and Design. To secure the gratification of this appetite we often submit to sacrifices the most severe. Rhetorically, we speak of "the feast of reason"; the very simile proving our high estimate of the sensuous repast. And when we consider its effect on us, — that on its composition and digestion depend the sustenance of the body, the serenity of the temper, and the electrical force of the mind, — I think we cannot resist the conclusion that the art of eating is a very fine art indeed; and that its culture is an object well worth the care of all who are compelled to use bodies as instruments of their souls, and to submit to the various influences which the condition of the former necessarily exercises on the education of the latter.

II.

I do not propose, however, any scientific treatment of a subject so large. These pages will constitute only a personal record, accompanied by hints and suggestions. The reader may have noticed that my first sentence began with that most self-estimable of personal pronouns, so often magnified by our vanity to proportions which over-

shadow all its brotherhood ; and I am very sincere in declaring that I entertain the deliberate design of making its recurrence frequent and perpetual. My sketch is to relate to myself ; and the conclusions given will mainly be such as have been derived from my own experiences.

It has been my fortune to lead a life of realities ; one identified with events so varied and tumultuous as to disable me, in general, from taking cognizance of facts not forced directly upon my notice. Living alternately in the East and the West ; sometimes trifling with the dainty compositions of French *cuisiniers*, and sometimes dividing with the squatter on the prairie his meal of fried bacon and pearlash biscuit, or devouring, after the fashion of camps, the army ration which forms the common measure of every private soldier's stomach, and decides them all to be of the same regulation pattern ; doomed oftentimes to the martyrdom of travel by railway, where the only theory of the time-table is to make connections — (it never seeming to occur to the managers that eating is a primary necessity, existing long anterior to the invention of the steam-engine or the contrivance of tramways ;) subject, in short, to the most violent mutations of our adventurous American life, I have lavished upon my stomach the usual amount of ill-usage and suffered the customary retribution, through the affliction of dyspepsia in some or other of the various disguises in which that many-visaged disorder

delights to make its unwelcome masquerade. Thus, by a costly tuition, I think myself qualified to become a pedant in hygiene; and as I believe the schooling to have been valuable, I desire to instruct in turn (and by processes shorter and less rugged than those I followed) such unfortunates as may have suffered like myself, without, like me, having found and applied the remedy they desire.

III.

FROM the most reliable evidence I have been able to obtain in regard to an event not within the scope of my personal recollection, I was introduced into the world with a physical constitution equal, at least, to those of average babies at the same unlucky period of existence. For two years — so run the traditions — every thing went well. In an evil hour, however, to remedy some slight derangement (which Nature, doubtless, if let alone, would speedily have removed), I was placed in charge of the very person, of all men in the world, who had the most direct and positive interest in keeping me ill,—namely, the family physician. In consequence, I was soon reduced to a condition of the greatest danger. Drugs had nearly done their work; and the delicate organs of babyhood almost ceased to contend against the poisonous administrations of the regular practice. Presently, a conclave of doctors

was summoned ; a consultation of awful gravity ensued ; and, by the voice of their united ignorance, my trembling life was solemnly dedicated to immediate destruction. This sentence, however, proved my salvation ; for, by the extinction of the professional hope, I was relieved from further endurance of the fatal potions which had already begun to chill my little heart with the damps of the Stygian river. Nature was again left alone, to contend, as best she might, with the assaulting disease, fearfully reinforced by the foreign allies which a false science had introduced into the very citadel of her empire. For a whole week, my hesitating life trembled in the balance ; but at length Nature gained a sort of Antietam victory, and overcame the enemy after a fashion, though herself too terribly exhausted by the struggle to be able to gather the full fruits of her hard-won triumph. I recovered, indeed, but very slowly. My system had become enfeebled beyond complete repair ; and its pristine vigor was gone forever. I think of that period as one recalls the dim outlines of a sad, half-remembered dream. Back in the past, those earlier years of my sickly childhood seem like weary ages of another existence. I remember myself growing slowly up, a puny and fragile boy ; and it was not till I had painfully reached the age of sixteen years or thereabouts that I ventured even to hope for such a partial recovery of health as should fit me for the less laborious of those duties which manhood brings to all.

A feeble childhood generates quiet and sedentary tastes; and these, again, discourage the habits of activity so essential to health in this exacting period. Thus, I naturally became studious; and naturally, too, my thoughts lingered on my condition, and dallied with every suggestion which offered a hope for its improvement. I was inevitably attracted by those modern theories which seek (in some respects not vainly) to supply in science the *hiatus* of a rational system of medicine. Much, even in this early period, did I become indebted to the reflective habits thus formed, and the frequent hints for the prevention of disease which I gleaned from miscellaneous sources and had the hardihood to test in practice. Yet, when I review those years, I vividly realize their profound ignorance; and I can but marvel at the tenacity with which Nature adheres to her rights, and so often triumphs in her desperate contests with the combined forces of ignorance and folly.

On reaching the stage of manhood, I entered upon it with far better health than I had dared to expect. The first five or six years were passed in quiet and studious pursuits. The consequence was nervous exhaustion; and having finally learned the value of exercise from its deprivation, I changed my occupations to secure its benefits. About this time, too, I fell in with Dr. Trall's "Hydropathic Encyclopedia"; a book of wonderful vigor and clearness, and marked by a thoroughness of professional

study and a severity of logic, which render the more dangerous his admixture of some as plausible sophisms as ever captivated a willing fancy. From this book I know that I derived great benefit. Many of its maxims I interwove into my philosophy of health ; and many of its processes became remedies on which I learned to rely for deliverance from the spectre of dyspepsia already following my footsteps. The valuable of these I still retain ; the worthless have perished in the ordeal of practice.

For one fortunate circumstance I have reason to be profoundly grateful. After the disastrous experiment of my infancy, I was permitted to remain almost entirely free from the administration of drugs. Save the harmless simples sometimes prescribed by maternal anxiety, I became almost a stranger to the use of medicines. Whether from an early consciousness, inspired by hearing the legend of my narrow infantile escape rehearsed at an age when I was just able to divine its moral, though too young to retain the recollection of its recital ; or from some idiosyncratic instinct, inexplicable by positive science — my first ability to manifest aversion was employed to show an inflexible antagonism to those prescriptions by which doctors manage to fasten their income-tax upon the expenses of society. At the age of four years, I recollect suffering intolerable agony from the dread of vaccination at the hands of a portly gentleman with saddle-bags, in whose benignant aspect I

seemed to discover all the malice of the great enemy of our race ; and at eight, I obstinately rejected the inevitable quinine, which my original evil genius, the family physician, sought to force down my rebellious throat while I was suffering the miseries of a detestable ague. I have always felt disposed to celebrate the result as a great triumph : for I actually carried my point in spite of the professional and family league formed against me ; and I had the grim satisfaction of “wearing out” the disease during six mortal weeks of alternating chills and fever fits, and, in this way, of achieving a permanent cure, as well as of gaining a moral victory over the doctor and his allies. These last were certain members of my own family whose experience, I thought, should have taught them better ; for they had themselves followed medical treatment for the same disease till it had reduced them to a condition in which they suffered about equal evils from the recurrence of the disorder and the ill effects of the drugs. But, on the whole, my father’s family had no great faith in *Materia Medica* ; so that I was spared many perils which, otherwise, I might have been obliged to encounter.

