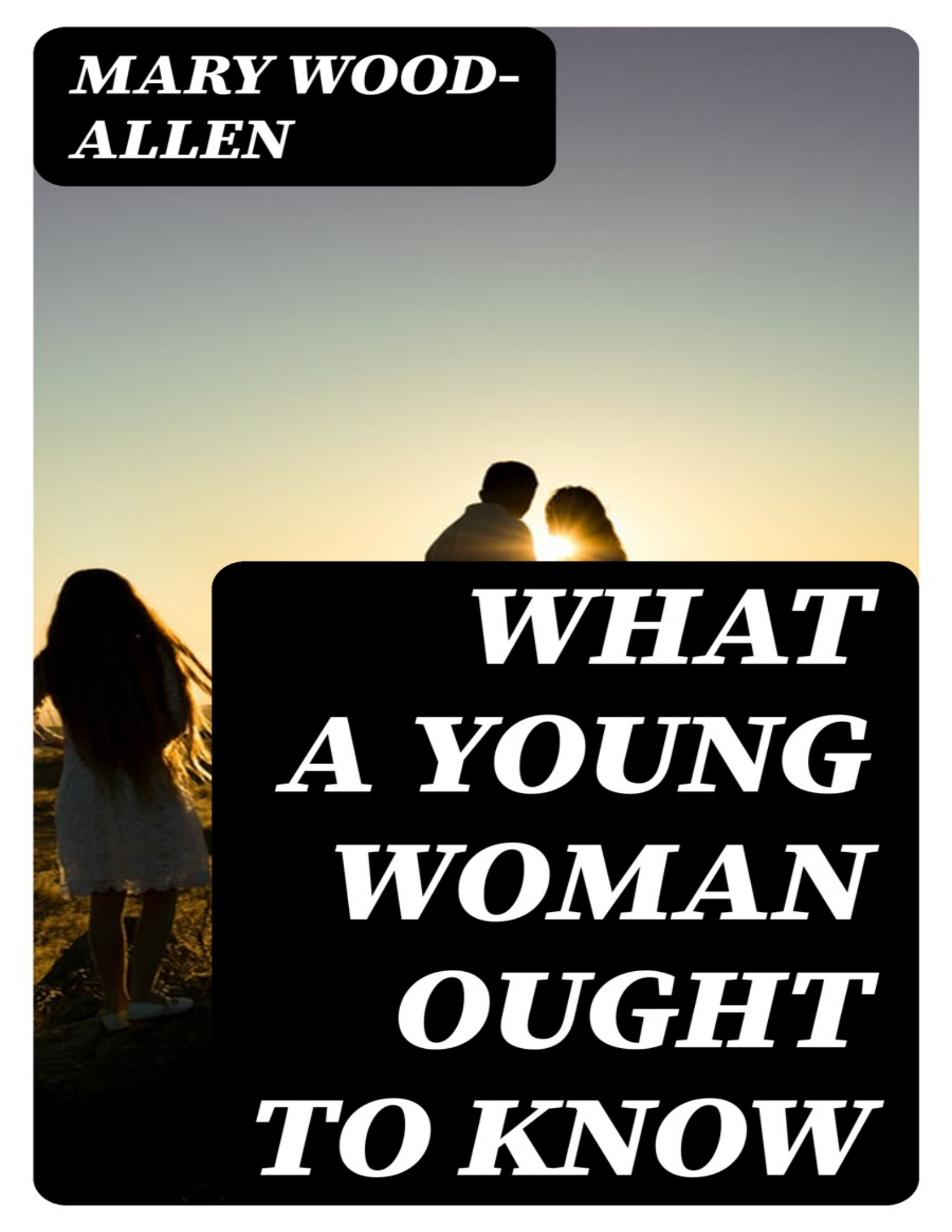


***MARY WOOD-  
ALLEN***



***WHAT  
A YOUNG  
WOMAN  
OUGHT  
TO KNOW***

**Mary Wood-Allen**

# **What a Young Woman Ought to Know**

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# **PREFACE.**

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During a number of years it has been my privilege to be the confidante and counsellor of a large number of young women of various stations in life and in all parts of the United States.

