Thoughts On Health and Some of Its Conditions

Hinton James
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Author: Hinton James

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THOUGHTS ON HEALTH,

AND SOME OF ITS CONDITIONS.

BY JAMES HINTON,

AUTHOR OF
"LIFE IN NATURE," AND "MAN AND HIS DWELLING PLACE."

LONDON:
SMITH, ELDER & CO., 15, WATERLOO PLACE.
1871.

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[Reprinted, with other papers, from the "Corkhill Magazine," and revised by the Author.]
PREFACE.

I hope these few papers, though of necessity they do but touch the outskirts of the subjects they refer to, may have the one merit of increasing the reader's desire to be better acquainted with them.

I have endeavoured to trace the connection of each special subject with universal laws; and to show it as an instance of an order wider than itself. But I wish in this respect I had done something worthier: I mean something worthier of those glimpses and fore-shadowings of human and spiritual meaning which science, though she gave promise of them from her birth, yet now presents in such increasing multitude and brightness. I am quite sure my own feeling in this respect represents that of thousands; that we seem, when we study nature as science shows her, as if we caught the echo of some distant music—so faint sometimes that we can hardly be sure whether it be not our own fancy merely, and yet so much
beyond anything our fancy could have suggested,
and, withal, coming so persistently, floating in from
every side, shaping itself ever anew, yet in every new
form recalling the same strain, that we cannot refuse
the glad persuasion that it is a real music which we
hear. When shall we hear it fully?

Not so very long, I think. Because already all
other voices begin to hush themselves and listen.
The world listens: not because it may seem in-
different, is indifference in its heart. Amid the tur-
moil of its business and its strifes, any one who notes
it with an eye not too self-engrossed for sympathy,
sees that the world listens. It stands expectant,
and its eyes are fixed on science. "We have waited
long, have believed often, have often been deceived,
but we have one hope yet left, O men of science,"
it says, "and that is in you. For knowledge we
have asked as for bread, and many have given us
stones; for solid facts to build our life upon, and
many dreamers have beguiled us with their visions.
O searchers out of all things, is it for you that we
have waited?"

As I believe, it is for them. How can it be other-
wise. When a man's heart speaks most truly to him,
does it not say, "Oh that I were as Nature." When
he looks around him, if he dares to wish at all, what
is it he can wish but that the fatal discord between
man and Nature were resolved? That fateful holder
of the key of order that is not restraint; of peace that
carries passion in its bosom; of rectitude that needs
no law; bears she not in her charmed hands the secret
also of his rectitude and peace? Will not those who
love her, and devote their lives to her, tell us what
it is?

If knowledge puffed them up with pride they
would not; if their hard-earned triumphs so filled
their souls that they thought nothing was withheld
from them. Then we know we should wait in vain.
But it is not so. The surest proof of coming know-
ledge has been given us in the words which own its
absence. On all hands from the men who study
nature we hear one confession: “We do not know:—
what nature is we have not found, and shall not
find.” But in those very words we recognize her
voice. Our guides have found her, for she speaks in
them. They have found her, and they know her
not; for she is better than they thought. Seeking
assurance of knowledge, they have found conscious-
ness of ignorance; seeking a substance away from
them and stranger to their souls, they have found a
Power that is known only in its action upon them.
They have not found what they sought, indeed; but
when did ignorance ever foreknow what would reward her search? A Power known in action, and in action only, this do our guides announce to us: a Power whose self they have sought and find it not, are sure they never will find.—Would to God they could say the same of man.

Is nature selfless? Is this what they tell us? They have found the secret of the universe; our secret. It is enough. There is the passion which is rocked in perfect peace; the freedom which no law restrains, yet which fulfils all law; the order which unreason cannot break. O image of Divinity, type and model of all perfectness, a worthy interpreter you have found at last. Your riddle has been guessed, your lesson read, your promise enrolled clear within our hearts. Man shall follow in your footsteps, shall attain your joy: he shall cast out the self.

*London, November, 1870.*
## CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAP.</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. HEALTH</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. FOOD—WHAT IT IS</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. FOOD—WHAT IT DOES</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. FOOD—HOW TO TAKE IT</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. WHAT ARE THE NERVES?</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI. THE BRAIN AND ITS USE</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII. ON NURSING AS A PROFESSION</td>
<td>203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIII. SEEING WITH THE EYES SHUT</td>
<td>218</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IX. FORCE</td>
<td>233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X. THE FAIRY LAND OF SCIENCE</td>
<td>261</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XI. A MEDITATION; ON SKELETONS—AND SOME OTHER THINGS</td>
<td>277</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>