

WILLIAM ALCOTT

VEGETABLE DIET: AS
SANCTIONED BY
MEDICAL MEN, AND BY
EXPERIENCE IN ALL
AGES

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Alcott W.

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All Ages / W. Alcott — «Public Domain»,

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William Andrus Alcott

Vegetable Diet: As Sanctioned by Medical Men, and by Experience in All Ages / Including a System of Vegetable Cookery

PREFACE

The following volume embraces the testimony, direct or indirect, of more than a hundred individuals – besides that of societies and communities – on the subject of vegetable diet. Most of this one hundred persons are, or were, persons of considerable distinction in society; and more than fifty of them were either medical men, or such as have made physiology, hygiene, anatomy, pathology, medicine, or surgery a leading or favorite study.

As I have written other works besides this – especially the "Young House-Keeper" – which treat, more or less, of diet, it may possibly be objected, that I sometimes repeat the same idea. But how is it to be avoided? In writing for various classes of the community, and presenting my views in various connections and aspects, it is almost necessary to do so. Writers on theology, or education, or any other important topic, do the same – probably to a far greater extent, in many instances, than I have yet done. I repeat no idea for the *sake* of repeating it. Not a word is inserted but what seems to me necessary, in order that I may be intelligible. Moreover, like the preacher of truth on many other subjects, it is not so much my object to produce something new in every paragraph, as to explain, illustrate, and enforce what is already known.

It may also be thought that I make too many books. But, as I do not claim to be so much an originator of *new* things as an instrument for diffusing the *old*, it will not be expected that I should be twenty years on a volume, like Bishop Butler. I had, however, been collecting my stock of materials for this and other works – published or unpublished – more than twenty-five years. Besides, it might be safely and truly said that the study and reading and writing, in the preparation of this volume, the "House I Live In," and the "Young House-Keeper," have consumed at least three of the best years of my life, at fourteen or fifteen hours a day. Several of my other works, as the "Young Mother," the "Mother's Medical Guide," and the "Young Wife," have also been the fruit of years of toil and investigation and observation, of which those who think only of the labor of merely *writing them out*, know nothing. Even the "Mother in her Family" – at least some parts of it – though in general a lighter work, has been the result of much care and labor. The circumstance of publishing several books at the same, or nearly the same time, has little or nothing to do with their preparation.

When I commenced putting together the materials of this little treatise on diet – thirteen years ago – it was my intention simply to show the safety of a vegetable and fruit diet, both for those who are afflicted with many forms of chronic disease, and for the healthy. But I soon became convinced that I ought to go farther, and show its superiority over every other. This I have attempted to do – with what success, the reader must and will judge for himself.

I have said, it was not my original intention to prove a vegetable and fruit diet to be any thing more than *safe*. But I wish not to be understood as entertaining, even at that time, any doubts in regard to the superiority of such a diet: the only questions with me were, Whether the public mind was ready to hear and weigh the proofs, and whether this volume was the place in which to present them. Both these questions, however, as I went on, were settled, in the affirmative. I believed – and still believe – that the public mind, in this country, is prepared for the free discussion of all topics

– provided they are discussed candidly – which have a manifest bearing on the well-being of man; and I have governed myself accordingly.

An apology may be necessary for retaining, unexplained, a few medical terms. But I did not feel at liberty to change them, in the correspondence of Dr. North, for more popular language; and, having retained them thus far, it did not seem desirable to explain them elsewhere. Nor was I willing to deface the pages of the work with explanatory notes. The fact is, the technical terms alluded to, are, after all, very few in number, and may be generally understood by the connection in which they appear.

THE AUTHOR.

West Newton Mass.

ADVERTISEMENT

TO THE SECOND EDITION

The great question in regard to diet, viz., whether any food of the animal kind is absolutely necessary to the most full and perfect development of man's whole nature, being fairly up, both in Europe and America, and there being no practical, matter-of-fact volume on the subject, of moderate size, in the market, numerous friends have been for some time urging me to get up a new and revised edition of a work which, though imperfect, has been useful to many, while it has been for some time out of print. Such an edition I have at length found time to prepare – to which I have added, in various ways, especially in the form of new facts, nearly fifty pages of new and original matter.

West Newton, Mass., 1849.

CHAPTER I. ORIGIN OF THIS WORK

Experience of the Author, and his Studies. – Pamphlet in 1832. – Prize Question of the Boylston Medical Committee. – Collection of Materials for an Essay. – Dr. North. – His Letter and Questions. – Results.

Twenty-three years ago, the present season, I was in the first stage of tuberculous consumption, and evidently advancing rapidly to the second. The most judicious physicians were consulted, and their advice at length followed. I commenced the practice of medicine, traveling chiefly on horseback; and, though unable to do but little at first, I soon gained strength enough to perform a moderate business, and to combine with it a little gardening and farming. At the time, or nearly at the time, of commencing the practice of medicine, I laid aside my feather bed, and slept on straw; and in December, of the same year, I abandoned spirits, and most kinds of stimulating food. It was not, however, until nineteen years ago, the present season, that I abandoned all drinks but water, and all flesh, fish, and other highly stimulating and concentrated aliments, and confined myself to a diet of milk, fruits, and vegetables.

In the meantime, the duties of my profession, and the nature of my studies led me to prosecute, more diligently than ever, a subject which I had been studying, more or less, from my very childhood – the laws of Human Health. Among other things, I collected facts on this subject from books which came in my way; so that when I went to Boston, in January, 1832, I had already obtained, from various writers, on materia medica, physiology, disease, and dietetics, quite a large parcel. The results of my reflections on these, and of my own observation and experience, were, in part – but in part only – developed in July, of the same year, in an anonymous pamphlet, entitled, "Rational View of the Spasmodic Cholera;" published by Messrs. Clapp & Hull, of Boston.

In the summer of 1833, the Boylston Medical Committee of Harvard University offered a prize of fifty dollars, or a gold medal of that value, to the author of the best dissertation on the following question: "What diet can be selected which will ensure the greatest health and strength to the laborer in the climate of New England – quality and quantity, and the time and manner of taking it, to be considered?"

At first, I had thoughts of attempting an essay on the subject; for it seemed to me an important one. Circumstances, however, did not permit me to prosecute the undertaking; though I was excited by the question of the Boylston Medical Committee to renewed efforts to increase my stock of information and of facts.

In 1834, I accidentally learned that Dr. Milo L. North, a distinguished practitioner of medicine in Hartford, Connecticut, was pursuing a course of inquiry not unlike my own, and collecting facts and materials for a similar purpose. In correspondence with Dr. North, a proposition was made to unite our stock of materials; but nothing for the present was actually done. However, I agreed to furnish Dr. North with a statement of my own experience, and such other important facts as came within the range of my own observations; and a statement of my experience was subsequently intrusted to his care, as will be seen in its place, in the body of this work.

In February, 1835, Dr. North, in the prosecution of his efforts, addressed the following circular, or letter and questions, to the editor of the Boston Medical and Surgical Journal, which were accordingly inserted in a subsequent number of that work. They were also published in the American Journal of Medical Science, of Philadelphia, and copied into numerous papers, so that they were pretty generally circulated throughout our country.

"To the Editor of the Boston Medical and Surgical Journal

"Sir, – Reports not unfrequently reach us of certain individuals who have fallen victims to a prescribed course of regimen. Those persons are said, by gentlemen who are entitled to the fullest confidence, to have pertinaciously followed the course, till they reached a point of reduction from which there was no recovery. If these are facts, they ought to be collected and published. And I beg leave, through your Journal, to request my medical brethren, if they have been called to advise in such cases, that they will have the kindness to answer, briefly, the following interrogatories, by mail, as early as convenient.

"Should the substance of their replies ever be embodied in a small volume, they will not only receive a copy and the thanks of the author, but will have the pleasure to know they are assisting in the settlement of a question of great interest to the country. If it should appear probable that their patient was laboring under a decline at the commencement of the change of diet, this ought, in candor, to be fully disclosed.

"It will be perceived, by the tenor of the questions, that they are designed to embrace not only unfortunate results of a change of diet, but such as are favorable. There are, in our community, considerable numbers who have entirely excluded animal food from their diet. It is exceedingly desirable that the results of such experiments, so difficult to be found in this land of plenty, should be ascertained and thrown before the profession and the community. Will physicians, then, have the kindness, if they know of any persons in their vicinity who have excluded animal food from their diet for a year or over, to lend them this number of the Journal, and ask them to forward to Milo L. North, Hartford, Connecticut, as early as convenient, the result of this change of diet on their health and constitution, in accordance with the following inquiries?

"1. Was your bodily strength either increased or diminished by excluding all animal food from your diet?

"2. Were the animal sensations, connected with the process of digestion, more – or less agreeable?

"3. Was the mind clearer; and could it continue a laborious investigation longer than when you subsisted on mixed diet?

"4. What constitutional infirmities were aggravated or removed?

"5. Had you fewer colds or other febrile attacks – or the reverse?

"6. What length of time, the trial?

"7. Was the change to a vegetable diet, in your case, preceded by the use of an uncommon proportion of animal food, or of high seasoning, or of stimulants?

"8. Was this change accompanied by a substitution of cold water for tea and coffee, during the experiment?

"9. Is a vegetable diet more – or less aperient than mixed?

"10. Do you believe, from your experience, that the health of either laborers or students would be promoted by the exclusion of animal food from their diet?

"11. Have you selected, from your own observation, any articles in the vegetable kingdom, as particularly healthy, or otherwise?

"N.B. – Short answers to these inquiries are all that is necessary; and as a copy of the latter is retained by the writer, it will be sufficient to refer to them numerically, without the trouble of transcribing each question.

"Hartford, February 25, 1835."

This circular, or letter, drew forth numerous replies from various parts of the United States, and chiefly from medical men. In the meantime, the prize of the Boylston Medical Committee was

awarded to Luther V. Bell, M.D., of Derry, New Hampshire, and was published in the Boston Medical and Surgical Journal, and elsewhere, and read with considerable interest.

In the year 1836, while many were waiting – some with a degree of impatience – to hear from Dr. North, his health so far failed him, that he concluded to relinquish, for the present, his inquiries; and, at his particular request, I consented to have the following card inserted in the Boston Medical and Surgical Journal:

"Dr. North, of Hartford, Connecticut, tenders his grateful acknowledgments to the numerous individuals, who were so kind as to forward to him a statement of the effects of vegetable diet on their own persons, in reply to some specific inquiries inserted in the Boston Medical and Surgical Journal of March 11, 1835, and in the Philadelphia Journal of the same year. Although many months elapsed before the answers were all received, yet the writer is fully aware that these communications ought to have been published before this. His apology is a prolonged state of ill health, which has now become so serious as to threaten to drive him to a southern climate for the winter. In this exigency, he has solicited Dr. W. A. Alcott, of Boston, to receive the papers and give them to the public as soon as his numerous engagements will permit. This arrangement will doubtless be fully satisfactory, both to the writers of the communications and to the public.

"Hartford, November 4, 1836."

Various circumstances, beyond my control, united to defer the publication of the contemplated work to the year 1838. It is hoped, however, that nothing was lost by delay. It gave further opportunity for reflection, as well as for observation and experiment; and if the work is of any value at all to the community, it owes much of that value to the fact that what the public may be disposed to regard as unnecessary, afforded another year for investigation. Not that any new discoveries were made in that time, but I was, at least, enabled to verify and confirm my former conclusions, and to review, more carefully than ever, the whole argument. It is hoped that the work will at least serve as a pioneer to a more extensive as well as more scientific volume, by some individual who is better able to do the subject justice.

It will be my object to present the facts and arguments of the following volume, not in a distorted or one-sided manner, but according to truth. I have no private interests to subserve, which would lead me to suppress, or falsely color, or exaggerate. If vegetable food is not preferable to animal, I certainly do not wish to have it so regarded. This profession of a sincere desire to know and teach the truth may be an apology for placing the letters in the order in which they appear – which certainly is such as to give no unfair advantages to those who believe in the superiority of the vegetable system – and for the faithfulness with which their whole contents, whether favoring one side or other of the argument, have been transcribed.

The title of the work requires a word of explanation. It is not intended, or even intimated, that there are no facts here but what rest on medical authority; but rather, that the work originated with the medical profession, and contains, for the most part, testimony which is exclusively medical – either given by medical men, or under their sanction. In fact, though designed chiefly for popular reading, it is in a good degree a medical work; and will probably stand or fall, according to the sentence of approbation or disapprobation which shall be pronounced by the medical profession.