These girls have talked freely with me concerning their plans, aspirations, fears and personal problems. It has been a great revelation to me to note with what unanimity they ask certain questions concerning conduct—queries which perhaps might astonish the mothers of those same girls, as they, doubtless, take it for granted that their daughters intuitively understand these fundamental laws of propriety.

The truth is that many girls who have been taught in the "ologies" of the schools, who have been trained in the conventionalities of society, have been left to pick up as they may their ideas upon personal conduct, and, coming face to face with puzzling problems, are at a loss, and perhaps are led into wrong ways of thinking and questionable ways of doing because no one has foreseen their dilemma and warned them how to meet it.

The subjects treated in this little book are discussed because every one of them has been the substance of a query propounded by some girl otherwise intelligent and well informed. They have been treated plainly and simply because they purport to be the frank conferences of a mother and daughter, between whom there can be no need of hesitation in dealing frankly with any question bearing on

the life, health or happiness of the girl. There is therefore no need of apology; the book is its own excuse for being, the queries of the young women demand honest answers.

Life will be safer for the girl who understands her own nature and reverences her womanhood, who realizes her responsibility towards the human race and conducts herself in accordance with that realization.

Life will be nobler and purer in its possession and its transmission, if, from childhood onward to old age, the thought has been held that "Life is a gift of God and is divine," and its physical is no less sacred than its mental or moral manifestation; if it has been understood that the foundations of character are laid in the habits formed in youth, and that a noble girlhood assures a grand maturity.

Dear girls who read this book, the mother-heart has gone out to you with great tenderness with every line herein written, with many an unspoken prayer that you will be helped, uplifted, inspired by its reading, and made more and more to feel

"A sacred burden is this life ye bear.  
Look on it, lift it, bear it solemnly;  
Stand up and walk beneath it steadfastly;  
Fail not for sorrow, falter not for sin,  
But onward, upward, till the goal ye win."

Mary Wood-Allen.

Ann Arbor, Michigan.

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# **PART I.**

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## **THE VALUE OF HEALTH, AND RESPONSIBILITY IN MAINTAINING IT.**

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## **WHAT A YOUNG WOMAN OUGHT TO KNOW.**

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## **CHAPTER I.ToC**

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### **WHAT ARE YOU WORTH?**

My Daughter Dear:

When I see you with your young girl friends, when I look into your bright faces and listen to your merry laughter and

your girlish chatter, I wonder if any one of you understands how much you are worth. Now you may say, "I haven't any money in the bank, I have no houses or land, I am worth nothing," but that would only be detailing what you possess. It is not what you possess but what you are that determines what you are worth. One may possess much wealth and be worth very little.

I was reading the other day that the first great lesson for a *young man* to learn, the first fact to realize, is that he is of some importance; that upon his wisdom, energy and faithfulness all else depends, and that the world cannot get along without him. Now if this is true of young men, I do not see why it is not equally true of young women.

It is not after you have grown old that you will be of value to the world; it is now, in your young days, while you are laying the foundation of your character, that you are of great importance. We cannot say that the foundation is of no importance until the building is erected, for upon the right placing of the foundation depends the firmness and stability of the superstructure. Dr. Conwell, in his little book, "Manhood's Morning," estimates that there are twelve million young men in the United States between fourteen and twenty-eight years of age; that these twelve million young men represent latent physical force enough to dig the iron ore from the mines, manufacture it into wire, lay the foundation and construct completely the great Brooklyn Bridge in three hours; that they represent force enough, if rightly utilized, to dig the clay from the earth, manufacture the bricks and construct the great Chinese Wall in five days. If each one were to build himself a house twenty-five feet

wide, these houses would line both sides of eight streets reaching across the continent from the Atlantic to the Pacific. For each one to be sick one day is equal to thirty thousand being sick an entire year.

Now, if there are twelve million young men in the United States, we may estimate that there are an equal number of young women. Although we cannot calculate accurately the amount of physical force represented by these young women, there are some things we can tell. We know that for each one of these young women to be sick one day means thirty thousand sick one year. Just imagine the loss to the country, and the gain to posterity if it can be prevented!

