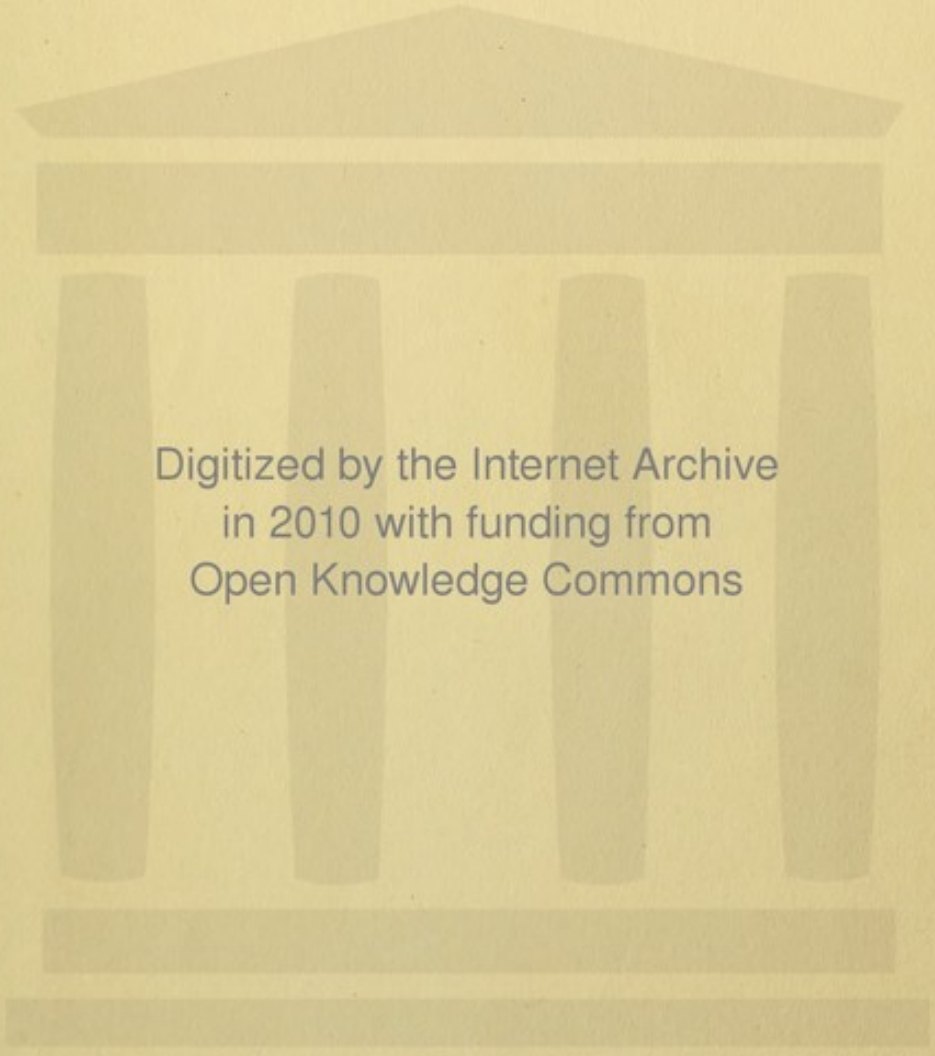
Essays on hypochondriacal and other nervous affections / by John Reid.



ESSAYS

ON

HYPOCHONDRIACAL

AND OTHER

NERVOUS AFFECTIONS.

BY JOHN REID, M. D.

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I have chosen those subjects of these Essays, wherein I take human life to be most concerned, which are of most common use, or most necessary knowledge; and wherein, though I may not be able to inform men more than they know, I may perhaps give them occasion to consider more than they do. *Sir William Temple.*

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ADVERTISEMENT.

It is right to apprise the reader of the following Essays, that many passages in them have been taken, without much alteration, from the Medical Reports, which, after Dr. Willan had relinquished the task, I was, for a course of years, in the practice of communicating to the Old Monthly Magazine.

It was my original design to have endeavoured to write something more systematic and complete on the subject of mental diseases; but domestic circumstances in which the public are not interested, having interfered with the prosecution of that object, I have been induced to commit to the press, in the form of Essays, what I had regarded as materials merely towards the formation of a larger and more methodical work.

J. REID.

Grenville-Street, Brunswick Square,
May 24, 1816.

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ESSAY I.

ON THE INFLUENCE OF THE MIND ON THE BODY.

HE who, in the study or the treatment of the human frame, overlooks the intellectual part of it, cannot but entertain very incorrect notions of its nature, and fall into gross and sometimes fatal blunders in the means which he adopts for its regulation or repair. Whilst he is directing his purblind skill to remove or relieve some more obvious and superficial symptom, the worm of mental malady may be gnawing inwardly and undetected at the root of the constitution. He may be in a situation like that of a surgeon, who at the time that he is occupied in tying up one artery, is not aware that his patient is bleeding to death at another.—Intellect is not omnipotent; but its actual power over the organized matter to which it is attached, is much greater than is usually imagined. The anatomy of the MIND, therefore, should be learnt, as well

as that of the body; the study of its constitution in general, and its peculiarities, or what may be technically called its idiosyncrasies, in any individual case, ought to be regarded as one of the most essential branches of a medical education.

The savage, the rustic, the mechanical drudge, and the infant whose faculties have not had time to unfold themselves, or which (to make use of physiological language) have not as yet been *secreted*, may, for the most part, be regarded as machines, regulated principally by physical agents. But man, matured, civilized, and by due culture raised to his proper level in the scale of being, partakes more of a moral than of an animal character, and is in consequence to be worked upon by remedies that apply themselves to his imagination, his passions, or his judgment, still more than by those that are directed immediately to the parts and functions of his material organization. Pharmacy is but a small part of physic; medical cannot be separated from moral science without reciprocal and essential mutilation.

Such observations are more particularly apt to occur to one whose station of professional experience is established in the midst of an intellectual, commercial and voluptuous me-

tropolis, the inhabitants of which exist in a state of more exalted excitement and irritative perturbation, than can be occasioned by the comparatively monotonous circumstances of rural or provincial existence. Over a still and waveless lake, a boat may move along steadily and securely, with scarcely any degree of skill or caution in the pilot who conducts it; whereas on the agitated and uncertain ocean, it requires an extraordinary degree of dexterity and science to insure the safety of the vessel, and the proper and regular direction of its destined course. "Thus the practice of medicine is reduced to a few simple rules, in the country, and in hospitals; but it is obliged to multiply, to vary, and to combine its resources, when applied to men of letters, to artists, and to all persons whose lives are not devoted to mere manual labour."*

The class of persons whose lives are devoted to mere manual labour, especially the more indigent part of them, are, to a certain extent, distinguished by the character of their diseases, as well as that of their other evils. They differ from the higher orders, less perhaps in the actual quantity, than in the glaring and obtrusive colour of their calamities.

* Coup d' ocil sur les Revolutions, et sur la Reforme de la Medicine. *P. J. G. Cabanis.*

There is no person, perhaps, who is apt to form so low an estimate of the value of human existence, as a medical man practising among the poor, especially among the poor of a great city. But it is not impossible that he may exaggerate the excess of their sufferings, by combining, as it is natural for him to do, their external state, with those feelings which he has acquired from very different circumstances and education. As the horrors of the grave affect only the living, so the miseries of poverty exist principally, perhaps, in the imagination of the affluent. The labour of the poor man relieves him at least from the burden of fashionable ennui: and the constant pressure of physical inconveniencies, from the more elegant, but surely not less intolerable distresses of a refined and romantic sensibility. Even those superior intellectual advantages of education, to which the more opulent are almost exclusively admitted, may, in some cases, open only new avenues to sorrow. The mind, in proportion as it is expanded, exposes a larger surface to impression.

ESSAY II.

THE POWER OF VOLITION.

NERVOUS diseases, from their daily increasing prevalence, deserve at the present time a more than ordinary degree of attention and interest on the part of the medical practitioner. Yet nothing surely can surpass the inhumanity, as well as folly, with which patients of this class are too frequently treated. We often act upon the ill-founded idea, that such complaints are altogether dependent upon the power of the will; a notion, which, in paradoxical extravagance, scarcely yields to the doctrine of a modern, though now obsolete writer, on the Philosophy of Morals, who asserted that no one need die, if, with a sufficient energy, he *determined* to live. To command, or to advise a person labouring under nervous depression, to be cheerful and alert, is no less idle and absurd, than it would be, to command or advise a person, under the direct and most intense influence of the sun's

rays, to shiver with cold, or one who is "wallowing naked in December's snows," to perspire from a sensation of excessive heat. The practice of laughing at, or scolding a patient of this class, is equally cruel and ineffectual. No one was ever laughed or scolded out of hypochondriasis. It is scarcely likely that we should elevate a person's spirits by insulting his understanding. The malady of the nerves is in general of too obstinate a nature to yield to a sarcasm or a sneer. It would scarcely be more preposterous to think of dissipating a dropsy of the chest, than a distemper of the mind, by the force of ridicule or rebuke. The hypochondriac may feel indeed the edge of satire as keenly as he would that of a sword. But although its point should penetrate his bosom, it would not be likely to let out from it, any portion of that noxious matter by which it is so painfully oppressed. The external expression of his disorder may be checked by the coercive influence of shame or fear: but in doing this, a similar kind of risque is incurred to what arises from the repelling of a cutaneous eruption, which, although it conceal the outward appearance, seldom fails still more firmly to establish the internal strength, to increase the danger, and to protract the continuance of the disease. By in-

direct and imperceptible means, the attention may, in many instances, be gently and insensibly enticed: but seldom can we with safety attempt to *force* it from any habitual topic of painful contemplation. In endeavouring to tear the mind from a subject to which it has long and closely attached itself, we are almost sure to occasion an irreparable laceration of its structure.

However well founded may be these observations, it must still be acknowledged, that the different degrees of power which persons of various habits and constitutions appear to possess, not only over the feelings and faculties of the mind, but likewise over what are called the involuntary muscles, and even the blood vessels of the body, may afford ground for an inquiry, curious at least, if not important, how far so desirable a power may be acquired; and to what extent, by some yet undiscovered method of education, it may be elevated and improved.

Dr. Cheyne, in one of his medical treatises, narrates a case, the accuracy of which is established by an irrefragable combination of evidence, of a man who could die to all appearance, at any time that he chose; and, after having lain for a considerable period exactly as a corpse, was able, as it would seem, by a

voluntary struggle, to restore to himself the appearance and all the various functions of animation and intellect. It is to be inferred from the latter part of the story, that the unnatural and painful exertions by which this person assumed the semblance of decease, produced at length a fatal result. Death would be no longer mocked with impunity. The counterfeit corpse, a few hours after its last revival, relapsed into a state which was capable of no subsequent resuscitation. But the case is so interesting and remarkable, as to deserve our giving it in all the detail with which Dr. Cheyne presents it to his readers.

"He could die or expire when he pleased; and yet by an effort, or somehow, he could come to life again. He insisted so much upon our seeing the trial made, that we were at last forced to comply. We all *three* felt his pulse first. It was distinct, though small and thready: and his heart had its usual beating. He composed himself on his back; and lay in a still posture for some time. While I held his right hand, Dr. Baynard laid his hand on his heart; and Mr. Skrine held a clear looking-glass to his mouth. I found his pulse sink gradually, till at last I could not feel any by the most exact and nice touch. Dr. Baynard could not feel the least motion in his

heart; nor Mr. Skrine perceive the least sort of breath on the bright mirror he held to his mouth. Then each of us, by turns, examined his arm, heart, and breath; but could not, by the nicest scrutiny, discover the least symptom of life in him. We reasoned a long time about this odd appearance as well as we could; and, finding he still continued in that condition, we began to conclude that he had indeed carried the experiment too far; and at last we were satisfied he was actually dead, and were just ready to leave him. This continued about half an hour. By nine o'clock in the morning in autumn, as we were going away, we observed some motion about the body; and upon examination found his pulse and the motion of his heart gradually returning; he began to breathe gently, and speak softly. We were all astonished to the last degree at this unexpected change; and after some further conversation with him and ourselves, went away fully satisfied as to all the particulars of this fact, but not able to form any rational scheme how to account for it. He afterwards called for his attorney, added a codicil to his will, &c. and calmly and composedly died about five or six o'clock that evening."*

* Cheyne's English Malady.

Burton, in his Anatomy of Melancholy, reports cases which were somewhat similar, but by no means equally wonderful with the preceding. "Celsus speaks of a priest that could separate himself from his senses when he list, and lie like a dead man, void of life and sense. *Qui, quoties volebat, mortuo similis jacebat, auferens se a sensibus.* Cardan brags of himself, that he could do as much, and that when he list."*

Such instances serve to shew, that the will can perform wonders in the controul and management of our corporeal frame. If such an extraordinary degree of command be possible, as has been here represented, it is fair to conclude, that we may have in general a greater power than we are aware of, over the animal and vital functions. If, by a determination of the mind, it be practicable in some cases, to suspend altogether the appearance of life, it is reasonable to believe, that, by the same means, we may put at least a temporary stop to the symptoms of disease. We would not be paradoxical or extravagant enough to assert, that for a person to be in health, it is sufficient that he wills it. But without transgressing the moderation of truth, we may venture to

* Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy, vol. i. v. 134. octavo edit.

give it as our opinion, that a man often indolently bends under the burden of indisposition, which a spirited effort would, in the first instance, have shaken from his shoulders. If, upon the approach of the malady, he had resolutely set his face against it, he would probably have arrested it in its threatened attack.

I was once consulted concerning an hypochrondriacal lady, who complained principally of an invincible indolence and languor. She seemed almost incapable of voluntary motion. This apparent incapacity had been sanctioned, and confirmed by authority as well as indulgence. She had been told, by a very complaisant physician, that "exertion would be poison to her," and had too literally reposed under the shelter of that professional opinion. Many, from an anxiety to avoid this falsely imagined poison, reject the most effectual antidote to the real miseries of life, as well as to a large proportion of its diseases. To a patient, however, whose malady is lassitude, exertion should be prescribed at first only, in very small doses. Such a person would be apt to be exhausted even by an ordinary task of exercise, and might thus be discouraged from further efforts at activity.

In the class of what are called nervous affections, it unfortunately happens, that the very essence of the disease often consists in a debility of the resolution; that the ailment of body arises from an impotency of spirit, a palsy of the power of resistance. A malady, occasioned by the weakness of the mind, is not likely to be cured by its energy. A tendency to sickness of the stomach, may often be overcome by striving against it: but a squeamish disgust of life cannot in the same degree be counteracted by a similar kind of exertion. It is not uncommon to say, to a drooping or desponding valetudinarian, "only exert yourself, and you will get the better of your complaint;" whereas, in many instances of this kind, it might as well be said to an invalid confined to his bed by a paralysis of his limbs, "only run or walk, and you will be well." People in general are apt to think that a man under the weight of constitutional or habitual melancholy, may keep up his spirits, as a little Miss can hold up her head, upon merely being *bid* to do so.

It is often as impossible for an hypochondriac, by any voluntary effort, to get the better of his complaint, as for a man of ordinary stature, to gain an ascendency, when struggling under the compression of a giant.

ESSAY III.

THE FEAR OF DEATH.

"The Egyptians in their hieroglyphics expressed a melancholy man by a hare sitting in a form, as being a most timorous as well as solitary creature." *Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy.*

An undue fear of death is one of the most ordinary symptoms of hypochondriasis, and not the least frequent perhaps among the causes which produce it; unless, indeed, we consider the disease as already formed, as soon as this feeling has encroached, in any inordinate degree, upon the tranquillity of the mind.

It is a circumstance somewhat remarkable, that those persons should be in general found to dread most their departure from this state of being, to whom it has proved least productive of enjoyment. The passion for life would seem to be like that for country, which is said to be felt with the greatest vivacity by the natives of barren regions.

Upon an apparently similar principle, after existence has lost every thing that could enli-

ven or embellish it, we often become more enamoured of its present deformity than we were with its former loveliness, When all is gone by, that could render the world reasonably dear to us, our attachment to it not only remains, but appears frequently to be strengthened rather than to be impaired by the departure of whatever could justify its continuance. The love of life, one might fancy, in some cases, to be a product formed from the decomposition of its pleasures.

These remarks are, in no case, so well illustrated as in that of many a nervous invalid, to whom the continuance of being is often only the longer lingering of torture. The unhappy hypochondriac is unwilling to lay down the burden which oppresses him. The rack of life upon which he is stretched, he prefers to the repose of the grave. He is loath to relinquish that breath which is spent in little else than sighs and lamentations. To him existence is a chronic malady: and yet he feels an insuperable aversion from its only effectual cure. I was once present when a poor patient of a dispensary, conscious that he was labouring under the last agonies of asthma, arising from water in the chest, breathed a confession, that "he was ashamed of feeling so much attached to this last *rag* of life." This

peculiar species of dotage, this fondness, as it were, for the mere function of respiration, can be explained only by that incurable obstinacy of hope which yields to no experience. We persist in looking for the sweetest part of the draught at the bottom of the cup. That felicity which the "first sprightly runnings" of life could not give, we fondly expect may be extracted from the feculence of age. Such an infatuation with regard to the future, may be considered, as, in some respects, a desirable ingredient in the composition of our frame. It is a delusion which mercifully supplies what would otherwise be a dreadful want in the realities of life. On the other hand, an almost unceasing and fearful looking forward to the end of our journey, prevents our seeing many of the flowers by which the path is strewed; and induces a distaste for nearly every cordial which might otherwise have innocently refreshed us in the course of our weary pilgrimage. The habitual horror, which thus overshadows the mind, darkens the little daylight of life. An indulgence in this morbid excess of apprehension not only embitters a man's existence, but may often tend to shorten its duration. He hastens the advance of death by the fear with which his frame is seized at the appearance of its approach. His trem-

bling hand involuntarily shakes the glass in which his hours are numbered.

