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Fake Scientific Research

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A group of scientific workers — we refrain from using the term scientists to describe them — have come up with the theory that milk is no good as food. The finding is tentative, but it's nevertheless highly interesting as an example of what sometimes for short periods passes for a genuine scientific discovery. One is reminded of doctor's warnings against breast milk about two decades ago, warnings which they now regret and are trying their best to reverse.

The charge that milk does more harm than good belongs to the same category, in that it repudiates several thousand years of human experience all for the fun of launching upon the world an astonishing theory which defies everything known hitherto about milk's nutritious value.

What would the world be without milk? It is the foundation of civilization in a sense. Milk and its products, butter, cheese, yoghurt supply the source of the best dishes imaginable. It is impossible to enumerate easily the uses of milk. To exclude milk from the diet, you'll have to cut out all puddings, all cakes, the fantastic range of milk-based sweets in which south Asia abounds, and live probably on such things as nuts and fruit. That may not be a bad idea for saints and sages who have learnt to suppress all normal desires, but ask any one whether he will prefer to be ninety without milk-foods or die at 65 after gorging himself on cheese and butter and cakes, the answer from any one under 30 will be a resounding vote for milk.

Fortunately, the report on milk, published as usual in America, also urges people to await further research. One may be certain that milk will win in the end and be triumphantly vindicated.

Like the discarded theory about breast-milk being harmful for children, there have been numerous hasty announcements in the name of sciences which scarcely differ from prognostications based on the signs of the zodiac. But there are unfortunately gullible people whose faith in science is of the same quality as others' faith in superstition.

The remedy is not to be shaken by any finding of this kind, but to reflect on history. If milk were something like tobacco, not known before the 16th century, one's reaction might be different. Some day their scientists might even tell us that for a healthy life man should abandon all cereal food.