Rome endeavored to create good soldiery, but was not able to produce strength and courage through physical culture of the men alone. Not until she began the physical education of the women, the young women, was she able to insure to the nation a race of strong, hardy, vigorous soldiery. So the health of the young women of to-day is of great importance to the nation, for upon their vigor and soundness of body depend to a very great extent the health and capacity of future generations. We are told that in the State of Massachusetts, in one year, there were lost twenty-eight thousand five hundred (28,500) years of time through the illness of working-people by preventable diseases. Dr. Buck, in his "Hygiene," tells us that one hundred thousand persons die every year through preventable diseases, that one hundred and fifty thousand are constantly sick through preventable diseases, and that the loss to the nation, through the illness of working-people by diseases that might have been prevented, is more than a hundred million dollars

a year. So we can see that each individual has a pecuniary value to the nation. You are worth just as much to the nation as you can earn. If you earn a dollar a day, you are not only worth a dollar a day to yourself and to your personal employer, but you are worth a dollar a day to the nation; and if, through illness, you are laid aside for one day, the nation, as well as yourself, is pecuniarily the loser.

Young women could not build the houses that would line eight streets from New York to San Francisco, but, rightly educated, they could convert each one of these houses into a home, and to found a home and conduct it properly is to help the world. It is so easy to measure what is done with physical strength. We can see what men are doing when they build railroads, construct immense bridges and towering buildings, but it is more difficult to measure what is done through intellectual and spiritual forces; and woman's work in the world is not so much the using of strength as it is the using of those finer forces which go to build up men and women. With this thought in your mind, can you answer the question, How much are you worth? How much are you worth to yourself? How much are you worth in your home? How much money would your parents be willing to accept in place of yourself? How much are you worth to the community in which you live? How much are you worth to the state, the nation, the human race?

You can recognize your value in the home when you remember how much you are the center of all that goes on there, how much your interest is consulted in everything that is done by father and mother. You can realize your value to the state when you realize how much money is

spent for the education of young people, how cultured men and women give the best of their lives to your instruction. You cannot measure your value to the human race until you begin to think that the young people of to-day are creating the condition of the world in fifty or one hundred years to come; that you, through your physical health, or lack of it, are to become a source of strength or weakness in future years, if you are a mother. It is all right that young women should think of marriage and motherhood, provided they think of it in the right way.

I want you to reverence yourself, to realize your own importance, to feel that you are a necessity to God's perfect plan. When we are young and feel that we are of no account in the world, it is difficult to realize that God's complete plan cannot be carried out without us. The smallest, tiniest rivet or bolt may be of such great importance in the construction of an engine that its loss means the incapacity of that piece of machinery to do its work. As God has placed you in the world, He has placed you here to do a specific work for Him and for humanity, and your failure to do that work means the failure of His complete and perfect plan. Now can you begin to see how much you are worth? And can you begin to realize that in the conduct of your life as a young woman you are a factor of immense importance to the great problem of the evolution of the human race? In the light of these thoughts I would like to have you ask yourself this question every day, How much am I worth?

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## **CHAPTER II.ToC**

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#### **CARE OF BODY.**

The question "How much are you worth?" is not answered by discussing your bodily conditions, for your body is not yourself. It is your dwelling, but not you. It, however, expresses you.

A man builds a house, and through it expresses himself. The external appearance causes the observer to form an opinion of him, and each apartment bears the impress of his individuality. To look at the house and then to walk through it will tell you much of the man. The outside will tell you whether he is neat, orderly and artistic, or whether he cares nothing for the elements of beauty and neatness. If you go into his parlor, you can judge whether he cares most for show or for comfort. His library will reveal to you the character of his mind, and the dining-room will indicate by its furnishings and its viands whether he loves the pleasures of sense more than health of body. You do not need to see the man to have a pretty clear idea of him.

So the body is our house, and our individuality permeates every part of it. Those who look at our bodily

dwelling can gain a very good idea of what we are. The external appearance will indicate to a great extent our character. We glance at one man and say, "He is gross, sensual, cruel, domineering;" at another and say, "He is intellectual, spiritual, fine-grained, benevolent." So we judge of entire strangers, and usually find the character largely corresponds to our judgment, if, later, we come to know the person.

