

FOOD

852. A SAYING is attributed to the Christ to the effect that not what is put into the mouth but what comes out of the mouth really defiles a man. Whether He ever made that remark or not, there can be no possible question that a man may be most decidedly defiled by what he puts into his mouth.

853. The food which we eat is taken into the body and we actually make it part of ourselves, so it is clearly evident that the magnetism with which it is charged is a matter of great moment to us. Both its physical and its magnetic purity are important, yet some people neglect one and some the other. In India, for example, great weight is attached to magnetic purity, and a man will not eat food which has been subjected to the magnetism of some one of lower caste. On the other hand he is much less careful than we are in the West as to the physical cleanliness of the preparations, forgetting that nothing which is physically dirty can ever be magnetically pure. We are usually particular as to the physical cleanliness, but we never think of the question of magnetic purity.

854. The fact which most seriously affects the magnetism of food is that it is touched so much by the hands of the cook in the course of its preparation. Now the special magnetism of a person flows out most strongly through the hands, and consequently food which is touched by the hands cannot but be highly charged with that magnetism. This is specially true in the case of pastry and bread, which are kneaded by hand in countries which are too backward to have learnt the use of machinery for these purposes. All food made in that way would be absolutely unfit to be eaten at all, were it not for the fact that fortunately the action of fire in the baking or the cooking removes the traces of most kinds of physical magnetism. Still it is eminently desirable that the cook should touch the food as little as possible, and so ladles and spoons, which can readily be demagnetised, should always be used in cooking and serving everything; and they should be kept rigorously clean.

855. In order to prevent any avoidable mixture of magnetism many an occult student insists upon always using his own private cup and spoon. Madame Blavatsky strongly advised this, and said that when it could not be done the cup and the spoon that were used should be demagnetised before each meal. The ordinary man pays no attention whatever to matters such as these, but the student of occultism who is trying to enter upon the Path must be more careful. It is possible to demagnetise food by a firm effort of the will, and with a little practice a mere wave of the hand coupled with a strong thought will do the thing almost instantaneously. But it must be remembered that demagnetisation removes neither physical dirt nor its astral counterpart, though it may take away other astral influence; and therefore every precaution must be taken to see that cleanliness is perfect in all culinary arrangements.

856. Food also absorbs the magnetism of those who are in close proximity to us when we are eating. It is for that reason that in India a man prefers to eat alone, and must not be seen eating by one of lower caste. The mixture which arises from eating in public amidst a crowd of strangers, as in a restaurant, is always undesirable, and should be avoided as much as possible. The magnetism of one's own family is usually more sympathetic, and at any rate one is accustomed to it, so that it is much less likely to be harmful than the sudden introduction of a combination of entirely strange vibrations, many of which are most likely quite out of harmony with our own.

857. There are, however, always two kinds of magnetism in every article of food-- the internal and the external-- the former belonging to its own character, the latter impressed upon it from without. The magnetism of the merchant who sells it and of the cook are both of the latter kind, and can therefore be removed by the action of the fire; but the magnetism which is inherent in it is not at all affected by that action. No amount of cooking of dead flesh, for example, can take away from it its inherently objectionable character, nor all the feelings of pain and horror and hatred with which it is saturated. No person who can see that magnetism and the vibrations which it sets up can possibly eat meat.

858. INTOXICATING LIQUORS

859. Indeed, many of the pernicious habits of life of the ignorant would become instantly impossible for them if they could see the hidden side of their selfish indulgences. Even the undeveloped specimens of humanity who cluster round the bar of a public-house would surely shrink back with terror, if they could see the class of entities by which they are surrounded-- the lowest and most brutal types of a rudimentary evolution, a bloated, livid fungus growth of indescribable horror; and far worse even than they, because they are degraded from something that should be so much better, are the ghastly crowds of dead drunkards-- drink-sodden dregs of humanity, who have drowned the divine image in depths of direful debauchery and now cluster round their successors, urging them on to wilder carousals with hideous leers and mocking laughter, yet with a loathly lust awful to behold.

