

SOCIAL DUTIES

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CHAPTER IV. SOCIAL DUTIES IN RELATION TO FOOD AND DRINK

“Whether ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God” (I Cor. 10:31); “Or know ye not that your body is a temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have from God? . . . glorify God therefore in your body” (I Cor. 6:19, 20). We assume in this discussion that the biblical teaching in respect to the body is familiar even from childhood. We proceed at once to outline topics for a discussion which may lead to clearer knowledge of what our duty is in respect to the treatment of the body. The information must be sought by consulting physicians, and books on anatomy, hygiene, and sanitation, some of which are mentioned at the close of this article.

I. THE INFLUENCE OF THE BODY AND THE SPIRIT UPON EACH OTHER.—The body affects the spirit, and, in turn, the state of the mind affects the health. Jesus healed the body as part of his redeeming work. Gluttony depresses the soul, weakens moral courage, excites animal passions, produces diseases, so reduces usefulness and efficiency and shortens life. Bad physical habits in parents cause their children to inherit their weakness and faults. On the other hand, insufficient and improper food injures the body and impairs the spiritual forces and character. A few persons overcome feeble health by strong effort, but weakness of the physical side of our nature easily passes over into the soul. We do not know exactly the connection between these two sides of our being, but the fact that they influence each other is known by all. Upright judges, after a dinner which is not digested, have been tempted to throw the scales of justice out of balance. Preachers in ill-health, or imperfectly fed, show it in peevish, whining, or scolding sermons. Toothache makes bad temper. Rheumatism cripples a good man in the race for the prize

of righteous living. Ague chills the ardor of devotion. Neuralgia unfits for social fellowship. Many diseases are due to unscientific feeding. These facts show that food, which is absolutely essential to life, is also an important factor in right living. No man can put forth more energy in song or prayer or charitable labor than he gets from food consumed and assimilated. It is our duty each day to have just as much force as we can possibly get out of what we eat, and then to direct that force according to the laws of social well-being, the law of love to God and man.¹

2. THE NECESSITY OF EDUCATION IN REFERENCE TO FOOD AND DRINK.—It is the duty which each person owes to society to acquire all possible knowledge of food and drink, and it is our duty as members of state and nation to use the powers of government to educate all citizens in this matter, and to protect the people against fraud, adulteration, and poison.

a) What is the use of food and drink? The purpose of taking food and drink is to build up the structure of bones, nerves, muscles, and all tissues of the body; to repair the waste of the system which goes on constantly; and to produce energy which may go out in the activities of life. If men were to stop consuming food, all the institutions of society would soon fall into ruin with the utter destruction of all life. Religion itself would disappear from the world more effectually than by the murder of all believers. Saints turn nutrition into prayers as wicked men transform it into curses.

b) What are the essential elements of food and drink? The authorities tell us that three kinds of organic materials are necessary to health and life: proteids, fats, and carbohydrates, with certain acids, and also inorganic materials, including water and mineral salts. The proteids are composed of various chemical elements, are found

“Every man has lain on his own trencher.”

“Men dig their graves with their own knives and forks.”

“Public men are dying, not of overwork, but of their dinners” (Mrs. Ellen H. Richards).

“The seat of courage is the stomach” (Frederick the Great).

“We are fed, not to be fed, but to work.”

“Courage, cheerfulness, and a desire to work depend mostly on good nutrition” (Moleschott).

“The destiny of nations depends on how they are fed.”

—Quotations from Lake Placid Conference on Home Economics, 1905.

in both vegetables and meats, and are necessary to life, while if taken in excess they produce disorders of many kinds. Fats consist of carbon, hydrogen, and oxygen; nitrogen is supplied by the proteids. The carbohydrates include starch, sugar, and cellulose. Some of the salts needed are sodium, potassium chlorides, potassium, magnesium, calcium phosphates, and compounds of iron.

c) Quantity of food and drink required.