The following chapter will contain the letters addressed to Dr. North. They are inserted, with a single exception, in the precise order of their date. The first, however, does not appear to have been elicited by Dr. North's circular; but rather by a request in some previous letter. It will be observed that several of the letters include more than one case or experiment; and a few of them many. Thus the whole series embraces, at the least calculation, from thirty to forty experiments.

The replies of nearly every individual are numbered to correspond with the questions, as suggested by Dr. North; so that, if there should remain a doubt, in any case, in regard to the precise point referred to by the writer of the letter, the reader has only to turn to the circular in the present chapter, and read the question there, which corresponds to the number of the doubtful one. Thus, for example, the various replies marked 6, refer to the length or duration of the experiment or experiments which had been made; and those marked 9, to the aperient effects of a diet exclusively vegetable. And so of all the rest.

CHAPTER II

Letter of Dr. Parmly. – Dr. W. A. Alcott. – Dr. D. S. Wright. – Dr. H. N. Preston. – Dr. H. A. Barrows. – Dr. Caleb Bannister. – Dr. Lyman Tenny. – Dr. J. M. B. Harden. – Joseph Ricketson, Esq. – Joseph Congdon, Esq. – George W. Baker, Esq. – John Howland, Jr., Esq. – Dr. Wm. H. Webster. – Josiah Bennet, Esq. – Wm. Vincent, Esq. – Dr. Geo. H. Perry. – Dr. L. W. Sherman.

LETTER I. – FROM DR. PARMLY, DENTIST

To Dr. North

My Dear Sir, – For two years past, I have abstained from the use of all the diffusible stimulants, using no animal food, either flesh, fish, or fowl; nor any alcoholic or vinous spirits; no form of ale, beer, or porter; no cider, tea, or coffee; but using milk and water as my only liquid aliment, and feeding sparingly, or rather, moderately, upon farinaceous food, vegetables, and fruit, seasoned with unmelted butter, slightly boiled eggs, and sugar or molasses; with no condiment but common salt.

I adopted this regimen in company with several friends, male and female, some of whom had been afflicted either with dyspepsia or some other chronic malady. In every instance within the circle of my acquaintance, the *symptoms* of disease disappeared before this system of diet; and I have every reason to believe that the disease itself was wholly or in part eradicated.

In answer to your inquiry, whether I ascribe the cure, in the cases alleged, to the abstinence from animal food or from stimulating drinks, or from both, I cannot but give it as my confident opinion that the result is to be attributed to a general abandonment of the *diffusive stimuli*, under every shape and form.

An increase of flesh was one of the earliest effects of the *anti-stimulating* regimen, in those cures in which the system was in low condition. The animal spirits became more cheerful, buoyant, and uniformly pleasurable. Mental and bodily labor was endured with much less fatigue, and both intellectual and corporeal exertion was more vigorous and efficient.

In the language of Addison, this system of ultra temperance has had the happy effect of "filling the mind with inward joy, and spreading delight through all its faculties."

But, although I have thus made the experiment of abstaining wholly from the use of liquid and solid stimulants, and from every form of animal food, I am not fully convinced that it should be deemed improper, on any account, to use the more slightly stimulating forms of animal food. Perhaps fish and fowl, with the exception of ducks and geese, turtle and lobster, may be taken without detriment, in moderate quantities. And I regard good mutton as being the lightest, and, at the same time, the most nutritious of all meats, and as producing less inconvenience than any other kind, where the energies of the stomach are enfeebled. And yet there are unquestionably many constitutions which would be benefited by living, as I and others have done, on purely vegetable diet and ripe fruits.

In relation to many of the grosser kinds of animal food, all alcoholic spirits, all distilled and fermented liquors, tea and coffee, opium and tobacco, – I feel confident in pronouncing them not only useless, but noxious to the animal machine.

Yours, etc.,

Eleazer Parmly

New York, January 31, 1835.

LETTER II – FROM DR. W. A. ALCOTT

Boston, December 19, 1834.

Dear Sir, – I received your communication, and hasten to reply to as many of your inquiries as I can. Allow me to take them up in the very order in which you have presented them.

Answer to question 1. I was bred to a very active life, from my earliest childhood. This active course was continued till about the time of my leaving off the use of flesh and fish; since which period my habits have, unfortunately, been more sedentary. I think my muscular strength is somewhat less now than it was before I omitted flesh meat, but in what proportion I am unable to say; for indeed it varies greatly. When more exercise is used, my strength increases – sometimes almost immediately; when less exercise is used, my strength again diminishes, but not so rapidly. These last circumstances indicate a more direct connection between my loss of muscular strength and my neglect of exercise than between the former and my food.

2. Rather more agreeable; unless I use too large a quantity of food; to which however I am rather more inclined than formerly, as my appetite is keener, and food relishes far better. A sedentary life, moreover, as I am well satisfied, tends to bring my moral powers into subjection to the physical.

3. My mind has been clearer, since I commenced the experiment to which you allude, than before; but I doubt whether I can better endure a "laborious investigation." A little rest or exercise, perhaps less than formerly, restores vigor. I am sometimes tempted to *break my day into two*, by sleeping at noon. But I am not so apt to be cloyed with study, or reflection, as formerly.

4. Several. 1. An eruptive complaint, sometimes, at one period of my life, very severe. 2. Irritation of the lungs; probably, indeed most certainly, incipient phthisis. 3. Rheumatic attacks, though they had never been very severe.

The eruptive disease, however, and the rheumatic attacks, are not wholly removed; but they are greatly diminished. The irritation at the lungs has nearly left me. This is the more remarkable from the fact that I have been, during almost the whole period of my experiment, in or about Boston. I was formerly somewhat subject to palpitations; these are now less frequent. I am also less exposed to epidemics. Formerly, like other scrofulous persons, I had nearly all that appeared; now I have very few.

You will observe that I merely state the facts, without affirming, positively, that my change of diet has been the cause, though I am quite of opinion that this has not been without its influence. Mental quiet and total abstinence from all drinks but water, may also have had much influence, as well as other causes.

5. Very few colds. Last winter I had a violent inflammation of the ear, which was attended with some fever; but abstinence and emollient applications soon restored me. In July last, I had a severe attack of diarrhœa unattended with much fever, which I attributed to drinking too much water impregnated with earthy salts, and to which I had been unaccustomed. When I have a cold, of late, it affects, principally, the nasal membrane; and, if I practice abstinence, soon disappears. In this respect, more than in any other, I am confident that since I commenced the use of a vegetable diet I have been a very great gainer.

6. The experiment was fully begun four years ago last summer; though I had been making great changes in my physical habits for four years before. For about three years, I used neither flesh nor fish, nor even eggs more than two or three times a year. The only animal food I used was milk; and for some long periods, not even that. But at the end of three years I ate a very small quantity of flesh meat once a day, for three or four weeks, and then laid it aside. This was in the time of the cholera. The only effect I perceived from its use was a slight increase of peristaltic action. In March last, I used a little dried fish once or twice a day, for a few days; but with no peculiar effects. After my attack of diarrhœa, in July last, I used a little flesh several times; but for some months past I have laid

it aside entirely, with no intention of resuming it. Nothing peculiar was observed, as to its effects, during the last autumn.

7. I never used a large proportion of animal food, except milk, since I was a child; but I have been in the habit, at various periods of my life, of drinking considerable cider. For some months before I laid aside flesh and fish, I had been accustomed to the use of more animal food than usual, but less cider; though, for a part of the time, I made up the deficiency of cider with ale and coffee. For several months previous to the beginning of the experiment, I had drank nothing but water.

8. Rather less. But here, again, I fear I am in danger of attributing to one cause what is the effect of another. My neglect of exercise may be more in fault than the rice and bread and milk which I use. Still I must think that vegetable food is, in my own case, less aperient than animal.

9. In regard to students, my reply is, Yes, most certainly. So I think in regard to laborers, were they trained to it. But how far *early habits* may create a demand for the continuance of animal food through life, I am quite at a loss for an opinion. Were I a hard laborer, I should use no animal food. When I travel on foot forty or fifty miles a day, I use vegetable food, and in less than the usual quantity. This I used to do before I commenced my experiment.

10. I use bread made of unbolted wheat meal, in moderate quantity, when I can get it; plain Indian cakes once a day; milk once a day; rice once a day. My plan is to use as few things as possible at the same meal, but to have considerable variety at different meals. I use no new bread or pastry, no cheese, and but little butter; and very little fruit, except apples in moderate quantity.

11. The answer to this question, though I think it would be important and interesting, with many other particulars, I must defer for the present. The experiments of Dr. F., a young man in this neighborhood, and of several other individuals, would, I know be in point; but I have not at my command the time necessary to present them.

LETTER III. – FROM DR. D. S. WRIGHT

Whitehall, Washington Co., N. Y., March 17, 1835.

Dear Sir, – I noticed a communication from you in the Boston Medical and Surgical Journal of the 5th instant, in which you signify a wish to collect facts in relation to the effects of a vegetable diet upon the human system, etc. I submit for your consideration my own experience; premising, however, that I am a practicing physician in this place – am thirty-three years old – of a sanguine, bilious temperament – have from youth up usually enjoyed good health – am not generally subject to fevers, etc.

I made a radical change in my diet three years ago this present month, from a mixed course of animal and vegetable food, to a strictly vegetable diet, on which I subsisted pretty uniformly for the most part of one year. I renewed it again about ten months ago.

My reasons for adopting it were: 1st. I had experienced the beneficial effects of it for several years before, during the warm weather, in obviating a dull cephalalgic pain, and oppression in the epigastrium. 2dly. I had recently left the salubrious atmosphere of the mountains in Essex county, in this state, for this place of *mosquitoes* and *miasmata*. 3dly, and prominently. I had frequent exposures to the variolous infection, and I had a *dreadful* apprehension that I might have an attack of the varioloid, as at that time I had never experimentally tried the protective powers of the vaccine virus, and had *too* little confidence in those who recommended its prophylactic powers. The results I submit you, in reply to your interrogatories.

1. I think each time I tried living on vegetable food exclusively, that for the first month I could not endure fatigue *as well*. Afterward I could.

2. The digestive organs were always more agreeably excited.

3. The mind uniformly clearer, and could endure laborious investigations longer, and with less effort.

4. I am constitutionally healthy and robust.

5. I believe I have more colds, principally seated on the mucous membranes of the lungs, fauces, and cavities of the head. (I do not, however, attribute it to diet.)

6. The first trial was one year. I am now ten months on the same plan, and shall continue it.

7. I never used a large quantity of animal food or stimulants, of any description.

8. I have for several years used tea and coffee, usually once a day – believe them healthy.

9. Vegetable diet is less aperient than a mixed diet, if we except *Indian corn*.

10. I do not think that common laborers, in health, could do as well without animal food; but I think students might.

11. I have selected *potatoes*, when *baked* or *roasted*, and all articles of food usually prepared from *Indian meal*, as the most healthy articles on which I subsist; particularly the latter, whose aperient and nutritive qualities render it, in my estimation, an invaluable article for common use.

Yours, etc.,

D. S. Wright.

LETTER IV. – FROM DR. H. N. PRESTON.¹

Plymouth, Mass., March 26, 1835.

Dear Sir, – When I observed your questions in the Boston Medical and Surgical Journal, of the 11th of March, I determined to give you personal experience, in reply to your valuable queries.

In the spring of 1832, while engaged in more than usual professional labor, I began to suffer from indigestion, which gradually increased, unabated by any medicinal or dietetic course, until I was reduced to the very confines of the grave. The disease became complicated, for a time, with chronic bronchitis. I would remark, that, at the time of my commencing a severe course of diet, I was able to attend to my practice daily.

In answer to your inquiries, I would say to the 1st – very much diminished, and rapidly.

2. Rather less; distinct local uneasiness – less disposition to drowsiness; but decidedly more troubled with cardialgia, and eructations.

3. I think not.

4. My disease was decidedly increased; as cough, headache, and emaciation; and being of a scrofulous diathesis, was lessening my prospect of eventual recovery.

5. My febrile attacks increased with my increased debility.

6. Almost four months; when I became convinced death would be the result, unless I altered my course.

7. I had taken animal food moderately, morning and noon – very little high seasoning – no stimulants, except tea and coffee. The latter was my favorite beverage; and I usually drank two cups with my breakfast and dinner, and black tea with my supper.