Gradually, as a means of relief from the evils of indigestion, mainly manifested in general debility and frequent violent headaches, I came to depend upon a tolerably careful diet, and a plentiful use of water in the various modes prescribed by the oracles of hygeopathic science. I am now aware of having

sometimes employed the latter unwisely ; as, for instance, when I once for some weeks overdid the application of a morning shower-bath (rashly allowed to fall on the head) while lacking the inherent vitality, and neglecting the active subsequent exercise, required to produce the necessary reaction and restore to the blood its indispensable vigor of circulation. (To show how truly circumstances *do* alter cases, I will state that *now* I can use the same shower daily, with the most gratifying effects.) I am certain, also, that at times I reduced my diet to a point too low to replace the waste of the system and maintain its strength. But I believe that my general course was judicious ; and it is to the habits thus formed and rigidly practiced, of abstaining from the free use of medicines as well as of stimulants — especially alcohol and tobacco — during the formative period, that I attribute the ability developed later in life to overcome the grave difficulties to which I was earlier subjected. Nature not having been enfeebled by a too constant contest with medical and stimulating poisons, has thus been enabled to bear the burden of other bad habits, and even to accumulate strength with which to second my more recent efforts in behalf of the long-suffering Stomach, and, consequentially, of the whole system.

IV.

It was under these circumstances that I approached my fortieth year ; — a sort of half-way point in the journey of life, most suggestive to the reflective mind, and calculated to produce an important influence upon habits not already unchangeable. Like Omar, I had my little programme formed for life. I had always looked forward to this age as one which must bring me comparative rest. In reaching it, I had said, I shall have passed the crisis of business affairs, and be able to command the necessary time for recreation and self-improvement ; and my leisure shall be employed in enriching my mind by the study of books, by travel, and by those artistic and social pleasures which bring a charm to the passing moment, while they impress us with lessons of enduring value. The plan was well enough, though fate seriously interfered with its consummation. The pinnacle of life rightly reached, what supreme pleasures may it not overlook ! — a past well spent in the execution of wise and beneficent plans and dotted all along with successful results ; a future to which hope, like the setting sun, lends its loveliest glow, and among whose fruited years we may gather the rewards which earlier toils and passions disabled us from reaching. In picturing my descent down this flowery path, into the tranquil valley of age, I had not been unmindful of the inevitable decay of health ; and had even

permitted myself to contemplate the possibility of a moderate resort to those physical stimulants, which then, if ever, can be made useful in the economy of the system. But as I approached the climacteric, I perceived indications of exhaustion which excited my alarm. A winter of extreme labor and anxiety was followed by symptoms of dyspepsia more marked than I had experienced for years. In vain I resorted to the most approved practices of hydropathy; fruits and coarse breads were made to supply the place of concentrated foods at breakfast, while my dinner was subjected to equal care in both quality and amount. Tea and coffee I entirely abolished, as well as condiments generally, and all known stimulants. Exercise in walking and riding I took with what freedom is permitted by city life. All was in vain. As the spring found me, so did it leave me; and I entered on the summer with a conviction that I must seek a life in the country, and by a total change of habits, rescue myself forcibly from the deadly grasp that seemed fastening upon my very vitals.

Apparently, I was not disabled from ordinary labor, but went to my office daily, and seemingly performed the duties of a man in health. But my energies were enfeebled and my spirits depressed; my existence seemed robbed of its pleasure and my mind of its power. The food I ate was slowly and imperfectly digested; and I suffered an immense diminution of that vitality which is the motor of

the animal machine, and without which the machine itself loses its capacity for functional performance. Instead of the prompt and cheerful response which a healthful and well-trained stomach always makes to the proper introduction of appropriate food, that organ, in this case, seemed resolutely bent on following a line of behavior which it is almost divine charity to characterize as mutinous and perverse. At times, the food eaten would be allowed to remain for hours without a sign of hospitable welcome; while at others, absolute objection was made to its presence, and, instead of the sweet influences which the digestive juices should have lavished lovingly upon it, they assumed an intensely acid and acrid character, to the great scandal of my physiological system, and the serious interruption of the entire animal economy. So general had this condition become, that an occasional variation in favor of healthy digestion was a novelty. In fact, had it continued, I do not know but the abnormal might so far have triumphed over the natural, as to generate a sombre satisfaction in the conscious possession of a phenomenal peculiarity to distinguish me from my kind; so that, presently, I might have come to regard my Stomach with a morbid admiration something akin to the curious regard which wonder-mongers manifest for unnatural monstrosities, like bearded women and two-headed calves.

V.

THIS period brought a crisis in my physical history ; and the turn was accomplished thus. A friend, whose enormous financial and constructive labors, not unknown to fame, had disordered his digestion, and who was my usual morning companion "down-town," astonished me, during one of those matutinal trips, by insisting on vacating his seat in a Madison Avenue stage, and calling at a fruiterer's, opposite the Metropolitan Hotel, to procure a prescription ordered by his physician. Not to lose his society, I also surrendered my place to a surprised and delighted candidate poised patiently on the steps, and followed my friend into the shop aforesaid ; in no way comprehending, I confess, how a vender of fruits and confections was expected to develop the ability to prepare a medical compound, but willing, nevertheless, to wait and observe whatever new manifestation of human eccentricity I might be destined to discover. But the shopman seemed not at all disconcerted by the requirement made on his skill ; and I readily comprehended the reason, when I found that the remedy which Dr. C. had prescribed for my friend, was simply a package of peach-pits. The order was filed with commendable alacrity, and the service embellished with the most emphatic indorsements of the efficacy of the curious remedy, which the seller, with a vivacity verging on enthusiasm, pro-

nounced absolutely sure to overcome any case of dyspepsia, if faithfully used for a reasonable period of trial. Of this article, as merchandise, I had never before even heard, though conscious of a dim impression that the concocters of hygienic bitters of various sorts, used peach-pits to give a tonic character to their preparations. (And since that time, I may remark in passing, I have often endeavored, and generally in vain, to procure them in other large cities, and even in other places in New York.) It appears that the peach-pits are a favorite prescription with Dr. C. for his dyspeptic patients; and that his reliance for a supply, was upon this vender of fruits and confections, who made it a point always to have them on sale. So confident was the honest man's assertion in their favor, that I was quite impressed by his statements; and, giving way incontinently to the pressure of his declamation, I hastened to follow the example of my friend, and invest in their purchase a note of U. S. fractional currency, purporting to be of the legal monetary valuation of fifty cents; and for which representative amount, I secured a supply of the precious prescriptive pits, sufficient for at least two full weeks of faithful administration. The direction was simply to eat them, one or more at a time, to the extent of say a dozen or two in a day;—a requirement easy of fulfillment, as it scarcely demanded the exercise of either perseverance or self-denial.

