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1834







# HEALTH

FROM

## DIET AND EXERCISE:

ILLUSTRATED BY STRIKING CASES.

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\* \* "Health is so necessary to all the duties, as well as pleasures of life, that the crime of squandering it is equal to the folly; and he that for a short gratification brings weakness and diseases upon himself, and for the pleasure of a few years, condemns the maturer and more experienced part of his life to the chamber and the couch, may be justly reproached, not only as a spendthrift of his own happiness, but as the robber of the public,—as a wretch that has voluntarily disqualified himself for the business of his station, and refused that part which Providence assigns him in the general task of human nature."—*Dr. Johnson.*

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☞ *The following Cases are from the Appendix to LEWIS CORNARO, ON HEALTH, just published at 376 Pearl-st., N. Y. with Notes by SYLVESTER GRAHAM.*

# HEALTH.

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CASE OF DEA. RICHARD CUNNINGHAM.

Since the notes to the Life and writings of Cornaro were finished, I have become acquainted with the interesting case detailed in the following statement, which the aged and venerable man has, with diffidence, consented to communicate.

That the reader who is not personally acquainted with Dea. Cunningham and knows nothing of his history, standing and reputation, may the better understand and appreciate the following communication, it may be well to say; that he was born in Mifflin County Pennsylvania, in May 1762: and in 1787, at the age of twenty-five, he came to the City of New-York, where he soon after established himself in business, in which he was very prosperous, and by which he accumulated a very handsome property. When about thirty years of age, he became a member of the Presbyterian Church, then under the pastoral care of the Rev. Doctor Rodgers; and about ten years after, he was elected a deacon of the same church; which office he continued to fill till he was about fifty years old, when he was elected an elder of the same church, which had, in the mean time, passed under the pastoral care of the Rev. Doctor Spring. About this same period, he was also elected an Alderman of the City, which office he continued to fill for several years. Such was the known hospitality

of Dea. Cunningham, especially to the friends of religion, that his house was for many years familiarly called "the Clergyman's Hotel." Seldom did he sit down to his own table without the presence of a greater or smaller number of guests: and the social charities of his heart were as generous as his means were then ample. He also took a lively and active interest in all the moral and religious enterprises of the day, which were calculated to extend the knowledge of the truth and improve the condition of the human race. The kindness of his nature, however, betrayed him into pecuniary responsibilities for his friends; by which means, connected with other reverses of fortune, he was compelled to forego those manifestations of hospitality and social and religious charity, which had afforded so much enjoyment to himself, and comfort and benefit to others.

The worthy old gentleman now, at the age of seventy-one, sustains the office of an elder in the Presbyterian Church in Prince-street. Most of his time is actively devoted to the cause of religion; and he seems to be happily exemplifying the truth of the Scripture which saith, that the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

A very great and manifest change, for the better, has taken place in his health, within the last four years, as is well known to all his personal friends. His complexion has now that clearness and freshness and ruddiness, and his countenance much of that plumpness and animation which belong to early youth. And he has repeatedly assured me that he never enjoyed life so well before.

*New-York, April 3d. 1833.*

MR. GRAHAM,—SIR,

Exceedingly reluctant, as I am, to hold up to view my own experience, even in a good cause, yet I yield to your solicitation and the wish of friends, in presenting to you the following brief sketch of my habits and course of life,—especially as respects my regimen and health; being deeply penetrated with the conviction that the cause, in which you are engaged, is of very great importance to the temporal and spiritual welfare of mankind, and humbly hoping that the statement I am about to make, may in some degree serve the interests of that cause.

During my childhood and youth, my health was such as is ordinarily considered good; and although I was subject to those occasional indispositions and ailments which are so common in civic life, yet till the age of forty, I continued to enjoy what we usually call good health.