8. I drank but one cup of weak coffee with my breakfast, none with dinner, and generally a cup of milk and water with supper.

9. With me *much less aperient*; indeed, costiveness became a very serious and distressing accompaniment.

10. From somewhat extensive observation, for the last seven years, I should say, of laborers never; students seldom.

11. Among dyspeptics, potatoes nearly boiled, then mashed together, rolled into balls, and laid over hot coals, until a second time cooked, as easy as any vegetable. If any of the luxuries of the table have been noticed as particularly injurious, it has been cranberries, prepared in any form, as stewed in sauce, tarts, pies, etc.

Crude as these answers are, they are at your service; and I am prompted to give them from the fact, that very few persons, I presume, have been so far reduced as myself, with dyspepsia and its concomitants. In fact, I was pronounced, by some of the most scientific physicians of Boston, as past all prospect of cure, or even much relief, from medicine, diet, or regimen. My attention has naturally been turned with anxious solicitude to the subject of diet, in all its forms. Since my unexpected restoration to health, my opportunities for observation among dyspeptics have been much enlarged; and I most unhesitatingly say, that my success is much more encouraging, in the management of such cases, since pursuing a more liberal diet, than before. Plain animal diet, avoiding condiments and tea, using mucilaginous drink, as the Irish Moss, is preferable to "absolute diet," – cases of decided chronic gastritis excepted.

Yours, etc.,

H. N. Preston.

¹ Dr. Preston has since deceased.

LETTER V. – FROM DR. H. A. BARROWS

Phillips, Somerset Co., Me., April 28, 1835.

Dear Sir, – I have a brother-in-law, who owes his life to abstinence from animal food, and strict adherence to the simplest vegetable diet. My own existence is prolonged, only (according to human probabilities) by entire abstinence from flesh-meat of every description, and feeding principally upon the coarsest farinacea.

Numberless other instances have come under my observation within the last three years, in which a strict adherence to a simple vegetable diet has done for the wretched invalid what the best medical treatment had utterly failed to do; and in no one instance have I known permanently injurious results to follow from this course, but in many instances have had to lament the want of firmness and decision, and a gradual return to the "*flesh-pots of Egypt*."

With these views, I very cheerfully comply with your general invitation, on page 77, volume 12, of the Boston Medical and Surgical Journal. The answers to your interrogatories will apply to the case first referred to, to my own case, and to nearly every one which has occurred within my notice.

1. Increased, uniformly; and in nearly every instance, without even the usual debility consequent upon withdrawing the stimulus of animal food.

2. More agreeable in every instance.

3. Affirmative, *in toto*.

4. None aggravated, except flatulence in one or two instances. All the horrid train of dyspeptic symptoms uniformly mitigated, and obstinate constipation removed.

5. Fewer colds and febrile attacks.

6. Three years, with my brother; with myself, eighteen months partially, and three months wholly; the others, from one to six months.

7. Negative.

8. Cold water – my brother and myself; others, hot and cold water alternately.

9. More aperient, – no exceptions.

10. I believe the health of *students* would uniformly be promoted – and the days of the laborer, to say the least, would be lengthened.

11. I have; and that is, simple bread made of wheat meal, ground in corn-stones, and mixed up precisely as it comes from the mill – with the substitution of fine flour when the bowels become too active.

Yours, etc.,

Horace A. Barrows.

LETTER VI. – FROM DR. CALEB BANNISTER

Phelps, N. Y., May 4, 1835.

Sir, – My age is fifty-three. My ancestors had all melted away with hereditary consumption. At the age of twenty, I began to be afflicted with pain in different parts of the thorax, and other premonitory symptoms of phthisis pulmonalis. Soon after this, my mother and eldest sister died with the disease. For myself, having a severe attack of ague and fever, all my consumptive symptoms became greatly aggravated; the pain was shifting – sometimes between the shoulders, sometimes in the side, or breast, etc. System extremely irritable, pulse hard and easily excited, from about ninety to one hundred and fifty, by the stimulus of a very small quantity of food; and, to be short, I was given up, on all hands, as lost.

From reading "Rush" I was induced to try a milk diet, and succeeded in regaining my health, so that for twenty-four years I have been entirely free from any symptom of phthisis; and although subject, during that time, to many attacks of fever and other epidemics, have steadily followed the business of a country physician.

I would further remark, before proceeding to the direct answer to your questions, that soon perceiving the benefit resulting from the course I had commenced, and finding the irritation to diminish in proportion as I diminished not only the quality, but quantity of my food, I took less than half a pint at a meal, with a small piece of bread, amounting to about the quantity of a Boston cracker; and at times, in order to lessen arterial action, added some water to the milk, taking only my usual quantity in *bulk*.

A seton was worn in the side, and a little exercise on horseback taken three times every day, as strength would allow, during the whole progress. The appetite was, at all times, not only *craving*, it was *voracious*; insomuch that all my sufferings from all other sources, dwindled to a point when compared with it.

The quantity that I ate at a time so far from satisfying my appetite, only served to increase it; and this inconvenience continued during the whole term, without the least abatement; – and the only means by which I could resist its cravings, was to live entirely by myself, and keep out of sight of all kinds of food except the scanty pittance on which I subsisted. And now to the proposed questions.

1. Increased.

2. More agreeable, hunger excepted.

3. To the first part of this question, I should say evidently clearer; to the latter part, such was the state of debility when I commenced, and such was it through the whole course, I am not able to give a decisive answer.

4. This question, you will perceive, is already answered in my preliminary remarks.

5. Fewer, insomuch that I had none.

6. Two full years.

7. My living, from early life, had been conformable to the habits of the farmers of New England, from which place I emigrated, and my habits in regard to stimulating drinks were always moderate; but I occasionally took them, in conformity to the customs of those "*times of ignorance*."

8. I literally drank *nothing*; the milk wholly supplying the place of all liquids.

9. State of the bowels good before adopting the course, and after.

10. I do not.

11. I have not.

Caleb Bannister.

LETTER VII. – FROM DR. LYMAN TENNY

Franklin, Vermont, June 22, 1835.

Sir, – In answer to your inquiries, in the Boston Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. xii., page 78, I can say that I have lived entirely upon a bread and milk diet, without using any animal food other than the milk.

1. At first, my bodily strength was diminished to a certain degree, and required a greater quantity of food, and rather oftener, than when upon a mixed diet of animal food (strictly so called) and vegetables.

2. The animal sensations, attending upon the process of digestion, were rather more agreeable than when upon a mixed diet.

3. My mind was more clear, but I could not continue a laborious investigation as long as when I used animal food more plentifully.

4. At this time there were no constitutional infirmities which I was laboring under, except those which more or less accompany the rapid growth of the body; such as a general lassitude, impaired digestion, etc., which were neither removed nor aggravated, but kept about so, until I ate just what I pleased, without any regard to my indigestion, etc., when I began to improve in the strength of my whole system.

5. I do not recollect whether I was subject to more or fewer colds; but I can say I was perfectly free from all febrile attacks, although febrile diseases often prevailed in my vicinity. But since that time, a period of six years, I have had three attacks of fever.

6. The length of time I was upon this diet was about two years.

7. Before entering upon this diet, I was in the habit of taking a moderate quantity of animal food, but without very high seasoning or stimulants.

8. While using this diet, I confined myself entirely and exclusively to cold water as a drink – using neither tea, coffee, nor spirits of any kind whatever.

9. I am inclined to think that a vegetable diet is more aperient than an animal one; indeed, I may say I know it to be a fact.

10. From what I have experienced, I do not think that laborers would be any more healthy by excluding animal food from their diet entirely; but I believe it would be much better if they would use less. As to students, I believe their health would be promoted if they were to exclude it almost, if not entirely.

11. I never have selected any vegetables which I thought to be more healthy than others: nor indeed do I believe there is any one that is more healthy than another; but believe that all those vegetables which we use in the season of them, are adapted to supply and satisfy the wants of the system.

We are carnivorous, as well as granivorous animals, having systems requiring animal, as well as vegetable food, to keep all the organs of the body in tune; and perhaps we need a greater variety than other animals.

Yours, etc.,

Lyman Tenny.

LETTER VIII. – FROM DR. J. M. B. HARDEN

Liberty County, Georgia, July 15, 1835.

Sir, – Having observed, in the May number of the "American Journal of the Medical Sciences," certain inquiries in relation to diet, proposed by you to the physicians of the United States, I herewith transmit to you an account of a case exactly in point, which I hope may prove interesting to yourself, and in some degree "assist in the settlement of a question of *great interest* to the *country*."

The case, to which allusion is made, occurred in the person of a very intelligent and truly scientific gentleman of this county, whose regular habits, both of mind and body, added to his sound and discriminating judgment, will tend to heighten the value and importance of the experiment involved in the case I am about to detail.

Before proceeding to give his answers to your interrogatories, it may be well to premise, that at the time of commencing the experiment, he was forty-five years of age; and being an extensive cotton planter, his business was such as to make it necessary for him to undergo a great deal of exercise, particularly on foot, having, as he himself declares, to walk seldom less than ten miles a day, and frequently more; and this exercise was continued during the whole period of the experiment. His health for two years previously had been very feeble, arising, as he supposed, from a diseased *spleen*; which organ is at this time enlarged, and somewhat indurated. His digestive powers have *always* been *good*, and he had been in the habit of making his meals at times entirely of *animal food*. His bowels have always been regular, and rather inclined to looseness, but never disordered. He is five feet eight inches high, of a very thin and spare habit of body, with thin dark hair, inclining to baldness; complexion rather dark than fair; eyes dark hazel; of *very studious* habits when free from active engagements; with great powers of mental abstraction and attention, and of a temper *remarkably even*.

In answer to your interrogatories, he replies, —

1. That his bodily strength was increased, and general health became better.
2. He perceived no difference.
3. He is assured of the affirmative.
4. His spleen was diminished in size, and frequent and long-continued attacks of *lumbago* were rendered *much milder*, and have so continued.
5. Had fewer colds and febrile attacks.
6. Three years.
7. No; with the slight exception mentioned above.
8. No.
9. In his case rather less.
10. Undoubtedly.
11. No; has made his meals of cabbages entirely, and found them as easily digested as any other article of diet. I may remark, that *honey* to him is a poison, producing, *invariably*, symptoms of cholera.

After three years' trial of this diet, without having any previous apparent disease, but on the contrary as strong as usual, he was taken, somewhat suddenly, in the winter of 1832 and 3, with symptoms of extreme debility, attended with oedematous swellings of the lower extremities, and painful cramps, at night confined to the gastrocnemii of both legs, and some feverishness, indicated more by the beatings of the *carotids* than by any other symptom. His countenance became very pallid, and indeed he had every appearance of a man in a very low state of health. Yet, during the whole period of this apparent state of disease, there were no symptoms indicative of disorder in any function, save the general function of innervation, and perhaps that of the lymphatics or absorbents of the lower extremities. Nor was there any manifest disease of any organ, unless it was the spleen, which was not

then remarkably enlarged. I was myself disposed to attribute his symptoms to the spleen, and possibly to the want of animal food; but he himself attributes its commencement, if not its continuance, to the inhalation of the vapor of arseniuretted and sulphuretted hydrogen gases, to which he was subjected during some chemical experiments on the ores of cobalt, to which he has been for a long time turning his attention; a circumstance which I had not known until lately.

However it may be, he again returned to a mixed diet (to which however he ascribes no agency in his recovery), and, after six months' continuance in this state, he rapidly recovered his usual health and strength, which, up to this day – two full years after the expiration of six months – have continued good. In the treatment of his case no medicine of any kind was given, to which any good effect can be attributed; and indeed he may be said to have undergone no medical treatment at all.

Yours, etc.,
J. M. B. Harden.

LETTER IX. – FROM JOSEPH RICKETSON, ESQ

New Bedford, 8th month, 26th, 1835.

Respected Friend, – Perhaps before giving answers to thy queries in the American Journal of Medical Science, it may not be amiss to give thee some account of my family and manner of living, to enable thee to judge of the effect of a vegetable diet on the constitution.