Contradictory, as it may appear, there are well attested instances of persons who have been driven even to suicide by the dread of dissolution. It would seem as if they had rushed into the arms of death in order to shelter themselves from the terrors of his countenance.

The favourable termination of serious disease is to be attributed much oftener, than is in general imagined, to a pacific indifference, on the part of the subject of it, with regard to the ultimate result. Cases have repeatedly occurred in my professional experience, in which, after having chearfully looked for an event which the sufferer anticipated simply as a release from pain, he has appeared to feel somewhat like disappointment at a recovery which was probably to be attributed, in a great measure, to its not having been anxiously desired. I particularly recollect one instance of a restoration to health from an apparently hopeless disease, which I ascribed, at the time, to the tranquil chearfulness of the patient, which powerfully aided the operations of nature, and gave an efficacy, altogether unexpected, to the applications of art. This patient was one of the Society of Friends ; a society

whose peaceful tenets and habits prove as favourable to health as they are to piety and virtue; with whom Christianity consists principally in composure; and self-regulation constitutes the essence of religion.

In dangerous maladies, the person in whom there is the least fear of dying, has, other circumstances being the same, the fairest chance to survive. Men, in critical situations, are apt to be overwhelmed by their terrors; they are drowned by their too eager struggles to emerge; they would keep afloat, if they remained quiescent.

Predictions of death, whether supposed to be supernatural, or originating from human authority, have often, in consequence of the poisonous operation of fear, been punctually fulfilled. The anecdote is well attested of the licentious Lord Littleton, that he expired at the exact stroke of the clock which, in a dream or vision, he had been forewarned would be the signal of his departure.

It is recorded of a person who had been sentenced to be bled to death, that, instead of the punishment being actually inflicted, he was merely made to believe, that it was so, by causing water, when his eyes were blinded, to trickle down his arm. This mimickry,

however of an operation stopped as completely the movements of the animated machine, as if an entire exhaustion had been effected of the vivifying fluid. The man lost his life, although not his blood, by this imaginary venesection.

We read of another unfortunate being who had been condemned to lose his head, that the moment after it had been laid upon the block, a reprieve arrived; but that the victim was already sacrificed. His ear was now deaf to the dilatory mercy. The living principle had been extinguished by the fear of the axe, as effectually as it would have been by its fall. "In Lesinsky's voyage round the world, there is an account of a religious sect in the Sandwich Islands, who arrogate to themselves the power of praying people to death. Whoever incurs their displeasure, receives notice that the homicide Litany is about to begin; and such are the effects of imagination, that the very notice is frequently sufficient, with these poor people, to produce the effect."*

Tell a timorous man that he will die, and if he has been in the habit of looking up with reverence to your opinion, it may, not improbably, kill him. Pronounce the sentence with

* Edinburgh Review, No. xlviii. p. 345.

sufficient decision and solemnity; and under certain circumstances, it will execute itself.

I am no advocate for imposing wantonly or unnecessarily upon the understanding of an invalid, under the pretence of remedying his distemper. Deception is liable to discovery; and, when once detected, a man forfeits his future right to credit and authority. By giving hope where it turns out that there was no ground for it, we deprive ourselves of the power, forever after, of inspiring confidence in those cases where even we have ourselves no suspicion of danger.—But by terrifying the imagination, to *create* danger, where none had previously existed; by some treacherous logic to reason a man into an illness, or when a trifling ailment is present, to aggravate it into a serious malady, by representing it as already such, is among the basest and the blackest arts of empirical imposture. The practitioner, who is capable of such meanness and atrocity, can be compared only to the highwayman who puts you in a state of alarm for your person, in order that he may secure your purse; and who, if he cannot otherwise sufficiently frighten you, has no repugnance to run the risk at least of murder, in order that he may effect his robbery.

The inordinate fear of death, so far as the disease is purely mental, may be in a great measure counteracted by a juster estimate of the value of life, "a state in which much is to be endured, and little, comparatively, to be enjoyed." This correct judgment, when associated with "the gay conscience" of a life that has been spent, upon the whole, honourably and usefully, so far as it has advanced, will enable a man, at any stage of its progress, to look forward as well as backward, with no exulting or triumphant, but with an humble and quiet satisfaction.

The Christian is still more highly privileged. His eye, happily invigorated by faith, is able to penetrate the thick mist which hangs over the tomb, and which, from our unassisted sight, intercepts any further prospect. The light of Divine Revelation is, after all, the *only* light which can effectually disperse the gloom of a sick chamber, and irradiate even the countenance of death.

ESSAY IV.

ON PRIDE.

I HAD once an opportunity of being minutely acquainted with the history of a case in which successive mortifications of an overweening pride, at length brought on a state of melancholy, amounting to mental derangement. Such cases are by no means of unfrequent occurrence. None are so liable as the proud to this most humiliating of all afflictions. The patient just referred to, previous to his insanity, had suffered under several paralytic attacks. I remember being present, when a contemptuous allusion having been made by one of the company to some of his poetical effusions, he suddenly complained of being seized by a numbness very much resembling palsy. The shafts of ridicule or satire, to which he was continually exposing himself, often wounded his vanity; but nothing could destroy it. This buoyant quality, when beat down, has a wonderful facility in recovering

itself. He was one of the multitude of instances which evince the almost necessary connection betwixt "vanity and vexation of spirit."

Egotism, although neither technically nor vulgarly classed among the diseases incident to the human frame, well deserves a place in a system of nosology. Patients of this class are themselves the favourite subjects of their uttered, and of course, of their unspoken meditations. "I" is the prominent pronoun of their conversation.

Egotism, when combined with hypochondriasis, often leads a man to form too high a notion of his bodily as well as of his intellectual stature. It is no very uncommon thing for an hypochondriac to fancy himself too big to get through a door: but I recollect no instance in which an invalid of this class has conceived that he was small enough to pass through the key-hole. In the imagination of such patients, the pictures of themselves, when not correctly drawn, for the most part are larger than life. But to this rule there are exceptions; such, for instance, as that which Zimmerman notices, of a man who imagined himself a barley-corn; and was on that account afraid of going out into the open air, lest he should be picked up by the birds.

The humbly-nervous ought to be treated with the most encouraging respect, and with the most courtier-like attention. We should endeavour, by expressions of an extraordinary regard for them, to supply the want of satisfaction which they are apt to feel with themselves. On the other hand, a haughty imbecility ought to be met by a management that is calculated to depress the patient in his own eyes, and to sober a spirit that may have been intoxicated by draughts of a servile or treacherous adulation. There is an appropriate remark in Terence, with regard to a parasite who was in the habit of purchasing his daily seat at a luxurious table, by feeding, with compliments the gluttonous vanity of its master,

"*Hic homines ex stultis facit insanos.*"

Praise unjustly or too liberally administered, acts as poison upon a puny intellect. A man even of a vigorous mind is liable to receive injury from applause, although it be well deserved. Extraordinary merit is often spoiled by its natural and most appropriate reward. The smoke of the incense is apt to obscure and pollute the idol of our worship.

The obstinacy of self-conceit is to be subdued only by a permanent, as well as a severe discipline. It is a long course of mortifying circumstances, a regularly pursued sys-

tem of humiliation, that is necessary in order to bring a vain man's opinion of himself down to the level of his real merit.

It is in a great measure, on account of the eminence of their station in society, exposing them more than others to the giddiness of pride, and the noxious influence of adulation, that absolute sovereigns are in general to be ranked among the most unfortunate of men. There is something apparently in the empire of an individual over nations, that renders him incompetent, for the most part, to the proper government of himself.

One reason why the proud are peculiarly liable to mental derangement, is, that they are less able than others to bear up against the distresses of life. They are more severely galled by the yoke of adversity. Misfortune they are apt to consider as an injury inflicted upon them by Providence, at which they cannot help feeling something like the same resentment as at a wrong which they have received from a fellow-creature. When assaulted by calamity, pride erects its crest in indignation against heaven. A young man, of an irritable temperament, once consulted me about a complaint which had been considered as nervous, and which, according to his de-

scription of it, was sufficiently distressing. "But," added he, "the most provoking circumstance relative to my sufferings, is, that I am conscious of having in no way deserved them."

Humility predisposes to resignation. He who thinks most lowly of his merits, will, in general, be induced to think most lightly of his afflictions. Descent from elevated station will be borne easily by those who are not high minded. The loss of opulence is no serious sorrow to one, the modesty of whose wishes can stoop to the degradation of his circumstances. Though, by eradicating pride, we could not always disarm adversity of its sting, we should, in every instance, render less painful and dangerous the wound which it inflicts.

After the remarks which have been already made, it is scarcely necessary to add any thing to shew, how ill-adapted the doctrine of the ancient Stoics was, either to help the infirmities of our nature, or to alleviate its sorrows. That "pain is no evil" is a proposition of which every one, with his senses about him, must *feel* the absurdity. A maxim originating from the pride of man, is ill calculated to endow him with patience. The arrogance of preposterous speculation may stifle a groan,

or any more articulate expression of complaint: but it will not render less excruciating the unuttered agony. It may forbid pain from betraying itself in the writhings of the limbs, or in the contortions of the countenance: but feeling, thus forcibly compressed within the heart, will be in danger of bursting it by its elastic force and expansion. A man elevated upon the stilts of Stoicism, stands higher indeed, but less securely. They lift him above the ground: but, whilst they deduct from his safety, they give no real addition to his stature. Stoicism is a cloke which merely disguises, not an armour which defends or fortifies, our weakness. The vanity of its lofty pretensions may be compared to the feather that idly floats above the head, not to that solid part of the helmet which encircles and protects it. The glitter of affected magnanimity is apt to be mistaken for what is sterling and substantial, until the repeated rubs of life have worn off the slight and superficial gilding.

For the unsatisfactory pride of Stoicism, would be well substituted that salutary benevolence which is so forcibly inculcated by the precepts of Christianity, and so conspicuously exemplified in the character of its author. By not thinking of our individual interest, we

effectually, although indirectly, promote it. He who enters most deeply into the misfortunes of others, will be best able to bear his own. A practical benevolence, by habitually urging us to disinterested exertion, tends to alienate the attention from any single train of ideas, which, if favoured by indolence and self contemplation, might be in danger of monopolising the mind; and occasions us to lose a sense of our personal concerns and feelings, in an enlarged and liberal sympathy with the general good. Howard, had he not been a philanthropist, would probably have been a maniac.

An admirable sermon by the late Dr. Priestley, on "the duty of not living to ourselves," provided that the principles of it were well digested and assimilated into the habit, would prove a better preservative against the malady of mental derangement than any that is to be found amidst the precepts of moral, or the prescriptions of medical, science.

ESSAY V.

REMORSE.

"No disease of the imagination is so difficult to cure, as that which is complicated with the dread of guilt. Fancy and conscience then act interchangeably upon us; and so often shift their place, that the illusions of the one are not distinguished from the dictates of the other. When melancholy notions take the form of duty, they lay hold on the faculties without opposition, because we are afraid to exclude or banish them."*

I shall never forget a patient, who, upon the entrance of the physician into his chamber, observed "You can be of no service to me. Doctors cannot cure a diseased conscience." The disease was indeed in this instance too deeply rooted for medicine to eradicate. The unfortunate person a few days afterwards died by his own hand in a paroxym of phrenzy.

Remorse itself is considered, perhaps too indiscriminately, as a compensation for mis-

* Rasselas.

conduct. When it is an unproductive feeling merely, and not a regenerating principle, instead of mitigating, it can serve only to aggravate our offences. Repentance, sentimentally iudulged, often stands in the way of a practical reformation. The pressure of conscious criminality ought to be sufficient to rouse into action, but not so great as to crush altogether the powers of the mind. Contrition is most easily indulged in a state of indolence and solitude; but can be alleviated only by strenuous efforts in the service of society. The errors of our past life are not to be atoned by wasting the remainder of it in a sedentary grief, or in idle lamentations. Every good deed which a man performs, lightens, in a certain degree, the load of recollected guilt. Active duty is alone able to counteract the injury, or to obliterate the stain, of transgression.

In even aggravated cases of remorse, much may be done towards relief, if the patient have resolution enough to administer to himself; to awaken from the lethargy of a vain regret; and make every atonement in his power for any wrong that he has committed, or any moral law which he has broken. A man may compensate to society, for an injury that is perhaps irreparable to an individual; and by

the extraordinary exertions of a penitentiary benevolence, be the means of producing a quantity of happiness that is equivalent to the misery which his former vices or errors may have occasioned.

The paradise of innocence, it is true, can never be regained. But innocence is a state of happiness rather than of merit. More vigor is required to resist the recurrence, after having yielded to the first approach, of temptation. The glory of victory is enhanced by the humiliation of previous discomfiture. A man must know something of vice, before he can practice the highest degree of virtue. The summits of moral excellence were never reached, without the foot having frequently slipped during the arduous ascent.

Remorse is often felt most acutely by those who have the least reason for self-accusation. In proportion to the purity of a man's character, is in general the degree of this species of sensibility, which may sometimes indeed amount to even a fastidious, and what may be called a *nervous* delicacy; in consequence of which, the best men are not unfrequently apt to class themselves among the worst. There are no symptoms of disease which it is more difficult to cure, than the hallucinations of an hypochondriacal humility. Hence

arises a bigotted self-reproach, a want of common candour in a man towards his own character, an utter blindness to its good qualities, and a prejudiced and preposterous exaggeration of any bad one that may belong to it.

It is not very long since I had a professional opportunity of knowing something of the morbid history of a man, who had succeeded to a peerage, and an immense estate, by the death of an elder brother, with whom he had not been upon good terms for some years previous to that event. The unforunate heir to the title and domains, so severely reproached himself for that suspension of fraternal amity, with regard to which he was altogether innocent, that he sunk into a profound melancholy, from which I have reason to believe nothing has hitherto been able to rouse him.

I knew another person, who, although his life had been signalized by the most active and successful exertions in behalf of his fellow-creatures, was affected with a despondency, the burden of which was, that he had been all along a useless member of society, and that the talents which had been given him had produced nothing in his hands. Under the influence of this imagination, he expressed a kind of horror as well as shame, at the prospect of giving up a stewardship, the duties of

which he had, as he thought, so unfaithfully discharged.

In addition to the morbid disposition in a patient to calumniate himself, which is often a striking feature of hypochondriacal malady, there is another important source of error, from which even more healthy minds are not altogether exempt. We are apt to be unduly biassed in our feelings with regard to the quality of an action, or course of conduct, by circumstances which merely *happen* to follow it, without having with it any necessary or probable connection. It is by no means uncommon for a person, in reference to some, perhaps, merely fancied error of management, or neglect in attendance upon a sick friend, to say, "*had he died*, I should never have forgiven myself;" as if the accidental decease of the one would have given a different complexion to the previous behaviour of the other; or as though the fortunate recovery of the invalid would have exonerated an indolent or inconsiderate nurse from all sense of moral responsibility. A disastrous result not unfrequently reflects the horror of guilt upon that conduct, which would otherwise have escaped any injurious imputation, which would have been deemed innocent in its character, had it proved so in its consequences. Nothing can

exceed the obvious injustice of this *ex post facto* mode of condemnation: yet after all, the event is often the only criterion by which the world, from its necessarily superficial knowledge, or from its careless examination, *can* pronounce a judgment upon the conduct of an individual: and when that judgment is unfavourable, a man's bitter reflections upon himself are rendered much more poignant, in consequence of their having been confirmed, as it were, by the verdict of his fellow-creatures. But, although the light of public opinion may sometimes be necessary to reveal, even to a criminal, the true colour of his offenses, it not less frequently throws a false glare upon the faults, as well as upon the virtues of mankind. People, in general, are too apt to consider as misconduct what was merely mischance, and to confound calamity with crime. A man's character may be shaded by the accidents, as well as by the actions, of his life. And perhaps, even conscience itself is seldom more deeply wounded by the stings of guilt, than it sometimes has been by the arrows of fortune.

The singular history is well known of Simon Brown, the dissenting clergyman, who fancied that he had been deprived by the Almighty of his immortal soul in consequence

of having accidentally taken away the life of a highwayman, although it was done in the act of resistance to his threatened violence, and in protection of his own person. Whilst kneeling upon the wretch whom he had succeeded in throwing upon the ground, he suddenly discovered that his prostrate enemy was deprived of life. This unexpected circumstance produced so violent an impression upon his nervous system, that he was overpowered by the idea of even involuntary homicide; and for this imaginary crime, fancied himself ever after to be condemned to one of the most dreadful punishments that could be inflicted upon a human being.

Not many months ago, I had an opportunity of knowing an instance of the melancholy effect of remorse, where the feeling, although not altogether without foundation, was unduly aggravated by an accidental association of occurrences.

A young lady was one morning requested by her mother to stay at home; notwithstanding which, she was tempted to go out. Upon her return to her domestic roof, she found that the parent whom she had so recently disobliged, had expired in her absence. The awful spectacle of her mother's corpse connected with the filial disobedience which had

almost immediately preceded, shook her reason from its seat: and she has ever since continued in a state of mental derangement.

The punishment which remorse inflicts in this world, although, in many instances, aggravated by the prospect, has no necessary reference to a future state of retribution. A man's conscience is more than a household god to him. It is the private deity of his bosom. The most solemn and efficacious warnings against vice are, no doubt, furnished by the doctrines of revelation, which present also the most powerful encouragements to the prosecution of a virtuous course. But independently of all revealed truth, there is a doctrine of the heart, a religion of feeling rather than of belief.

ESSAY VI.

ON SOLITUDE.

An hypochondriac should be a hermit in abstinence, but not in solitude. With no less beauty than truth, has the author of Rasselas depictured the insanity of the astronomer, as gradually declining under the influence of society and diversion. "The sage confessed, that since he had mixed in the gay tumults of life, and divided his hours by a succession of amusements, he found the conviction of his authority over the skies fade gradually from his mind; and began to trust less to an opinion which he could never prove to others, and which he now found subject to variations from causes in which reason had no part. If," says he "I am accidentally left alone for a few hours, my inveterate persuasion rushes upon my soul; and my thoughts are chained down by an irresistible violence: but they are soon disentangled by the Prince's conversation; and are instantaneously released at the entrance of Pekuah. I am like a man habitually

afraid of spectres, who is set at ease by a lamp, and wonders at the dread which harassed him in the dark."