Now, the philosophical operations of this remedy I do not propose to discuss ; it not being essential to my purpose, which is accomplished with the simple statement of its effects. To be quite candid with a reader between whom and myself I very much desire to establish and maintain confidential relations, I am thoroughly ignorant of its chemical nature. I have heard dreadful hints that the little germ of vitality enveloped in the peach-stone, is rich in the fatal possession of Prussic Acid ; and I confess to have thrilled and shuddered under a sense of mingled admiration and terror when I read, one day, that splendid apotheosis of the Peach, where the brilliant authoress of " Azarian " speaks of " the subtly sweet poison at its heart." But I here close my eyes resolutely to all the deductions of logic, and the fearful whispers of chemical admonition ; for I ate the article experimentally, and not on scientific principles, and, having realized from its use unequivocal benefits, do not care a doit if it shall be found by analysis to contain all the deadly influences concentrated in the fatal poison of the Borgias. As its use was followed by an immediate and decided improvement in the temper and action of my stomach, it is impossible that I shall refuse to credit it with a large agency in this change. Alone, it might not have been able to accomplish an absolute cure ; but, as a means of restoring tone to the digestive organs, and thus inaugurating a complete reform in their action, I concede to it an almost miraculous efficacy.

I will add, here, that I have since found similar results from the use of the Bitter Almond ; and I am inclined to the belief that there is no material difference in the remedial effects of the two seeds.

VI.

VERY soon after my commencement with the peach-pits, I was again obliged to go West on business ; and a period of autumnal travel in a delightful prairie region, with abundant activity and variety of manual exercise, doubtless aided greatly in their good effect. I do not, indeed, precisely see how it could produce hygienic benefit for me to pass through the hands of that terrible type of diabolism, the guerilla Quantrell, and to witness the murder of a hundred and fifty defenceless men and boys, and the unprovoked destruction of their homes, over the heads of their families, as was my painful destiny during that journey ; and I am sure, from experience, that, to feel for six hours, in the midst of carnage and conflagration, as I did at Lawrence, Kansas, on that fearful 21st of August that the tossing of a copper would fitly indicate my own chances between life and death, is not favorable to that serenity of mind which I believe to be essential to perfect digestion ; but, setting aside these disagreeable incidents, I am able fully to appreciate the advantages to health derivable from

the novelty, the exercise, the change of diet, the free respiration of a stimulating air, inseparable from a wagon-trip over the rolling plains of a country like Kansas. Such a trip, enjoyed during the most delightful days of autumn, in a region where autumn is not only surpassingly lovely in itself, but where its resplendent beauties were tempered by the virginal freshness of youth, may well give to the physical life such an impulse as will thoroughly re-tone all its faculties, in spite of the few startling experiences I have named. In this case, I am sure that the favorable influence was no way lessened by my good companionship; and I credit as hygienic the spectacular effects produced on me by Indian holiday shows, and by those barbaric rites by which the former lords of the continent simulate a traditionary power, and seek to impress their white masters with the grandeur of a nationality long since trodden into helplessness beneath the heel of a ruthless civilization. At all events, in spite of Quantrell and much atrocious cookery, and nights by no means free from the depredations of vermin not less sanguinary, if less dangerous, than the guerillas, I returned from the expedition late in October, greatly improved in general health. This advantage, however, was seriously diminished by a closing ride of many days and nights by rail; and the residue was not sufficient to withstand a temporary incarceration to which I was condemned in a boarding-house where the diet was distasteful and the society uncongenial. And this leads me

to say a word in deprecation of the mercenary and indifferent spirit which usually governs these cheap substitutes for homes. We must advance the standard of living ; and, by showing a willingness liberally to pay for a higher grade of accommodation, induce the employment, in the boarding-house business, of a grade of talent such as any intelligent and well-bred man would require in a housekeeper, or even a wife. I know, from a varied experience, that my own chances for health are greatly increased whenever I am able to enjoy the comforts of my home ; and I regard it as not the most trifling of the testimonials due to its feminine "head centre," that her virtues embrace the perceptions of fitness and taste necessary to its satisfactory management.

VII.

SHORT as was this last boarding-house era, it produced a marked recurrence of my old symptoms, and I speedily made an opportunity to effect a change. A seemingly fateful series of accidents and incidents resulted in my domestication for the remainder of the autumn and the whole of the following winter, in a private family where the footing was social rather than mercenary, and where all the previous unfavorable conditions were exactly reversed. Here the diet was nutritious and appetizing without being gross ; the food was well

selected and well cooked; and the meals were served with taste and embellished with a conversational charm sufficient to invest the plainest repast with the luxurious gusto of an Apician feast. This family belonged essentially to the *genus* of good liverers; and its *esprit* absolutely forbade the exercise of a rigid dietary. Its head was a lady of English birth and breeding, accustomed to the enjoyment of table pleasures; and, made defiant by robust health, she had always alternated the intellectual pleasures which she was well fitted to create and enjoy, with a reckless indulgence of her appetite for high living. This appetite it had never occurred to her to restrain on emigrating to America. The transplantation of dietetic habits is always an error; these, like the natural productions intended to maintain them, should always grow from the conditions of the country. It were as sensible for a traveler to the tropics, to provide himself with a wardrobe of furs, or for a pilgrim to the North Pole, to sail into the shadow of icebergs, clad in a costume adapted to equatorial heats, as for the natives of any region, on removing to another meteorologically its opposite, to insist on retaining their old modes of life. In this case, my friend had brought from lymphatic England those sensuous habits quite suitable to its moist atmosphere, where temperature aids temperament, and out-door exercise strengthens both; but in attempting to practice them in our drier and more stimulating climate, she had gradually undermined her physical consti-

tution, and made compulsory a wholesome moderation in Epicurian enjoyments. Her voluptuous nature had been so tempered by encroaching infirmities, as to reduce her present practice to the golden medium essential to the health. A diet equally removed from grossness and poverty, I am now aware to be most conducive to the conservation of that chiefest of physical blessings; and I cannot repress an impulse of thankfulness whenever I remember that, since that era, I have not experienced as much inconvenience altogether from dyspepsia as I had often suffered before in a single month.