I have a wife, a mother aged eighty-eight, and two female domestics. It is now near three years since we adopted what is called the Graham or vegetable diet, though not in its fullest extent. We exclude animal food from our diet, but sometimes we indulge in shell and other fish. We use no kind of stimulating liquors, either as drink or in cookery, nor any other stimulants except occasionally a little spice. We do not, as Professor Hitchcock would recommend, nor as I believe would be most conducive to good health, live entirely simple; sometimes, however, for an experiment, I have eaten only rice and milk; at other times only potatoes and milk for my dinner; and have uniformly found I could endure as much fatigue, and walk as far without inconvenience, as when I have eaten a greater variety. We, however, endeavor to make our varieties mostly at different meals.

For breakfast and tea we have some hot water poured upon milk, to which we add a little sugar, and cold bread and butter; but in cold weather we toast the bread, and prefer having it so cool as not to melt the butter. We seldom eat a meal without some kind of dried or preserved fruit, such as peaches, plums, quinces, or apples; and in the season, when easily to be procured, we use, freely, baked apples, also berries, particularly blackberries stewed, which, while cooking, are sweetened and thickened a little. Our dinners are nearly the same as our other meals, except that we use cold milk, without any water. We have puddings sometimes made of stale bread, at others of Graham or other flour, or rice, or ground rice, usually baked; we have also hasty puddings, made of Indian meal, or Graham flour, which we eat with milk or melted sugar and cream; occasionally we have other simple puddings, such as tapioca, etc. Custards, with or without a crust, pies made of apple, and other fruits either green or preserved; but we have no more shortening in the crust than just to make it a little tender.

I have two sons; one lived with us about fifteen months after we adapted this mode of living; it agreed remarkably well with him; he grew strong and fleshy. He married since that time, and, in some measure, returned to the usual manner of living; but he is satisfied it does not agree so well with him as the Graham diet. The coarse bread he cannot well do without. My other son was absent when we commenced this way of living; he has been at home about six weeks, and has not eaten any animal food except when he dined out. He has evidently *lost* flesh, and is not very well; *he* thinks he shall not be able to live without animal food, but I think his indisposition is more owing to the season of the year than diet. He never drank any tea or coffee until about four years since, when he took some coffee for a while, but no tea. For the last two years he has not drank either, when he could get milk. He is generally healthy, and so is his brother: both were literally brought up on gingerbread and milk, never taking animal food of choice, until they were fifteen or sixteen years of age.

Dr. Keep, of Fairhaven, Connecticut, was here about a year since, in very bad health, since which I learn he has recovered by abstaining from animal food and other injurious diet. As he is a scientific man, I think he can give thee some useful information.

1. The strength of both myself and wife has very materially increased, so that we can now walk ten miles as easily as we could five before; possibly it may in part be attributed to practice. Our health is, in every respect, much improved. One of our women enjoys perfect health; the other was feeble when we commenced this way of living, and she has not gained much if any in the time; but this may be owing to her attendance on my mother, both day and night, who, being blind and feeble, takes no exercise except to walk across the room; but we are very sure she would not have lived to this time had she not adopted this way of living.

2. The process of digestion is much more agreeable, if we do not indulge in eating too much. We seldom have occasion to think of it after rising from the table.

3. I do not perceive much effect on the mind, other than what would naturally be produced by the restoration of health; but have no doubt a laborious investigation might be continued as long, if not longer, on this than any other diet.

4. I was formerly very much afflicted with the headache, and sometimes was troubled with rheumatism. I have very seldom, for the last two years especially, been troubled with either; and when I have had a turn of headache, it is light indeed compared with what it was before we adopted this system of living. My wife was very dyspeptic, and often had severe turns of palpitation of the heart; the latter is entirely removed, and she seldom experiences any inconvenience from the former. Our nurse was formerly, and still is, troubled with severe turns of headache, though not so bad as formerly; and I think she would have much less of it if she were placed in a different situation.

5. We scarcely know what it is to have a cold; my wife in particular. Previously to our change of diet, I was very subject to severe colds, attended with a hard cough, which lasted, sometimes, for several weeks.

6. As before stated, we exclude animal food from our diet, as well as tea and coffee.

7. Before we adopted a vegetable diet, we always had meat for dinner, and generally with breakfast; and not unfrequently with tea. Tea and coffee we drank very strong.

8. We have substituted milk and water sweetened, for tea and coffee.

9. Most vegetables I find have a tendency (especially when Graham or unbolted wheaten flour is used) to keep the bowels open; to counteract which, we use rice once or twice a week. Potatoes, when eaten freely, are flatulent, but not inconvenient when eaten moderately.

10. I think the health of students, by the exclusion of animal food from their diet, would be promoted, especially if they excluded tea and coffee also; and I can see no good reason why it should not be beneficial to laboring people. I have conversed with two or three mechanics, who confirm me in this belief.

11. Graham bread, as we call it, eaten with milk, or baked potatoes and milk, for most people, I think would be healthy; to which should be added such a proportion of rice as may be found necessary.

*Thy friend,
Joseph Ricketson.*

LETTER X. – FROM JOSEPH CONGDON, ESQ

New Bedford, Sept., 1835.

Answers to Dr. North's inquiries on diet.

1. Increase of strength and activity, connected with, and perhaps in some good degree a consequence of, an increase of daily exercise.
2. Process of digestion more regular and agreeable.
3. Mental activity greater; no decisive experiments on the ability to *continue* a laborious investigation.
4. Dyspepsia of long continuance, and also difficult breathing; inflammation of the eyes.
5. Fewer colds; febrile attacks very slight; great elasticity in recovering from disease. Some part of the effect should undoubtedly be ascribed to greater attention to the skin by bathing and friction.
6. Twenty-six months of *entire abstinence* from all animal substances, excepting butter and milk. Salt is used regularly.
7. Through life inclined to a vegetable diet, with few stimulants.
8. Drinks have been milk, milk and water, or cold water.
9. A *well-selected* vegetable diet appears to produce a very regular action of the stomach and bowels.
10. I think the health of laborers and students would be promoted by a *great* reduction of the usual quantity of animal food, and perhaps by discontinuing its use entirely. I feel no want.
11. From my experience, I can very highly recommend bread made of coarse wheat flour. Among fruits, the blackberry, as peculiarly adapted to the state of the body, at the time of the year when it is in season. My range of food has been confined. I avoid green vegetables. Age 35.

Joseph Congdon.

LETTER XI. – FROM GEORGE W. BAKER, ESQ

New Bedford, 9th month, 10, 1835.

Dr. M. L. North, – Agreeably to request, the following answers are forwarded, which I believe to be correct as far as my experience has tested.

1. At first it was diminished; but after a few months it was restored, and I think increased.
2. More.
3. It could.
4. Pretty free from constitutional infirmities before the change, and no increase since.
5. I have had no cold, of any consequence, for the last three years; at which time I substituted cold water for tea and coffee, and commenced using cold water for washing about my head and neck and for shaving, which I continued through the year.
6. I have not eaten animal food for about eighteen months.
7. Two years previous to the entire change the quantity was great, but there had been a gradual diminution.
8. It was. (See fifth answer.)
9. More so, in my case.
10. I believe the health of both laborers and students would be improved.
11. I have generally avoided eating cucumbers; otherwise I have not.

*Thy assured friend,
Geo. W. Baker.*

LETTER XII – FROM JOHN HOWLAND, JR., ESQ

New Bedford, 9th month, 10th day, 1835.

Friend, – As I have lived nearly three years upon a vegetable diet, I cheerfully comply with thy request.

1. My bodily strength has been increased; and I can now endure much more exercise than formerly, without fatigue.

2. They are more agreeable; and I am now free from that dull, heavy feeling, which I used to experience after my meals.

3. My mind is much clearer; and I am free from that depression of spirits, to which I was formerly subject.

4. I was of a costive, dyspeptic habit, which has been entirely removed. I had frequent and severe attacks of headache, which I now rarely have; and when they do occur they are very light, compared with what they formerly were.

5. I have had fewer colds, and those much lighter than formerly.

6. About three years.

7. I used to eat animal food for breakfast and dinner, with coffee for drink, at those meals; and tea for my third meal, with bread and butter.

8. Milk for breakfast, and cold water for the other two meals.

9. I have found it more so; inasmuch as the use of it, with the substitution of bread, made from *coarse, unbolted wheat flour*, instead of superfine, has removed my costiveness entirely.

10. I do.

11. I consider potatoes and rice as the most healthy, and confine myself principally to the former.

I would remark that during the season of fruits, I eat freely of them, with milk; and consider them to be healthy.

John Howland, Jr.

LETTER XIII. – FROM DR. W. H. WEBSTER

Batavia, N. Y., Oct. 21, 1835.

Sir, – Some months since, I read your inquiries on diet in the Boston Medical and Surgical Journal; and subsequently in the Journal of Medical Sciences, Philadelphia.

I will answer your questions, numerically, from my knowledge of a case somewhat in point, and with which I am but too familiar, as it is my own. But, first, let me premise a few points in the history of my health, as a kind of key to my answers.

It is about fifteen years since I was called a *dyspeptic*; this was while engaged in my academical studies. Not being instructed by my medical friend to make any alteration in diet and regimen, I merely swallowed his cathartics for one month, and his anodynes for the next month, as the bowels were constipated or relaxed. In short, I left college more dead than alive – a confirmed dyspeptic.

In 1826, I commenced the practice of physic. From this time, to the winter of 1831-2, I found it necessary gradually to diminish my indulgence in the luxuries of the table – especially in animal food, and distilled and fermented liquors. On one of the most inclement nights of the winter of 1831-2, a fire broke out in our village, at which I became very wet by perspiration, and the ill-directed efforts of some to extinguish it. This was followed by a severe inflammatory attack upon the digestive organs generally, and especially upon the renal region, which confined me to the house for more than eight months; and, for the greatest share of that time, with the most excruciating torture. On getting out again, I found myself in a wretched condition indeed – reduced to a skeleton – a voracious appetite, which could not be indulged, and which had scarcely deserted me through the whole eight months. I could not regain my flesh or strength but by almost imperceptible degrees; indeed, loaf-sugar and crackers were almost the only food I could use with impunity for the first year.

It is now nearly four years since I have eaten animal food, unless it be here and there a little, as an experiment, with the sole exception of oysters, in which I can indulge, but with all due deference to the stricter rules of temperance. Still my appetite for animal food seems unabated. I have ever been a man unusually temperate in the use of intoxicating drinks; and by no means intemperate in the luxuries of the table. I take no meat, no alcoholic or fermented drinks, not even cider; and, for a year past, my health has been better than for three years previous; and I think that about one third the amount of nourishment usually taken by men of my age, might subserve the purposes of food for *me* better than a larger quantity. The more I eat, the more I desire to eat; and abstinence is my best medicine.

But I have already surpassed my limits, and here are my answers.

1. My strength is invariably diminished by animal food, and in almost direct proportion to the quantity, with the exception named above.

2. Pain has been the uniform attendant upon the digestion of an animal diet, with feverish restlessness and constipation.

3. Decidedly more fit for energetic action.

4. An irritation, or subacute inflammation of the digestive apparatus, which is aggravated by animal food.

5. Can endure hardship, exposure, and fatigue, much better without meat.

6. About four years, with the exception stated above.

7. It was not.

8. Partially at the commencement; but not of late, if not taken hot.

9. Much more aperiient.

10. Both classes take too much; and students and sedentaries should take little or none.

11. For myself farinaceous articles first, then the succulent sub-acid ripe fruits, then the less oily nuts are most healthful – and animal food, strong coffee and tea, and unripe or hard fruits, in any considerable quantities, are most pernicious.

Yours, etc.,

W. H. Webster.

LETTER XIV. – FROM JOSIAH BENNET, ESQ

Mount-Joy, Pa., Oct. 27, 1835.

Sir, – I hereby transmit to you, answers to a series of dietetic queries which you have recently submitted.

1. My physical strength was at least equal (I am rather inclined to think greater) after abstaining from animal food. I was, I am certain, not subject to such general debility and lassitude of the system, after considerable bodily exercise.

2. More agreeable – not being subject to a sense of vertigo, which frequently (with me) followed the use of animal food. There is, generally, more cheerfulness and vivacity.

3. The mind is more clear, and is not so liable to be confused when intent upon any intricate subject; and, of course, "can continue a laborious investigation longer." There is at no time such a propensity to incogitancy.