Burton concludes his voluminous work on Melancholy, with this summary precept: "Be not solitary: be not idle."

The society, in the centre of which a person is placed, may be regarded as the atmosphere of his mind: and to one whose understanding has been improved to any considerable degree of refinement or extent, this mental atmosphere is of more importance to the vigour and proper condition, even of his body, than almost any variety in the modification or proportion of those material ingredients with which his lungs are supplied by the external air. A residence even in a great and polluted city, which affords objects of interest, and motives to exertion, ought to be recommended more especially to an hypochondriacal or nervous patient, in preference to the most highly oxygenated situation in the country, where there is not enough to rouse the sluggishness, or to fill the vacuity, of the mind.

Hypochondriasis is far from being a metropolitan disease. The multiplicity of external objects, which, in a great capital, are continually giving a new direction to the current

of thought, is of course unfavourable to the uniformity and self-absorption of melancholy. There are, in such a situation, so many rival candidates for our attention, as to preclude the exclusive dominion of any single idea. Although a man be not concerned as an actor in the gay or the more serious tumults of the world, he may find, as a simple spectator, sufficient engagement to prevent that dejection of mind which is apt to arise from its being unemployed. Even walking the streets of London affords abundant materials for amusement and reflection.

A rage for rural charms is at the present day a matter more perhaps of fashion than of feeling. A pretended relish for the beauties of the country is found to be by no means incompatible with a real attachment to vices which are considered as appropriate to the town; although in fact the most degrading kinds of vice are at least as prevalent at a distance from, as in the centre of, the capital. Intemperance, both in eating and drinking, is especially predominant in remote towns and provinces where the inhabitants often devote a large portion of the day to the pleasures of the table, from having no other resource for the disposal of their time. Hence perhaps it may be explained how a country clergyman,

more particularly, where the dull monotony of his life is not diversified by literature, or animated by devotion, is apt to sink into the gloom of hypochondriasis, or into the grossness of mere animal indulgences.

To one who has principally resided in the middle of a great city, an entire and permanent removal from it is a doubtful and somewhat dangerous experiment. The shades of solitude, it is to be feared, may prove too dark for him who has been long used to the sunshine of society.

I once knew a man who, at the meridian of his reputation, withdrew from the performance of his professional duty, and the useful display of his transcendent talents in this metropolis, to enjoy, as he thought, in the obscurity of a rustic retirement, the solace of seclusion and repose. But he had not long been in this state of falsely anticipated happiness, before he fell into a sottish melancholy. He who had been distinguished by his public addresses in favor of temperance, and every other virtue, became himself a victim to the most debasing excesses. Had not this person renounced the conspicuous station which he previously filled in society, the intoxication of public applause might have continued to supersede the want of any more vulgar inebriety; and for the in-

spiration of genius would never probably have been substituted the contemptible and destructive excitement of alcohol.

An unnatural exile from the world, so far from necessarily implying a superiority to its pollutions, often exposes a man even more imminently to the risk of moral contamination. The voice of the appetites and passions is heard more distinctly amidst the stillness of retirement. The history of hermits, of monks, and even of nuns, serves abundantly to demonstrate, that sensuality may be indulged in solitude, and debauchery practised in the desart.

Although habits of seclusion should be in general avoided by the hypochondriacal, it ought also to be remembered, that there is a kind of society which may prove more injurious even than solitude to his bodily and intellectual health. We are not perhaps sufficiently aware, that nervous complaints are, through the medium of sympathy, scarcely less infectious than febrile diseases. Amongst many other instances illustrative of this opinion, I particularly recollect the case of an amiable young woman, who, although she had been before remarkable for the uniform cheerfulness and gaiety of her temper, be-

came decidedly, and often deplorably, dejected, in consequence of having, for a length of time, been domesticated with an elderly friend, who was of a desponding and melancholy cast. The contiguous atmosphere of an hypochondriacal, like that of a typhous patient, may, in a certain sense, be said to be impregnated with contagion.

It is principally on account of the barbarous and unphilosophical treatment, but in part likewise it may be owing to the communicative nature of mental indisposition, that the receptacles are too often found to be the nurseries of insanity, where any, however small an aberration from the ordinary and healthy standard of nervous excitement may, in due time, be matured and expanded into the full size and frightful monstrosity of madness.

The reference which has been made to the contagious quality of mental depression, is by no means intended to prevent, or in any degree to discourage an occasional or even an habitual association with the afflicted, when we are able, by our society and sympathy, to comfort or relieve them; and especially if, from the obligations of gratitude or domestic connection, they have more than an ordinary claim upon our fellow-feeling and assistance.

There is an *antiseptic* power in an active benevolence which counteracts the putrescency of melancholy; and has, in some instances, proved an antidote even to the gangrene of despair.

ESSAY VII.

EXCESSIVE STUDY, OR APPLICATION OF MIND.

"——— Universal plodding poisons up
The nimble spirits in the arteries;
As motion and long-during action tires
The sinewy vigour of the traveller." *Love's Labour Lost.*

ALTHOUGH intemperate study be not one of those modes of excess, against which it is peculiarly necessary to guard the youth of the present generation; there is no one, I am convinced, from which more mischievous and dreadful consequences have sometimes originated. Too often talents have been sacrificed to acquisitions, and knowledge purchased at the expense of understanding. Literary gluttons may not unfrequently be met with, who, intent only upon feeding a voracious appetite for books, accumulate gradually a mass of indigested matter, which oppresses, and in time destroys altogether the power of intellectual assimilation. The learning of such men lies a dead weight upon the mind; and, instead of enriching its substance, or adding to its vigor,

serves only to obstruct the freedom, or to impede the activity of its operations. The mental enlargement which is thus produced, may be compared, not to that natural and healthy growth which is attended by a proportionate increase of strength, but rather to the distension of tympanites, or to the morbid dilatation of a dropsy. What is called a learned man, is often only a lazy man in disguise, with whom reading is a refuge from the more strenuous task of reflection. A reformation has taken place with regard to literature as well as religion. With the more rational part of mankind, wisdom is no longer thought to consist in poring over books, any more than counting beads is now regarded as devotion.

Many years ago I was consulted with respect to an idiotic man of erudition. It was a case of idiocy arising from an overstrained intellect. The understanding had been broken down, in consequence of having been overloaded. The head of the patient, in its best estate, might have been compared to a pawnbroker's shop, which is furnished principally with other people's goods; a repository merely for ideas, not a soil out of which an idea ever grew.

Since the occurrence of the preceding case, I was desired to give my opinion in an-

other, which was considerably different in the circumstances attending it, although originating apparently from a somewhat similar cause. A young man of very superior talents, a member at that time of one of the colleges of Oxford, had applied most intensely to his studies, with a view to the acquisition of the highest honours of the university, which, however, he was suddenly thrown into despair of attaining, by some new and unexpected rules, that were introduced with regard to the mode or the subject of the examinations. There was no just ground for his despondency in consequence of this innovation; but the idea of possible defeat, where he had been previously confident of victory, so dwelt upon, and harassed his mind, as to throw it at last into a state of temporary disorder, and the most excessive irritation. This irritation was accompanied by a singular and sometimes ludicrous caprice. He deliberated for a long time before he could determine on the most indifferent proceeding: and he had scarcely acted upon, before he invariably repented of his decisions. I remember calling upon him one afternoon, and finding him still in bed, from not having as yet been able to determine whether he should put on his pantaloons, or small clothes, for the day. He at

length fixed upon the latter; but had not been long risen, before he changed that for a different dress. Every thing he did, he regretted having done; and of what he had neglected to do, he regretted the omission.

It was for no long period that the patient remained in this state of imbecility. He recovered, after a time, the entire possession of his excellent understanding; obtained all the objects of his academical ambition; and is at present a very respectable member of a learned profession.

Although the intellectual faculties will always be in danger of debility or disorder from the too intense or too long continued exercise of them; this will be still more likely to take place, when the exercise of them has been confined to one or but a few subjects. By sufficiently diversifying the mode, we may protract almost indefinitely the period of exertion. Change of employment is often found to answer the same end as an entire cessation from it. The sense of fatigue, for instance, which we experience from the use of our limbs, may be relieved, not merely by rest, but also by again using them in a different manner. On a similar principle, if we have been reading, or thinking upon any subject until the attention be exhausted, we almost uniform-

ly find the mind to be again roused and invigorated by directing it to a subject of a different nature. A person in whose constitution there is reason to suspect a tendency to mental disorder, not only ought to be guarded against too long-protracted or intense thinking; but it should likewise be recommended to him to avoid, as much as possible, thinking upon questions of a very intricate and perplexing nature.

There are few walks of literature in which he may not be allowed to amuse himself, provided he shun with care the endless labyrinth of metaphysical speculation. Scarcely can it appear desirable, or even safe, to attend much to subjects, where the restlessness of doubt so seldom terminates in the repose of conviction; or at least, where the labour of the research is never likely to be rewarded by the importance of the discovery.

ESSAY VIII.

VICISSITUDE A CAUSE, AND CHARACTERISTIC SYMPTOM OF INTELLECTUAL MALADY.

VICISSITUDE constitutes one of the most remarkable features, in the character of mental derangement, as well as one of the most frequent causes of its production.

There is no radical distinction between the fury of madness and the sullen repose* of melancholy. They are found in the same individual frequently, and often regularly, to alternate. The opposite states of this disease, in many cases occur as punctually as the hot and cold stages of an intermittent fever. A frightful hilarity portends the certainty of subsequent depression. There is often in such

* This expression is meant to refer to the external physiognomy and demeanour, rather than to the internal state of the melancholic. Under the influence of some intense emotion, a man may be made to assume at once the immobility of marble; but he does not in that case become stone *within*. He stands fixed as a statue, but not as insensible. There is often a spasmodic chilliness of the surface, which only serves to aggravate that mental fever from which it originates. The supposed torpor of melancholy is like that of a child's top, which, after having been lashed into the most rapid agitation, is said, from its apparent composure, to be *asleep*.

cases, an *equinoctial* condition of the mind, which is almost equally divided between the light of joy, and the darkness of despondency. These remarks apply by no means exclusively to the unequivocally insane. They refer even more particularly to those minor degrees, those faint and scarcely discernible shades, those evanescent approximations towards mental disorder, the existence of which might elude the vigilance, or be concealed from the sagacity of any but an experienced and well-instructed eye. Sudden, and apparently causeless elevations, and equally abrupt and unreasonable declensions of vivacity, mark a morbid condition of the intellectual frame. A sober cheerfulness, a quiet happiness, an evenness and tranquillity of mind, are circumstances which not only indicate the actual possession, but are necessary also to secure the continuance of intellectual health. Temperance ought to be regarded as a virtue of more comprehensive range than what relates merely to a salutary discipline in diet. Temperance implies a certain regulation of all the feelings, and a due but restricted exercise of all the faculties of the frame. There is no species of passion or exertion which may not pass the limits of a wholesome sobriety. A man may be intemperately joyful or sorrowful, intem-

perate in his hopes or in his fears, intemperate in his friendships or hostilities, intemperate in the restlessness of his extravagance, or in his greediness of gain. It may be remarked, that, especially in this grand mart of trade, many cases of mental derangement originate from the alternations of mind attending upon the vicissitudes of commercial speculation. I recollect the case of an unfortunate young man who became a victim to the disastrous issue of a variety of mercantile adventures. The same blow which deranged his affairs, produced a disorder of his reason. His finances and his faculties fell together. The phantoms of imagination indeed survived, and seemed to hover over the ashes of his understanding. The demon of speculation, which had before misled his mind, now possessed it entirely. His projecting spirit, which was always more than moderately intrepid, took, in the maniacal exaltation of his fancy, a still bolder and sublimer flight. Some of his schemes reminded me of another madman that I had heard of, who planned, after draining the Mediterranean, to plant it with apple trees, and establish a cider manufactory on the coast.

The progress towards intellectual disorganization is sometimes rapid, but more fre-

quently it is tardy in its course. The mental fabric is often thrown into ruins by a single and unanticipated blow: but in the majority of instances, many pulls, and frequently-reiterated concussions are necessary, previous to the last crash of dilapidation.

Although an evenness and quietness of temper may, in many cases, appear connate or constitutional, equanimity ought not on that account to be regarded as altogether out of the reach of acquisition. The feelings which have been subject to an habitual restraint will seldom be found to rise above their proper level. Disproportionate emotions may often, in early life at least, be corrected, in the same manner as deformities and irregularities of bodily shape are by means of constant pressure forced into a more natural figure and dimension.

ESSAY IX.

WANT OF SLEEP.

OBSTINATE vigilance is not only one of the most uniform symptoms, but also very generally precedes, and, in a few instances, may even itself provoke an attack of mental derangement. It is rather, I am aware, to the agitating passion or the corroding anxiety, by which the want of sleep is most frequently occasioned, that we ought in many cases to ascribe the insanity which ensues. But even when watchfulness cannot be regarded as the only agent in inducing the disease, it assists, and in no small degree aggravates the operation of the other causes. That this should be the case, it will not be difficult to shew from circumstances obviously attending the state of sleep.

The variety and rapid succession of ideas so remarkable in dreams, cannot but tend to

counteract in some measure that habit of unvaried thought, which, when it occurs, has been too generally found the melancholy prelude to insanity.

Sleep generally suspends, and by this means preserves in vigour, the voluntary power which, in our waking state, we possess over our thoughts. It is reasonable to suppose, that the power of the will over the current of thought, like that which it exercises over the voluntary muscles, should require, in order permanently to retain its influence, to be recruited by frequent and regular intervals of repose. Where such repose therefore has been denied for a considerable period, it seems inevitable that this power should gradually decline, and be at length altogether destroyed.

Sleep often affords a temporary relief from those tumultuous passions, or gnawing solicitudes, which, if their operation were not in this way frequently interrupted, would, in no long time, induce a disorder of the mental faculties. Constant vigilance will be likely to produce insanity, by subjecting the mind habitually to that increased violence of feeling, which we must have observed to take place during the darkness, the silence, and the solitude of the night. It is astonishing, in how

much more lively a manner we are apt, in these circumstances, to be impressed by ideas that present themselves, than when the attention of the mind is dissipated, and its sensibility, in a considerable degree, absorbed by the action of light, sound, and that variety of objects, which, during the day, operate upon our external senses.

From such considerations it will be evident, that any strong feeling, or any favourite idea, will be apt to acquire an ascendency, and, in some instances, a dominion completely despotic over the mind, when it becomes the subject, as, in cases of obstinate vigilance, it inevitably will be, of an habitual nocturnal meditation.

I have been often solicited to recommend a remedy for wakefulness, or broken and untranquil sleep, by hypochondriac patients who had previously tried all the medicinal, or dietetic opiates, as well as other methods for producing the same effect, without obtaining the object of their wishes. I in these cases advised the use of the cold or the warm bath, and generally with decided advantage. The cold bath is by no means a novel prescription, for the malady we are speaking of. We find Horace long ago recommended it,

"Transnanto Tiberim, somno quibus est opus alto."

Next to involuntary vigilance ranks the almost equal distress of anxious and agitated slumber. It is sufficiently known that the condition of the mind in sleep is modified by the occurrences and impressions of the previous day. But we are not, perhaps, equally aware, that dreams cannot fail to have a certain degree of reciprocal influence upon our ideas and sensations during the waking state. The good or the bad day of the sick man, depends much upon his good or his bad night: and although in a less degree, the same circumstance affects alike those who are considered as in a condition of health. The due digestion of our food is scarcely more necessary to health, as it relates even to the body, and more especially as it concerns the mind, than the soundness and serenity of our slumbers. After a night of fancy-created tempest, it is not to be expected that we should at once regain our composure. The heaving of the billows continues for some time after the subsidence of the storm. The troubled vibrations survive the delusion which at first occasioned them. The nerves, for some time after the cause has ceased, retain the impression of disorder. The feelings with which we awake, determine, in a great measure, the character of the future day. Each day, indeed, may be

regarded as a miniature model of the whole of human life; in which its first seldom fails to give a cast and colour to its succeeding stages. The comfortable or opposite condition of our consciousness immediately subsequent upon sleep, for the most part indicates the degree in which we possess a sound and healthy state of constitution. With those who are in the unbroken vigour of life, the act of awakening is an act of enjoyment; every feeling is refreshed, and every faculty is in a manner regenerated; it is a new birth to a new world. But to the hypochondriacal invalid, or to the untuned and unstrung votary and victim of vicious or frivolous dissipation, the morning light is felt as an intruder. During his perturbed and restless process of convalescence from a diseased dream, he realises, to a certain extent, the well-pictured condition of the unhappy heroine of the Æneid.

"Revoluta toro est, oculisque errantibus alto,
Quæsivit coelo lucem, ingemuitque reperta."

ESSAY X.

INTEMPERANCE.

"LIVING fast," is a metaphorical phrase, which, more accurately perhaps than is in general imagined, expresses a literal fact. Whatever hurries the action of the corporeal functions must tend to abridge the period of their probable duration. As the wheel of a carriage performs a certain number of rotations before it arrives at its destined goal; so to the arteries of the human frame we may conceive that there is allotted only a certain number of pulsations before their vital energy is entirely exhausted. Extraordinary longevity has seldom been known to occur, except in persons of a remarkably tranquil and slow-paced circulation.

But if intemperance merely curtailed the number of our days, we should have comparatively little reason to find fault with its effects. The idea of "a short life and a merry one," is plausible enough, if it could be generally realized. But unfortunately, what

shortens existence is calculated also to make it melancholy. There is no process by which we can *distil* life, so as to separate from it all foul or heterogeneous matter, and leave nothing behind but drops of pure defecated happiness. If the contrary were the case, we should scarcely be disposed to blame the vital extravagance of the voluptuary, who, provided that his sun shine brilliant and unclouded as long as it continue above his head, cares not, although it should set at an earlier hour.