860. All this is entirely apart from the unquestionable deterioration which is brought about in both astral and mental bodies by the indulgence in intoxicating liquors. The man who is eagerly seeking for excuses for the gratification of ignoble cravings frequently asserts that food and drink, belonging as they do purely to the physical world, can have but little effect upon a man's inner development. This statement is obviously not in accordance with common sense, for the physical matter in man is in exceedingly close touch with the astral and mental-- so much so, that each is to a great extent a counterpart of the other, and coarseness and grossness in the physical body imply a similar condition in the higher vehicles.

861. There are many types and degrees of density of astral matter, so that it is possible for one man to have an astral body built of exceedingly coarse and gross particles, while another may have one which is much more delicate and refined. As the astral body is the vehicle of the emotions and passions, it follows that a man whose astral body is of the ruder type will be chiefly amenable to the lower and rougher varieties of passion and emotion; whereas a man who has a finer astral body will find that its particles most readily vibrate in response to higher and more refined emotions and aspirations. Thus a man who is building for himself a gross and impure physical body is building for himself at the same time coarse and unclean astral and mental bodies as well. This effect is visible at once to the eye of the trained clairvoyant, and he will readily distinguish between a man who feeds his physical vehicle with pure food and another who contaminates it by intoxicating drink or decaying flesh.

862. There can be no question that it is the duty of every man to develop all his vehicles as far as possible in order to make them perfect instruments for the use of the soul, which in itself is being trained to be a fit instrument in the hands of the Solar Deity, and a perfect channel for the divine love. The first step towards this is that the man himself should learn thoroughly to control the lower bodies, so that there shall be in them no thought or feeling except those he approves.

863. All these vehicles, therefore, must be in the highest possible condition of efficiency; they must be pure and clean and free from taint; and it is obvious that this can never be, so long as the man puts into the physical body undesirable constituents. Even the physical vehicle and its sense perceptions can never be at their best unless the food is pure, and the same thing is true to a much greater extent with regard to the higher bodies. Their senses also cannot be clear if impure or coarse matter is drawn into them; anything of this nature clogs and dulls them, so that it becomes far more difficult for the soul to use them. Indulgence in alcohol or carnivorous diet is absolutely fatal to anything like real development, and those who adopt these habits are putting serious and utterly unnecessary difficulties in their own way.

864. Nor is the effect during physical life the only point which is to be borne in mind in connection with this matter. If, through introducing impure particles into his physical body, the man builds himself an unseemly and unclean astral body, we must not forget that it is in this degraded vehicle that he will have to spend the first part of his life after death. Just as, here in the physical world, his coarseness draws into association with him all sorts of undesirable entities who, like parasites, make his vehicles their home, and find a ready response within him to their lower passions, so also will he suffer acutely from similar companionship after death, and from the working out in astral life of the conditions which he has here set in motion.

865. FLESH-EATING

866. All this applies not only to indulgence in intoxicating liquor, but also to the prevalent practice of feeding upon corpses. This habit also, like the other, produces a consistent effect; this also, like the other, draws round its votaries all kinds of undesirable entities-- horrible gaping red mouths, such as those that gather round the shambles to absorb the aroma of blood. It is indeed strange and pitiable to a clairvoyant to see a lady, thinking herself dainty and refined (*truly* refined and dainty she cannot be, or she would not be there) surrounded by an incongruous nightmare of such strange forms in a butcher' s shop, where she goes to examine the corpses left by the grim, ceaseless slaughter on the battle-field between man' s bestial, tigerish lust for blood and the divine Life incarnated in the animal kingdom. Little she realises that there will come a time when those who by their support make possible this ghastly blot on the record of humanity, this daily hecatomb of savage, useless murder of the forms through which the Deity is patiently trying to manifest, will find themselves face to face with His ineffable Majesty, and hear from the Voice that called the worlds into existence the appalling truth: "Inasmuch as you have done this unto one of the least of these My little ones, you have done it unto Me."