The lessons which I learned here, were, to a great extent, involuntary. The circumstances in which I was placed, seemed insensibly to compel the abandonment of my more rigid practices. The breakfast-steak — tender, warm, and done to a turn — at once assumed an unwonted prominence in the operations of that meal; the delicious rolls and buckwheats unceremoniously displaced the coarse breads which I had before regarded as a necessity; and the real coffee completely supplanted my usual aqueous draught, so charming as we read of it in pastoral idyls, — so chilling when we drink it on a winter's morning, shivering with the mercury at zero. This breakfast was not only eaten: it was enjoyed. Under the admirable influences which it exercised, even Cornaro, stern ascetic as he was, must have proved infidel to the faith on which rested the last two thirds of his mortal century.

The results of this change were as gratifying as they were surprising. I found myself relieved from the heaviness and torpidity which had oppressed me. I again experienced the comfortable consciousness of good digestion, and began to glory in the realization of increasing vitality and strenght ; which increase I could feel to be reacting on my spirits and intellect. My hearty breakfast permitted but the slightest lunch, if any ; and the evening brought an appetite for dinner commensurate with the preparations made for its satisfaction. Faithfully and kindly did the reconciled Stomach, approving the new *regime*, sustain the reformatory measures which I had instituted in its behalf and my own ; and the ready and uniform flow of its gastric juices attested the fact that I had finally entered on a course which Nature was eager to approve and bless, and ready to sustain with all the powers which the mal-practice of the doctors and my own abuses had permitted her to preserve.

These chief incidents of reform were attended with others which I shall presently describe. But I wish first to formularize my grand lesson in dietary science ; — a lesson not new, and one scarcely needed by those who are thoroughly healthful, but which those who do need it, seem most resolved not to learn ; namely, that

An abundant, generous diet is the one best adapted to a feeble digestion.

For the utterance of this dogma, I know I shall incur the anathemæ of the Hygeopathic hierarchy ; but I have advanced so far in my dissentient career that I can afford to disregard the fulminations of medical Protestantism as well as those of medical Papacy.

VIII.

THIS seems to me the proper place to conclude what I have to say of the peach-pits which played so important a part in initiating my recovery. I used them as medicine ; and, as medicine, I abandoned them with the return of health. When the house is repaired, the scaffold is no longer needed, and should be removed. It is now about three and a half years since I first tested their efficacy ; and I continued their habitual use only about a year. Like any other medicine, they should be put aside as soon as the effect is produced. Occasionally, to be sure, (such is the tenacity of constitutional morbidness and the tyranny of bad old habits) when, from over-indulgence or irregularity or neglect, I feel recurring symptoms — for, alas ! though the spirit is willing, the flesh is often very weak — I return to them for a day or so ; but this necessitated return is a penalty for the infringement of hygienic laws which I have expensively learned, but am not wise enough always to obey.

Medicines should not be made a constant necessity. While daily habits cannot well be too regular in civilized life, the use of remedies should be rare and exceptional; and while the former should become as much a part of routine, as sitting when we eat or reclining when we sleep, the latter can be employed with scarcely too much caution or infrequency.

PART THE SECOND.

I.

IN my narrative, I alluded to certain principles and habits which I deem of hygienic importance. Some of these I desire to consider more at length, offering, with them, the general conclusions of my experience and practice.

I shall not dwell upon those canons of health with which even our school-children are supposed to be familiar. Everybody, for instance, is expected to know in a general way, that sedentary habits render necessary an especial respect for daily exercise, pure air, and cleanliness. At points like these, I shall do little more than hint; employing my limited space in suggestions less familiar.

II.

IN considering the subject of health, as affected by habits, we must first clarify our ideas in regard to its relations with society. Many of our medical reformers cloud the general liberality of their views by an assumption that civilization is its enemy. *My*

own belief is exactly the reverse. Statistics conclusively show that, among nations, the average of life rises with the elevation of the social standard. Of course, each state of society is subject to its peculiar vices, against which civilization is forced to contend ; but these, fearful and disgusting as they appear in contrast with their beautiful surroundings, are impotent to neutralize the advantages which Christianity and art are accumulating on our race.

While, therefore, sedentary habits and passional excesses are powerful auxiliaries of disease, yet cleanliness, regularity, good houses, and abundant food are stronger reënforcements on the side of health. Unquestionably, the digestive organs are great sufferers from the evils of civilization ; and, *all other things being equal*, health would be much better in a condition of primitive simplicity than when dependent on the complex and artificial systems of enlightened nations. But civilization, if it be true, brings with it remedies for all its especial evils, while it discards all the especial evils of barbarism, and replaces them with unquestioned blessings. It is the sum of beneficent art ; and the aim of its disciples should be, to make life as artistic as possible ; securing every advantage of intelligence, with which to adorn and strengthen those of Nature. No exercise of art can be more legitimate than the improvement and preservation of health, on which life itself depends. An understanding and application of principles, here, is as important and effica-

cious as though the object were to perfect a machine or carve a statue.

The Hygeopathists have undertaken to treat the subject of health rationally, and have promulgated many important truths ; but their system is based on error, and fails in its results. They attempt to graft the inferior scion upon a superior stock, and so get a very unsatisfactory fruit. Reverting to the primitive *status* of the race, they ignore the effects and requirements of intellectual advancement. Condemning the Stomach of a highly organized man, to the coarse regimen of the ox, they infer that the result must be to secure for it the ox's digestion. If such could be the result, it would also tend to bring down the man's brain to the same bovine coarseness and feebleness.

No ; the hygienic philosophy which draws its illustrations from peasant life, is of necessity inapplicable to a class which labors chiefly with its brain. It is not the coarseness of the bread of the Russian serf which gives him strength ; it is his exercise and his out-door life. Such are the tonics of Nature ; and their use, so far as possible, should be retained in all conditions ; but growth must be promoted and waste repaid, also ; and to do these is the office of food. If the growth and waste are mainly muscular, the food may be coarse and the man be strong ; but if they be of the brain and nerves, the food must be correspondingly better, or

brain and nerves will fail. And if (as is generally the case where brain-work predominates) plentiful exercise and respiration are neglected, the muscular system and all organs of the body will likewise become enfeebled, and general debility will result.