It is seldom that debauchery separates at once the thread of vitality. There occurs, for the most part, a wearisome and painful interval between the first loss of a capacity for enjoying life, and the period of its ultimate and entire extinction. This circumstance, it is to be presumed, is out of the consideration of those persons who, with a prodigality more extravagant than that of Cleopatra, dissolve the pearl of health in the goblet of intemperance. The slope towards the grave these victims of indiscretion find no easy descent. The scene is darkened long before the curtain falls. Having exhausted prematurely all that is delicious in the cup of life, they are obliged to swallow afterwards the bitter dregs. Death is the last, but not the worst result of intemperance.

Punishment, in some instances, treads almost instantly upon the heels of transgression; at others, with a more tardy, although an equally certain step, it follows the commission of moral irregularity. During the course of a long-protracted career of excess, the malignant power of alcohol, slow and insidious in its operation, is gnawing incessantly at the root; and often without spoiling the bloom, or seeming to impair the vigour of the frame, is clandestinely hastening the period of its inevitable destruction. There is no imprudence with regard to health that does not *tell:* and those are not unfrequently found to suffer in the event most essentially, who do not appear to suffer immediately from every individual act of indiscretion. The work of decay is, in such instances, constantly going on, although it never loudly indicate its advance by any forcible impression upon the senses.

A feeble constitution is, in general, more flexible than a vigorous one. From yielding more readily, it is not so soon broken by the repeated assaults of indiscretion. A disorder is, for the most part, violent in proportion to the stamina of the subject which it attacks. Strong men have energetic diseases. The puny valetudinarian seems to suffer less injury from indisposition, in consequence of having

been more used to it. His lingering, and scarcely more than semivital existence is often protracted beyond that of the more active, vivacious, and robust.

But it ought to be in the knowledge of the debauchee, that each attack of casual or return of periodical distemper, deducts something from the strength and structure of his frame. Some leaves fall from the tree of life every time that its trunk is shaken. It may thus be disrobed of its beauty, and made to betray the dreary nakedness of a far advanced autumn, long before that season could, in the regular course of nature, even have commenced.

The distinction, although incalculably important, is not sufficiently recognized betwixt stimulation and nutrition; between repairing the expenditure of the fuel by a supply of substantial matter, and urging unseasonably, or to an inordinate degree, the violence of the heat and the brilliancy of the flame.

The strongest liquors are the most weakening. In proportion to the power which the draught itself possesses, is that which it ultimately deducts from the person into whose stomach it is habitually received. In a state of ordinary health, and in many cases of disease, a generous diet may be safely and even

advantageously recommended. But, in diet, the generous ought to be distinguished from the stimulating, which latter is almost exclusively, but on account of its evil operation upon the frame, very improperly called *good* living. The indigent wretch, whose scanty fare is barely sufficient to supply the materials of existence, and the no-less-wretched debauchee, whose luxurious indulgence daily accelerates the period of its destruction, may both be said, with equal propriety, to *live hard.* Hilarity is not health, more especially when it has been roused by artificial means. The fire of intemperance often illuminates, at the very time that it is consuming, its victim. It is not until after the blaze of an electric corruscation, that its depredations are exposed.

Stimuli sometimes produce a kind of artificial genius, as well as vivacity. They lift a man's intellectual faculties, as well as his feelings of enjoyment, above their ordinary level. And if, by the same means, they could be kept for any length of time, in that state of exaltation, it might constitute something like a specious apology for having had recourse to them. But unfortunately, the excitement of the system can in no instance be urged above its accustomed and natural pitch, without this being succeeded by a correspondent degree of

depression. Like the fabulous stone of Sisyphus, it invariably begins to fall as soon as it has reached the summit; and the rapidity of its subsequent descent is almost invariably in proportion to the degree of its previous elevation. Genius, in this manner forcibly raised, may be compared to those fire-works, which, after having made a brilliant figure in the sky for a very short time, fall to the ground, and exhibit a miserable fragment, as the only relic of their preceding splendour.

It is no very uncommon thing, I believe, in this dissipated metropolis, for a woman of gaiety and fashion, previous to the reception of a party, to light up, by artificial means, her mind, as well as her rooms, that both may be shewn off to the best advantage. But the mental lustre which is thus kindled, goes out even sooner than that of the lamps: and the mistress of the entertainment often finds herself deserted by her spirits, long before her company is dispersed. In like manner, a man who is meditating a composition for the public, is often tempted to rouse the torpor, or to spur the inactivity of his faculties, by some temporary incentive. Gay, if I mistake not, in one of his letters observes, that "he must be a bold man who ventures to write without the help of wine." But, in general, it may

be remarked, that the cordials which an author may, on this account, be induced to take, are more likely to make himself, than his readers, satisfied with his productions. The good things which a person, under the influence of factitious exhilaration, may be stimulated to say, are often, in their effects, the very worst things that could possibly have escaped him. From a want of sufficient steadiness or discretion, sparks sometimes may fall from the torch of genius, by which it becomes a firebrand of mischief.

We are apt to complain of the heaviness and wearisomeness of volumes, where the pains which have been taken by the writer have not been sufficiently concealed. But the apparent result of excessive care is much to be preferred to the heedless effusion of a mind, over which it is too obvious that the judgment has in a great measure suspended its control. It is far better that a work should smell of the *lamp* than of the *cask*.

Intemperance is a resource especially to be dreaded by men of more than common acuteness of feeling and vivacity of imagination. Such persons are in general least able to submit to the ennui of vacancy, or patiently to bend under the leaden weight of incurable sorrow. On which account, they too fre-

quently endeavour to fill up a want of interest, or to disperse the cloud which darkens their horizon, by transient remedies that permanently ruin—by momentary reliefs, which tend only to destroy more effectually the last wreck of their comfort and constitution. Under certain circumstances, the motive is almost irresistible, to seek a repose from suffering in the opiate of intoxication; in that kind of sleep of the sensibility, out of which the awakening cannot fail to be attended with an accumulated horror. In the flood of intemperance, the afflicted inebriate does not drown, he only *dips* his sorrow, which will in general be found to rise again, with renovated vigour, from the transient immersion. Wine, during the treacherous truce to misery which it affords, dilapidates the structure, and undermines the very foundations, of happiness.

The habit of indulgence in wine, is not more pernicious, than it is obstinate and tenacious in its hold, when it has once fastened itself upon the constitution. It is not to be conquered by half measures: no compromise with it is allowable. The victory over it, in order to be permanent, must be perfect. As long as there lurks a relic of it in the frame, there is danger of a relapse of this moral malady, from which there seldom is, as from physical dis-

orders, a gradual convalescence. The man who has been the slave of intemperance, must renounce her altogether, or she will insensibly reassume her despotic power. With such a mistress, if he seriously mean to discard her, he must indulge himself in no dalliance or delay. He must not allow his lips a taste of her former fascination.

Webb, the celebrated walker, who was remarkable for vigour, both of body and mind, drank nothing but water. He was one day recommending his regimen to a friend who loved wine, and urged him with great earnestness, to quit a course of luxury, by which his health and his intellects would be equally destroyed. The gentleman appeared convinced, and told him "that he would conform to his counsel, though he thought he could not change his course of life at once, but would leave off strong liquors by degrees." "By degrees!" exclaims the other with indignation: "if you should unhappily fall into the fire, would you caution your servants to pull you out only by degrees?"

To reprobate the use of strong liquors altogether, may be considered as a kind of *prudery* in temperance; as carrying this virtue to an unnecessary and even preposterous extent. But prudery, it should be recollected,

consists not so much in the excess of a virtue as in the affectation of it. The real prudes in regimen are those who "strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel;" who would have great scruple perhaps in drinking a glass of wine, but who would not hesitate every day of their lives to ingurgitate, in a pharmaceutical shape, draughts composed principally of the worst and most concentrated spirits. Tinctures are medicinal drams. The habitual use of them can be regarded only as a more specious and decorous mode of intemperance. In this may be said to consist the privileged debauchery of many a nervous valetudinarian. A female of decorum and delicacy may, in this way, ruin, most effectually, her health, without, in the slightest degree, impairing her reputation. She may allay the qualms of the stomach, without the danger of occasioning any more disagreeable qualms of conscience.

It is possible for us to be intemperate in our eulogy of abstinence, and to violate moderation in our invectives against excess. But at the same time it is our duty to reflect, that what is evil in its essence, no reduction of quantity can convert into good. Vice retains its character throughout every gradation of its scale. In none of its descending degrees

can it produce any thing better than more diluted and mitigated mischief.

The crime of intemperance, it must, after all, be allowed, is, in a certain sense, a *relative* thing. Pope said, that more than one glass of wine was to him a debauch. There are multitudes who, without the intellectual vigour, labour under the corporeal imbecility of that celebrated poet, and who ought, therefore, to be equally nice in their notions of excess. The mischief, and of course the guilt of intemperance, varies considerably according to the different sex, as well as other circumstances of the individual. To the constitution of man, for instance, unnecessary incentive is injurious; to that of woman incalculably more so; and to that of a woman in a state of pregnancy, it involves the danger of two-fold destruction. Females, in that situation, are loaded with a double responsibility. By the abuse of inebriating liquors, they incur the risk of child murder, in addition to that of suicide. Or, if the infant of an intemperate mother so far escape as to be ushered alive into the world, little physical vigour or intellectual health can be expected from a human being, whose constitution has been made to know the influence of alcohol, before even it was exposed to that of air.

Men, who, from an equivocal felicity of constitution, are prevented, for a long time, from killing themselves by their excesses, are often the indirect means of destroying many of their fellow creatures. Such persons are referred to as living arguments, much stronger than any inanimate logic to the contrary, of the innocuous nature of intemperance. In their countenances we may sometimes read the indications of almost invulnerable health. It would be well, if also were inscribed there, in characters equally legible, the catalogue of convivial companions who have fallen victims to their treacherous example.

The unfortunate Burns at one time complained that those with whom he associated, were not satisfied with his conversation, luxurious as it must have been, unless he gave them also a slice of his constitution. By universal agreement, he must be condemned as unwisely lavish, who cuts up his vital principle for the entertainment of his friends. On the other hand, a person may be thought by some too grudgingly parsimonious of his fund of health, who would not lay out a little of it upon extraordinary occasions, in solemnizing, according to the usual form, the rites of hospitality, in heightening the warmth of sympathy, or in promoting the vivacity of convivial

intercourse. But that man's heart, it must be acknowledged, is of little value, which will not beat full and strong upon an empty stomach. An after-dinner kind of friendship, the expression of which acquires new ardour at every fresh filling of the glass, must be expected to evaporate with the fumes of the liquor which inspired it. The tide of liberal sentiment retires, in such cases, as soon as the animal spirits begin to ebb. The heat produced by alcohol ought not to be mistaken for the glow of virtue. He whose pitch of generosity or goodness is regulated by the state of his circulation, is entitled to little confidence or respect, in any of the important connections or social intercourses of life. The steadiness of a sober and substantial benevolence, is to be compared, only by way of contrast, to the precarious vicissitudes of that person's temper, with whom kindness is not a healthy habit, but a feverish paroxysm, and who, although constitutionally, or in the ordinary course of his life, sensual or selfish, may be occasionally wrought up, by factitious means, to the elevation of a jovial and fugitive philanthropy.

In connection with the subject of intemperance, it may be proper to remark, that there are cases in which extraordinary stimuli may be useful in deducting from the operation of

causes still more injurious, or more rapidly fatal in their effects. When bodily pain, for instance, has risen to a certain point, wine, brandy, or laudanum, although they should always with caution, may sometimes with propriety, be applied; as, by affording temporary relief, they spare for a time at least, the wear and tear that is produced by too acute and violent sensations. Such a seasonable use of them may be estimated upon the whole, as a saving to the constitution. It is likewise a doctrine of some importance, and which ought to be acted upon by the medical practitioner, that whenever a patient expresses a violent appetite, which, from his never having been known to experience it before, appears to have been created by his disease, it ought in general to be regarded as indicating what is subservient to its cure. As, in the lower animals, which are constitutionally deficient in reason, instinct supplies its place; so, during the period that the mental power in man, is in some measure impaired by bodily disorder, nature provides him also with a temporary instinct, which is still more sure in its dictates than the reasoning faculty.

We ought not to dismiss the subject of the present essay without remarking, that the best way of attempting to conquer in another the

vice of intemperance, especially when it has been induced, as is very frequently the case, by some permanent or weighty cause of sorrow, is to picture to the mind of the patient the agreeable change in his situation, which would be likely to arise from an alteration in his mode of life, rather than to present to him those deeper shades of misery which must successively ensue from the continuance of his ignominious servitude, and habits of fatal, although joyless, indulgence. The latter, though the more common mode of endeavouring to effect the reformation of an unfortunate inebriate, is in general calculated only to confirm and aggravate the evil, by sinking his spirits still lower, and, in some instances, perhaps converting the languor of dejection into the mental palsy of despair. It is a condition scarcely distinguishable from despair, which can alone account for the obstinacy with which many an intemperate person deliberately pursues his disastrous course. In his mind, the heavy foot of calamity has trampled out every spark of hope. He feels as if he could scarcely be in a more wretched, or is ever likely to be in a better condition. The exaggerated dimensions of his present misery, so completely fill his eye, as to prevent him from seeing any thing beyond it. He is

habitually in a state of agitation, or despondency, similar to that in which suicide is committed. His is only a more dilatory and dastardly mode of self destruction. He may be compared to a person who, in attempting to cut his throat, from a want of sufficient courage or decision, lacerates it for some time, before he completely perpetrates his purpose.

ON THE USE OF OPIUM.

Inebriety is not properly confined to the use of fermented liquors. The tipplers of laudanum are sots, although of another sort. There is something peculiarly plausible and seducing in this mode of fascinating the sensations. Opium does not, in general, as wine is apt to do, raise a tumult of the feelings, or involve the intellect in clouds; but acts more like oil poured upon a tumultuous sea, which tends to allay the agitation of the billows, and induces an agreeable stillness and tranquillity. Instead of lowering man to a level with the beasts, it often invests him, for a time, with the consciousness and at least fancied attributes of a superior being; but he is soon stripped of his shadowy and evanescent prerogative, and is made to suffer all the

horrors and humiliation of a fallen angel. The confessions of many a miserable hypochondriac, who has been in the habit of having recourse to opium for relief, justify this representation from the charge of caricature. Grievous as is the depression which takes place, as the second effect of fermented liquors, that which succeeds to the excitement produced by laudanum, is still more intolerable. It is of course a task less difficult to refrain from the former than the latter, when the latter has been, for many years, regularly applied to for temporary comfort or support, in a desertion or prostration of the spirits. The late Dr. Heberden was of opinion, that it is more easy to relinquish opium than wine : and therefore, in cases which may seem to require either the one or the other, he recommends the former in preference to the latter. My own comparatively contracted experience would incline me, in the same circumstances, to give different advice.

I have known only one case in which an inveterate opium-taker has had resolution enough to dispel the charm which had long bound him to its use. This patient was in the custom of employing it in that concentrated form of the drug, which has received the appellation of the black drop. The dreadful

sensations which he experienced for a considerable period, after having refrained from his wonted cordial, he was unable to express, any more than the gratitude which he felt towards his physician, for having strenuously and repeatedly, and at length successfully, urged him to an abstinence from so delusive and bewitching a poison.

When opium is employed as a remedy, in cases of merely physical disease, it may not be liable to the same objection; although, even in that class of maladies, it ought to be in general reserved for occasions of urgency or peril. When used for a length of time, without any considerable intervals, its bad effects upon the constitution will be found to accumulate, whilst its alleviating influence over troublesome and painful symptoms, becomes almost every day less observable.

PROSPERITY OFTEN A SOURCE OF INEBRIETY.

The meaning of the word, stimulus, is in general confined to fermented liquors, or to drugs, such as that which we have noticed in the preceding section. But it may, in a more comprehensive and philosophical sense, be made to include, not only what acts imme-

diately upon the stomach, but likewise a vast variety of moral causes, which operate more directly upon the passions or imagination. A man may be intoxicated by good news as well as by brandy. In this way prosperity not unfrequently proves as unwholesome as intemperance. Many have thus fallen victims of what has been considered their good fortune. A sudden accession of opulence or honour will often obscure the faculties as much as the fumes of drunkenness. A sudden gush of happiness has been known to occasion immediate death; and in other instances has given rise to what is incalculably worse, paroxysms which have terminated in incurable insanity. In the celebrated South Sea speculation, it was remarked that few lost their reason in consequence of the loss of their property, but that many were stimulated to madness by the too abrupt accumulation of enormous wealth. In other lotteries, as well as in the general lottery of life, dreadful effects have, perhaps, more frequently arisen from the prizes than the blanks. It has often happened, that an adventurer, in addition to the original price of his ticket, has paid for his chance-gotten wealth by a forfeiture of his reason. The same turn of the wheel which has raised him into affluence, has sunk him also into idiocy,

or, by no advantageous change, has transformed the mendicant into the maniac.

Adversity, that "tamer of the human breast," acts, on the other hand, as a salutary sedative upon the irritability of our frame; and may thus not only secure the subjugation of our passions, and protect the sanity of our intellect; but also may, in some instances, tend to protract life, almost in proportion as it deducts from the vivacity of its enjoyment.

ESSAY XI.

THE EXCESS OF ABSTINENCE INJURIOUS.