867. Surely it is time, with all our boasted advance, that this foul stain upon our so-called civilisation should be removed. Even if it were only for selfish reasons, for the sake of our own interests, this should be so. Remember that every one of these murdered creatures is a definite entity-- not a permanent reincarnating individual, but still an entity that has its life in the astral world. Remember that every one of these remains there for a considerable time, to pour out a feeling of indignation and horror at all the injustice and torment which have been inflicted; and perhaps in that way it may be possible faintly to realise something of the terrible atmosphere which hangs over a slaughter-house and a butcher' s shop, and how it all reacts at many points upon the human race.

868. Most of all, these horrors react upon those who are least able to resist them-- upon the children, who are more delicate and sensitive than the hardened adult; and so for them there are constant feelings of causeless terror in the air-- terror of the dark, or of being alone for a few moments. All the time there are playing about us tremendous forces of awful strength, which only the occult student can understand. The whole creation is so closely interrelated that we cannot do horrible murder in this way upon our younger brothers without feeling the effect upon our own innocent children.

869. The pitiable thing about it is that a lady is actually *able* to enter a butcher' s shop-- that because of the indulgence of her forefathers in this shocking form of food, her various vehicles have become so coarsened that she can stand amidst those bleeding carcasses without being overcome by loathing and repulsion, and can be in the midst of the most ghastly astral abominations without being in the slightest degree conscious of it. If we take into such a place any person who has never corrupted himself with such carrion, there is no doubt that he will shrink in disgust from the loathsome, bleeding masses of physical flesh, and will also feel stifled by the actively and militantly-evil astral entities which swarm there. Yet here we have the sad spectacle of a lady who ought, by her very birthright, to be delicate and sensitive, whose physical and astral fibre is so coarsened that she neither observes the visible nor senses the invisible horrors which surround her.

870. The pity of it is, too, that all the vast amount of evil which people bring upon themselves by these pernicious habits might so easily be avoided. No man needs either flesh or alcohol. It has been demonstrated over and again that he is better without them. This is a case in which actually all the arguments are on one side and there is nothing whatever to be said on the other, except the man' s assertion: "I will do these horrible things, because I like them."

871. With regard to flesh-eating, for example, it cannot be questioned that: (1) the right kind of vegetables contain more nutriment than an equal amount of dead flesh; (2) many serious diseases come from this loathsome habit of devouring dead bodies; (3) man is not naturally made to be carnivorous and therefore this abominable food is not suited to him; (4) men are stronger and better on a vegetable diet; (5) the eating of dead bodies leads to indulgence in drink and increases animal passions in man; (6) the vegetable diet is in every way cheaper as well as better than flesh; (7) many more men can be supported by a certain number of acres of land which are devoted to the growing of wheat than by the same amount of land which is laid out in pasture; (8) in the former case healthy work upon the land can be found for many more men than in the latter; (9) men who eat flesh are responsible for the sin and degradation caused in the slaughter-men; (10) carnivorous diet is fatal to real development, and produces the most undesirable results on both astral and mental bodies; (11) man' s duty towards the animal kingdom is not to slaughter it recklessly, but to assist in its evolution.

872. These are not points about which there can be any question; the fullest evidence in support of each of them will be found in my book, *Some Glimpses of Occultism*. No man needs these things, and to take them is just a matter of selfish indulgence. Most men commit this act in ignorance of the harm that it is doing; but remember, to continue to commit it when the truth is known is a crime. Widely spread as they are, these are nothing but evil habits, and with a little effort they can be laid aside like any other habit.