4. I am not aware of being the subject of any "constitutional infirmities;" yet, that the change of diet had a very great effect upon the system, is obvious, from the fact of my having been, formerly, subject to an eruptive disease of the skin, principally on the shoulders and upper part of the back, for a number of years, which is not the case at present, nor do I think will be, as long as I continue my present mode of living.

5. I think I have not had as many colds and febrile attacks as before, nor have they been so severe; yet I cannot be very decisive on this point, on account of the length of time in the trial not being fully sufficient.

6. Between seven and eight months. I must here state that animal food was not *entirely* excluded. I probably partook, in very moderate quantities, once or twice a week.

7. The quantity of animal food which would be considered "an uncommon proportion," I am unable to determine; but I was accustomed to make use of it, not *less* than twice, and sometimes three times a day, moderately seasoned. No other stimulants, of any account.

8. Cold water has been the only substitute for tea and coffee, with the exception of an occasional cup; probably as often as once or twice a week. I was, on several occasions, by personal experience, induced to believe that the use of strong coffee retarded the process of digestion.

9. More aperient. Previous to the general exclusion of animal food from my diet, I was subject to inveterate costiveness; cases of which are now neither frequent nor severe.

10. I do firmly believe it would.

11. My diet, principally, during the trial, consisted of wheat bread, of the proper age, with a moderate quantity of fresh butter. Potatoes, beans, and some other esculent roots, etc., I found to be nutritious and healthy. The following substances I found to produce a contrary effect, or to possess different qualities: cabbage, when not well boiled; cucumbers, raw or pickled; radishes, beets, and the whole catalogue of preserves. Fresh bread was particularly hurtful to me.

*Yours, etc.,
Josiah Bennett.*

LETTER XV. – FROM WILLIAM VINCENT, ESQ.²

Hopkinton, R. I., Dec. 23, 1835.

Sir, – The following answer to the interrogations in the Boston Medical and Surgical Journal of March 1835, on diet, etc., as proposed by yourself, has been through the press of business, neglected until this late period. Trusting they may be of some use, I now forward them.

1. Rather increased, if any change.
2. —
3. I think I have retained the vigor of my mind more, in consequence of an abstemious diet.
4. I thought I had the appearance of scurvy, which gradually disappeared.
5. —
6. From May 20, 1811, (more than twenty-four years.)
7. Small in quantity, and dressed and cooked simply.
8. I have drank nothing but warm tea, for seven years.
9. Bowels uniformly open.
10. I should not think it would.
11. I have lived principally on bread, butter, and cheese, and a few dried vegetables.

I was born March 31, 1764. In 1833, when mowing, to quench thirst, I drank about a gill of cold water, *after* about as much milk and water; and the same year, some molasses and water; but they did not answer the purpose. But when I rinsed my mouth with cold water, it allayed my thirst.

(Signed)

Wm. Vincent.

² Mr. Vincent is of Stonington, Ct.

LETTER XVI. – FROM L. R. BRADLEY, BY DR. GEO. H. PERRY

Hopkinton, R. I., Dec. 23, 1835.

Sir, – I deem it necessary, first, to mention the situation of my health, at the time of commencing abstinence from animal food. I was recovering from an illness of a *nervous fever*. A sudden change respecting my food not sitting well, rendered it necessary for me to abstain from all kinds, excepting dry wheat bread and gruel, for several weeks. By degrees I returned to my former course of diet, but as yet not to its full extent, as I cannot partake of animal food of any kind whatever, nor of vegetables cooked therewith.

1. Diminished.
2. —
3. I do not perceive the mind to be clearer, and the power of investigation less.
4. Distress in the stomach and pain in the head removed.
5. —
6. Six years and ten months.
7. Unusual proportion of animal food.
8. The first year, I drank only warm water, sweetened; since that, tea.
9. —
10. I do not.
11. I find *beets* particularly hard to digest.

L. R. B.

The foregoing statements and answers are in her own way and manner.

Yours, etc.,

Geo. H. Perry.

LETTER XVII. – FROM DR. L. W. SHERMAN

Falmouth, Mass., March 28, 1835.

Sir, – In compliance with the request you recently made in the Medical Journal, I inclose the following answers to the queries relative to regimen you have propounded. They are given by a lady, whose experience, intelligence, and discernment, have eminently qualified her to answer them. She, with myself, is equally interested with you in having this important question settled, and is extremely happy that you have undertaken to do it. This lady is now fifty years of age; her constitution naturally is good; her early habits were active, and her diet simple, until twenty years of age. After that, until within a few years, her living consisted of all kinds of meats and delicacies, with wine after dinners, etc., etc.

1. Her bodily strength was greatly increased by excluding animal food from her diet.

2. The animal sensations connected with the process of digestion have been decidedly more agreeable.

3. The mind is much clearer, the spirits much better, the temper more even, and "less irritability pervades the system." The mind can continue a laborious investigation longer than when she subsisted on a mixed diet.

4. Her health, which was before feeble, has, by the change, been decidedly improved.

5. She has certainly had fewer colds, and no febrile attacks of any consequence, since she has practiced rigid abstinence from meats.

6. She has abstained entirely for three years, and has taken but little for seven or eight years; and whenever she has, from necessity (in being from home, where she could procure nothing else), indulged in eating meat, she has universally suffered severely in consequence.

7. The change to a vegetable diet was preceded, in her case, by the use of an uncommon proportion of animal food, highly seasoned with stimulants.

8. Tea and coffee she has not used for thirteen years. She has used, for substitutes, water, milk and water, barley water, and gruel. She found tea and coffee to have an exceedingly pernicious effect upon her nervous and digestive system.

9. A vegetable diet is more aperient than a mixed. Habitual constipation has been entirely removed by the change.

10. She sincerely believes, from her experience, that the health of laborers and students would be generally promoted by the exclusion of animal food from their diet.

11. She considers *hominy*, as prepared at the South, particularly healthy; and subsists upon this, with bread made from coarse flour, with broccoli, cauliflower, and all kinds of vegetables in their season.

Be assured, dear sir, that these answers have come from a high source, to which private reference may at any time be made, and consequently are entitled to the highest consideration.

Yours, etc.,

L. W. Sherman.

Note. – If I have not been minute enough in the relation of this case, I shall hereafter be happy to answer any questions you may think proper to propose. It is a very interesting and important case, in my opinion. The lady has been under my care a number of times, while laboring under slight indisposition. She has always been very regular and systematic in all her habits. She is healthy and robust in appearance, and looks as though she might not be more than forty. This is the only case of the kind within my knowledge. I have practiced on her plan for a few weeks at a time, and, so far as my experience goes, it precisely comports with hers. But I love the "good things" of this world too well to abstain from their use, until some formidable disease demands their prohibition.

Yours, etc.,
L. W. S.

CHAPTER III.

REMARKS ON THE FOREGOING LETTERS

Correspondence. – The "prescribed course of Regimen." – How many victims to it? – Not one. – Case of Dr. Harden considered. – Case of Dr. Preston. – Views of Drs. Clark, Cheyne, and Lambe, on the treatment of Scrofula. – No reports of Injury from the prescribed System. – Case of Dr. Bannister. – Singular testimony of Dr. Wright. – Vegetable food for Laborers. – Testimony, on the whole, much more favorable to the Vegetable System than could reasonably have been expected, in the circumstances.

"Reports not unfrequently reach us," says Dr. North, "of certain individuals who have fallen victims to a prescribed course of regimen. These persons are said, by gentlemen who are entitled to the fullest confidence, to have pertinaciously followed the course, till they reached a point of reduction from which there was no recovery." "If these are facts," he adds, "they ought to be known and published."

It was in this view, that Dr. North, himself a medical practitioner of high respectability, sent forth to every corner of the land, through standard and orthodox medical journals, to regular and experienced physicians – his "medical brethren" – his list of inquiries. These inquiries, designed to elicit truth, were couched in just such language as was calculated to give free scope and an acceptable channel for the communication of every fact which seemed to be opposed to the vegetable system; for this, we believe, was distinctly understood, by every medical man, to be the "prescribed course of regimen" alluded to.

The results of Dr. North's inquiries, and of an opportunity so favorable for "putting down," by the exhibition of sober facts, the vegetable system, are fully presented in the foregoing chapter. Let it not be said by any, that the attempt was a partial or unfair one. Let it be remembered that every effort was made to obtain *truth in facts*, without partiality, favor, or affection. Let it be remembered, too, that nearly two years elapsed before Dr. North gave up his papers to the author; during which time, and indeed up to the present hour – a period, in the whole, of more than fourteen years – a door has been opened to every individual who had any thing to say, bearing upon the subject.

Let us now review the contents of the foregoing chapter. Let us see, in the first place, what number of persons have here been reported, by medical men, as having fallen victims to the said "prescribed course of regimen."

The matter is soon disposed of. Not a case of the description is found in the whole catalogue of returns to Dr. N. This is a triumph which the friends of the vegetable system did not expect. From the medical profession of this country, hostile as many of them are known to be to the "prescribed course of regimen," they must naturally have expected to hear of at least a few persons who were supposed to have fallen victims to it. But, I say again, not one appears.

It is true that Dr. Preston, of Plymouth, Mass., thinks he should have fallen a victim to his abstinence from flesh meat, had he not altered his course; and Dr. Harden, of Georgia, relates a case of sudden loss of strength, and great debility, which he thought, *at the time*, might "possibly" be ascribed to the want of animal food: though the individual himself attributed it to quite another cause. These are the only two, of a list of thirty or forty, which were detailed, that bear the slightest resemblance to those which report had brought to the ear of Dr. N., and about which he so anxiously and earnestly solicited inquiry of his medical brethren.

As to the case mentioned by Dr. Harden, no one who examined it with care, will believe for a moment, that it affords the slightest evidence against a diet exclusively vegetable. The gentleman who made the experiment had pursued it faithfully three years, without the slightest loss of strength, but

with many advantages, when, of a sudden, extreme debility came on. Is it likely that a diet on which he had so long been doing well, should produce such a sudden falling off? The gentleman himself appears not to have had the slightest suspicion that the debility had any connection with the diet. He attributes its commencement, if not its continuance, to the inhalation of poisonous gases, to which he was subjected in the process of some chemical experiments.

But why, then, it may be asked, did he return to a mixed diet, if he had imbibed no doubts in regard to a diet exclusively vegetable; and, above all, how happened he to recover on it? To this it may be replied, that there is every reason to believe, from the tenor of the letter, that he acted against his own inclination, and contrary to his own views, at the request of his friends, and of Dr. Harden, his physician; though Dr. Harden does not expressly say so. Besides, it does not appear that under his mixed diet there was any favorable change, till something like six months had elapsed. This was a period, in all probability, just sufficient to allow the poison of the gases to disappear; after which he might have been expected to recover on any diet not positively bad. If this is not a true solution of the case, how happens it that there was no disease of any organ or function, except the nervous function? There is every reason for believing that Dr. Harden, at the date of his letter, had undergone a change of opinion, and was himself beginning to doubt whether the regimen had any agency in producing the debility.³

The case of Dr. Preston is somewhat more difficult. At first view, it seems to sustain the old notion of medical men, that, with a scrofulous habit, a diet exclusively vegetable cannot be made to agree. This, I say, seems to be a natural conclusion, *at first view*. But, on looking a little farther, we may find some facts that justify a different opinion.

Dr. Preston was evidently timid and fearful – foreboding ill – during the whole progress of his experiment. We think his story fully justifies this conclusion. In such circumstances, what could have been expected? There is no course of regimen in the world which will succeed happily in a state of mind like this.

It should be carefully observed by the reader, that Dr. Preston speaks of entering upon a "severe course of diet;" and also, that, in attempting to give an opinion as to the best kind of vegetable food, he speaks of potatoes, prepared in a certain specified manner, as being preferable to any other. Now, I think it obvious, that Dr. Preston's "severe course" partook largely of *crude* vegetables, instead of the richer and better farinaceous articles – as the various sorts of bread, rice, pulse, etc. – and, if so, it is not to be wondered at that it was so unsuccessful. In short, I do not think he made any thing like a fair experiment in vegetable diet. His testimony, therefore, though interesting, seems to be entitled to very little weight.

This conclusion is stated with the more confidence, from the fact that some of the best medical writers, not only of ancient times, but of the present day, appear to entertain serious doubts in regard to the soundness of the popular opinion in favor of the "beef-steak-and-porter" system of curing scrofulous patients. Dr. Clark, in the progress of his "Treatise on Consumption," almost expresses a belief that a judicious vegetable diet is preferable even for the scrofulous. He would not, of course, recommend a diet of *crude* vegetables, but one, rather, which would partake largely of farinaceous grains and fruits. Nor do I suppose he would, in every case, entirely exclude milk.