The author was once acquainted with a person, who, not from actual poverty, but from an hypochondriacal fear of its approach, denied himself, not merely the enjoyments, but likewise the wholesome comforts, and almost the meagre necessaries of existence. He insulated himself from convivial and all social intercourse, that he might avoid the expenses attending them; and refused what was almost essential to immediate sustenance, lest he might ultimately want the means of procuring it. He died, in fact, of extreme debility and emaciation of mind and body, from neither of them having been regularly provided with a sufficient quantity of its appropriate aliment. Temperance is moderation. In the proper sense, therefore, of the word, we may be intemperately abstemious, as well as intemperately luxurious and self-indulgent. That degree of privation which is unnatural or unrea-

sonable, proves no less destructive than superfluous and superabundant gratification. It is possible, indeed, by simple and almost innoxious means, to relieve ourselves from the burden of excess. But it is not possible long to bear with impunity, or even without a fatal result, the inconveniences of a scanty and deficient supply. The vital flame requires a perpetual renovation of fuel. The waste which is incessantly going on, of internal strength, must be as incessantly compensated by reinforcement from without. There is no interior and independent spring of action and support. Sound does not exist in the Eolian harp, but is produced merely by the breeze that passes over it. Life in like manner is not an essential part or ingredient of the human body, but is every moment generated by the external powers that are continually operating upon its sensible and delicate organization. Take away the action of air in the former instance, and that of all external stimuli in the latter, the harp will instantly become silent; and the body cease to exhibit any symptom or expression of vitality.

ESSAY XII.

MORBID AFFECTIONS OF THE ORGANS OF SENSE.

MORBID affections, of any individual organ of sense, for the most part originate from, although in some instances they produce a more general affection of, the nervous system.

Lord Orrery, in his account of the life and writings of Swift, observes, that this extraordinary man attributed to a surfeit, that giddiness in the head which sometimes for a longer, and sometimes for a shorter continuance, pursued him, until it seemed to complete its conquest, by rendering him the exact image of one of his own Struldbruggs; a miserable spectacle, devoid of every appearance of human nature, except the outward form. The noble author's own opinion, with regard to the origin of Swift's mental disease, is both more ingenious and more plausible. It may not be improper to quote his words.

"The absolute naturals are owing to a wrong formation of the brain, as to accident,

in their birth, or the dregs of fever, or other violent distempers. The last was the case of the Dean of St. Patrick's, according to the account sent me by his relations, Mr. Whiteway and Mr. Swift, neither of whom, I think, make the least mention of a *deafness* that from time to time attacked the Dean, and made him completely miserable. You will find him complaining of this misfortune in several parts of his writings, especially in the letters to Dr. Sheridan. Probably some internal pressure upon his brain, might first have affected the auditory nerves, and this by degrees have increased so as entirely to stop up that fountain of ideas which had before spread itself in the most diffusive and surprising manner."

Whatever may be the physiological mode of accounting for it, there is scarcely any symptom more frequently attendant upon maniacal or hypochondriacal complaints than a defect, excess, or some kind of derangement in the faculty of hearing. The celebrated Dr. Johnson complains at one time, that he could not hear the town clock distinctly; and at another states that he distinctly heard his mother, who had been dead many years, calling out "Sam." Cowper, in one of his letters to a friend, speaks thus of his infirmity; "I have a perpetual din in my head; and though I am

not deaf, hear nothing right, neither my own voice nor that of others. I am under a tub, from which tub accept my best love." There are few hypochondriacs that do not know, as well as Cowper, what it is to be under a tub; or who cannot perfectly understand and sympathise with this invalid in most other passages where he refers to his morbid feelings.

I once attended a nervous patient, who was afflicted with a noise in her head, which she compared to that of the guns firing at the Tower, in the neighbourhood of which she then resided.*

Mental impressions, we know, act upon the nervous system in general, but especially upon that part of it which is more immediately subservient to the function of vision. The appearance of the eye is in general a faithful index of the state of the mind. It has been remarked by those who have had peculiar opportunities of observing, that it is beyond even the cunning of maniacal hypocrisy to disguise the appropriate expression of the eye. The eye seems to be acted upon almost equally by all the passions, whether of a pleasurable

* One circumstance that makes me recollect this case is, that the lady referred to had a very fine head of hair: and upon my advising that her head should be shaved in order that a large blister might be applied to it, she objected to this sacrifice, and observed, that "she would rather trust to Providence."

or painful nature. It cannot then appear impossible, that highly-excited or long-protracted emotion, should, in some instances, more especially where there has previously existed any ocular debility or defect, act so powerfully as to impair the structure, and altogether to destroy the capacity of that organ.

I had occasion to peruse many years ago, a letter from a poor French emigrant, in which he gave a pitiable account of his situation; and, amongst other things, complained of so great a degree of opthalmic weakness, that "he was unable to shed even one tear for all that he had left behind him." This, no doubt, arose in part from the many tears which he had already shed. The heart is not so soon exhausted as the eye.

During my attendance upon the Finsbury Dispensary, a remarkable instance of dimness of sight occurred, that had for some time previously been gradually approaching towards absolute blindness, which, indeed, had actually taken place in one of the eyes. The patient first perceived the dimness the day after she had been frightened by witnessing a violent paroxysm of epilepsy, with which her husband had been attacked the preceding night. Since that time, she had herself become, although not in the least so before, ex-

tremely liable to fits; and was apt to fall down insensible upon occasions of the slightest degree of agitation or surprise. Her dimness of sight seemed to consist, not in an injured state of the eye, but in a debility of the nervous system in general, which *appeared* more particularly in that delicate and exquisitely-irritable part of it which is destined for the purposes of vision. The capacity of seeing with the eye that was not altogether blind, was intermittent, "going and coming," to use her own comparison, "like the sun, when a cloud passes over it." The patient had likewise been subject to a deafness, that might be traced to the same circumstance as gave rise to her opthalmic malady. Both symptoms had, in all probability, a common origin in nervous weakness or derangement.

Diseases of the eye, when they arise from mental influence, or from any disorder of the general health, which in a large proportion of cases, upon a strict examination, they will be found to do, are not to be cured by exterior and local applications, but principally, if not exclusively, by those means which are calculated to restore the strength, or to reform the character of the constitution. Trifling with, and teasing the eye with drops of lotion,* or

* Philosophy, I fear, does not warrant much faith in a lotion."
Johnson's Letters.

particles of unguent, is only betraying the patient into a flattering and faithless anticipation of recovery, without any chance of eradicating, or even reaching the root of, the disease.

In the washes for the eye, opium is, I believe, in general, if not the only efficient, at least the most important ingredient. It is said, that a late celebrated oculist, after more than forty years' trial of this substance as an application, which he conceived beneficial to the eye, found out at length that it had an injurious, rather than a salutary, operation upon that organ. It is a matter of equal surprise and regret, that a fact so important should, for so long a period, have escaped the discernment of any watchful and intelligent observer; or that it should not have before occurred to a man at all in the habit of reasoning or reflection, that opium, frequently administered for a course of time, either to the stomach or the eye, must tend, instead of strengthening, to impair its structure, and more permanently to disorder, instead of re-establishing its functions.

In my practice at the institution already mentioned, a considerable number of the cases, not only of opthalmia, but of acute and chronic head-ache, and other distressing nervous affections, seemed to have been occasioned

by the too strenuous and continued exertion of the optic nerve, in the minute operations of watch-making, an occupation which used to employ no small proportion of the mechanics in the neighbourhood of the Finsbury Dispensary. Inflammation, or debility of the eye, cannot but be produced by the excessive or unseasonable exercise of it: and the diseased state of that organ is likely to be communicated by sympathy to the brain in particular, and in many instances even to the whole nervous system. Hence, from an injury, often apparently unimportant, inflicted upon the delicate instrument of vision, hysteria, epilepsy, hypochondriasis, and even absolute and obstinate melancholy have not unfrequently originated.

One case of melancholy I well recollect, which was remarkable, from the patient not having been afflicted by it until after the deprivation of his sight. Reflection upon that loss could not fail, for a time, to have been itself a source of uneasy feelings, but the continuance and gradual aggravation of his depression, may be better accounted for, by his not being longer able, in consequence of this loss, to pursue his usual active employment, by its withdrawing from him the natural and exhilarating stimulus of light, and by its pre-

cluding altogether the possibility of that amusement and diversion of mind, which, in general, is so constantly derived from the contemplation of external objects; to which may be added, that by confining the sensibility within a smaller compass, it condensed and increased its force. Notwithstanding all this, we find that the blind, when in society, and engaged in conversation, are in general more cheerful than other men. But from their apparent, and even actual state of spirits, when exhilarated by social intercourse, we are by no means to infer, that their general condition of feeling is of the same character. Society is the proper sphere of their enjoyment. In proportion as the total obstruction of light shuts out the principal inlet to solitary amusement, they must feel delight in that which arises from a communication with their fellow-creatures. Conversation acts upon them as a dram; but when that stimulus is withdrawn, their depression is likely to be aggravated by the temporary elevation which it had induced. This, however, does not appear to be uniformly the case. I knew a man of a superior understanding, who, according to vulgar prejudice and phraseology, had the *misfortune* to be blind. The conversation happened to turn, in his presence, upon a person

who was subject, without any apparent cause, to a lowness of spirits, which, though many things had been tried, nothing had been able to remove. Upon the blind man being asked what *he* thought would be most likely to cure the malady of this mental invalid, he emphatically replied, "put out his eyes."

ESSAY XIII.

MENTAL DERANGEMENT NOT INDICATIVE OF CONSTITUTIONAL VIGOUR OF MIND.

An insane patient, who had been so for about a year, and had once before been afflicted in the same way, was, on account of his cries disturbing the neighbourhood, removed to an asylum at some distance from town. In consequence of circumstances attending his removal, he caught cold, which was immediately followed by symptoms of malignant sore throat and intermittent fever. These complaints were speedily relieved by the liberal administration of bark and wine: and the patient afterwards had no threatening of a relapse to his insanity. The result in this instance of tonic and stimulating remedies served somewhat to countenance an opinion which the author had long been inclined to entertain, that remedies of an invigorating character may be applied with safety, and even advantage, in certain cases of mental derangement.

Violence is not *strength.* In typhus fever, for instance, of which, in its advanced stage, delirium is the most prominent and alarming symptom, excessive debility constitutes the characteristic, if not even the essence of the disease. This delirium seldom comes on until the strength of the patient has arrived at almost its lowest point of reduction; better evidence can scarcely be required, that the former is produced by the latter: and, from analogy, it may not unfairly be inferred, that in other cases where phrenzy takes place, it may arise from a similar cause. This analogy might be corroborated by other maladies; hysteria, for instance, which, although it is most apt to occur in relaxed constitutions, and although its violent attacks are generally occasioned by circumstances immediately preceding them, that weaken or exhaust, often exhibits symptoms of morbid energy, much greater than the patient would have been capable of displaying in a state of the most perfect health and vigour.

These fugitive and abrupt exhibitions of morbid energy are very far from indicating genuine strength, which shews itself only in a capacity for regular and continued action. The human machinery is of so complicated a structure, and its motions, although various,

are all so connected and dependent upon each other, that a derangement in one part, may produce a temporary augmented action in the whole machine; in the same manner as the wheels of a watch, if the balance be removed, will run down with increased and inordinate force.

Mental diseases are well illustrated by those of the body. The paroxysms of mania are convulsions of the mind*; those of melancholia its paralysis. It is a common, but an ill-founded notion, that madness, in any of its modifications, arises for the most part from an excess of intellectual vigour: it is not in every case, but in many cases it is, a symptom of radical imbecility, or of premature decay.

* Mania in general bears a striking analogy to chorea. Constant, irregular, and involuntary motions of the body characterise the one: motions, precisely correspondent of the mind, constitute the other.

ESSAY XIV.

PHYSICAL MALADY THE OCCASION OF MENTAL DISORDER.

In the preceding essay, an instance was stated, in which derangement of mind seemed to have been cured by the opportune occurrence of a bodily complaint. I recollect a remarkable case, in which, on the other hand, a derangement of the body unequivocally produced a disorder of the understanding. This case occurred at one of those critical periods of life, at which the female sex are particularly liable to an anomalous variety of diseases, especially to those to which there is any hereditary or constitutional predisposition. The poor woman fancied that she saw her bed encompassed with a legion of devils, impatient to hurry her to eternal torments. She derided medicine, and obstinately and haughtily resisted its application. In a very short time, however, an alteration having taken place in her physical condition, she repented of her folly, and smiled at the men-

tion of her former terrors.* To so humiliating a degree do the floating particles of matter which surround, and still more those which enter into the interior composition of our frame, exhibit their influence in exciting, repressing, or disordering the phenomena of human intelligence! "Toi qui dans ta folie prends arrogamment le titre de *Roi de la nature;* toi qui mesures et la terre et les cieux; toi pour qui ta vanité s'imagine que le tout a été fait, parceque tu es intelligent, il ne faut qu'un leger accident, qu'une atome déplacée, pour te dégrader, pour te ravir cette intelligence, dont tu parois si fier."

By being so much in the habit of observing the influence of physical causes upon the mental powers and feelings, the practitioners of medicine are particularly in danger of leaning towards the doctrine of materialism. Speculations with regard to the nature of the vital or intelligent principle in man, are involved in so much obscurity, as to allow greater scope for the display of a fertile imagination,

* It may be here not out of place to remark, that in those cases in which mental derangement has originated from a physical state that exists only for a short period, or from the sudden impression of an unlooked-for calamity, an expectation of cure may, for the most part, be not unreasonably entertained. But when, on the other hand, by a life of debauchery, or the corroding operation of any chronic passion, the structure of the mind has been disorganized, there is in general little hope, from either medical or moral regimen, of an entire and permanent restoration.

than for the sober exercise of the reasoning faculty. The clouds in which this subject is enveloped, the rays of genius may illuminate, but cannot disperse. The unwarrantable boldness and decision with which many are apt to speak upon a question, which, from an incurable deficiency of data, admits of no satisfactory conclusion, argues a more than ordinary imbecility, rather than any superiority of understanding. Genuine intrepidity of every species, is naturally allied to modesty. There is a chaste and sober scepticism. When we profess that there is no moral evidence so immaculately clear, as to preclude all obscuration of doubt, we acknowledge merely the present imperfection and immaturity of our nature. A peremptory positiveness of opinion, as well as a rashness of action, is natural to the ardour and inexperience of youth; but diffidence gradually grows upon declining life. Unlimited dogmatism, in almost every case, affords suspicion of very limited information. In the degree in which our actual knowledge advances, we increase likewise our acquaintance with its comparative deficiency. As the circle of intellectual light expands, it widens proportionably the circumference of apparent darkness.

ESSAY XV.

ON THE ATMOSPHERE OF LONDON.

It is not so much the heat itself, as the various and accumulated pollution with which, in the warmer months, the atmosphere of the metropolis is impregnated, that tends to disorder and debilitate the constitution of its inhabitants.

> "It is not air: but floats a nauseous mass
> "Of all obscene, corrupt, offensive things."*

Happy are they, who, unconfined by professional or any other chains, find themselves at this season of the year, at liberty to enjoy the salutary fragrance of vegetation, or to seek refreshment and relief in the still more enlivening breezes and invigorating exhalations of the sea. London, which at other times serves as a kind of nucleus for an accumulated population, seems, in the latter part of sum-

* Armstrong.

mer, to exert a *centrifugal* force, by which are driven to a distance from it a large proportion of those inhabitants, who are not fastened to the spot upon which they reside, by the rivet of necessity, or some powerful local obligation. Men, whose personal freedom is not restricted within geographical limits, may gladly escape in the autumnal state of the atmosphere, from the perils, real or imaginary, of this crowded and artificially heated capital.

Pericula mille sævæ urbis.

An already immense and incessantly expanding city, on every side of which new streets are continually surprising the view, as rapid almost in their formation, as the sudden shootings of crystalization, it is fair to imagine, cannot be particularly favourable to the health of that mass of human existence which it contains. In London, when a man receives into his lungs a draught of air, he cannot be sure that it has not been in some other person's lungs before. This second-hand atmosphere cannot but be injurious to health, as the idea of it is offensive to the imagination. But it is a matter of at least doubtful speculation, how far those maladies which are attributed exclusively to the air of this great town, may not arise from the more noxious influ-

ence of its fashions and its habits. As the body varies little in its heat in all the vicissitudes of external temperature to which it may be exposed; so there is an internal power of resistance in the mind, which, when roused into action, is in most instances, sufficient to counteract the hostile agency of external causes. I have been acquainted with more than one instance of a female patient, who, at the time that she felt or fancied herself too feeble or enervated to walk across a room, could, without any sense of inconvenience or fatigue, *dance* the greater part of the night, with an agreeable partner. So remarkably does the stimulus of an enlivening and favourite amusement awaken the dormant energies of the animal fibre. Upon a similar principle, they are, for the most part, only the vacant and the idle, the "lillies of the valley that neither toil nor spin," who suffer in any considerable degree from the closeness of the air, or the alterations of the weather. One whose attention is constantly occupied, and whose powers are actively engaged, will be found to be, in a great measure, indifferent to the elevations and depressions of the barometer.

The gloomy month of November has been regarded, but perhaps with little justice, as peculiarly disposing to melancholy, and the fa-

vourite season of suicide. The dark hues of the mind are not in general reflected from the sky: and the preternaturally exalted excitement of mania, soars in general above atmospheric influence.

There are cases, indeed, in which the diseased apprehensions of an hypochondriac are relieved or aggravated by the changes of the weather, where, when the sun shines, even his mind seems to be irradiated by its influence, and scarcely a cloud can obscure the face of nature, without at the same time casting a melancholy shade over his speculations.

ESSAY XVI.

DYSPEPTIC AND HEPATIC DISEASES.