I ought however to state, that at the age of twenty, I formed the pernicious habit of chewing and smoking tobacco. My dietetic habits, after I became established in life, were not restrained, and yet not what was considered, by any means, excessive. I ate promiscuously of such food as ordinarily comes upon the table of those who have the means and the disposition “to live well:” using brandy and water, and sometimes wine or other liquor at my dinner; and occasionally also at other times of the day. After I was forty years old, my health began to be less uniformly good,—I began to feel some of those ailments and infirmities, which indicate that we have past the meridian of our days, and are commencing the decline of life. From about this period, I almost every spring and autumn, had a turn of sickness, attended with severe oppression of the chest, asthmatic difficulty of breathing, head-ache, &c. &c. which obliged me to have recourse to medical advice and remedies. These difficulties gradually increased upon me,—becoming more and more severe. I was also much afflicted with depression of spirits, and religious despondency,—often suffering great and painful doubts concerning the genuineness of my faith and the foundation of my hopes; although I had been a professor of religion from about the age of thirty, and many years also, an officer in the church. Suspecting that the effects of tobacco were injurious to my system, I abandoned the use of it entirely, about the age of fifty. This reformation

in my habits proved very beneficial to me. My appetite became more natural and uniform, and my food was taken with much better relish. Still however, I was not restored to health. My periodical turns of sickness regularly recurred, and my infirmities gradually increased upon me with increasing years.

When I was about sixty years old, seeing the evil effects of intemperate drinking in others, and suspecting that my own health was not benefited by the use of alcoholic liquors of any kind, and sensible that no one, who used them, was beyond the danger of excess, and that they did no good, I concluded that it would be decidedly best for me to abstain wholly from the use of them. And although I had by no means been, what was considered an immoderate drinker, yet, contrary to long-established and almost universal opinion on this subject, old as I was, and long as I had been accustomed to the moderate use of ardent spirit, wine and beer, I was decidedly benefited by a total abstinence from all such liquors. My appetite and the relish of my food were still farther improved, and in many other respects my health was better; and I suffered less depression of spirits and religious doubt and despondency than before. Nevertheless, I continued to experience my semi-annual returns of sickness, and expected them every spring and autumn, as a matter of course. My usual food was what is commonly called good and nourishing. My dinner table was always well supplied with flesh-meat, and I generally had a little beef steak or some other flesh-meat at breakfast, and occasionally a little smoked beef or tongue, at tea.

As the oppression which I suffered in my chest—difficulty of breathing, head-ache &c. not only continued, but, by reason of my increasing age, became more distressing, I was induced, at the age of sixty-seven, to make an entire change in my diet. I abandoned at once the use of tea and coffee, and of all animal food, and put myself on a diet of bread, and porridge made of Indian meal and water. For a while at first, I felt some hankering after the dishes which I had discarded; and experienced some lassitude in consequence of the absence of more stimulating food; but in the course of about three months, these all passed away, and I found my health improving exceedingly.

It is now about four years since I adopted this simple

regimen, and my health has been continually improving to the present time. I have not experienced a single turn of my periodical sickness, nor indeed any other illness or ailment, except perhaps, two or three times, a slight cold, since I commenced my present mode of living. There has not been a day, during the last four years, in which I have not been able to be abroad, let the weather be what it might:—nor have I hesitated to be out nights, habitually, till eight or nine o'clock. I rise early; and at five o'clock in the morning, during the longer days of the year, and at six during the shorter ones, I go out regularly to attend a prayer meeting. When desirable, I can walk ten, and sometimes fifteen miles a day, without any painful sense of fatigue.

During the prevalence of the Cholera last summer, a great many, in my immediate neighborhood, were sick and died with that awful disease: and I visited several of the sick, and was much exposed; but through the whole season, was perfectly well, not having the slightest symptoms of Cholera, nor any other indisposition.

Indian meal porridge and bread still constitute the principal articles of my diet. I however occasionally eat plain boiled rice, potatoes, and other simple vegetables, and a little milk. I think the bread made of unbolted wheat meal, mixed with indian, decidedly preferable to any other, for health and enjoyment. My appetite is excellent, and I now enjoy my plain and simple fare, far better than I ever did the richer dishes of my former days. Indeed I now habitually and uniformly experience a high degree of enjoyment of my food, and hope I am truly thankful for the discovery that such simple fare is so conducive to health and comfort.