For the maintenance of a proper degree of health and strength the individual must ingest an amount of food sufficient to meet the daily loss of nitrogen and carbon. This must necessarily vary according to circumstances, and hence no rule can be laid down to fit all cases. The best that can be done is to make general rules based on the amount of work performed; for the greater the amount of work done, the greater the amount of food required to meet the necessary consumption of fuel and to replace the tissues. . . . It has been estimated by Voit . . . that a man weighing 70 to 75 kilos (154 to 165 pounds), and working at moderately hard labor 9 to 10 hours a day, requires 118 grams of proteids, 56 of fat, and 500 of carbohydrates (Harrington).

Some later writers² think that the amount of proteids may be considerably reduced with advantage to health. The measure used is called a calorie, which means the amount of heat necessary to raise the temperature of 1 kilogram of water, 1 degree centigrade, and this energy is able to lift 425.5 kilograms one meter. Voit thought that it was necessary for a man at work according to his standard to consume food enough to create 3,054.6 calories in a day. Beginning with this measurement, scientific students are working out the quantities necessary for all classes of persons—infants, boys and girls, women, and persons in all occupations and circumstances of climate, age, health, weight, etc. These interesting studies will result in great economy of food and in improved health. But it would be impracticable and undesirable to weigh viands every time we eat, and this is unnecessary. Nature will aid in finding the limit of quantity by the indications of appetite, though this is not infallible and may be morbid. It has been found, as by Gladstone, that by very thorough mastication of food one is satisfied with a smaller quantity and at the same time is more perfectly nourished.

Food must be agreeable and varied in order to perform its task; and the pleasures of the table aid digestion. The satisfaction of

² R. H. Chittenden, *Physiological Economy in Nutrition* (1904).

food is part of nature's way of assuring the perpetuation of life and of all that should go with life. Further details must be sought in the books cited, or in others equally reliable.

3. ALCOHOLIC DRINKS.—It is in connection with this subject that we come upon the use and abuse of alcoholic drinks. Fluids are necessary to health, and agreeable drinks have direct value in connection with foods. The danger of drinking intoxicating fluids has been made familiar in the temperance campaigns of the past generation, although with much ignorance and exaggeration. A few maxims may be sufficient to start discussion in the right direction. If alcoholic fluids are required for health, they should be prescribed by a reputable physician, just as quinine, strychnine, and arsenic are prescribed. Alcohol is a powerful remedy, and even in its diluted forms lurk perils to health and character. Very few persons actually need alcohol in any form, since thousands of men have done hard work and accomplished the highest results in all occupations and all climates without such stimulants. Ordinary food supplies all the alcohol that is really necessary, except in disease or, perhaps, old age. All the nutritive value that is in alcoholic drinks can be bought at much less expense in foods which are not dangerous.

4. SOCIAL CUSTOMS.—Banquets and feasts must be judged by their effects on health and their cost in waste. Not only in commercial, political, and fashionable circles do people sin against the canons of hygiene and economy, but even in church meetings, both in country and city, gluttony and waste are not unknown. "Tell it not in Gath." While hundreds of thousands of children go hungry to bed, the waste of food cries out to heavenly pity and justice. The miserable falsehood that the waste of rich men is the good fortune of the poor, by increasing trade, has caused many a death—death by surfeit and death by starvation.

5. ADULTERATION OF FOOD AND MEDICINE.—Commerce and trade deal out food and drink, and they must be brought under the rule of moral principles. From ancient times complaints have not ceased in respect to short weights and measures. The temptation is ever present in each of billions of sales to get pay for a pound when only fifteen ounces are delivered. The thrifty housewife keeps in the kitchen her own scales, but it is a shame she must do so.

Adulteration of food has become a subject of discussion all over the civilized world. By investigations carried on by private parties, and then by governments of nation and city, the extent of this wrong has been made public. Setting aside the exaggerations and misrepresentations of sensational writers, we have left in the official reports and in the confessions of meat-packers, wholesale grocers, retail dealers, and disclosures of boards of health, a picture of unscrupulous neglect, combined with ignorance and recklessness of human life, which is humiliating and discouraging. Nor are merchants alone guilty, for the "honest farmer," guileless and simple, has been known to ship his hogs and cattle to market as quickly as possible when he found them threatened with some disease which might soon carry them off.