The fact that physical labor taxes the system less than mental, is partially realized by many. We know that the student needs more sleep than the journeyman blacksmith; he also needs more nutriment. So with the statesman in his closet, the merchant in his counting-room, and the clerk at his desk; neither can endure coarse food or scant sleep as well as the hunter among his hills or the farmer in his fields. The sedentary life, lacking Nature's tonics, impairs the digestion; and it logically follows that the food should be easier of assimilation. When habits of labor are artificial, we should call on art to remedy their evils. Every theory of dietetic reform must be worthless, whose conclusions would lead us down to the lower conditions of the race, instead of upward.

The reverse of such a theory should shape the system of the true reformer. In the progress of civilization, we substitute intellectual for physical pursuits, and should study how to preserve the muscular power unimpaired, while increasing that of the brain. With faith in progress, and admiration for art, we should support every advance with confidence, knowing that its consequence must be

an increase of power. Were it otherwise, barbarism only could endure ; and to civilize a people would be to doom them to extinction. Any reasoning, no matter what its premises, which leads to conclusions like these, is not only absurd but irreligious.

III.

THE *quality* of the food we eat becomes a question of grave import.

The Hygeopathist will recommend to the dyspeptic a diet of bran-bread, fruits, and the coarser roots and plants. All animal substances he prohibits, and looks coldly upon those grains and fruits which are most nutritious and easily digested. The human Stomach, taxed to provide for the waste of a weary brain and over-wrought nerves, he condemns to the same material which is furnished to that of a horse, which has to supply a demand for muscle alone.

It is only as you descend in the social scale that such a recommendation approaches reason ; as you rise, it becomes mischievous. We now know why the Scotch peasant may thrive on his bannock, and the Irishman subsist on potatoes ; but a diet so meagre would have sent Humboldt ungarlanded to his grave in middle age.

The great argument in favor of a meagre diet is, that it supplies sufficient *bulk* without excess of nourishment. Thus, it is claimed, is the Stomach filled, and yet relieved of the labor of digesting more nutriment than the system demands. In the latter part of this assumption lies ambushed a most dangerous error; for the very quality of food thus used to give bulk, is the most difficult of all to digest, and imposes upon the feeble Stomach an onerous and distasteful duty, while it supplies a nourishment totally inadequate to the labor required. In effect, it is an increase of work and a diminution of wages. The direct object of food is to produce blood; and if innutritious, the blood will be impoverished, and the digestive powers made to share the enfeeblement of the whole system. In selecting our food, therefore, we should study the relations of nutriment, waste, and digestibility, so that the blood may be sufficiently enriched without imposing needless labor on the Stomach; and in estimating these proportions, we must consider the habits of the individual. Here is a frequent source of error. The Vegetarians do not realize that the man of inactive physical habits, but whose work is with the brain, needs *more* nutrition than the common laborer, at the same time that his digestion is feebler. And inasmuch as brain is more valuable than muscle, — finer, more critical in every sense, — so must we use costlier food for its nourishment, and apply more skill and care — superior art, in short — in the selection. By supplying a richer

and more digestible regimen, we must at the same time meet the high demands of the mental and nervous systems, and reduce the labor of the weakened Stomach.

By no means do I reject vegetable foods. On the contrary, I consider them indispensable. Furnishing, as they do, every degree of nutrition and digestibility, I do not doubt that a Stomach *trained to their use* can be kept in perfect health. But habit becomes second nature; and so long as society adheres to a mixed diet, no dyspeptic who sits at its tables can profitably discriminate to the utter rejection of meats.

The *kinds* of food, within these limits, is a matter of less moment. The appetite, in a healthy person, will usually be a safe guide. When morbid, or pampered by stimulants and aristological enormities, its instincts are less true, and should be assisted by the judgment. Nature, in offering for man's use her immense variety of food, has recognized and provided for the different and varying wants of his system, and given the widest scope for individual selection. Stomachs equally healthy, will differently relish different foods, and digest them with different degrees of ease. To one, beef may be congenial, to another, mutton; and it is even possible that some strong and ill-educated organs may develop an affinity for pork, though, for the health of the race, as well as the credit of the individual,

I should hope that such instances are rare. So, too, some digest fine breads too readily, and require a coarse material on which to exercise their coarser powers. Some are found quite averse to milk; while others seem incapable of dealing with the crude fibre of the less digestible vegetables.

But as a rule, the delicate Stomach should beware of fats — especially if not entirely sweet. Rich gravies levy a fearful tax on its powers, and rancid oils are absolutely poisonous. Fried dishes, therefore, should be regarded with general disfavor; and the use of unwholesome butter, even in cooking, as an abomination. Condiments, as well as tea and coffee and all other stimulants, should be used with sparing rigor, so that, in periods of disability, when Nature seems to need a little awakening, their effect may be the better.

Thus it would seem that, of all the gifts tendered to man for his subsistence, none are to be absolutely rejected, though selection, since it is absolutely impossible to use them all, may be made a means of benefit. Each individual is by nature the best judge of his own requirements; and the sounder common sense and higher skill he brings to aid the choice, the better will it be for himself and for society.

IV.

I HAVE never seen the subject of *quantity*, in food, treated as seems to befit its importance. It is true that all now concede the necessity of bulk to accomplish the distension of the Stomach when digestion begins; but the argument is but half made, and often conducted to erroneous conclusions.

Wherever Nature has provided for muscular action, in a vital organ as well as in a limb, such action should be encouraged; otherwise, debility, if not disease, will be sure to result. Disuse the eye, the ear, the arm, and its powers decay. The heart derives a regular exercise in its action on the blood; the lungs do the same in breathing; the Stomach should do the same in digestion. A partial failure in either case produces disease; a total one, death.

Thus we see the importance of the muscular system of the Stomach. It cannot act with vigor, except that organ is fully distended; it cannot thoroughly repose, except after complete collapse. In order, therefore, to secure the regular periods of action and repose which the health of the Stomach demands, we must provide for it regular periods of fullness and depletion. This important principle lies at the very foundation of good digestion in sedentary life.

The process should be *not only regular, but gradual*. The empty Stomach should not be rudely awakened and violently distended by the abrupt deposit of a large quantity of food; but should be quietly, slowly enlarged by its introduction, till completely filled. This distension liberates the digestive fluids which flow forth upon the mass; and the faithful muscles commence that peristaltic action upon the food which ends only in its complete commixture and expulsion. As the organ has been gradually enlarged, so is it contracted in the same manner; and the labor of the occasion being over, it renews a period of rest only to be terminated by the awakening of hunger or the introduction of fresh food. If the latter — if it shall be required to recommence work before its strength is fully restored — a derangement to some extent ensues; but if not interfered with until a proper interval has passed, it returns to its task with original vigor, and health is preserved.