The anatomist and microscopist who penetrates into the secrets of his bodily house after the inhabitant has moved out can tell much of his habits, his thoughts, his capacities and powers by the traces of himself which he has left on the insensate walls of his dwelling. The care of the body, then, adds to our value, because it gives us a better instrument, a better medium of expression.

The old saying, "A workman is known by his tools," is equally true of the body. The carpenter who cares for his saws, chisels and planes, who keeps them sharp and free from rust, will be able to do better work than the one who carelessly allows them to become nicked, broken, handleless or rusted. The finer the work which one does, the greater the care he must take of the instruments with which he works. A jack-knife will do to whittle a pine stick, but the carver of intricate designs must have his various sharp tools with which to make the delicate lines and tracings.

When we speak of health and physical conditions in discussing the question of your value, we are discussing the instrument upon whose integrity depends your ability to demonstrate your value.

Many young people think it nonsense to pay attention to the preservation of health. I have heard them say, "O, I don't want to be so fussy! It will do for old folks to be coddling themselves, but I want a good time. I'd rather die ten years sooner and have some fun while I do live."

I wonder what these same young people would think if they should hear a workman say, "Well, I have here a fine kit of tools; I am assured that if they are destroyed they will never be replaced; but now, while I am learning my trade, I don't want to be 'so fussy' about keeping them in order. It will do for 'boss workmen' to take care of everything so constantly, but now I want to break stones with these delicate hammers, to cut nails with these razor-bladed knives, to crack nuts with these slender pincers. By and by, when I am older, I'll use them as they should be used, but I think it's all nonsense to be so careful now." If in later years you should hear him complain that he had nothing to work with, would you feel like pitying him?

No "kit of tools" was ever so complete as is the bodily instrument given to each one of us. Its mechanism has been the inspiration of inventors; it combines all forms of mechanical devices; its delicacy, intricacy, completeness and adaptability challenge the admiration of the philosopher, the engineer, the master mechanic.

I cannot here tell you of all its wonders,<sup>[1]</sup> but I would like to give you such an exalted idea of its importance that you would look upon it with reverence and take a justifiable pride in keeping it in perfect working order. I would like to make you feel your personal responsibility in regard to its condition.



You know that in the ages past men believed the body to be the individual, and they endeavored through care of the body to build up mental as well as physical power. In those days the acrobat and the sage were found working side by side in the gymnasium, the one to gain physical strength, the other to increase his mental ability, and each profited as he desired.

When men made the discovery that the body is not the individual, but merely his dwelling and instrument of expression, they came to feel less regard for it, and lost their interest in its care and culture. Even the early Christians, forgetting what Paul said about the body as a temple, began to call it vile, and thought it an evidence of great piety to treat it with contempt. I have read of one religious sect who believed that the Creator of the body could not have been the Creator of the soul, and held that the chief object of God's government was to deliver the captive souls of men from their bodily prisons.

When men began to understand that the thinking principle was the real self and the body merely a material encasement, it was no wonder that they valued the body less and held mind as of great value. They failed to see that mind without a material organ of expression is, in this world, of no account. A great pianist with no piano could not make music, and he would be considered a strange being if he did not care for his instrument most scrupulously. Think of a Rubinstein voluntarily breaking the piano strings or smashing the keys, while he made discordant poundings, and excusing himself by saying that it was "fussy" to take care of a piano until it was old. You cannot imagine such a

thing. We can all appreciate the value of a man-made instrument or machine; but the God-created body, a combination of machines and instruments of marvelous power and delicacy, we neglect or treat with absolute, positive injury, and excuse ourselves on the ground that when it is old we will treat it more kindly.

Melville says it is a sin to die, ignoring what is to be done with the body. "That body," he says, "has been redeemed, that body has been appointed to a glorious condition."

It seems to me we prize the body far more after its use for us is at an end than while it is ours to use. We do not neglect the dead; we dress them in beautiful garments, we adorn them with flowers, we follow them to the grave with religious ceremonies, we build costly monuments to place over their graves, and then we go to weep over their last resting-place.