873. SMOKING

874. Another custom, also pernicious and equally widely spread, is that of smoking. In this, as in so many other cases, a man at once resents any suggestions that he should give up his bad habits, and says: "Why should I not do as I like in these matters?" With regard to flesh-diet the answer to this is perfectly clear, for that is a practice which not only seriously injures the man who adopts it, but also involves terrible crime and cruelty in the provision of the food. In the case of alcohol also a clear answer can be given, quite apart from the effect upon the drinker himself, for by buying this noxious fluid he is encouraging a pernicious trade, helping to create a demand for a liquor which tempts thousands of his fellow-creatures to excess and lures them to their own destruction. No man who buys alcohol for drinking purposes can escape his share in the responsibility of that.

875. It may be said that with regard to smoking the position is somewhat different, since no cruelty is necessary in obtaining tobacco, nor are lives destroyed by it as by alcohol. This is true, and if the smoker can entirely shut himself away from any contact with his fellow-men, and if he has no desire to make anything in the nature of occult progress, his argument may, so, far, hold good. If, not being actually a hermit, he has sometimes at least to come into touch with his fellowmen, he can have no possible right to make himself a nuisance to them. There are many people who, being deeply steeped in the same pollution themselves, have no objection to the nauseating odour of tobacco; but all who have kept themselves pure from this thing know how strong is the disgust which its coarse and fetid emanations inevitably arouse. Yet the smoker cares little for that. As I have said elsewhere, this is the only thing that a gentleman will deliberately do when he knows it to be offensive to others; but the hold which this noxious habit gains upon its slaves appears to be so great that they are utterly incapable of resisting it, and all their gentlemanly instincts are forgotten in this mad and hateful selfishness.

876. Anything which can produce such an effect as that upon a man's character is a thing that all wise men will avoid. The impurity of it is so great and so penetrating that the man who habitually uses it is absolutely soaked in it, and is most offensive to the sense of smell of the purer person. For this purely physical reason no one who comes into contact with his fellows should indulge in this most objectionable practice, and, if he does, he thereby brands himself as one who thinks only of his own selfish enjoyment and is willing in taking it to inflict much suffering upon his fellow-creatures. And all this is quite apart from the deadening effect which it produces, and from the various diseases-- smoker's throat, smoker's heart, cancer in the mouth, indigestion and others-- which it brings in its train. For nicotine, as is well known, is a deadly poison, and the effect of even small quantities of it can never be good.

877. Why should any man adopt a custom which produces all these unpleasant results? To this there is absolutely no answer except that he has taught himself to like it; for it cannot be pretended that it is in any way necessary or useful. I believe it to be quite true that in certain circumstances it soothes the nerves; that is part of its deadening effect as a poison, but that result can be equally well achieved by other and far less objectionable means. It is always evil for a man to adopt a habit to which he becomes a slave-- evil for himself, I mean; it is doubly evil when that habit brings with it the bad karma of inflicting constant annoyance upon others.

878. No child by nature likes the loathsome taste of this evil weed but, because others older than himself indulge in it, he struggles painfully through the natural nausea which it causes him at first-- the protest of his healthy young body against the introduction of this polluting matter-- and so gradually he

forces himself to endure it, and eventually becomes a slave to it, like his elders. It stunts his growth; it leads him into bad company; but what of that? He has asserted his dawning manhood by proving himself capable of a 'manly' vice. I know that parents frequently advise their children not to smoke; perhaps if they set them the example of abstention, their sage counsels would produce a greater effect. This is another habit with evil results which could so easily be avoided-- all that is needed being simply not to do it.

879. The impurity produced by this obscene practice is not only physical. It may be taken as an axiom that physical filth of any sort always implies astral filth as well, for the counterpart of that which is impure cannot itself be pure. Just as the physical nerve-vibrations are deadened by the poison, so are both astral and mental undulations. For occult progress a man needs to have his vehicles as finely strung as possible, so that they may be ready at any moment to respond in sympathy to any kind of vibration. Therefore he does not want to have his thought-waves deadened and his astral body weighed down with foul and poisonous particles. Many who call themselves students still cling to this unpleasant habit, and try to find all sorts of weak excuses to cover the fact that they have not the strength to break away from its tyranny; but facts remain facts, for all that, and no one who can see the effects on the higher vehicles of this disastrous custom can avoid the realisation that it does serious harm.