That food should be made fine and thoroughly salivated before being swallowed, all admit; and this necessity makes the operation of eating, gradual, as it should be to meet the muscular requirement of the Stomach. And in the simple statements here made, we find a key to the mystery of nutrition. *Distension* and *contraction* are the chief *exercise* of the stomach, and must recur regularly and gradually, and to the extreme limit. The food must be made fine before going into the

Stomach ; and an interval of absolute repose must be granted to the digestive organs before asking them to renew their labors. While in a natural, out-door life, these principles are less necessary to be observed, in an artificial one they are essential.

This theory of taking food only *in quantity*, is fatal to the childish practice of eating between meals. Before growth is attained, the periods must be more frequent ; but in adults, there is great danger of their recurring too often. It were more sensible to take our sleep in little snatches, than our food. Unless the Stomach be *filled*, the expansion is but partial, the digestion imperfect ; and after it is filled, no impertinent interruption should occur. Not till digestion is over, and the organ refreshed by repose, should the process be repeated ; and the Stomach will then be as eager to welcome it, as a fresh horse, liberated from his stall, is anxious for work or frolic.

To enjoy health, the sedentary man must sternly resist all temptations for infringing this law. Very much of my own improvement, I attribute to an utter abandonment of the habit of eating fruits and lunches and confections, on rail-cars and in other places subject to irregularities. With the return of health, and the disuse of the custom, I find the appetite easily held in check.

How often the Stomach should be thus exercised

in the work of digestion, is a question on which people will always differ. Obviously, the less frequent the meals, the larger will be the quantity taken at once, the more thorough the distension of the organ, and the longer the interval of repose. The argument strongly favors very full meals, taken at very long intervals. My own judgment approves but *two* during the day ; breakfast, *before our chief labors begin* ; dinner, *after they close*. As for the mid-day lunch, I am compelled to agree with Dr. Dixon in calling it "pernicious."

This plan too, with the fitness which should always exist between natural requirements and artificial habits, is admirably adapted to the customs of cities. Here, to eat in the middle of the day is, with most, to eat little, or in great haste. Morning and evening are, as they should be, the periods of leisure ; and the great duty of eating should *then* be performed, when we have time to regard the requirements of decency and health.

Some will object to the late dinner, on the ground that digestion cannot be complete before bed-time, and that the repose of the general system should include that of the involuntary muscles. The first reason I deny, and the second I am not prepared to admit. A Stomach which has had no demands made on it between the hours of seven or eight in the morning and five or six in the evening, will grapple its task with such power that a very few

hours will finish it. But I am not sure about physical rest being unfavorable to digestion. The old adage said to us, "After dinner rest awhile;" and sleep certainly would not be any worse than severe labor. The Stomach needs a large amount of the blood, while active; and either physical or mental labor withdraws it to other parts. The chill we sometimes feel after a full meal, shows how Nature works. So, too, the brain should be relieved of the blood during sleep, and I am not sure that the Stomach is not a good field for the employment of that fluid while the nervous system is at rest. At all events, if digestion shall have been half completed by bed-time, I have no fears of the other half.

We find a curious illustration of inconsistent practice in our treatment of ourselves and our horses. The organization and diseases of this animal, and the effect on him of artificial habits, are so like our own, as to render our necessities measurably the same. But what ostler is so ignorant as to choose to give his horse his heaviest feed on the eve of severe work? and what intelligent teamster would push his cattle to their speed, immediately after eating their grain?

Gentle exercise I believe to aid digestion, by assisting the muscular action of the Stomach, while it does not interfere with any process. If associated with pleasant thoughts, the aid will be still greater. This is an additional argument in favor of the late

dinner, as the evening is our only reliable time for pleasure and recreation.

Breakfast may be followed by labor without injury, unless it be too severe on the brain, and such as to induce a cramped position of the Stomach. The bodily powers are so strong at that hour, that both digestion and work can proceed together; more especially as the morning meal is much lighter than the other. But to dispose of the dinner, which is the chief reliance of the system for restoration, we must give the Stomach more advantage. "The dinner," well says Emerson, "is the capital thing." Eaten at five or six o'clock, with the labors of the day over and the mind at rest, with the time unlimited by engagements, so that mastication and salivation may be complete, and accompanied and followed as it should be, by pleasing social influences, it becomes a source of exquisite enjoyment, and an agent of æsthetic, moral, and physical improvement.

V.

As dyspeptics are by no means free from abuses of appetite, I must disclaim any encouragement of over-eating. The Stomach may be *filled*, without being over-loaded and strained. Temperance is always necessary, and a man may eat too much food as

well as drink too much wine or water, or wear too much clothing, or do too much work.

By a natural law, the digestive powers are proportioned to the amount of nutrition needed, and not to the quantity of food consumed. To eat more than the supply of waste and strength requires, is perhaps worse than not to eat enough ; as it might be wiser to stint Nature a little, than to require her to over-work. If the process of eating be slow, there will be small danger of serious transgression, unless the eater is under the tyranny of a sensual appetite.

And here I must dilate a little on the absolute importance of *time* in the alimentary process. I have stated the reasons which make slow eating necessary ; I want now to insist that these reasons shall be regarded.

Civilization, in securing its advantages, is always compelled to make concessions. The Stomach, in every member of society, has acquired a vested right in so much of his time as will give ample leisure for the consumption of daily food. This period, with our present habits, seems to be from half to three fourths of an hour for breakfast, and twice as long for dinner. Now, my countrymen are proverbial for sharp dealing ; and nothing is more common, I regret to say, than efforts on their part to evade this obligation. In the attempt to defraud their Stomachs, however, they cheat themselves as

well; for Nature has retained ample security for fulfillment, and never fails to enforce a forfeiture for any evasion of the bond. The full debt, with interest compounded, is sure to be collected at the grave, (if not sooner,) which advances to meet the dishonest debtor on his way.

Sam Slick records of Abernethy, that he was once consulted by a dyspeptic Yankee, who had recently entered some diplomatic position in London. As soon as the patient had stated this fact, the eccentric physician bade him go his way and get well. The stranger angrily demanded an explanation. "Why," said Abernethy, coolly, "your official character will compel you to mingle in good society and eat like a civilized being, and that will cure you." If I cannot vouch for the truth of the story, I can guarantee the soundness of the moral.

VI.