"We're not ourselves,
When nature being opprest, commands the mind
To suffer with the body." *Shakespeare.*

When disease originates from an improper indulgence in the more solid luxuries of the table, it ought, perhaps, in general, to be regarded as a condition of debility, occasioned in a great measure by fatigue of the corporeal powers. The epicure is not aware what hard work his stomach is obliged to undergo, in vainly struggling to incorporate the chaotic mass with which he has distended and oppressed it. It is possible to be tired with the labour of digestion, as well as with any other labour. The fibres connected with this process are wearied by the execution, or by the ineffectual endeavour to execute too heavy a task, in the same manner as the limbs are apt to be wearied by an extraordinary degree of pedestrian exertion. Gluttony is one of the most frequent conductors to the grave. When

even the table may be said to groan under the load of luxury, it is no wonder that the stomach also should feel the burden. The poorer orders of the community, fortunately for themselves, cannot afford to ruin their constitutions by the inordinate gratification of their appetites. It is one of the unenviable privileges of the comparatively wealthy, to be able to gormandize to their own destruction. Those who are not indigent, although they may escape many other trials, have often to undergo the severest trials of resolution.

The appetite is increased much beyond what is natural, by the excitement of miscellaneous and highly seasoned dishes, of which we can eat more, although we can digest less, than of plainer and less varied diet. The list of our viands would be sufficiently numerous, although we were to strike all poisons out of our bill of fare.

The observance of fasts is a wholesome form of superstition. The omission of them in the protestant calendar, was, perhaps, as it relates to health, an unfortunate result of the reformation. Though no longer regarded by us as religious institutions, it would be desirable that some of them at least should still be kept with a kind of sacred punctuality, as salutary intervals of abstinence, which give to the sto-

mach a periodical holiday, and afford an occasional respite from the daily drudgery of digestion.

I recollect a case of unsightly and unwieldy corpulence, which appeared gradually to have accumulated in consequence of gross feeding, connected with a life of sluggish inactivity. From an ignoble indulgence in habits of repletion and repose, this patient seemed ultimately to sink under the weight of abdominal oppression.

I have known several instances of dyspepsia, which might be in part accounted for from the state of the teeth, which were so decayed as to be unequal to the due performance of their appropriate office. When it is considered how much health and life itself depend upon the proper assimilation of our food; that such an assimilation must be preceded by an adequate digestion; and that this last process cannot well be effected without a previous and sufficient mastication, the functions of the teeth will seem to approach in importance, to that of the essential viscera. The wanton or unnecessary extraction of a tooth, ought to be avoided, not on account merely of the momentary pain of the operation, or of the appearance of decay and dilapidation it may give to the face, but because it involves the loss of

one of the instruments most intimately connected with the preservation of vigour, and even with the continuance of vitality. A circumstance which has almost constantly been observed to occur among the phenomena of an extraordinary and healthy old age, is the unimpaired integrity of the teeth. Their decay, which for the most part accompanies, cannot fail likewise to contribute to and accelerate that progressive reduction of substance and of strength that so generally characterises the more advanced stages of our existence.

Hepatic disease, although belonging more properly to a warmer climate, forms a large proportion in the class even of English maladies.

It were to be wished that the commencement of mischief in an organ so important as the liver, should invariably announce itself by some obtrusive and unequivocal symptom. But this essential viscus has often been found after death to be indurated, or otherwise injured, without any marked indication of disease during the life of the patient, except dyspepsia, or simple indigestion. Fortunately, however, in the greater number of cases, less doubtful signs of this disorder shew themselves before it is too late to avert its most

lamentable consequences. A sense of heaviness in the upper part of the abdomen, an obtuse pain below the ribs on the right side, a troublesome acidity or flatulence in the first passages, with an uneasiness when lying on the left side, are grounds of reasonable apprehension. When a *bon vivant*, who has indulged in those habits of life, which, in this country at least, are observed to be by far the most frequent exciting causes of liver complaints, begins to be conscious of these symptoms, no time ought to be lost in reforming his regimen, as well as in having recourse to the modes of recovery which are to be derived from the medical art. On a close interrogation of invalids with disorganized livers, we shall often discover that they can recollect the exact time since which they always found themselves lying on the right side, on awaking in the morning. It is probable that inward sensations during sleep, unconsciously inclined the patient to take this posture. We should, however, be aware that an equal ease in lying on either side, is no demonstration of the liver being in a sound condition. A sallowness of the skin, and particularly a light yellow colour of the forehead, may be classed among the signs of hepatic disorganization; so may likewise a pain under the right shoulder blade,

and what is particularly worthy of notice, a regular morning cough, followed by the ejection of a little froth from the mouth. The liver may sometimes be felt hard or enlarged. But there is no one, it is to be hoped, who would defer his apprehensions until they were forced upon him, by this palpable completion of evidence.

After all, a large proportion of what are in general called cases of disordered liver, may be more properly considered as cases of broken-up habits or worn-out stamina. The constitution is, perhaps, not so often affected in the first instance, by a disease of the liver, as the liver is by the previous disease or decay of the constitution. On this account it is not altogether by the remedies which seem to have a more particular operation upon this organ that its irregularities are to be corrected, or its obstructions to be removed; but in a great measure by those other medicines and methods of treatment that are calculated to restore lost tone to the general fibre, or to prop for a period the tottering pillars of the frame.

There are, no doubt, articles in the Materia Medica, which do not rank with tonics or corroborants, that often have a decidedly and eminently favourable operation in hepatic dis-

orders. Of these the most distinguished is calomel. But calomel, powerful and beneficial as it unquestionably is, when seasonably and discreetly administered, has sometimes, perhaps, been extolled with an intemperate zeal, and appears to have been employed in certain cases with too little reserve and discrimination. There is reason to believe, that many a patient, supposed to be hepatic, but in fact only dyspeptic, has fallen a martyr to a mercurial course; a course which has often been persisted in with a perseverance undaunted by the glaring depredation which it produced. Mercury would be more cautiously administered, if sufficient attention were paid, not only to its immediate and more apparent, but also to its ultimate and comparatively clandestine operation upon the human frame.

In the treatment of any malady, our object ought to be not merely to remove it, but to do so at as little expense as possible to the stamina of the patient. In too rudely eradicating a disease, there is danger lest we tear up a part of the constitution along with it. One of the most important circumstances that distinguish the honourable and reasoning practitioner from the empiric, is, that the former in his endeavour to rectify a temporary derangement, pays, at the same time, due regard to the per-

manent interests and resources of the constitution.

The inebriate, who, from having hardened or mutilated his hepatic organs, or one who, from having mangled his health by a different mode of indiscretion, has recourse to the remedial influence of mercury, ought to be aware that a poison may lurk under the medicine, which apparently promotes his cure; that although it prove ultimately successful in expelling the enemy, it often, during the conflict, lays waste the ground upon which it exercises its victorious power.

ESSAY XVII.

PALSY, IDIOCY, SPASMODIC AND CONVULSIVE AFFECTIONS.

In the formidable family of diseases, there is no individual more to be dreaded than palsy, unless, indeed, it extend its influence to the faculties of intellect, as well as to those of muscular exertion. Idiocy is a mournful object of contemplation. But the second childhood of the mind is less to be pitied than that of the body, when, in the latter case, the faculties of memory and reflection remain comparatively unimpaired.

I remember a young man, who, in consequence of having caught cold during a medicinal course, to which he had frequently before been under the necessity of submitting, was attacked with a palsy of the left side, which soon became apparently universal, except in the muscles about the neck and face. He presented the spectacle of a living head moving upon a motionless and apparently de-

ceased trunk. Death soon, however, completed its task; and liberated the sufferer from the horrors of consciousness.

More than one instance of paralysis, which I have met with, has seemed to consist in a gradual mouldering away of the constitution. The warm bath, which often proves one of the most efficacious cordials for decayed energies, was, in these cases, only of fugitive advantage. It may not be unworthy of remark, that in instances of advanced palsy, or even natural decline of strength, the immediate preliminary to, and proximate cause of, death, is very frequently an obstruction or an irreparable debility of the urinary organs, which does not, for the most part, originate so much from any local injury or partial disorganization, as from the general feebleness or impaired powers of the frame.

The application of blisters, which, in a state of torpor, or morbid sleep of the faculties, is so well calculated to rouse them into activity, is seldom of much avail, and often is positively injurious in cases of radical exhaustion or slowly-induced decay. The troublesome effect, however, which, under such circumstances, they are particularly apt to produce upon the urinary organs, may be obviated, or prevented from leading at least to any serious

consequence, by methods of relief which are of obvious and easy application.

Intemperance is among the most frequent causes of paralysis: but it is not always an intemperance in the use of intoxicating liquors, but sometimes in business requiring anxious and unseasonable exertions. One instance of paralysis I have known, in which the subject of the attack had through life been remarkably abstemious in his regimen; but had stretched and strained his faculties by a praise-worthy effort to secure to himself and his family the reasonable comforts of life, and a respectable independence. Labour is the lot of man, and perhaps his most genuine and lasting luxury. But although no ordinary error, it is possible to be industrious over-much. We may sometimes over-work the machine, although more frequently we allow its springs to rust for want of sufficient use. The patient above referred to, observed, that "it was very strange a man should be so ill, and not know it." The doctors whom he saw, and the medicines that he took, were to him almost the only indications of his labouring under disease. But this is by no means uncommon in paralytic affections, more especially when they extend their influence to the intellectual powers. The muscles of a man's face may be distorted by

this malady without his being aware of it, unless he be made so by the testimony of a friend, or the accidental reflection of a mirror. Unfortunately, or perhaps happily, there is in such cases no mirror for the mind; and as for a friend, we are seldom willing to acknowledge a man as such, who endeavours to convince us of our mental decline. The Bishop of Grenada, in Gil Blas, is a well drawn copy of a multitude of originals, which are continually occurring in actual life. Pride consoles us for the failure of reason: and in proportion as we forfeit our title to the respect of others, we are often apt to acquire an additional reverence for ourselves. A once-celebrated beauty, sees but too distinctly the reflection of her faded charms. But a man, the flower of whose genius is withered, for the most part remains ignorant of the melancholy alteration. The dim eye of dotage cannot discern its own decay. Hence arises the reluctance which men often shew to resign stations in society, to the duties of which they have long ceased to be equal. Next to the glory arising from a course of illustrious and profitable activity, is the dignity and the grace of a seasonable and voluntary retirement.

To the man of genius more especially, paralysis teaches an edifying lesson of humili-

ation. It is that unjustly envied class of men, which is omst conspicuously open to its attacks. A dazzling display of intellect menaces its premature extinction. Of a life signalized by mental exercise and splendor, palsy too frequently marks the melancholy conclusion. Marlborough, in his last years a victim to this dreadful malady, observed, to one admiring his portrait, "Yes; that *was* a great man;" such a remnant at least of understanding was still preserved as enabled him to recollect the brilliancy of his former career. How different are the feelings which are excited by beholding the ruins of a superannuated mind, from those with which we contemplate a dilapidated specimen of ancient architecture, more especially if the latter has been associated in our recollections, with examples of former heroism or devotion. The remaining fragments of a decayed abbey or a time-worn castle, strike us as venerable or sublime. But who ever heard of a venerable idiocy, or a sublime paralysis?

In an inveterate case of idiocy or of paralysis, affecting more particularly the intellect, which once came under my observation, I was particular in my enquiries with regard to the habits of living, professional employment, and

former character of the patient. I found that he was originally a man of more than ordinary acuteness and capacity for business; that he had been always abstemious in his diet; and had spent the greatest part of his life in an official situation, which required no unseasonable or unwholesome degree of labour, or any extraordinary anxiety or perturbation of mind. The mental imbecility seemed in this instance not to originate from any of its usual or natural sources. Upon further scrutiny, however, it came out that the patient had, for a considerable period, been in the habit of taking "patent drops," which produced a gradually progressive weakness, and ultimately an entire destruction of the intellectual and active powers.

About two years ago, I met with a remarkable case, which strikingly exemplified the connection and affinity that may exist between what are called "bilious affections" and those which belong more apparently and decidedly to the nervous system. The patient referred to, had, in consequence of a severe domestic privation, been seduced into habits of intemperance, which, for two years, seemed to have no effect but upon the liver, producing at nearly regular intervals of ten days, vomitings of bile, occasionally accompanied by a diarrhæa,

which, when combined with the former, of course assimilated the disease to the character of cholera. For the considerable period above-mentioned, his only apparent complaint was what, in popular and fashionable language, is called the "bile." After the lapse, however, of somewhat more than two years from the commencement of his intemperate habits, without having received any precautionary or prefatory intimation, he was surprized by a seizure which paralized one half of his body, dividing it longitudinally into two equal sections, the one dead to all the purposes of sensation or voluntary motion, the other retaining the functions and privileges of vitality, although in some measure, of course, clogged and impeded by the impotent and deceased half to which it was united. When I saw him last, he had remained three years in this truly melancholy state. At least, during that time, he had experienced no important or permanent amelioration, nor any evident tendency towards the recovery of his corporeal powers. His mind also seemed to have shared in the paralysis. This was more particularly obvious in the lapses of his recollection. His memory had been maimed by the same blow which had disabled one side of his body. His recollection with regard to things, did not seem

to be much impaired: but it was surprisingly so with regard to the denominations of persons or places. He has often forgotten the name of an intimate friend, at the very time that, with the most unaffected cordiality, he was shaking hands with him. Upon enquiry, it appeared that the pernicious habits of the patient were still persisted in; a circumstance which, alone, was sufficient to account for the uninterrupted continuance of his disorder.

In this case, nothing could be more evident than that the bilious symptoms with which he was first affected, and the nervous complaints which succeeded, both originated from one source: and this may give a hint to those who are much troubled with the *bile*, as it is called, especially when it has been occasioned by the same means as in the instance just stated, that unless they seasonably reform their regimen, they may be at no great distance from a paralytic seizure.

I recollect another case of palsy, which was rather remarkable, both from some of the symptoms which attended it, and from the manner in which the patient was restored. This person was perfectly sensible of every circumstance of the attack. He felt as if the ground were sinking from under his feet, and all the objects before him appeared to him

inverted. He suddenly became incapable of moving any limb or part of his body, while, at the same time, his recollection and other faculties of mind, were not, in any sensible degree, impaired. Instead of bleeding, or any other violent method of depletion being had recourse to, stimulants, both externally and internally, were administered. The patient was thus gradually aroused, and a resuscitation took place of those powers, which might perhaps have been irrecoverably extinguished by an ill-timed expenditure of the vital fluid.

Palsy, although often apparently sudden in its attacks, is, for the most part, a disease of gradual, and sometimes of clandestine growth. The circumstances, at least, which indicate the embryo existence of this malady in the constitution, are seldom understood, or sufficiently attended to. In the premature diminution of the capacity for either bodily or mental exertions, there may, in many cases, be a well-founded fear of ultimate paralysis, unless the tendency to it be in due time counteracted by the administration of appropriate remedies, or the relinquishment of pernicious habits. A decline of energy is often to be regarded as a commencement of palsy. But besides the general failure of the most important powers of life, there are many more particular cir-

cumstances which indicate the approach, if not the actual inroad of this formidable disease: such as, transitory torpor of some limb or muscle; dark spots floating or fixed before the eye; an occasional dimness of discernment; an indistinctness or confusion of memory. Fearful feelings are frequently experienced, such as deep-seated pains in the back part of the head, which give an idea of pressure, or of the firm and violent grasp of an iron hand; these symptoms are often attended by a singing in the ears, an awkward difficulty of motion or articulation, a diminished acuteness, although, in some rare cases, it is increased, in several or all of the senses. What is particularly remarkable, and by no means unfrequent before a fatal seizure, a numbness of one side will be felt occasionally for a little time, and then pass away. Dr. Beddoes speaks of a person, who once feeling in this manner whilst a tailor was employed about his person, remarked that "he should probably never want the suit of cloaths; as he distinctly felt Death taking measure of him for his shroud." This man afterwards died suddenly of palsy.

An acquaintance not merely with the actual symptoms of a disorder, but with the previous history also of the patient, is highly

interesting and instructive. The latter knowledge is often as necessary to the prevention, as the former is to the cure, of a disease. It is of importance to know, and to interpret rightly, those signs which portend the approach of any formidable malady, in order that our fear may be aroused in time, and that we may seasonably oppose to the morbid tendency, all the means of precaution and counteraction in our power. In some of the complaints which fall under the denomination of nervous, this is more particularly required.

Many of the symptoms which indicate a tendency to epilepsy, are the same as those by which palsy is preceded. But there are some which more particularly threaten the occurrence of the former disease. Upon minute enquiry of an epileptic patient, it will often appear that several years before the complete formation of an epileptic paroxysm, he had been liable to a drowsiness, which was not removed by actual sleep; to a frequently occurring sense of intoxication, without having taken any inebriating draught or drug; to an almost habitual unsteadiness upon the feet, and sometimes an absolute staggering; to an incessant restlessness and propensity to locomotion, and a continual disposition to change

his posture, or his place. This mobility extends likewise to the mind of the patient, so that a permanent direction of it towards one object, is an effort beyond his power. The attention is always on the wing. Not long before an actual paroxysm of epilepsy, a variety of uncomfortable feelings occur, such as flashes of light before the eyes, head-ache, violent rushings, as it would seem, of the blood towards the head, dizziness, dimness and confusion of vision, and a frequent sense of faintness, approaching to syncope. The patient often complains also, whilst the malady is pending, of being subject to transient desertions of the intellectual faculty, which seems to leave him for a few minutes, and then to return in a manner that he cannot account for.

It is but seldom that we meet with a person whose previous life affords all these admonitory hints of the kind of danger which may threaten his constitution: although it is perhaps for want of a scrutiny sufficiently strict, that we do not ascertain, in almost every instance of true epilepsy, the previous occurrence of most at least of these circumstances of awful presage. Happy are they, who, in such cases, have discernment enough to decypher, and resolution practically to apply the

characters of menace, before it is too late to avert the evil which they forebode.

When the early intimations of the progress either of approaching epilepsy or paralysis are not adverted to, and the tendency of the disease towards further encroachment is not, by a correction of diet, and general regulation of the passions and habits, carefully and vigorously resisted, the destiny of the unhappy patient is likely, in no long time, to be irretrievably fixed by one decisive blow, which, if it spare for a season, the principle of life, will blast at once, and obscure for ever, all the energies and capacities of intellect. The paralytic survivor of his reason, presents an object truly pitiable and humiliating; an unburied and respiring corpse, a soul-less image, a mockery of man! All is fled that was valuable in the interior: it is only the *shell* that remains. The empty casket serves merely as a memento of the jewel which it once contained.