880. Its effect in the astral world after death is a remarkable one. The man has so filled his astral body with poison that it has stiffened under its influence, and has become unable to work properly or to move freely. For a long period the man is as though he were paralysed-- able to speak, yet debarred from movement, and almost entirely cut off from all higher influences. In process of time he emerges from this unpleasant predicament, when the part of his astral body which is affected by this poison has gradually worn away.

881. DRUGS

882. The taking of opium or cocaine, though happily less common, is equally disastrous, for from the occult point of view it is entirely ruinous and fatal to progress. These drugs are sometimes a necessity in order to relieve great pain; but they should be taken as sparingly as possible, and on no account be allowed to degenerate into a habit. One who knows how to do it, however, can remove the evil effect of the opium from the astral and mental bodies after it has done its work upon the physical.

883. Nearly all drugs produce a deleterious effect upon the higher vehicles, and they are therefore to be avoided as much as possible. There are definite cases in which they are clearly required, when they are really specifics for certain diseases; but these are few, and in far the greater number of cases nature herself will work a rapid cure if the surroundings are pure and healthy.

884. With regard to the treatment of the body, prevention emphatically better than cure, and those who live rationally will rarely need the services of a doctor. Under all circumstances animal serums and products in any way connected with or obtained by means of vivisection should be absolutely avoided. It should be remembered that tea and coffee contain as their essence drugs called respectively theine and caffeine, which are poisonous, so that an excess of these beverages is a bad thing, especially for growing children; indeed, I incline to the opinion that, while in moderation they do no serious harm, those who find themselves able to avoid them are all the better for it.

885. CLEANLINESS

886. Doctors are usually agreed as to the necessity for physical cleanliness, but the requirements of occultism are far more stringent than theirs. The waste matter which is constantly being thrown off by the body in the shape of imperceptible perspiration is rejected because it is poisonous and decaying refuse, and the astral and mental counterparts of its particles are of the most undesirable character. Dirt is often more objectionable in the higher worlds than in the physical, and, just as in the physical world, it is not only foul and poisonous in itself but it also inevitably breeds dangerous microbes, so in these higher worlds it attracts low-class nature-spirits of a kind distinctly prejudicial to man. Yet many people habitually carry a coating of filth about with them, and so ensure for themselves the possession of an unpleasant retinue of astral and etheric creatures.

887. The thorough daily bath, therefore, is even more an occult than a hygienic necessity, and purity of mind and feeling cannot exist without purity of body also. The physical emanations of dirt are unpleasant, but those in the astral and mental worlds are much more than merely unpleasant; they are deleterious to the last degree, and dangerous not only to the man himself, but to others. It is through the pores of the body that the magnetism of the person rushes out, bearing with it what remains of the vital force. If therefore these pores are clogged with filth, the magnetism is poisoned on its way out, and will produce a pernicious effect upon all those around.

888. We must remember that we are constantly interchanging the particles of our bodies with those about us, and that our bodies therefore are not wholly our own; we cannot do just as we like with them, because of the fact that they thus constantly influence those of our brothers, the children of our common Father. A comprehension of the most rudimentary idea of brotherhood shows us that it is an absolute duty to others to keep our bodies healthy, pure and clean. If the person be perfectly clean, his emanations will carry health and strength, and so when we make ourselves purer we are helping others also.

889. OCCULT HYGIENE

890. This radiation is strongest of all from the ends of the fingers and toes, so that even more than usual care should constantly be lavished upon the strictest cleanliness in the case of these channels of influence. A careless person who allows filth to accumulate under his finger-nails is all the time pouring forth from the ends of his fingers what in the astral world exactly corresponds to a torrent of peculiarly noisome sewage in the physical-- an effect which makes his neighbourhood exceedingly unpleasant to any sensitive person, and causes him to do harm in many cases where, but for that, he might be doing good.