Dr. Cheyne, in his writings, not only gives it as his opinion that a milk diet, long continued, or a milk and vegetable diet and mild mercurials, are the best means of curing scrofula; but he also says, expressly, that "in all countries where animal food and strong fermented liquors are too freely used, there is scarcely an individual that hath not scrofulous glands." A sad story to relate, or to read! But, Dr. Lambe, of London, and other British physicians, entertain similar sentiments; and Dr. Lambe practices medicine largely, while entertaining these sentiments. I could mention more than

³ See a more recent letter from Dr. Harden, in the next chapter.

one distinguished physician, in Boston and elsewhere, who prescribes a vegetable and milk diet in scrofula.

But, granting even the most that the friends of animal food can claim, what would the case of Dr. Preston prove? That the healthy are ever injured by the vegetable system? By no means. That the sickly would generally be? Certainly not. Dr. Preston himself even specifies one disease, in which he thinks a vegetable diet would be useful. What, then, is the bearing of *this single and singular case*? Why, at the most, it only shows that there are some forms of dyspepsia which require animal food. Dr. Preston does not produce a single fact unfavorable to a diet exclusively vegetable for the healthy.⁴

It is also worthy of particular notice, that not a fact is brought, or an experiment related, in a list of from thirty to forty cases, reported too by medical men, which goes to prove that any injury has arisen to the healthy, from laying aside the use of animal food. This kind of information, though not the principal thing, was at least a secondary object with Dr. North; as we see by his questions, which were intended to be put to those who had excluded animal food from their diet for a year or more.

But, let us take a general view of the replies to the inquiries of Dr. North. The sum of his first three questions, was, – What were the effects of excluding animal food from your diet on your bodily strength, your mental faculties, and your appetite and animal spirits?

The answers to the three questions, of which this is the same, are, as will be seen, remarkable. In almost every instance the reply indicates that bodily and mental labor was endured with less fatigue than before, and that an increased activity of mind and body was accompanied with increased cheerfulness and animal enjoyment. In nearly every instance, strength of body was actually increased; especially after the first month. A result so uniformly in favor of the vegetable system is certainly more than could have been expected.

One physician who made the experiment, indeed, says, that though his mind was clearer than before, he could not endure, so long, a laborious investigation. Another individual says, he perceived no difference in this respect. A third says, she found her bodily strength and powers of investigation somewhat diminished, though her disease was removed. With these exceptions, the testimony on this point is, as I have already said, most decidedly – I might say most overwhelmingly – in favor of the disuse of animal food.

To the question, whether any constitutional infirmities were aggravated or removed by the new course of regimen, the replies are almost equally favorable to the vegetable system. It is true that one of the physicians, Dr. Parmly, thinks the beneficial effects which appeared in the circle of his observation were the results of a simultaneous discontinuance of fermented drinks, tea and coffee, and condiments. But I believe every one who reads his letter will be surprised at his conclusions. No matter, however; we have his facts, and we are quite willing they should be carefully considered. The singular case of Dr. Preston, I now leave wholly out of the account. It was, as I have since learned, the story of a *very singular man*.

Among the diseases and difficulties which were removed, or supposed to be removed, by the new diet, were dyspepsia, with the constipation which usually attends it, general lassitude, rheumatism, periodical headache, palpitations, irritation of the first passages, eruptive diseases of the skin, scurvy, and consumption.

The case of Dr. Bannister, who was, in early life, decidedly consumptive, is one of the most remarkable on record. Though evidently consumptive, and near the borders of the grave, between the ages of twenty and twenty-nine, he so far recovered as to be, at the age of fifty-three, entirely free from every symptom of phthisis for twenty-four years; during which whole period, he was sufficiently vigorous to follow the laborious business of a country physician.

The confidence of Dr. Wright in the prophylactic powers of a diet exclusively vegetable, so far as the mere opinion of one medical man is to be received as testimony in the case, is also remarkable.

⁴ Besides, it is worthy of notice, that Dr. Preston did not long survive on his own plan. He died about the year 1840.

He not only regards the vegetable system as a defence against the diseases of miasmatic regions, but also against the varioloid disease. On the latter point, he goes, it seems, almost as far as Mr. Graham, who appears to regard it not only as, in some measure, a preventive of epidemic diseases generally, in which he is most undoubtedly correct, but also of the small-pox.

The testimony on another point which is presented in the replies to Dr. North's questions, is almost equally uniform. In nearly every instance, the individuals who have abandoned animal food have found themselves less subject to colds than before; and some appear to have fallen into the habit of escaping them altogether. When it is considered how serious are the consequences of taking cold – when it is remembered that something like one half of the diseases of our climate have their origin in this source – it is certainly no trifling evidence in favor of a course of regimen, that, besides being highly favorable in every other respect, it should prove the means of freeing mankind from exposure to a malady at once troublesome in itself and disastrous in its consequences.

In reply to the question, – Is a vegetable diet more or less aperient than a mixed one, – the answers have been the same, in nearly every instance, that it is more so.

The answers to the question whether it was believed the health of either laborers or students would be promoted by the exclusion of animal food from their diet, are rather various. It will be observed, however, that many of the replies, in this case, are medical *opinions*, and come from men who, though they felt themselves bound to state facts, were doubtless, with very few exceptions, prejudiced against an exclusively vegetable regimen for the healthy. It is, therefore, to me, a matter of surprise, to find some of them in favor of the said prescribed course of regimen, both for students and laborers, and many of them in favor of the discontinuance of animal food by students. Those who have themselves made the experiment, with hardly an exception, are decidedly in favor of a vegetable regimen for all classes of mankind, particularly the sedentary. And in regard to the necessity of diminishing the proportion of animal food consumed by all classes, there seems to be but one voice.

On one more important point there is a very general concurrence of opinion. I allude to the choice of articles from the vegetable kingdom. The farinacea are considered as the best; especially wheat, ground without bolting. The preference of Dr. Preston is an exception; and there are one or two others.

On the whole – I repeat it – the testimony is far more favorable to the "prescribed course of regimen," both for the healthy and diseased than under the circumstances connected with the inquiry the most thorough-going vegetable eater could possibly have anticipated. If this is a fair specimen – and I know no reason why it may not be regarded as such – of the results of similar experiments and similar observations among medical men throughout our country, could their observations and experiments be collected, it certainly confirms the views which some among us have long entertained on this subject, and which will be still more strongly confirmed by evidence which will be produced in the following chapters. Had similar efforts been made forty or fifty years ago, to ascertain the views of physicians and others respecting the benefits or safety of excluding wine and other fermented drinks in the treatment of several diseases, in which not one in ten of our modern practitioners would now venture to use them, as well as among the healthy, I believe the results would have been of a very different character. The opinions, at least, of the physicians themselves, would most certainly have been, nearly without a dissenting voice, that the entire rejection of wine and fermented liquors was dangerous to the sick, and unsafe to many of the healthy, especially the hard laborer. And there is quite as much reason to believe that animal food will be discarded from our tables in the progress of a century to come, as there was, in 1800, for believing that all drinks but water would be laid aside in the progress of the century which is now passing.

CHAPTER IV.

ADDITIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Letter from Dr. H. A. Barrows. – Dr. J. M. B. Harden. – Dr. J. Porter. – Dr. N. J. Knight. – Dr. Lester Keep. – Second letter from Dr. Keep. – Dr. Henry H. Brown. – Dr. Franklin Knox. – From a Physician. – Additional statements by the Author.

During the years 1837 and 1838 I wrote to several of the physicians whose names, experiments, and facts appear in Chapter II. Their answers, so far as received, are now to be presented.

I have also received interesting letters from several other physicians in New England and elsewhere – but particularly in New England – on the same general subject, which, with an additional statement of my own case, I have added to the foregoing. I might have added a hundred authentic cases, of similar import. I might also have obtained an additional amount of the same sort of intelligence, had it not been for the want of time, amid numerous other pressing avocations, for correspondence of this kind. Besides, if what I have obtained is not satisfactory, I have many doubts whether more would be so.

The first letter I shall insert is from Dr. H. A. Barrows, of Phillips, in Maine. It is dated October 10, 1837, and may be considered as a sequel to that written by him to Dr. North, though it is addressed to the author of this volume.

LETTER I. – FROM DR. H. A. BARROWS

Dear Sir, – As to food, my course of living has been quite uniform for the last two or three years – principally as follows. Wheat meal bread, potatoes, butter, and baked sweet apples for breakfast and dinners; for suppers, old dry flour bread, which, eaten very leisurely without butter, sauce, or drink, sits the lightest and best of any thing I eat. But I cannot make this my principal diet, because the bowels will not act (*without physic*) unless they have the spur of wheat bran two thirds of the time. I have at times practiced going to bed without any third meal; and have found myself amply rewarded for this kind of fasting, and the consequent respite thereby afforded the stomach, in quiet sleep and improved condition the next day. And as to drink, I still use cold water, which I take with as great a zest, and as keen a relish, as the inebriate does his stimulus. I seldom drink any thing with my meals; and if I could live without drinking any thing between meals, I think I should be rid of the principal "thorn in my side," the acetous fermentation so constantly going on in my epigastric storehouse.

As to exercise, I take abundance; perform all my practice (except in the winter) on horseback, and find this the very best kind of exercise for me. I seldom eat oftener than at intervals of six hours, and am apt to eat too much – have at various times attempted Don Cornaro's method of weighing food, but have found it rather dry business, probably on account of its conflicting with my appetite; but I actually find that my stomach does not bear watching at all well.

My brother continues to practice nearly total abstinence from animal food. I have seen him but once in two and a half years, but learn his health has greatly improved, so that he was able to take charge of a high school in the fall of 1836, of an academy in the spring of the present year, and also again this fall. During his vacation last July, he took a tour into the interior of Worcester county, Mass., and came home entirely on foot by way of the Notch of the White Hills, traveling nearly three hundred miles. This speaks something in favor of rigid abstinence – as when he commenced this regimen he was extremely low.

Yours sincerely,
H. A. Barrows.

LETTER II. – FROM DR. JOHN M. B. HARDEN

Georgia, Liberty Co., Oct. 19, 1837.

Dear Sir, – I stated in my letter to Dr. North, if I recollect correctly, that the use of animal food was resumed in consequence of a protracted indisposition brought on, *as was supposed*, by the inhalation of arseniuretted hydrogen gas. The gentleman had begun to recover some time previously; and in a short time after he commenced the use of the animal food, he was restored to his usual health. He has continued the use of it ever since to the same extent as in the former part of his life. He has lately passed his fifty-fifth year, and is now in the enjoyment of as good health as he has ever known.

I know of a gentleman in an adjoining county, who with his lady has been living for some time past on a purely vegetable diet. They have not continued it long enough, however, to make the experiment a fair one.

No case of injury from the inhalation of arseniuretted hydrogen has come under my own personal observation, if we except the one above alluded to. I find, however, that Gehlen, a celebrated French chemist, fell a victim to it in the year 1815. His death is thus announced in the "Philosophical Magazine" for that year. "We lament to have to announce the death of Gehlen, many years the editor of an excellent Journal on Chemistry and other sciences, and a profound chemist. He fell a victim to his ardent desire to promote the advancement of chemical knowledge. He was preparing, in company with Mr. Rehland, his colleague, some arsenated hydrogen gas, and while watching for the full development of this air from its acid solution, trying every moment to judge from its particular smell when that operation would be completed, he inhaled the fatal poison which has robbed science of his valuable services." Vide Tillock's Phil. Mag., vol. 46, p. 316. Some further notice is taken of his death in a paper extracted from the "Annales de Chimie et de Physique," and published in a subsequent volume of the same Magazine. Vide vol. 49, p. 280, in which are given his last experiments on that subject, by M. Gay Lussac. I regret that no account is given in the same work of the symptoms arising from the poison in his case. I presume, however, they are on record.

In the subject of the case I mention, the general and prominent symptoms were an immediate and great diminution of muscular strength, with pallor of countenance and constant febricula, the arteries of the head beating with violence, particularly when lying down at night, the pulse always moderately increased in frequency, and full, but not tense; and digestion for the most part good. This state continued for about three months, during which time he was attending to his usual business, although not able to take as much exercise as before. At the end of this time he began to recover slowly, but it was six months before he was restored entirely.