After all, is it not life that we should value? Life here and hereafter, not death, is the real thing for which we should prepare, and earthly life without a sound body is not life full and complete. Life is joy, vigor, elasticity, freedom from pain or illness, enjoyment of all innocent pleasures in maturity as well as in youth. We have no right to look forward to decrepitude, to failure in zest of living, to lessening of real enjoyment because of coming years. Life should increase in beauty and usefulness, in ability and joyousness, as the years bring us a wider experience, and this will be the case if we in youth have been wise enough to lay the foundation of health by a wise, thoughtful, prudent care of our bodies and our minds.

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## **Footnote**

[1] This Dr. Mary Wood-Allen has done in a volume entitled "Marvels of Our Bodily Dwelling." This book teaches physiology and hygiene, by metaphor, parable, and allegory in a most charming way. Superbly illustrated. 12mo. Price, cloth, \$1.50, post free.

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## **CHAPTER III.ToC**

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### **FOOD.**

If I can arouse in your mind a most earnest desire to be strong and vigorous, I shall not find it necessary to give you very minute directions, for if you have the ambition you will find the way. If I could excite in you an intense longing to visit Paris, I should know that you would begin to seek for the way of getting there. If I could create in you an earnest aspiration to be well and physically strong, I should know that you would seek for the books that would give you the necessary instruction. It will not be needful to talk of rules and restrictions if I can make you feel the glory of having a sound body.

If you were starting on a journey, I should not need to warn you of by-paths, of traps, or of dangers if I could be assured that your eye was fixed upon your ultimate destination. So it is in the matter of health; and yet there are some general rules or principles which I might lay down for your consideration.

In regard to the matter of diet. I do not want you to be hampered by "don'ts" and restrictions as to what you shall eat, but I do want you to eat with the thought in view that eating is to be governed by judgment and not by the pleasures of sense. Why do we eat? Not merely because the food tastes good. There is a better reason. We eat to live. We know that the food which we take into our bodies is digested, elaborated and assimilated—that is, made over into ourselves—and unless this digestion, elaboration and assimilation is properly conducted, we shall not be fully and completely nourished. Our body is made up of cells; the food which we eat is transformed into cell structure, and this new cell-material takes the place of the worn-out cells. Our reason would tell us that if too little material is furnished, cells will not be properly repaired and ill-health will follow. Our reason would tell us in the same way that if too much material is furnished, the machine will be clogged and the work will not be properly done. We will also understand at once that an irregular supply of new material would interfere with the elaboration of that which is undergoing the process of digestion and assimilation. We can see, too, that unless the various tissues receive the material which they can transform into themselves, they will not be fully repaired. If material is taken into the system which supplies

no tissue with what it needs, this material becomes a source of irritation.

These general rules borne in mind are sufficient to guide us into a wiser life than if we do not understand them; and, understanding these general principles, we will be anxious to study the particular rules which govern digestion and assimilation.

I have known young women in college to be so absolutely ignorant or indifferent to physiological law as to be injuring themselves constantly by disobedience of such laws. I knew one girl, supposed to be a very fine student, and to have brought on "fits" by overstudy, while away at school. I had an opportunity to investigate the case, and I discovered that she had been eating from morning till night. She carried nuts, and candy, and apples in her pocket, had pickles and cake in her room, and studied and munched until it was no doubt a disturbed digestion, rather than an overused brain, that caused the "fits."

If you will eat regularly of plain meat, vegetables, fruits, cereals, milk and eggs, plainly prepared, and avoid rich pastries, cakes, puddings, pickles and sweetmeats, you will have compassed the round of healthful diet, and need give yourself very little anxiety in regard to anything more. I should like to emphasize the fact, however, that tea and coffee are not foods. They are irritants, stimulants, nerve-poisons. They bring nothing to the system to build it up. They satisfy the sense of hunger without having contributed to the nourishment of the body. If you are wise you will avoid them. You will not create for yourself any false necessities. You will avoid the use of alcohol in all forms,