My bodily strength and activity and general vigor have improved very much on my new regimen, and I am now quite as fleshy as is desirable, and enjoy much better health than is common to men, considered well, at my period of life.

Some of my friends still say to me, "you do very wrong to live on such plain fare: you are an old man and require more stimulating food, and a glass or two of wine with your dinner." But I can say to them;—when did you ever see me so perfectly healthy and so fleshy as I am now, though upwards of seventy years of age? and why should I forsake a regimen on which I enjoy myself, in

every respect, so much better than I did before I adopted it, and return to the use of flesh and wine? The truth is, mankind are in a great error on this subject. Old men no more require wine and stimulating food than children do. Pure water is altogether the best beverage for human beings at every period of life.

The effect on my mind is equally happy. I enjoy a continual serenity and cheerfulness of spirit. My religious views and hopes and consolations are more clear and steadfast and abundant. To those turns of doubt and despondency, which before afflicted me, I am now almost a stranger: and I am enabled to maintain "a closer walk with God," and to perceive spiritual things more spiritually; and the beauty of holiness appears to me more exceedingly beautiful.

O, that all professing Christians, especially, and the whole human family were properly enlightened on this great and important subject of true "temperance in all things." O, that men would use the common bounties of Providence, as well as the riches of grace, as not abusing them. Then might this world experience the universal reign of righteousness and peace and true joy. But while human beings seek their supreme enjoyment in the indulgences of appetite, they lessen even the pleasures of the table, and they must expect from such sowing to the flesh, to reap depravity and disease and suffering; and moral and spiritual darkness, and untimely death. For "to be carnally minded is death: but to be spiritually minded is life and peace." "From whence come wars and fightings" among men, in families as well as in states?—"Come they not hence, even of their lusts that war in their members?"

With a deep sense of gratitude to Heaven, for the comforts I enjoy, I fervently pray that the cause of health and longevity, and of moral and spiritual purity, which you advocate, may be abundantly prospered, and that it may go on with increasing success, till mankind generally shall understand the laws of God in their own natures, as well as in his revealed word, and by obeying them, and his most holy will in all things, attain that fulness of temporal good and eternal happiness, which he so benevolently offers for their enjoyment.

Yours truly,

RICHARD CUNNINGHAM.

## CASE OF JOHN LINTON.

WHILE making a tour through Pennsylvania, as the general agent of the State Temperance Society, in the summer of 1830, I stopped for a few days to rest myself, during the excessively hot weather of July, at the hospitable mansion of my highly esteemed friend, Dr. John H. Gordon, in Bucks county. As I was sitting on the piazza one morning, my attention was arrested by the sight of a person on horseback, who came galloping across the fields, and who seemed to manage his spirited steed, with all the ease and grace of a trained equestrian.

"We have company in prospect," said I to the doctor, who at that moment stepped upon the piazza.

"Yes," replied he, peering inquisitively over his glasses; "but who can it be?"

"He sits well upon his horse," said I, "and rides with spirit; I suspect it must be some one of your chivalrous young bloods."

"Upon my word," replied the doctor, "I believe it is my worthy neighbor, John Linton!—indeed it is he—and I am glad of it. He is coming over this morning to have a talk with you."

"And who is your worthy neighbor, John Linton," I inquired, with some curiosity.

"A very sensible and intelligent old gentleman, who resides on his farm, about a mile from this," answered the doctor. "You will be much interested in his conversation: and his experience will afford you some valuable facts."

"Old gentleman!" exclaimed I, with aston-

ishment, "I should take him to be a man in the very pride and buoyancy of youth."

"True, he has the sprightliness and vivacity of youth in an old body," replied the doctor.