During the year 1809, I met with two cases of disease arising from personal imprudence of a similar nature, but producing effects, in some respects different, upon the constitution.

One of them was an instance of fatuity, or extreme imbecility which had been gradually induced by a succession of epileptic paroxyms,

each of which took something away, until the mind was stripped altogether of its powers and endowments. At length, it presented a tablet from which was effaced nearly every impression of thought, or character of intellectual existence.

The other case was that of a young man, who, from an indiscreet exposure during a medicinal course, was suddenly seized with delirium, which, on account of an hereditary bias in that direction, seemed likely to degenerate into a chronic, and perhaps cureless aberration, instead of abolition of the mental powers. The mind, in the latter instance, shattered by disease, may be compared to the small fragments of a broken mirror, which retain the faculty of reflection, but in which, although the number of images is increased, there is no one entire and perfect representation.

I have known an instance of epilepsy, in which the disease seemed to have been at first occasioned by blows upon the head which a boy had received from his schoolmaster, and also from the hand of an unnatural parent. He had for some time previous to my seeing him, been in the habit, as a baker's servant, of carrying to great distances heavy loads of bread, the pressure of which upon his head,

was calculated to aggravate the disposition to his original disorder. After, he had in consequence of professional advice, been induced to relinquish this to him peculiarly unsuitable occupation, the fits occurred more rarely, and assumed a less alarming appearance.

It is not always easy to mark the distinction between different kinds of fits; hysteria, epilepsy, palsy, and apoplexy exhibit often strong features of consanguinity, and in practice are seldom, indeed, seen so distinct from each other, as in the definitions of nosology. Some years ago, I heard of an impressive instance of the fatality of impetuous passion. A farmer was intemperately indignant against a tenant, for some alteration which he had made in one of his houses; and in the crisis of his anger fell instantly dead at the feet of his innocent offender. The violence of his emotion exhausted the powers of vitality without the intervention of disease. The moment before the sudden rising of his rage, he was in the most perfect health, and had been so for a long time previous to it. Although at already an advanced age, his mode of living, and moderation in every thing but temper, had promised still a considerable protraction of comfortable life. Armstrong had such a case as is here

related in his view, in the following description:

> "But he, whom anger stings, drops, if he dies
> "At once, and rushes apoplectic down."*

It may be doubted, however, whether this fatal attack may be correctly considered as apoplectic; although that epithet is, in general, but certainly with too little discrimination, applied to almost every case of sudden death, which has not been obviously occasioned by external violence.

The physical injury arising from inordinate passion, separate from any mischievous act to which it may lead, has not been sufficiently the subject of medical attention. It operates upon the vital functions in a state of health, so as to produce disturbance and disease; and, in a state of actual disease, it has an alarming tendency to aggravate every symptom of disorder, and to increase the risk of a fatal termination. Anger, when it is not immediately dangerous, is at least unwholesome. It is painful, without any compensation of pleasure. A man must be altogether unwise, who would sacrifice his health to his enmity, and really injure himself, because he conceives that he has been injured by another.

* Art of Preserving Health.

Bath is a favourite place of refuge for the paralytic, whether made so by debauchery or any other cause of premature decay. But the fashionable springs of that crowded mart of health are not impregnated with the power of restoring lost energies, or of bringing back the tide of ebbing animation. The late Dr. Heberden, a physician eminent for the largeness of his experience and the correctness of his observations, remarks, that "These waters are neither in any way detrimental, nor of the least use, in palsy."

My experience with regard to the trial of the electric fluid in paralytic seizures arising from radical debility or decay, has in no instance proved favourable to its use. Although it may have the effect of awakening dormant sensation for a moment, it is not likely that the sudden operation of so fugitive an agent should produce any important or permanent impression upon a chronic and constitutional disorder. Electricity is of well-ascertained advantage in some diseases, where the cure is, in many instances, to be effected only by a violent agitation or movement of the general system: but, with regard to those morbid affections, or, to speak more correctly, those predispositions to morbid affection, which are either implanted before our birth, or have by

the influence of exterior situation, or inveterate habits, been gradually introduced into our frame, in addition to a vigilant and unceasing care to avoid any circumstances which may rouse the sleeping propensity to disease, little else is to be prescribed than to adopt that regimen and method of life, and occasionally the use of those pharmaceutical remedies which are calculated to preserve or restore the general health, and by a slow and almost imperceptible influence, to give additional vigor to the stamina of the constitution.

In the treatment of disease, it must appear desirable to effect the cure, when it is practicable, by means which act generally and impartially upon the body, rather than by those which operate, although not solely, yet more immediately, and with peculiar force, upon the delicate nerves and fibres of the stomach. The health, and of course comfort of man, depend in a principal degree, upon the due vigour of his powers of digestion, which, by the inordinate or unnecessary use of drugs, has in too many instances been gradually impaired, and at length irrecoverably destroyed. This is apt to be the case more especially with those fashionable hypochondriacs, who are continually having recourse to the doses of pharmacy, in order to relieve the *ennui* of in-

dolence, or to support the languor of an effeminate or enervated constitution. Such an existence as theirs may, out of courtesy, be called life: but it possesses none of life's privileges or its blessings.

Before concluding the present essay, it may be worth while to notice several additional cases of nervous or spasmodic disorder, which are somewhat remarkable, and capable, perhaps, of useful application.

A case of chorea once fell under my care, in a girl of nine years of age. Her limbs, during the time that she was awake, were in constant motion. So far from being able to stand still, she was scarcely able to stand at all. Every muscle of her face was strangely distorted, and her countenance wore an expression of singular horror. She frequently threw herself upon the floor, and beat her head violently against it, the effects of which were visible in the scars and contusions that remained. She would, in some of her paroxysms, thrust needles into the flesh of her arms, without appearing to receive pain from the wounds thus inflicted. She was in the habit of grasping, with an uncommon degree of eagerness and tenacity, any object which might happen to be within her reach. All these symptoms, when regarded in combination,

seemed to indicate a superabundance of sensorial power, which continually required to expend itself in muscular motion and voluntary exertion. It is many years since I heard of this patient; but it is not improbable that the reduction of excitability, which gradually takes place as life advances, might at length have restored her to that state of health, which no remedies were likely, at the time I knew her, completely and permanently to effect.

Dr. Parry observes, that "The mere sight of certain colours and liquids, slight noises, and various other trifling irritations, are highly distressing, and even productive of convulsions. These circumstances are very common concomitants of high degrees of what is called nervous affection. A lady whom I knew, could not bear to look at any thing of a scarlet colour; another could bear the sight of no light colour whatever; in consequence of which the papers and wainscot of her rooms were all tinged with a deep blue or green; and the light was modified by green blinds. If also at any time I visited her in white stockings, I was always at my entrance presented with a black silk apron, with which I was requested to cover these offensive garments. I have seen a third patient of this description, re-

peatedly thrown into violent convulsions by the noise produced by the falling of a pill-box, or even a black pin, on the floor."*

The source of convulsive affections for the most part consists in a morbid excess of irritability. Every nerve, in many of these cases, seems to have the exquisite sensibility of the optic. I have repeatedly been called upon to prescribe for one lady who belongs to this class of patients. She is subject to attacks of convulsion, accompanied with the most excruciating pain at the top of her head. These symptoms were the other day suddenly induced, by the servant letting fall the tea-board at the door of her chamber. She felt as if the brittle load had fallen upon her head. Her brain appeared to sympathize with the fracture of the porcelain. This person had recently undergone the pains of child-birth, without experiencing any injury, or a more than usual shock to her feelings. Such invalids are often operated upon most powerfully by the most feeble causes; serious sufferings they can bear with fortitude and composure. It is only trifles that overcome them.

A very singular and anomalous case of nervous affection I shall narrate in the words in

* See "Cases of Tetanus and Rabies Contagiosa," by Dr. Parry, of Bath.

which it was described by me many years ago, when I was Physician to the Finsbury Dispensary.

"A case equally remarkable and melancholy, has remained for a very long period under the care of the dispensary. It is that of a young woman, who, for many years past, has been confined to her bed in a state of nearly universal spasm. She lies rigid and motionless, with her eyes more than half closed, and every other organ of sense almost completely shut against external impression. The physician who attended her, by speaking in her ear as loud as it was possible for him to do, succeeded only so far as to produce a motion of the lips, that betrayed an ineffectual endeavour for utterance. It seems to be a case in which there is an absence of actual sensation, although by some violently exciting cause, the sensibility may, at times, be imperfectly awakened. Lying in such a state, with scarce any symptom of vitality, but a feeble respiration, she can be regarded as little more than a breathing corpse. It is possible that in this case, consciousness may still exist, although it be unable to appear, in consequence of the voluntary muscles usually employed to express it, refusing in the present instance to discharge their accustomed

office. It is to be hoped, however, that this is not actually the fact. Nothing is more terrific to the imagination than the idea of being buried alive: and what mode of being buried alive, can be conceived more truly horrible, than for the soul to be entombed in the body ?"*

* See Monthly Magazine, Medical Report, for June, 1800.

ESSAY XVIII.

THE HEREDITARY NATURE OF MADNESS.

"To be well born," is a circumstance of real importance, but not in the sense in which that expression is usually employed. The most substantial privileges of birth are not those which are confined to the descendants of noble ancestors.

The heir of a sound constitution has no right to regret the absence of any other patrimony. A man who has derived from the immediate authors of his being, vigorous and untainted stamina of mind as well as of body, enters upon the world with a sufficient foundation and ample materials for happiness. Very different is it with the progeny of those who are constitutionally diseased in any way, but more especially with the progeny of persons who are radically morbid in intellect. No wealth, which it is in the power of such parents to bequeath, can compensate the probability of evil which they entail upon the crea-

tures and the victims of their selfish indulgence or their criminal indiscretion.

Nothing can be more obvious, than that one who is aware of a decided bias in his own person towards mental derangement, ought to shun the chance of extending and of perpetuating, without any assignable limit, the ravages of so dreadful a calamity. No rites, however holy, can, under such circumstances, consecrate the conjugal union. In a case like this, marriage itself is a transgression of morality. A man who is so situated, in incurring the risk of becoming a parent, involves himself in a crime, which may not improbably project its lengthened shadow, a shadow too, which widens in proportion as it advances, over the intellect and the happiness of an indefinite succession of beings.

The ruffian who fires at the intended object of his plunder, takes away the life of him only at whom his aim is levelled. The bullet which penetrates the heart of the unfortunate victim, does in general no farther mischief. But he, who inflicts upon a single individual, the worse than deadly wound of insanity, knows not the numbers to which its venom may be communicated. He poisons a public stream out of which multitudes may drink.

he is the enemy, not of one man, but of mankind.

In cases of disease which are more strictly corporeal, the risk as well as evil of engendering them is smaller, not only because they are less serious in their character and consequences than mental maladies, but also, because they are more within the scope of management and possible counteraction.

Scrophula, for instance, although by the vulgar it has been emphatically denominated "the Evil," is less deserving of so fearful a title, than that complaint, which, not altogether without reason, has received the appellation of the "English Malady."; It should likewise be considered, that scrophula might, perhaps, in a majority of instances, be corrected in early life, by a suitable *education* of the muscular fibre, upon the chronic relaxation of which, affections of this nature may be supposed, in a great measure, to depend. Gout, likewise, may be considered as an hereditary complaint. But by temperance, exercise, and other means which are completely within our power, we may avert an impending attack, and even counteract, in some measure, if not altogether extirpate, an original tendency to this disease. But an hereditary propensity to *inflammation* and consequent *distortion* of the

mental faculties, will not yield, with equal readiness and certainty, to any skill in medicine, or discretion in diet. We may shun or protect ourselves against those vicissitudes of external temperature which develope the secret tendency to pulmonary complaints. But, we cannot with similar facility or success, attempt to elude the noxious influence of those vicissitudes of life, which are apt to awaken the dormant energies of madness. There are crushes of calamity which at once overwhelm, with an irresistible force, the sturdiest and most firmly established intellect. Such, however, are comparatively of rare occurrence. But who can uniformly escape those abrupt *interruptions*, or sudden *turnings* of fortune, by which a reason that is loosely seated may be suddenly displaced; or those lighter blows of affliction which are sufficient to overpower the feebleness of a tottering understanding?

When, as it sometimes happens, an hereditary disposition to this disease appears to sleep through one generation, it will often be found to awaken in the next, with even aggravated horrors. Should the child of a maniac escape his father's malady, the chance is small that the grand-child will be equally fortunate. The continued stream of insanity, although it occasionally conceal itself for a time, soon again

emerges to our view. Madness, like the electric fluid, runs through the whole length of the chain, although we may not observe it at every link.

After all, I would be understood to inculcate, that strictly speaking, it is the *tendency* only to insanity that is inherited; or, in other words, a greater facility than ordinary, to be acted upon by those external circumstances that are calculated to produce the disease.

It might not, perhaps, transgress the exactness of truth to assert, that the external circumstances and accidents of a man's life, and, what is more important, his physical and moral habits are calculated to have a greater efficacy than any seeds of disorder that may lie concealed in his original organization. That therefore one who, under a fear of radical predisposition, should, from early youth, adopt a counteracting regimen, as it relates both to the body and the mind, would often be in less danger of being affected by intellectual malady, than another, who, confiding in a constitutional immunity from this form of disease, should continually and carelessly expose himself to its predisposing and exciting causes.

ESSAY XIX.

ON OLD AGE.

CORNARO, in his celebrated little treatise on health and long life, introduces one of his paragraphs with this absurdity: "since nothing is more advantageous to man upon earth, than to live long."

By a person of an unimpaired reason, longevity can never be regarded as an object of ambition or desire. The wick of life emits, in proportion as it lengthens, a more dim and languid flame. Man, in completing the orbit of his terrestrial existence, returns to that point of imbecility from which he originally set out. But, between his first and second childhood, there is a difference no less important, than between the morning and the evening twilight. The equivocal obscurity of the former, it is not unreasonable to hope, may be succeeded by a clear and even a brilliant day. But of the latter, the faint and imperfect shadows must be expected to grow gradually

deeper and larger, until they are lost in the complete darkness of night.

During the periods of youth and maturity, a man has a regular revenue of health and vigour, which he is at liberty to consume without infringing upon the capital of his constitution. But in old age he is reduced to the necessity of living upon his principal; in consequence, every day his stock of vitality grows sensibly loss. His power of resistance against the agents of further decay, diminishes in proportion to the degree of decay which has already taken place. The pressure of years often seems to produce a curvature even of the understanding, which, when it has been bent from this cause, cannot, any more than the body, restore itself to the upright attitude.

An old man is no longer susceptible of new ideas. His mind lives altogether upon the past. Hence, in a great measure, arises the extreme difficulty, amounting, in many instances, to an impossibility, of removing mental malady when it occurs at a very advanced period of life. In the instance of an aged melancholic, we might as well almost attempt to change the complexion of his grey hairs, as to brighten the dark hues of his imagination. Grief hangs loosely about early youth: but, in more advanced life, it often adheres so close-

ly as to become almost a part of the moral organization. In the one case, sorrow resembles the dress of civilized life, which is laid aside without much difficulty; in the other, it may be compared to the scars with which savage nations are used to adorn themselves, and which are so deeply engraven in the substance of the body, as to defy any attempt at obliteration. A radical cure has scarcely ever been effected, in the instance of a hoary-headed maniac. His mind, when shattered, is like broken porcelain, the fragments of which may be so carefully put together, as to give it the appearance of being entire; but which is in danger of falling to pieces again upon the slightest touch, or upon even a more than ordinary vibration of the surrounding atmosphere. The disorder of the faculties, in such a case, is not likely to terminate except in their complete extinction. The agitation of mind can be expected to subside only in the calm of death, or in the inoffensive quiet of idiocy or idea-less superannuation.

ARTIFICIAL OR PREMATURE OLD AGE.

There are few men that can be strictly said to die a natural death. And there are fewer

still that allow themselves to live to a natural old age. An unseasonable senility grows out of the hot bed of juvenile licentiousness. Spendthrifts of constitution, by an inconsiderate waste of their hereditary fund of vitality, bring upon themselves an early incompetency and want of healthy relish for the pleasures as well as for the business of the world. It is thus that man decays before he has had time to ripen. The foundation is undermined, before the superstructure is nearly finished. The helplessness of childhood is, by means of excesses, brought almost into contact with the imbecility of age; so as to leave scarcely any interval for that period of manly maturity, that combination of intellectual with physical vigour, which principally constitutes the value, and alone exhibits the dignity of human nature. In such an existence there is no noon. The sun of life, instead of completing the convexity of its course, soon after the first shew of its light, relapses beneath the verge of the horizon.

Veterans in vice often appear to become virtuous, in consequence of having lost the capacity for licentious indulgence. On the other hand, it not unfrequently happens, that, "when the bodily organs have lost their freshness, the imagination its radiant hues, and the nerves

their once exquisite faculty of thrilling with delight through all their filaments ;" the dull debauchee, the vapid voluptuary, still persists, from the inveteracy of custom, in a course which he has long ceased to pursue from the impetuosity of instinct. Habits are more invincible than passions. Nothing can be more truly wretched as well as contemptible, than a state in which impotency is still instigated by the torment of desire, and where, although the fire of masculine emotion be extinct, even the ashes of the constitution continue to glow with unhallowed and ineffectual heat.

ESSAY XX.

LUNATIC ASYLUMS.

"I am not mad! I have been imprisoned for mad—scourged for mad—banished for mad:—but mad I am not." *Guy Mannering.*

THE mind of a man may be bruised or broken as well as any limb of his body: and the injury, when it occurs, is not so easy of reparation. A morbidly tumid fancy cannot, like many other swellings, be made speedily to subside. An intellect out of joint will not allow of being set with the same facility as a dislocated bone: nor can the deep and often hidden ulcerations which arise from mental distemper or disorganization, be healed with the same readinesss or certainty as those more palpable sores which take place on the surface of the body. On this account it is, that so close and vigilant an observation is required in watching the incessantly varying move-

ments, and in inspecting the too exquisitely delicate texture of a disordered and highly-wrought imagination.