*Yours, etc.,
John M. B. Harden.*

LETTER III. – FROM DR. JOSHUA PORTER

North Brookfield, Oct. 26, 1827.

Though I would by no means favor the propensity for book-making, so prevalent in our day, yet I have been long of the opinion that a work on vegetable diet for general readers was greatly needed. I need it in my family; and there are many others in this vicinity who would be materially benefited by such a work.

I have had no means of ascertaining the good or bad effects of a "diet exclusively vegetable in cases of phthisis, scrofula, and dyspepsia," for I have had none of the above diseases to contend with. But, since your letter was received, I have been called to prescribe for a man who has been a flesh eater for more than half a century. He was confined to his house, had been losing strength for several months, still keeping up his old habits. The disease which was preying upon him was chronic inflammation of the right leg; the flesh had been so long swollen and inflamed that it had become hard to the touch. There were ulcers on his thigh, and some had made their appearance on the hip. This disease had been of *seven months'* standing, though not in so aggravated a form as it now appeared. During this time, all the local applications had been made that could be thought of by the good ladies in the neighborhood; and after every thing of the kind had failed, they concluded to send for "the doctor."

After examining the patient attentively, I became convinced that the disease, which developed itself locally, was of a constitutional origin, and of course could not be cured by local remedies. All local applications were discontinued; the patient was put on a vegetable diet after the alimentary canal was freely evacuated. I saw this man three days afterward. The dark purple appearance of the leg had somewhat subsided; the red and angry appearance about the base of the ulcers was gone, his strength improved, etc. Three days after I called, I found him in his garden at work.

He is now – two weeks since my first prescription – almost well. All the ulcers have healed, with the exception of one or two. This man, who thinks it wicked not to use the good things God has given us – such as meat, cider, tobacco, etc. – is very willing to subsist, for the present, on vegetable food, because he finds it the only remedy for his disease.

Early in the spring of 1830, while a student at Amherst College, I was attacked with dyspepsia, which rendered my life wretched for more than a year, and finally drove me from college; but it had now so completely gained the mastery, that no means I resorted to for relief afforded even a palliation of my sufferings. After I had suffered nearly two years in this way, I was made more wretched, if possible, by frequent attacks of colic, with pains and cramps extending to my back; and so severe had these pains become, that the prescriptions of the most eminent physicians afforded only partial relief.

On the 13th of February, 1833, after suffering from the most violent paroxysm I had ever endured, I left my home for Brunswick, Maine, to attend a course of medical lectures. For several days I boarded at a public house, and ate freely of several substantial dishes that were before me. The consequence was a fresh attack of colic. From some circumstances that came up at this time, I was convinced that flesh meats had much to do with my sufferings, and the resolution was formed at once to change my diet and "starve" out dyspepsia.

I took a room by myself, and made arrangements for receiving a pint of milk per day; this, with coarse rye and Indian bread, constituted my only food. After living in this way a week or two, I had a free and natural evacuation. Thus nature began to effect what medicine alone had done for nearly three years. The skin became moist, and my voracious appetite began to subside. I returned home to my friends at the close of the term well, and have been well ever since – have never had a colic pain or any costiveness since that time. My powers of digestion are good, and though I do not live so rigidly now as when at Brunswick, I always feel best when my food is vegetables and milk. I

can endure fatigue and exposure as well as any man. On this mild diet, too, my muscular strength has considerably increased; and every day is adding new vigor to my constitution.

Having experienced so much benefit from a mild diet, and being rationally convinced that man was a fruit-eating animal naturally, I made my views public by a course of lectures on physiology, which I delivered in the Lyceum soon after I came to this place (three years ago). The consequence was, that quite a number of those who heard my lectures commenced training their families as well as themselves to the use of vegetables, etc., and I am happy to inform you that, at this day, many of our most active influential business-doing men are living in the plainest and most simple manner.

One of my neighbors has taken no flesh for more than three years. He is of the ordinary height, and sanguine temperament, and usually weighed, when he ate flesh, one hundred and eighty pounds. After he changed his diet, his countenance began to change, and his cheeks fell in; and his meat-eating friends had serious apprehensions that he would survive but a short time, unless he returned to his former habits. But he persevered, and is now more vigorous and more athletic than any man in the region, or than he himself has ever been before.

His muscular strength is very great. A few days since, a number of the most athletic young men in our village were trying their strength at lifting a cask of lime, weighing five hundred pounds. All failed to do it, with the exception of one, who partly raised it from the ground. After they were gone, this vegetable eater without any difficulty raised the cask four or five times. More than three years ago this man lost his daughter, who fell a prey to cholera infantum; he has now a daughter rather more than a year old, whom he has trained on strictly physiological principles; and though very feeble at birth, and for three months subsequently, she is now the most healthy child in the town. This child had some of the first symptoms of consumption last August, owing to the too free indulgence of the mother in improper articles of food; but being treated with demulcents, at the same time correcting the mother's system, she recovered, and is now the "picture of health."

I was conversing with this gentleman the other day respecting his health – says he is perfectly well, weighs one hundred and sixty-five pounds; and though he was called well when eating flesh, he was not so in reality; for every few weeks he was troubled with headache and a sense of fullness in the region of the stomach, for which he was obliged to take an active cathartic. For a few months before he adopted the vegetable system, he had decided symptoms of congestion in the head, such as precede apoplexy. I questioned him as to his appetite. He informed me, that when he ate meat he had such an unconquerable desire for food about eleven o'clock, that he could not wait till noon. This he calls "meat hunger," for it disappeared soon after he came to the present style of living. He has no craving now; but when he begins to eat, the zest is exquisite.

*Yours,
Joshua Porter.*

LETTER IV. – FROM DR. N. J. KNIGHT, OF TRURO

Dated at Truro, October, 1837.

Dr. Alcott: Sir, – I hasten to comply so far with your request as to show my decided approbation of a fruit and farinaceous diet, both in health and sickness. The manner in which nutritious vegetables are presented to us for our consumption and support, evince to a demonstration the simplicity of our corporeal systems. Through every medium of correct information, we learn that the most distinguished men, both in ancient and modern times, were pre-eminently distinguished for their abstemiousness, and the simplicity of their diet.

It was not, however, a consideration of this kind that first induced me to relinquish flesh meat and fish. Some three years previous to my forming a determination to subsist upon farinacea, I had been laboring under an aggravated case of dyspepsia; and about six months previous, also, an attack of acute rheumatism.

I was harassed with constant constipation of the bowels, and ejection of food after eating, together with occasional pain in the head.

Under all these circumstances, I came to this determination, which I committed to paper: "November 9, 1831. This day ceased from strengthening this mortal body by any part of that which ever drew breath." To the above I rigidly adhered until last November, when my health had become so perfect that I thought myself invincible, so far as disease was concerned. All pains and aches had left me, and all the functions of the body seemed to be performed in a healthy manner.

My diet had consisted of rye and Indian bread, stale flour bread, sweet bread without shortening, milk, some ripe fruit, and occasionally a little butter.

During this time, while I devoted myself to considerable laborious practice and hard study, there was no deficiency of muscular strength or mental energy. I am fully satisfied my mind was never so active and strong.

Since last November I have, at times, taken animal food, in order that I might be absolutely satisfied that my mode of living acted decidedly in favor of my perfect health, and that a different course would produce organic derangement.

I had only taken animal food about two months after the usual custom, before I had a severe attack, and only escaped an inflammatory fever by the most rigid antiphlogistic treatment.

I again lived as I ought, and felt well; and having continued so some time, I resorted the second time to an animal diet.

In two months' time, I was taken with the urticaria febrilis, of Bateman, which lasted me more than two weeks, and my suffering was sufficient to forever exclude from my stomach every kind of animal food.

I am now satisfied, to all intents and purposes, that mankind would live longer, and enjoy more perfectly the "sane mind in a sound body," should they never taste flesh meat or fish.

A simple farinaceous diet I have ever found more efficient in the cure of chronic complaints, where there was not much organic lesion, than every other medical agent.

Mrs. A., infected with scrofula of the left breast, and in a state of ulceration, applied to me two years since. The ulcer was then the size of a half-dollar, and discharged a considerable quantity of imperfect pus. The axillary glands were much enlarged, and, doubting the practicability of operating with the knife in such cases, I told her the danger of her disease, and ordered her to subsist upon bread and milk and some fruit, drink water, and keep the body of as uniform temperature as possible. I ordered the sore to be kept clean by ablutions of tepid water. In less than three months, the ulcer was all healed, and her general health much improved. The axillary glands are still enlarged, though less so than formerly.

She still lives simply, and enjoys good health; but she tells me if she tastes flesh meat, it produces a twinging in the breast.

Many cases, like the above, have come under my observation and immediate attention, and suffice it to say, I have never failed to ameliorate the condition of every individual that has applied to me, who was suffering under chronic affections, if they would follow my prescriptions – unless the system was incapable of reaction.

Yours, truly,
N. J. Knight.

LETTER V. – FROM DR. LESTER KEEP

Fair Haven, Jan. 22, 1838.

Dear Sir, – Agreeably to your request, I will inform you that from September, 1834, to June, 1836, I used no meat at all, except occasionally in my intercourse with society, I used a little to avoid attracting notice.

When I commenced my studies, life was burdensome. I knew not, for months, and I may say years, what enjoyment comfortable health affords. In a great many ways I can now see that I very greatly erred in my course of living. I am surprised that the system will hold out in its powers during so long a process in the use of what I should now consider the means best calculated to break it down.

I cannot now particularize. But in college, and during my professional studies, and since, during six or eight years of practice in an arduous profession, I have been greatly guilty, and neglected those means best calculated to promote and preserve health; and used those means best fitted to destroy it. The summers of 1832, 1833, and 1834, were pretty much lost, from wretched health. I was growing worse every year, and no medicines that I could prepare for myself, or that were prescribed by various brother physicians, had any thing more than a temporary effect to relieve me. All of the year 1834, until September, I used opium for relief; and I used three and four grains of sulphate of morphine per day, equal to about sixteen grains of opium. Spirit, wine, and ale I had tried, and journeys through many portions of the State of Maine, with the hope that a more northern climate would invigorate and restore a system that I feared was broken down forever, and that at the age of thirty-seven. But, without further preamble, I will say, I omitted at once and entirely the use of tea, coffee, meat, butter, grease of all sorts, cakes, pies, etc., wine, cider, spirits, opium (which I feared I must use as long as I lived), and tobacco, the use of which I learned in college. Of course, from so sudden and so great a change, a most horrid condition must ensue for many days, for the relief of which I used the warm bath at first several times a day. I had set no time to omit these articles, and made no resolutions, except to give this course a trial, to find out whether I had many native powers of system left, and what was their character and condition when unaffected by the list of agents mentioned.

I pursued this plan of living faithfully for one year and a half, and with unspeakable joy I found a gradual return of original vigor and health. Now, I cannot say that the omission of meat of all kinds, for a year and a half, caused this improvement in health; it is possible that it had but little to do with it. I know I was guilty of many bad habits; and probably all combined caused my bad condition.

At the close of the year and a half, I married my present second wife, and then commenced living as do others, in most respects, and continued this course most of the time until I received your letter. I then again omitted the use of all animal food, tea, coffee, and tobacco; and for the last month, it is a clear case, my health is better; that is, more vigorous to bear cold. I also bear labor and care better.

I have not investigated the subject of dietetics very much, but I have no doubt that the inhabitants of our whole land make too much use of animal food. No doubt it obstructs the vital powers, and tends to unbalance the healthful play and harmony of the various organs and their functions. There is too much nutriment in a small space. An unexpected quantity is taken; for with most people a sense of fullness is the test of a sufficient quantity.

I am satisfied that I am better without animal food than with the quantity I ordinarily use. If I should use but a small quantity once or twice a day, it is possible it would not be injurious. This I have not tried; for I am so excessively fond of meat, that I always eat *more* than a small quantity, when I eat it at all. Healthy, vigorous men, day laborers in the field, or forest, may perhaps require some meat to sustain the system, during hard and exhausting labor. Of this I cannot say.

I am now pretty well convinced, from two or three years' observation, that a large portion of my business, as a physician, arises from intemperance in the use of food. Too much and too rich nutriment is used, and my constant business is, to counteract its bad effects.