By this time the horseman came wheeling upon a full gallop up to the steps of the piazza; and suddenly checking his speed, he dismounted with the elasticity and vigor of a young man. I saw that he had indeed past the meridian of life; yet his movements, his activity, the sprightly animation of his address, the bright and intelligent look of his eye and countenance, discovered much of the spirit, and vivacity of early life. I perceived from his style that he was a member of the society of Friends; and soon discovered that he was a man of no ordinary intelligence.

After expressing his interest and satisfaction in a lecture he had heard me deliver a few evenings before, he went on to say that the principles I had laid down, coincided exactly with his own experience. He then gave me substantially the following narrative:—

"Having received a good education for a farmer's son, I was called early to take an active part in the affairs of society, and continued for many years to fill various civil offices of the township and county. By such means, I was, of course, brought much into public intercourse with men of all characters, conditions, and habits; and to some extent, obliged to conform to the customs of those with whom I was under the necessity of associating. At court times, and on other public occasions, I was in the habit of eating at the hotels and taverns, where

the tables were loaded with a great variety of richly prepared and tempting food, and abundantly furnished with liquors of different kinds. I did not at the time, consider myself as approaching to the character of an intemperate man in any respect, yet I freely partook of the bounties of the table, and to a moderate extent, indulged in the use of brandy and water, wine, and other exhilarating drinks. These things were by no means calculated to simplify my own domestic board: but on the contrary, caused me the more to desire what is commonly called good living, at home. With active and industrious habits upon my farm, I enjoyed what is usually considered good health, till after I had passed my fortieth year. I then began to experience slight infirmities, and to feel various symptoms of declining health slowly gathering upon me. At first, I paid little attention to these indispositions; but after awhile they became so troublesome, that I was induced to consult physicians. Many of the prescriptions which I tried seemed to afford a temporary alleviation, but on the whole I continued to grow more and more unwell, until I found myself suffering under severe infirmities, and unable to attend to any kind of business. I was then told that I had past the noon of life, and was becoming aged: and that my constitution was much impaired, and my body worn out by the exceedingly active and laborious habits and exposures of my past years. This afforded me little consolation, and was in no degree calculated to assuage my pains, or render my decrepitude more tolerable. In

spite of the various remedies which I continued to try, I still became more and more afflicted and infirm. I was now approaching my sixtieth year, and was so completely broken down with disease and suffering, that it did not seem possible, that I could survive many months longer. Nothing seemed to have power to remove my disorders and restore me to health. My limbs swelled excessively: indeed I was obliged to swathe my legs and feet to prevent the skin from bursting; and my arms and hands were so much swollen, and so exceedingly sore and painful, that I was not able to raise my hand to my head. In fact, my whole body was so sore and disordered that I had no comfort in any position. My sight failed to such an extent, that I could with difficulty see to read with the best glasses I could procure; and my mind was very much impaired and feeble. Still I continued, with the help of crutches, to hobble about my room a little, and when the weather was fine, I would crawl out, and with great difficulty climb into my chaise and ride a short distance; but never suffering the horse to go faster than a walk, and always using care to avoid striking the wheels against the stones.

“In this miserable condition, I took a fancy to seek amusement for my tedious hours, in reading medical works: and I had not long occupied my mind in this way, before I was fully convinced that the whole course which I was pursuing for the recovery of my health, was utterly wrong, and directly calculated to aggravate and increase my disorders and

sufferings. I therefore determined at once to make an entire change in my regimen. I threw away all my medicine, wine bitters, brandy tonics, and every other stimulating and heating substance: abandoned the use of all animal food, and put myself strictly upon a diet of pure water, bread, and other plain, and mild vegetable food, and kept up my exercise as before. This great and sudden change gave much alarm to my friends, who assured me that my new regimen would inevitably and rapidly hasten me to the grave. But my mind was fully made up on the subject, and I was not to be shaken from my purpose.