PERHAPS there is as much virtue in *variety* in food, as in uniformity. In music, we do not always wish to be confined to that of Mozart or any one master; or in tragedy, to hear nobody but Booth, unequalled though he may be. And if we would, as we should, make eating a fine art, we seek those principles which Nature has provided for its foundation.

We need *kinds* enough of food, habitually, to give us all the elements of the blood ; and a change outright is often advantageous. We go to the springs, and attribute our improved appetite to the water ; or to the sea-side, and are eloquent on the efficacy of surf-baths and salt air. But sometimes we go into the country, instead, where we find neither Congress-water nor ocean-spray ; and yet we think food never tasted so well before, nor so nourished the system. Now, much credit may be given to the air, and much to the water, and much, also, to the effect of novelty upon the spirits ; but much is also due to the mere *change of diet*, which is sometimes as much a necessity, as for us occasionally to walk or ride, instead of always sitting or standing.

So, too, it sometimes seems necessary to reverse all our rules. The system falls into a condition where some positive excitement is needed to bring it back to its true tone. For instance, pastry, as commonly composed, I consider a crowning triumph of the enemy, and better calculated to exasperate a critical Stomach and excite a gastric insurrection, than any other compound which the infernal ingenuity of cooks has ever achieved. The pie-crust usually set before us at hotels is absolutely infamous ; and I beg pardon of the stall-keepers at the Fulton Market, for the comparison, when I say that the very scavengers of the wharves can at any time, for a few cents, buy of them a better. And

yet, such are the apparent contradictions of Nature, that I have sometimes experienced unquestionable benefit from eating pie-crust. As, occasionally, the muscles need severe tension — as we feel a desire to lift heavy weights, or run races, or take a turn at fisticuffs, or have a match at wrestling — so does the Stomach sometimes seem to need a trial that will test it to the utmost, and awaken the sluggish powers that seem to be sinking into lethargy. So, the simplest diet is not always the best. The Stomach needs occasionally to be treated smartly, and made to exert itself in order to the maintenance of its complete integrity. Art has always its contradictions, imitating Nature. The finest effects in painting are often produced by contrasts ; and discords in music are as necessary as concords to its completeness. Chemistry is nothing without its opposites, wherein, after all, its affinities are found ambushed. The principles that govern the animal economy belong to the same great family as the rest.

My condemnation of bad pastry, however, must not be taken as applying to that which is properly made. There are two species of pie-crust that are infinitely less objectionable than many other articles of common consumption which go unchallenged. Both of them are sweet and light ; the one made very plainly, with few elements of mischief ; the other, rich, but delicate and puffy, so that it will afford no great resistance to the action of the gastric juice. But your heavy, dense pastry — espe-

cially if the lard or butter be not entirely sweet — is, as I have said, infamous.

VII.

I HAVE alluded to the circumstances which should wait upon and dignify the rite of alimentation. This consideration deserves emphasis. To people of sensitive organizations — the class from which Dyspepsia draws its recruits — it is of the utmost consequence that the hours allotted to eating and digestion be complete in all that creates satisfaction. Not only should the material meal be irreproachable, — wholesome in quality, artistic in cookery, and tasteful in service, — but the domestic circle, so far as possible, should be so composed as to promote the highest development of social pleasure. All harassing and laborious thoughts should be banished — all displeasing topics avoided in discourse. The very aspect of the dining-room should inspire cheerfulness; the lighting, the color of its paint, the pictures on its walls. In these details — not trifling or unworthy — the society of our age is far behind its intellectual advancement; in some respects we are even inferior to the ancients, who, in spite of their absurd *dilletantism* in cookery, knew how to convert their banqueting-rooms into temples of beauty. No resource was too precious for their embellishment; painting, statu-

ary and flowers counterfeited the fabled abodes of the gods, while the repast was served by the loveliest of their slaves. Surely, we may receive hints from those kingly races, in whose mythology modern imagination still finds its best suggestions; whose Fine Arts we still imitate rather than study.

VIII.

IT were a stupid error did I limit the period of dinner to the time spent in its consumption. On the contrary, I would so enlarge it as to embrace the interval of active digestion. The mere eating is but a beginning. The same general provisions which make dinner a ceremonial of partial festivity, should include those hours which follow the desert. The labors of the day are supposed to be over; and the interval before repose should be dedicated to enjoyment. The evening hours should be spent in the interest of the Stomach. Instruction is by no means debarred, where it does not involve too much labor; but I insist that every thing like drudgery shall be thrust aside and made to await its proper place in the *routine* of the severe day. Books, music, conversation, popular and social amusements, — all are appropriate and approved. Let the Imagination be encouraged; and above all, the equanimity of the mind fully preserved. Sleep,

when it approaches, should never find the temper inflamed, or the brain excited.

We are too much in the habit of yielding ourselves to the mood of the hour ; of surrendering to the impulse of mirth or melancholy which may chance to be upon us. This is weak and demoralizing. Our humors are much more controllable than we admit ; and dullness, and even Hypochondria — the eldest born of Dyspepsia — may be shaken off by persistent and judicious effort. The will is given us for use ; and it should be made Grand Marshal of all our organized actions, under the direction of that supreme faculty we call Judgment, and made to conduct our thoughts to agreeable and useful ends.

IX.

ANOTHER subject, singularly neglected in discussing digestion, is *attitude*. If the Stomach is at all cramped, its powers are proportionately impaired. Women have been taught (though, I fear, to but little purpose) that to compress the waist is to contract the lungs and lay a sure foundation for disease. The Stomach also suffers from this compression ; but its action is almost equally impeded by the faulty attitude which we so often assume in sitting, or even in standing or sleeping. Nature has

designed the human form to be erect. We realize the advantage of a prominent chest; but, to have good digestion, we must develop also a prominent abdomen. In fact, the healthy action of all vital organs seems in some measure dependent on the others; and Nature ordains an erect attitude as necessary to *all*. A habit of holding the shoulders well back, insures the prominence of both Stomach and chest. To sit stooping, after meals, is as pernicious as ungraceful; and to walk so, is nearly as bad. The habit is not so easy to correct as may be supposed; especially as our chair-makers seem in league with the venders of dyspeptic bitters. But unless the invalid can insure this reform, I will not warrant him a cure. To enjoy perfect health, the Stomach *must not be cramped* in any way.

X.