891. For a similar reason special care of the feet is desirable. They should never be encased in boots too tight for them, and thick, heavy walking boots should never be worn an instant longer than is absolutely necessary, but should be replaced by something soft, loose and easy. Indeed it is far better that whenever possible the feet should be left uncovered altogether, or when that is considered impossible, that a light sandal should be used without stockings or socks. This plan could hardly be adopted out-of-doors amidst the horrible filth of our large towns, but it surely ought to be possible in country houses and at the seaside. It could be done indoors everywhere, and would be healthier and more comfortable physically, as well as correct from the occult point of view. But while we are all such

slaves of fashion that any man who lived and dressed rationally would probably be regarded as insane, I suppose that it is hopeless to expect people to have sufficient strength of mind to do what is obviously best for them.

892. From the point of view of occult hygiene great care should be taken also with regard to the head, which should be left uncovered whenever possible, and never allowed to get hot. A hat is an utterly unnecessary article of clothing, and people would be much better in every way without it; but here again probably the foolishness of fashion will, as usual, stand in the way of common sense. The folly of wearing a hat becomes immediately obvious when we remember that even in the coldest weather we habitually leave the face entirely uncovered, even though there is usually but little hair on it, whereas we are careful to put a considerable and most insanitary weight upon the upper part of the head, which nature has already abundantly covered with hair! Think, too, how much money might be saved by discarding all unnecessary and positively harmful articles of dress-- hats, boots, stockings, collars, cuffs, corsets.

893. But people never use their own brains with regard to such matters; they think only of what some one else is doing, and they never realise that their boasted liberty is the merest sham, since they do not feel themselves free to follow the plainest dictates of their reason, even with regard to a matter which is so clearly their own private business as the clothing that they shall wear. Future and more enlightened generations will look back with wonder and pity upon the dreary monotony of ugliness to which this senseless thralldom condemns us.

894. Another of the objectionable customs of our modern civilisation is that of hair-cutting. It is outrageous that we should be expected to submit to have our heads pawed about for a quarter of an hour or so by a person who is not usually of the higher classes, who generally smells offensively of tobacco or onions or pomatum, who breathes in our faces and worries us with a stream of inane chatter-- and in any case has been promiscuously pawing the heads of a score of others of His Majesty's lieges without any intermediate process of purification. Considering the fact that the head is precisely the part of the human body where unpleasant alien magnetism will produce the greatest effect, and that it is through the hands that magnetism flows most easily, one sees at once what a peculiarly unscientific abomination this is. I do not suggest that every man should let his hair grow to its full length; that is a matter entirely for his private taste; but I do say that the person who cuts it should be his wife or his mother, his brother or his sister, or at least somebody of the same family or in close friendship, whose magnetism is likely to be on the whole harmonious and reasonably pure. It may be that until we all have had a certain amount of practice, the hair would not be quite so well cut as by the professional person; but we should be far more than compensated by freedom from headache, from unpleasant smells and from foreign influences.

895. PHYSICAL EXISTENCE

896. In order that its reaction upon higher vehicles should be satisfactory, it is necessary that the physical body should be regularly exercised. This, which doctors tell us is so desirable from the point of view of physical health, is still more desirable from the point of view of health in other worlds. Not only do unused muscles deteriorate and become feeble, but their condition produces a congestion of magnetism, a check to its proper and healthy flow; and that means a weak spot in the etheric double,

through which a hostile influence can easily penetrate. A man who keeps his physical body thoroughly well exercised also keeps his etheric body in good order, which means in the first place that he is far less liable to the penetration of unpleasant physical germs, such as those of infection, for example. And in the second, because of the reaction of this upon the astral and mental bodies, thoughts of depression or of animal passion will find it almost impossible to seize upon him. Therefore we see that due and regular physical exercise has great importance from the occult standpoint; indeed we may say that all such practices as have been found by experiment to promote the health of the physical body are also found to react favourably upon the higher vehicles.