

## ARE YOU A FOOD "DRUNKARD"?

MY friend Henry, who has never touched a drop of alcohol in his life, is one of the worst "drunkards" I know. He weighs nearly 300 pounds. His heart is getting tired of pushing blood through 100 pounds of hitch-hiking tissue that Henry carts around to no good purpose, and his doctor has warned him to "take it easy." By and large, Henry does take it easy, except for incessant maxillary exercise. Perhaps it is his weight that makes him good-natured and, on the whole, tolerant of my weakness.

He never calls me an old soak or a gutter-bum when I take an occasional cocktail at lunch, but it is plain from the inclination of his eyebrow and the righteous celerity with which he pushes away the wine-card that he regards me as just another casualty of demon rum.

Well, he may be right and I cannot argue that I set a good example for anybody, but I do believe that I am temperate about alcohol. It would be a terrific shock to Henry if I told him the simple truth that he is the most intemperate person of my acquaintance.

You can find evidence of Henry's intemperance scattered about his office at any hour of the day. You will not uncover a single bourbon bottle, gin label, cork-crew or ethylated cork in Henry's desk. But in his wastebasket you will find a wad of tinfoil candy wrappings. There is a sack of gumdrops in his top drawer. Up near his inkwell is a burst cellophane package of salted nuts.

At ten-thirty Henry strolls downstairs for a snifter of coffee and doughnuts. A couple of hours after lunch he's back again for a slab of pie and a glass of milk.

In short, Henry is a food drunkard.

The fact that you can be a food drunkard as well as an alcohol toper may be surprising, because food is an essential and alcohol is not. But you can't be intemperate, even where essentials are concerned, without paying the piper. You can't live more than a few minutes without oxygen, but too much oxygen under pressure will poison you. Two-thirds of your weight is water and you'd soon die without it, but there is such

a thing as water intoxication. Fundamentally, "intoxicate" means "to poison," a toxin being a poison.

Morally the food drunkard is above reproach, as the heavy drinker is not, but he pays just as extreme a physical penalty. Life expectancy tables prove that the overweight who may also be good, die young. Professor Raymond Pearl's authoritative statistics indicate that the moderate drinker has a very slightly better chance of living a long life than the teetotaler. This is no argument for drinking—you're just as well off without alcohol—but it is an argument for moderation.

How can you tell if you are a food drunkard? Look at your belt line or the pointer on the bathroom scales. Eliminating possible glandular causes, and such modifying influences as exercise and fluid intake, there is just one reason why you are overweight: you eat too much.

But you *don't* overeat, yet you still get fat? Sorry—you're wrong about that! Most drunkards think they're moderate about alcohol. Henry eats only three meals a day; it's his habit of constant nibbling that makes a food drunkard out of him.

You can eat between meals with impunity, if you like. In fact, five light meals are better for your stomach than three

heavy ones. Your normal stomach doesn't welcome a complete layoff. But if you "don't count" the candy bars, the chocolates you nibble, the handful of peanuts, you are not fooling your body any more successfully than the toper who quits counting his highballs after the second.

A fact about food that is not too comforting to brain-workers is that the hardest kind of mental activity burns up practically no calories. If you go on a food spree and eat a single peanut, that insignificant food unit will keep you going for two hours, of concentrated mental work.

This is not to imply that the nerves and brain cells involved in the processes of thinking do not burn energy exactly as to the other cells of your body: by taking oxygen from the blood and returning carbon dioxide, with a consequent liberation of energy. It is simply that the nerves and brain represent but a small proportion of your body weight—about 4%.

Keep a record of everything you nibble between meals, if you are disturbed by the idea of food drunkenness; an honest total may surprise you and explain that spare tire around your waist.

What can you do about it? Simply eat less. Of course it

takes will power, just as it does to break the drink habit. Often it may take only an averted glance as you pass a candy counter. Arrange the household routine so that second helpings are never offered at your table.

Some folk, bent on bringing their eating habits within normal limits, turn to smoking as

a substitute. This is often effective, but cannot seriously be recommended as a rational health measure.

If you *have* to be chewing something for the function of your soul, try chewing gum or pine pitch. —*Morgan Deming, condensed from Your Life.*