Two cases are now in mind of the great benefit of dieting for the recovery of health, the particulars of which I cannot now give you. One of them I think would be willing to speak for himself on the subject.

*I am, sir, yours, etc.,
Lester Keep.*

LETTER VI. – SECOND LETTER FROM DR. KEEP

Fair Haven, Ct., Jan. 26, 1838.

Sir, – Since I wrote you, a few days ago, I have learned of several individuals who have, for some length of time, used no flesh meat at all.

Amos Townsend, Cashier of the New Haven Bank, has, as I am told, lived almost entirely upon bread, crackers, or something of that kind, and but little of that. He can dictate a letter, count money, and hold conversation with an individual, all at the same time, with no embarrassment; and I know him to have firm health.

Our minister, Rev. B. L. Swan, during the whole of two years of his theological studies at Princeton, made crackers and water his only food, and was in good health.

Mr. Hanover Bradley, of this village, who has been several years a missionary among the Indians, has, for I think, eight or ten years, lived entirely on vegetable food. He had been long a dyspeptic.

There are some other cases of less importance, and probably very many in New Haven; but I am situated a mile from the city, and have never inquired for vegetable livers.

*Yours, etc.,
Lester Keep.*

LETTER VII. – FROM DR. HENRY H. BROWN

West Randolph, Vt., Feb. 3, 1838.

Dear Sir, – It has been about two years and a half since I adopted an exclusively vegetable diet, with no drink but water; and my food has been chiefly prepared by the most simple forms of cookery. Previously to this, I used a large proportion of flesh meat, and drank tea and coffee. I had much impaired my health by such indulgences. I hardly need to say that my health has greatly improved, and is now quite good and uniform.

I think that physicians, in prescribing for the removal of disease, should pay much more regard to the diet of their patients, and administer less of powerful medicine, than is customary with gentlemen of this profession at large.

*Yours, etc.,
Henry H. Brown.*

LETTER VIII. – FROM DR. FRANKLIN KNOX

Kinston,⁵ N. C., June 23, 1837.

Dear Sir, – Your letter of the 22d July has been hitherto unanswered, through press of business.

I consider an exclusive vegetable diet as of the utmost consequence in most diseases, especially in those chronic affections or morbid states of the system which are not commonly considered as diseases; and I think that, in these cases, such a diet is too often overlooked, even by physicians.

*Yours, truly,
F. Knox.*

⁵ Dr. Knox has since removed to St. Louis, Missouri.

LETTER IX. – FROM A HIGHLY RESPECTABLE PHYSICIAN

[The following letter, received last autumn, is from a medical gentleman, in a distant part of the country, whose name, for particular reasons, we stand pledged not to give to the world. The facts, however, may be relied on; and they are exceedingly important and interesting.]

Dear Sir, – Your letter was duly received. I proceed to say that, since I settled in this town, my attacks of epilepsy⁶ have occurred in the following order:

1833.				
Nov.	18.	One at	11 P. M.	Severe.
"	19.	"	"	"
"	24.	Nineteen, from	4 A. M. to 3 P. M.	Frightful
1835.				
Jan.	13.	One at	4 A. M.	}
"	15.	"	"	} Milder.
"	16.	Two at 2 and	4 A. M.	}

Thus it appears that I have enjoyed a longer immunity since the last, than for some years prior. I have maintained total abstinence from flesh, fish, or fowl, for two and a half years, namely, from March 1835 to the present time. That this happy immunity from a most obstinate disease is to be attributed solely to my abstinence from animal food, I do not feel prepared to assert; but that my general health has been better, my attacks of disease far milder, my vigor of mind and body greater, my mental perceptions clearer and more acute, and my enjoyment of life, on the whole, very essentially increased, I am fully prepared to prove.

I have, however, found it nearly as essential for me to abstain from many kinds of vegetable food as from animal, namely, from all kinds of flatulent vegetables; from all kinds of fruits and berries, except the very mildest – as, perfectly ripe and well baked sweet apples – and from all kinds of pies, sauces, and preserves. Of these, however, I am not able to say, as I do of the animal varieties, that I have practiced total abstinence; by no means. I have often ventured to indulge, and generally suffer more or less for my temerity. My severest sufferings for the last two years have been in the form of colic, of which I have had frequent slight attacks; but none to confine me over twenty-four hours.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS. – BY THE AUTHOR.⁷

From the age of five or six months to that of two years, I was literally crammed with flesh meat; usually of the most gross kind. Such a course was believed, by the fond parents and others, as likely to be productive of the most healthful and happy consequences. The result was an accumulation of adipose substance, that rendered me one of the most unsightly, not to say monstrous productions of nature. I ought not to say *nature*, perhaps; for, if not perverted, she produces no such monsters. At the age of six months, my weight was twenty-five pounds; and it rose soon after to thirty or more.

When I was about two years of age, I had the whooping-cough, and, having been brought up to the height, and more than the height of my condition, by over-feeding with fat meat, I suffered exceedingly. I recovered, at length, but I had lost my relish, as I am informed, for flesh meat; and

⁶ The reader will find another remarkable cure of epilepsy in a subsequent chapter of this volume. The case was that of Dr. Taylor, of England.

⁷ See pages 13 and 23.

from this time till the age of fourteen, I seldom ate any but the leanest muscle. I was tolerably healthy, but, from the age of two years, was slender; so much so that, at five or six, I only weighed fifty pounds; and was constantly either found fault with, or pitied, because I did not eat meat in quality and quantity like other people. Nor was it without much effort, even at the age of fourteen, that I could bring myself to be reconciled to it. I was also trained to the early use of much cider, and to the moderate use of tea and spirits. I have spoken of my slender constitution; – I believe this was in part the result of excessive early labor, and that it was not wholly owing to a premature use of flesh meat.

I had suffered so much, however, from the belief that I was feeble from the latter cause, that I had no sooner become reconciled to the use of flesh and fish – which was at the age of fourteen – than I indulged in it quite freely. About this time I had a severe attack of measles, which came very near carrying me off. I was left with anasarca, or general dropsy, and with weak eyes. To cure the former the physicians plied me, for a long time, with blue pill, and with mercurial medicine in other forms, and also with digitalis; and finally filled my stomach to overflowing with diuretic drinks. However, in spite of them all, I recovered during the next year; except that a foundation was laid for premature decay of the teeth, and for a severe eruptive disease. This last, and the weakness of the eyes, were, for some time, very troublesome.

The eruptive complaint was soon discovered to be less severe, even in hot weather, and while I was using a great deal of exercise, in proportion as I abstained from all drinks but water, and ate none but mild food. Owing to the discovery of this fact and to other causes, I chiefly discontinued the use of stimulating food and drink, during the hottest part of the season; though I committed much error in regard to the quantity of my food, and drank quite too freely of cold water. Still I always found my health best, and my body and mind most vigorous at the end of summer, or the beginning of autumn, notwithstanding the very hard labor to which I was subjected on the farm. This increase of vigor was, at that time, attributed chiefly to a free use of summer fruits; for, so deeply had the belief been infixed by early education, that highly stimulating food and drink were indispensable to the full health and strength of mankind, and especially to people who were laboring hard, that, though I sometimes suspected they were not true friends to the human system, my conscience always condemned the suspicion, and pronounced me guilty of a species of high treason for harboring it.

This brings up my dietetic history, to the period at which it commences, in the letter to Dr. North. The study of medicine, however, from the age of twenty-four to twenty-seven, and the subsequent study and practice of it for a few years, joined to the changes I made at the same time in my physical habits, and my observations on their effects, led me to reject, one after another, and one group after another, the whole tribe of extra stimulants – solid and fluid.

The sequel of my story remains to be told. It is now nearly fifteen years since I wrote the letter, which is found at page 23d, to Dr. North. During this long period, and for several years before, amounting, in all, to about nineteen years, I have not only abstained entirely from flesh, fish, and fowl – not having eaten a pound of any one of these during the whole time, except the very few pounds I used in the time of the first visitation of our country with cholera, as before mentioned – but I have almost entirely abstained from butter, cheese, eggs, and milk. Butter, especially, I *never* taste at all. The occasional use of milk, in very small quantities, once a day, has, however, been resorted to; not from necessity, indeed, or to gratify any strong desire or inclination for it, but from a conviction of its happy medicinal effects on my much-injured frame. Hot food of every kind, and liquids, with the exception just made, I rarely touch. Nearly every thing is taken in as solid a form and in as simple a state as possible; with no condiments, except a very little salt, and with no sweets, sauces, gravies, jellies, preserves, etc. I seldom use more than one sort of food at a time, unless it be to add fruit as a second article; and this is rarely done, except in the morning. I have for ten or twelve years used no drinks with my meals; and sometimes for months together have had very little thirst at all.⁸

⁸ This fact, and certain discussions on the subject of temperance, led me to abstain, about the years 1841 and 1842, entirely from

And as to the effects, they are such, and have all along been such, as to make me wonder at myself, whenever I think of it. Instead of being constantly subject to cold, and nearly dying with consumption in the spring, I am almost free from any tendency to take cold at all. During the winter of 1837-8, by neglecting to keep the temperature of my room low enough, and by neglecting also to take sufficient exercise in the open air, I became unusually tender, and suffered to some extent from colds. But I was well again during the spring, and felt as if I had recovered or nearly recovered my former hardihood.

In regard to other complaints, I may say still more. Of rheumatism, I have scarcely had a twinge in twelve or fourteen years. My eruptive complaint is, I believe, *entirely* gone. The weakness of my eyes has been wholly gone for many years. Indeed, the strength and perfection of my sight and of all my senses, till nearly fifty years of age – hearing perhaps excepted, in which I perceive no alteration – appeared to be constantly improving. My stomach and intestines perform their respective duties in the most appropriate, correct, and healthful manner. My appetite is constantly good, and as constantly improving; – that is, going on toward perfection. I can detect, especially by taste, almost any thing which is in the least offensive or deleterious in food or drink; and yet I can receive, without immediate apparent disturbance, and readily digest, almost any thing which ever entered a human stomach – knives, pencils, clay, chalk, etc., perhaps excepted. I can eat a full meal of cabbage, or any other very objectionable crude aliment, or even cheese or pastry – a single meal, I mean – with apparent impunity; not when fatigued, of course, or in any way debilitated, but in the morning and when in full strength. It is true, I make no experiments of this sort, except occasionally *as* experiments.

In my former statements I gave it as my opinion that vegetable food was less aperient than animal. My opinion now is, that if we were trained on vegetable food, and had never received substances into the stomach which were unduly stimulating, we should find the intestinal or peristaltic action quite sufficient. The apparent sluggishness of the bowels, when we first exchange an animal diet for a vegetable one, is probably owing to our former abuses. At present, I find my plain vegetable food, in moderate and reasonable quantity, quite as aperient as it ought to be, and, if I exceed a proper quantity, too much so.

I have now no remaining doubts of the vast importance that would result to mankind, from an universal training from childhood, to the exclusive use of vegetable food. I believe such a course of training, along with a due attention to air, exercise, cleanliness, etc., would be the means of improving our race, physically, intellectually, and morally, beyond any thing of which the world has yet conceived. But my reasons for this belief will be seen more fully in another place. They are founded in science and the observation of facts around me, much more than on a narrow individual experience.

There is one circumstance which I must not omit, because it is full of admonition and instruction. I have elsewhere stated that, twenty-three years ago, I had incipient phthisis. Of this fact, and of the fact that there were considerable inroads made by disease on the upper lobe of the right lung, I have not the slightest doubt. The symptoms were such at the time, and subsequently, as could not have been mistaken. Besides, what was, as I conceive, pretty fully established by the symptoms which existed, is rendered still more certain by auscultation. The sounds which are heard during respiration, in the region to which I have alluded, leave no doubt on the minds of skillful medical men, of their origin. Still I doubt whether the disease has made any considerable progress for many years.

all drink for a long time. Indeed, I made two of these experiments; in one of which I abstained nine months and nineteen days, and in the other fourteen months and one or two days; except that in the latter case I ate, literally, for one or two successive days, while working hard at haying, one or two bowls a day of bread and water. But these were experiments *merely*– the experiments made by a medical man who preferred making experiments on himself to making them on others; and they never deserved the misconstruction which was put upon them by several persons, who, in other respects, were very sensible men. "The author" never believed with Dr. Lambe, of London, that man is not a drinking animal.

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