CONNECTED with this subject, is that of light gymnastic exercise, which is often found to be of the greatest benefit. I have known a sluggish Stomach greatly stimulated by the mere stretching backward as far as possible of the body, a few times in succession, so as thoroughly to excite the action of its muscles. Dyspeptics often knead the abdomen for the same purpose. Rubbing the skin briskly with the hands, just over the pit of the Stom-

ach, often gives relief from sensations of heaviness or headache caused by indigestion ; such manipulation stimulates the peristaltic action and relieves the cavity from the air liberated by partial fermentation. Friction, applied to the region of the liver, often has a good effect. Simple as these processes seem, I am persuaded that they often possess more efficacy than the prescriptions of our physicians ; while it is certain that their effects are at least sure to be innocent.

XI.

THE subject of digestion cannot be dismissed without allusion to another matter of great delicacy, but greater importance. The slightest reflection will show us the necessity of providing the alimentary passages with sufficient opportunities of relief from the burden of waste matter rejected by the digestive organs. To fail in this, is to tantalize Nature and invite debility. No contrivance of civilized house-building is more absolutely important than the water-closet. Its use should be as invariable as the habit of eating, and attended with all the deliberation and composure essential to comfort and success. To this end, no pains should be spared to render it pleasant and even luxurious, so that it may invite, rather than repel, visitation. Light, warmth, and quiet should be insured, and

hot and cold water ; but it is better to keep it separate from the bath-room, which often interferes with its use. There is no surer test of hygienic education, than a full appreciation of the truth here inculcated.

XII.

PHYSICAL habits alone, however, will not insure perfect health to persons of delicate organization. So intimate are our mental, moral, and material relations, that all must act harmoniously in order that either may reach its full development. As our civilization rises in character, it must be broadened at the base ; a larger philosophy must be infused into the daily life. It is not enough that our food be unexceptionable, and that it be properly eaten, and the ceremony idealized by influences of genial art and wholesome hospitality. Cheerfulness and contentment should pervade the atmosphere in which we dwell ; and the nervous system should be spared those heavy draughts so often made on it by our terrible American habits of over-work and artificial excitement. The passions should be controlled equally with the appetites ; and recreation and culture steadily alternate with labor. A perfect life, could it be attained, would necessitate a division of the day, the week, and the year into periods of labor, recreation, and

rest; and if the latter two were faithfully employed, the productive results of the first would be found greatly richer in the end, owing to the superior energy and mental clearness brought to their achievement. Five hours of the twenty-four, spent in hard work — close, tenacious application, such as a well-recuperated system, full of fresh vitality, makes easy — would be more effective than fifteen, performed by a nervous, dispirited, confused dyspeptic; and the happy influences of the former habits upon longevity, could not fail greatly to extend the era of performance, as well as that of pleasure. It is a monstrous fallacy, which I cannot refrain from again exposing, to suppose civilization incompatible with health and long life. A natural philosophy teaches the reverse; but it compels the construction of our habits upon principles of high art. These, fashioned into a system, should make that system as admirable as a fine poem; complete and perfect in its proportions, like an inspired temple. We may not think like Newton, and live like savages. When we forsake the life of muscular exercise, and exchange the fresh morning air of the hill-side for a place at a desk and the cramped respiration of city vapors, we must adopt the corresponding habits ordained for our new estate. The truer the civilization, the higher will be the culture, the more symmetrical the life; and, as a consequence, the more wonderful and the more satisfactory will be all the results. While the Imagination throws its lights over the commonest

events, softening their harsh angles into lines of beauty, and finding ever-increasing power for distant flights, the Reason will be developed into the proportions of an athlete, and conquer new realms of reality never before invaded. Pleasure should be perpetual; and life should lengthen and broaden for the multiplication of our beneficent triumphs.

Thus impressed, I have come to realize that, to the dyspeptic especially, society and relaxation are as necessary as temperance and exercise. I, who have sacrificed very liberally on the altar of a false utility, have been made, almost as by an inspiration, to feel that such offerings cannot escape the punishment of idolatry. If a man will be *thoroughly well*, he must preserve the health of all his functions. To this end, no care can be too great. Hours spent each day in literary and artistic studies, or in rambles in fields and woods; evenings devoted to social and affectional enjoyments; whole weeks in summer passed in recreative travel, the mind getting stout as well as the body, and the nerves new toned; — all these are wise expenditures, — nay, absolute economies, — saving immeasurably more than the cost they seem to have entailed.

Nor can these pleasures be complete without free social intercourse between the sexes. This is as absolutely ordained by Nature as are the movements of the planets in their appropriate spheres. Men and women are destined to create mutual society.

The family circle, where the sexes are impartially mingled, gives us the model. Here we find the highest and purest form of human association; but let us not commit the error of believing that it can fill the place of others equally ordained and equally indispensable, in a complete society. The human constitution demands variety; and society is the great garden where variety blooms with perennial freshness. The torpid and sluggish temperament of the dyspeptic, especially demands a pleasurable excitement sufficient to induce oblivion of his disabilities, and to give an impetus to the slow current of his blood, and enliven the sleepy action of his liver. Sometimes he may find this in the company of his own sex; but he is a thousand times more likely to do so in that of the other. He mingles enough among men, perforce, in the transaction of business. Let him improve the lesson instinctively learned from Nature; and, always cherishing his domestic relations and preserving a due respect for public opinion, never hesitate to cultivate female friendships, as among the blessings which have been apportioned to his lot. If his ride in the Park, or his ramble by the sea-side, can be made sweeter and healthier by feminine influences, I count it a sin and a shame to reject them. If such companionship enhance the pleasures derived from his evening at the opera or at Wallack's, I hold him to be a simpleton if he make no effort to secure it. Men and women are chiefest among the good things provided by Providence for the delectation and de-

velopment of each other ; and mutual neglect demonstrates not only mutual folly, but irreverence of their divine Author. Let none make any pretense of misunderstanding me ; for I write, not in the interest of passion, but of philosophy ; and, to enjoy its fruits, lust must be as far removed from our motives, as jealousy, which I regard as one of the meanest and most selfish of passions, degrading both subject and object, and demoralizing the liver far beyond the line of respectable health.

Of course, in these pages, I but follow the custom in using the masculine pronoun for convenience ; yet I place the sexes on the same plane, and design to address my suggestions equally to both. My subject interests both alike ; and, of the two, it is more important that the life of the female be perfect, than that of her hardier mate.

XIII.

I HAVE lingered over my little work, which, brief as it is, has far outgrown the tiny ideal which rose before me when I begun it. That my simple experiences have been productive of good to myself, I know ; and I would fain hope that their recital, and the conclusions I have drawn, may benefit the reader in whose way my venturesome *Egotism* may fall. Its paragraphs are the work of

occasional, disconnected hours, separated by long, inevitable intervals; — which have served, however, to confirm my faith in my own opinions, and which were always haunted by a desire to resume a lesson which I felt to be full of use. It is now ended.