How can social righteousness become effective? Some tell us by individual honesty, by preaching the gospel, and by conversion of sinners. All this is right; but even converted men need to be taught their duty by the law, since many of them think the parson and Sunday-school teacher are not familiar with business. Some adulterators of food stand high among friends of missions. They never think they are doing wrong until they are threatened with exposure by a government inspector. The interest of the individual will not protect the common interest; the community must protect the public welfare by law. Self-interest needs both enlightenment and punishment to make it serve the public. The public must have scientific and upright inspectors wherever food is prepared, whether on ranch and farm or in packing-houses, storage warehouses, or grocery stores. In this connection it might be well for the class to make an inspection of the places in which the animal food of the town or village is prepared; they are likely to find things in the slaughter-house which will remind them of the Chicago and Kansas City scandals.

The pure food laws recently enacted by Congress to regulate interstate commerce in foods, and the improvement in methods of inspecting the preparation of meats, are examples of the value of appeals to government against private neglect or greed of gain. It is hoped that not only will these kinds of business find a better market in all civilized lands, but that at home we shall have more just weights and purer diet. Incidentally the great merchants themselves will be

made better men. The magistrate and President are ministers of God for this very thing, just as truly as pastors and deacons.

Patent medicines, only too frequently advertised in religious papers, through ignorance and neglect of careful inquiry, have become one of the more important causes of inebriety. Persons are induced by these advertisements to swallow stuff recommended by ministers of the gospel, who of course never made chemical analysis of the contents; and since it makes them "feel good" for a time, they imagine they are cured by it. Meantime some form the habit of depending on dangerous stimulants. Many medicines, as soothing syrups, contain opium, and the druggist does not always give notice to mothers who ignorantly drug their children to death. There is a long series of these immoral practices which might be brought out in many communities with the help of honest druggists and physicians.

6. THE DUTY OF SOCIETY TO THE IGNORANT AND THE YOUNG.— Social duty must not ignore the poor and the ignorant in all our towns who perish from hunger, or become feeble and pauperized from food unsuitable in kind or improperly cooked. Food is at the basis of civilization, and cooking is an art which ought to be taught everywhere in schools. Private philanthropy and individual effort will never be able to train the hundreds of thousands of girls and young women for household duties.

The duties of society in relation to drinking customs should be taught in public schools as a natural part of the study of human anatomy, physiology, and hygiene. This should not be done in special hours and classes. There is much complaint among both scientific men and teachers of high rank that the books used in some states are not accurate and reliable, and that the method of instruction required by law is frequently monotonous and repetitious. Want of accuracy and interest in method of teaching will destroy all the good influence of such instruction and cause a reaction against the whole movement.

REFERENCES

- Mrs. E. H. Richards, *Cost of Food, and Chemistry of Cooking and Cleaning*.
Mrs. M. W. Abel, *Practical Sanitary and Economic Cooking*.
Mrs. E. Ewing, *Art of Cookery*.
J. S. Billings (ed.), *Physiological Aspects of the Liquor Problem*.

- J. Rowntree and A. Sherwell, *The Temperance Problem and Social Reform*.
 C. Harrington, *Practical Hygiene*.
 Florence Kelley, *Some Ethical Gains through Legislation*. chaps. 6, 8.

TOPICS FOR FURTHER INVESTIGATION AND DISCUSSION

1. Members of the class who know of adulteration of food and drugs can report.
2. See if improper advertisements of patent medicines are found in secular and religious newspapers, and discuss facts discovered.
3. What is gluttony? When does a man come under the influence of alcohol enough to be "drunk?" Is intoxication the worst evil of using alcohol?
4. What are some of the inherited effects of gluttony and use of alcohol?
5. Analyze the Pure Food Law of Congress.
6. What are the duties of health officers of state and city in your own community?
7. Why cannot the regulation of food and drink be left to individuals? Why is law necessary?



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