“At the end of the first three months I could scarcely perceive any decided change for the better. The anguish of my body was somewhat diminished, my pains were less acute, my limbs were not quite so much swollen, my sleep was more sound and refreshing, and my mind was more clear and serene. Still however, the improvement of my health in all these respects was very small: but before another three months had elapsed, the beneficial effects of my new regimen, were far more manifest and certain:—all my complaints and ailments were much diminished, and my strength and activity were considerably improved. I could use my limbs very well, and with little difficulty, mount my horse and ride him at a smart trot. My sight improved astonishingly, and became so perfectly restored that I could easily read the finest print, without the help of glasses: but the most wonderful effect was produced on my mind, which became far more clear and active and

vigorous than it had ever been before. Indeed, no one who has not experienced the same, can have any adequate conception of the real intellectual luxury which I enjoyed. It seemed as though my soul was perfectly free from all the clogging embarrassments and influences of the body. I could command and apply my thoughts at will; and was able to study and investigate the most abstruse subjects, and to write with an ease and perspicacity and satisfaction which I had never before known, or had any idea of. In truth, if nothing else were to be gained by such a course of living, than the mental clearness and delight which I enjoyed, it were fully worth the experiment. But this was not all with me. In every respect I was a gainer. Before twelve months had passed in this way, I was perfectly restored to health: and seemed to have renewed my life. I was entirely free from every pain and ailment, and was very active, vigorous and more serenely and truly cheerful and happy than ever before since my childhood.

“Lately, I have not been quite so strict in my regimen. I have occasionally for convenience sake yielded to the customs of society, and eaten a little flesh: but I always find that I am the most active and cheerful, and particularly, that my mind is the most clear and vigorous, when I most strictly adhere to my simple diet of water, bread, and other vegetable food. In fact, I have never felt in every respect of body and mind so completely well, and buoyant and cheerful and happy, as I did during the latter part of the first year of my new mode of living, before I had deviated in

any degree from the strictness of my simple regimen. Still however I have been careful not to deviate so far as materially to impair my health.

“After having passed my sixtieth year, and when I had been for a considerable time unaccustomed to labor; my sons being very much in need of help, I took my cradle and went into the harvest field to assist them. My friends thought it would not do for me, and said it might make me sick, and perhaps cut short my life. I was, however, very little apprehensive of evil; and persisted in my undertaking. My two sons were full-grown robust young men, and we had also a stout laboring man in our employ. They led the course, and told me that I could follow on leisurely behind, as I found it most for my comfort. But much to their surprise, I held my way with them all day, without any oppressive sense of fatigue. I drank nothing during the day but pure water, and that only once in the forenoon and once in the afternoon; while my three fellow-laborers drank their spirits and water four or five times each half of the day: and the next day I felt no inconvenience from my labor.

“I am now sixty three years old and continue to observe my simple regimen with considerable strictness; dividing my time between reading, writing and exercise. My sight, hearing and other senses are about as good as they ever were; my mind is clear and active, my spirit serene and cheerful, and my body healthy and vigorous: and I enjoy life far better than I did in those earlier years, when I had much more

intercourse with the busy world, and indulged freely in what most people consider the comforts and blessings of the earth."

After having spent two or three hours with me in interesting and instructing conversation concerning his own experience and observations in life, the sprightly old gentleman took his leave of me, and with the activity and vigor of a young man, mounted his horse and galloped away; leaving me to admire in him a remarkable instance of the renovating powers of nature, when undisturbed by those irritating causes which are continually and almost universally operating in civic life, abridging the period of human existence, and filling the world with disease and suffering and crime.

This very intelligent and interesting old gentleman has only to continue with strictness, the simple regimen under which he recovered his health, and he has a fair prospect of numbering thirty or forty years more, of healthy, and serene, and cheerful, and happy existence upon earth. Apart from the consequences of human conduct, there is no more necessity for a man's dying between the periods of fifty and a hundred years, than there is between the periods of ten and fifty: nor is there any more necessity for his becoming decrepid, and helpless and gloomy, and incapable of enjoying life in a high degree, and continuing to be an object of enjoyment and instruction to his friends and to society. But "the minding of the flesh is death; and he that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption."