One thing at least is certain, that, in the management of such maladies, tenderness is better than torture, kindness more effectual than constraint. Blows, and the straight-waistcoat, are often, it is to be feared, too hastily employed. It takes less trouble to fetter by means of cords, than by the assiduities of sympathy or affection. Nothing has a more favourable and controuling influence over one who is disposed to, or actually affected with, melancholy, or mania, than an exhibition of friendship or philanthropy; excepting indeed in such cases, and in that state of the disease, in which the mind has been hardened and almost brutalized, by having already been the subject of coarse and humiliating treatment. Where a constitutional inclination towards insanity exists, there is in general to be observed a more than ordinary susceptibility of resentment at any act that offers itself in the shape of an injury or an insult.

Hence it will not appear surprising, that as soon as an unfortunate victim has been enclosed within the awful barriers of either the public, or the minor and more clandestine

Bethlems, the destiny of his reason should, in a large proportion of cases, be irretrievably fixed. The idea that he is supposed to be insane, is almost of itself sufficient to make him so: and when such a mode of management is used with men, as ought not to be, although it too generally is, applied even to brutes, can we wonder if it should often, in a person of more than ordinary irritability, produce, or at any rate, accelerate the last and incurable form of that disease, to which at first perhaps there was only a delusive semblance, or merely an incipient approximation?

Tasso, the celebrated poet, was once instigated by the violence of an amorous impulse, to embrace a beautiful woman in the presence of her brother, who, happening to be a man of rank and power, punished this poetic license by locking up the offender in a receptacle for lunatics. It is said that by this confinement he was made mad, who was before only too impetuous or indiscreet.

That a wretched being, who has been for some time confined in a receptacle for lunatics, is actually insane, can no more prove that he was so, when he first entered it, than a person's being affected with fever in the black

hole of Calcutta, is an evidence of his having previously laboured under febrile infection.

Bakewell, the late celebrated agriculturist, was accustomed to conquer the insubordination, or any vicious irregularity of his horses, not by the ordinary routine of whipping and spurring, but by the milder and more effectual method of kindness and caresses. And it is worthy of being remembered and practically applied, that, although the human has higher faculties than other animals, they have still many sympathies in common. There are certain laws and feelings which regulate and govern alike every class and order of animated existence.

In order to obtain a salutary influence over the wanderings of a maniac, we must first secure his confidence. This cannot be done, without behaving towards him with a delicacy due to his unfortunate state, which for the most part ought to be regarded not as an abolition, but as a suspension merely of the rational faculties. Lord Chesterfield speaks, in one of his humourous essays, of a lady whose reputation was not lost, but was only *mislaid*. In like manner, instead of saying of a man, that he has lost his senses, we should in many instances more correctly perhaps say, that they

were mislaid. Derangement is not to be confounded with destruction; we must not mistake a cloud for night, or fancy, because the sun of reason is obscured, that it will never again enliven or illuminate with its beams. There is ground to apprehend that fugitive folly is too often converted into a fixed and settled phrenzy; a transient guest into an irremovable tenant of the mind; an occasional and accidental aberration of intellect, into a confirmed and inveterate habit of dereliction, by a premature and too precipitate adoption of measures and methods of management, which sometimes, indeed, are necessary, but which are so only in cases of extreme and ultimate desperation.

A heavy responsibility presses upon those who preside or officiate in the asylums of lunacy. Little is it known how much injustice is committed, and how much useless and wantonly inflicted misery is endured in those infirmaries for disordered, or rather cemeteries for deceased intellect. Instead of trampling upon, we ought to cherish, and by the most delicate and anxious care, strive to nurse into a clearer and brighter flame the still glimmering embers of a nearly-extinguished mind.

It is by no means the object of these remarks to depreciate the value of institutions which, under a judicious and merciful superintendance, might be made essentially conducive to the protection of lunatics themselves, as well as to that of others, who would else be continually exposed to their violence and caprice, But it is to be feared, that many have been condemned to a state of insulation from all rational and sympathising intercourse, before the necessity has occurred for so severe a lot. Diseased members have been amputated from the trunk of society, before they have become so incurable or unsound as absolutely to require separation. Many of the depots for the captivity of intellectual invalids may be regarded only as nurseries for, and manufactories of, madness; magazines or reservoirs of lunacy, from which is issued, from time to time, a sufficient supply for perpetuating and extending this formidable disease,—a disease which is not to be remedied by stripes or strait-waistcoats, by imprisonment or impoverishment, but by an unwearied tenderness, and by an unceasing and anxious superintendance.

The grand council of the country ought to be aroused to a critical and inquisitorial scru-

tiny into the arcana of our medical prisons, into our *slaughter-houses* for the destruction and mutilation of the human mind.*

* Vide Monthly Magazine. Medical Report for February, 1808.

Not only the last paragraph, but nearly every sentence of this Essay, is a repetition of what I had published, many years ago, in the above periodical work. Those statements and observations with regard to mad-houses, which were then reprobated either as altogether groundless, or as unpardonably exaggerated, have since been remarkably confirmed to the fullest extent, by the parliamentary reports which have lately appeared on the same subject, and which have so deeply interested every humane and intelligent individual in the empire.

ESSAY XXI.

THE IMPORTANCE OF COUNTERACTING THE TENDENCY TO MENTAL DISEASE.

"De toutes choses les naissances sont foibles et tendres. Pourtant faut-il avoir les yeux ouverts aux commencements, car comme alors en sa petitesse on ne decouvre pas le danger,—quand il est accru, on ne'en decouvre plus de remede."

Montaigne.

THE commencement of morbid irritation is seldom sufficiently watched and corrected. Almost every nervous affection may be considered as an approach to insanity. The coming on of melancholy, like that of the evening darkness, is scarcely perceptible in its encroachments. The gradual establishment of intellectual hallucination is traced with admirable fidelity in the following delineation of Dr. Johnson.

"Some particular train of ideas fixes upon the mind. All other intellectual gratifications are rejected. The mind, in weariness or leisure, recurs constantly to the favourite conception; and feasts on the luscious falsehood,

whenever it is offended with the bitterness of truth. By degrees, the reign of fancy is confirmed. She grows first imperious, and in time despotic. These fictions begin to operate as realities. False opinions fasten upon the mind: and life passes in dreams of rapture or of anguish."*

There are floating atoms or minute embryos of insanity which cannot be discerned by the naked or uneducated eye. One of the most important requisites in the character of a Physician, is the capacity of detecting the earliest rudiments, and the scarcely-formed filaments of disease; so that by timely care and well-adapted means, he may prevent them from growing and collecting into a more palpable and substantial form.

I well recollect an interesting case of a person whose mind had received the highest culture, and who was endowed with an exquisite sensibility. The disease was, in his instance, of gradual, almost of imperceptible growth. The shadow of melancholy slowly advanced until it had produced a total eclipse of the understanding.

The importance cannot be too deeply impressed, of counteracting a *tendency* to this

* Rasselas.

disease. When it is fully formed and established by habit, our efforts will seldom prove of any avail. We might in that case as well almost attempt, by the spell of a professional recipe, to break asunder the chain which binds the body of a maniac to the floor, as the strong concatenation of thought which is still more closely riveted around his mind. In a derangement of the intellectual faculties, the first moment of its appearance is often the only one at which it may be combated with any certainty of success. The smallest speck on the edge of the horizon ought to be regarded with awe, as portending, if not speedily dispersed, an universal and impenetrable gloom.

It is not in the adult and fully-established form of insanity, that we can best learn its origin, or become thoroughly acquainted with its character. A mad-house is, on this account, an insufficient school for acquiring an intimate and correct knowledge of madness. No man, by studying merely a *hortus siccus*, would think of making himself a botanist. In order to lay any claim to that title, he must contemplate plants, not as they are pinned down in a port-folio, but at the period when they first emerge from the soil, and at every successive stage of their history and growth.

LUCID INTERVALS.

It is astonishing with what management and sagacity a maniac, when he is impelled by a sufficient motive, can keep the secret of his madness. I was once very nearly imposed upon by a patient of this description, who, by means of extraordinary art and exertion, had effected his escape over the barriers of confinement, and, in order to elude pursuit, solicited professional evidence in favour of his sanity. A particular train of thought, which for a time lay silent and secret within the recesses of his mind, all at once, by an accidental touch kindled into an unexpected and terrible explosion.

Lucid intervals are subjects deserving of the very particular study of the legal, as well as the medical profession. There are, in fact, few cases of mania, or melancholy, where the light of reason does not now and then shine between the clouds. In fevers of the mind, as well as those of the body, there occur frequent intermissions. But the mere interruption of a disorder is not to be mistaken for its cure, or its ultimate conclusion. Little stress ought to be laid upon those occasional and uncertain disentanglements of intellect, in which

the patient is for a time only extricated from the labyrinth of his morbid hallucinations. Madmen may shew, at starts, more sense than ordinary men. There is perhaps as much genius confined, as at large; and he who should court corruscations of talent, might be as likely to meet with them in a receptacle for lunatics, as in almost any other theatre of intellectual exhibition. But the flashes of wit betray too often the ruins of wisdom: and the mind which is conspicuous for the brilliancy, will frequently be found deficient in the steadiness, of its lustre.

ESSAY XXII.

BLEEDING.

Pneumonia, or pleurisy, is one of the few complaints in which an early and often a repeated application of the lancet is in general of the most urgent and indispensable necessity. If blood-letting be had recourse to at a proper period, and to a sufficient extent, which of course must vary according to the symptoms of the disease, and the constitutional habit of the patient, it will seldom fail, without much other aid, to remove a disease that otherwise might, and not unfrequently does, in a very short time, terminate in death. But it is a matter of serious and essential importance, to discriminate between genuine pleurisy and those pains, difficulty of breathing, and other associated symptoms, which arise, not from inflamation or too high excitement, but merely from nervous weakness and depression. In the latter case, venæsection

is as injurious to health, as in the former it is necessary to the preservation of life. To draw blood from a nervous patient, is, in many instances, like loosening the chords of a musical instrument, whose tones are already defective from want of sufficient tension.

Pain in any part is too generally considered as an evidence of inflammation; whereas it more frequently arises from the difficulty with which a debilitated or obstructed organ performs its accustomed and salutary office.

In modern times, inflammatory fever, or a habit indicating an excess of general excitement, very rarely indeed occurs. I have never met with an instance of proper fever which appeared to me to justify the opening of a vein.* Local inflammation is so far from operating invariably as an argument for, may constitute, in some instances, even an objection against the application of the lancet. Local

* It would reconcile many of the apparent oppositions and incongruities which occur in the works of those who have written upon the diseases of the human frame at different stages of its history, to consider, that man, the subject upon which they write, has, during the intervening periods, undergone considerable changes in his physical as well as in his moral constitution. Sydenham was eminently judicious and successful in his time. But the physician, who, in this comparatively enervated and puny age, was, in the exercise of his profession, to imitate, without modification or reserve, the bold and energetic style of practice adopted by that great master of his art, would not be unlikely, by the empirical rashness of his conduct, to injure, if not destroy, in almost every instance in which he ventured to prescribe.

inflammation is often only a partial accumulation of that excitement which ought to be equally distributed through the whole frame. The frame in general is, of course, likely in such cases to be proportionably impoverished, and will of consequence, be rendered less able to bear any artificial or extraordinary evacuation.

Those hæmorrhages which are so common to the nervous, more especially of the other sex, rarely indicate the propriety of artificial blood-letting, although in such cases, it is often employed. Hæmorrhage may be occasioned either by too copious a production of the vital fluid; by some partial accumulation of it; or by the laxity or tenuity of the vessels which contain it. In the present condition of the human frame, enfeebled as it is, by every species of luxury and effeminacy, this, as well as most other modes of physical derangement, originate, in a majority of cases, from a deficiency of vigour. Hæmorrhage seldom, comparatively, arises from a more than ordinary mass or impetus of blood; but in general from a want of that contractile power in the artery which is necessary to resist its tendency to immoderate effusion.

True pleurisy, as I have already stated, in most cases, imperiously demands immediate

venæsection. But with true pleurisy are apt to be confounded those pulmonary or asthmatic affections, which, for the most part, commence their attacks in advanced life, and which are not attended with any active inflammation, but arise merely from the worn-out condition of superannuated lungs. The difficulty of breathing, pain, and oppressed circulation, will seldom, in such instances, justify the subtraction of blood. We cannot be too fearful and tender in deducting from an old man any portion, however small, of that fluid, the remaining quantity of which is barely sufficient to support the vigour, or even the vitality of his enfeebled and declining frame. I have lately had an opportunity of witnessing more than one case, in which copious and repeated bleeding relieved an asthmatic old man from most other symptoms of disease; but at the same time left a degree of weakness from which he was not able to recover, and which was, in no long time, fatal in its result. Bleeding may, in some instances, produce a temporary alleviation of pain, only by inducing that debility of the general powers of the system, which, of course, deducts in a proportionate degree from the particular power of sensation.

The fatal result of real or apparent apoplexy, may sometimes arise from the manner in which it is treated. At the sight of a person in any kind of fit, the surgeon almost instinctively pulls out his lancet. Sometimes, even after the paroxysm has subsided, bleeding is had recourse to from a vague and empirical notion of its indiscriminate utility in this class of diseases. Less slaughter, I am convinced, has been effected by the sword, than by the lancet,—that minute instrument of mighty mischief!

From the period of life at which apoplectic and paralytic seizures are most apt to take place; from the enfeebling habits or diseases which in a large proportion of cases have preceded and prepared the way for their occurrence; and from the variety of circumstances indicating a worn and debilitated frame, which almost invariably accompany such attacks, it would seem natural to infer, that although the habitual use of stimuli may, in many instances, have helped to bring on this deplorable state of the constitution; a recovery from it, when it is practicable, can be effected only by their temporary application; and that, on the contrary, to have recourse, in so extreme a case of actual weakness, attended by a partial suspension of the functions of life, to the most

direct and powerful means of producing still further weakness and exhaustion, is, in effect, forcibly to overwhelm the sinking, and to trample upon the already prostrate.

My opinions upon this subject cannot be better sanctioned than by the authority of the late venerable Dr. Heberden, whose own words relative to a point so important, it may not be improper to make use of: "Etenim ju-
"niores et robusti non tam obnoxii sunt his
"morbis (apoplexy and palsy) quam pueri in-
"firmi, et effæti senes, in quibus vires nutri-
"endæ sunt et excitandæ, potius quam minu-
"endæ; dum multa sanguinis profusio, quem-
"admodum in submersis fieri dicitur, omnes
"naturæ conatus reprimit, et tenues vitæ re-
"liquias penitus extinguit. Quod si consula-
"mus experientiam, hæc, quantum possum
"judicare, testatur, copiosas sanguinis mis-
"siones sæpe nocuisse, easque in non paucis
"ægrotis, tutius fuisse, prætermissas."*

* The commentaries of Dr. Heberden, from which the above quotation has been made, comprise the scanty but invaluable results of a long life of extensive and diligent, as well as of correct and sagacious observation. That experienced and highly-accomplished practitioner, in this his literary legacy to the public, has communicated a large portion of what is at present known in the practical part of medicine:—a science, which, after the lapse of so many ages, may still be regarded as at a great distance from its maturity.

"When will thy long minority expire?"

Young.

In the preceding observations, it is far from my intention to inculcate that bleeding is not, in many instances of apoplexy or palsy, absolutely necessary to the life of the patient; but, that on the other hand, there are also many instances in which it may with more propriety be omitted, and that such diseases would not be so generally fatal, if the lancet were more cautiously and less indiscriminately employed.

It should be remarked, however, that weakness is not always an insuperable argument against the propriety of bleeding. The arteries, whose contractile power has, from any cause, been considerably impaired, are sometimes not able, without difficulty and febrile uneasiness, to propel even their usual quantity of blood. Under such circumstances, they ought, perhaps, to be in some measure relieved from their burden by timely and moderate evacuation. The existence of a morbid plethora is not to be ascertained merely by the absolute mass of fluid, or even by its proportion to the diameter of the vessels which it occupies; but likewise by a circumstance which is not, perhaps, sufficiently attended to; the less or greater degree of power which, in any particular instance, the heart and arteries may possess, of urging with unintermitting constancy, the tide of sanguineous circulation.

By most practitioners it is imagined, that what is called local bleeding, is preferable, in many cases, to that which is called general. In apoplexy, for instance, the pressure upon the brain is supposed to be relieved more effectually, as well as more expeditiously, by an operation on a vessel in the neck, than on one in either of the arms; in pleurisy, pthisis, or catarrh, by cupping and leeches in the breast or side affected, than any where else. When more attentively considered, however, the matter will appear, perhaps, in a somewhat different light. There is no such thing, in fact, as *local* bleeding, if by that term be meant an evacuation from one part of the vascular system, without its affecting in the same proportion every other. When a fluid is in a constant state of circulation through a round of vessels, it can be of little consequence from what part of that circle any quantity of it is deducted. If we drink out of a canal, through which flows a free and uninterrupted stream, in whatever place the draught be taken, it must equally affect the level of its surface and the impetuosity of its course.

ESSAY XXIII.

PHARMACY.

PHARMACY may be abused; but it is not therefore to be despised. Nature has provided physic to relieve the ailments, as it has food for the nourishment and support, of man. The suitable and seasonable use of the one is almost as necessary in order to rectify occasional deviations from health, as that of the other is for its ordinary maintenance and preservation. There are, however, several seeming abuses of pharmacy, to which I shall here venture to advert, although, I hope, with due reverence towards established usage.

In cases of convalescence from acute disease, to prolong a medicinal course, for the sake merely of still further strengthening, after the natural desire has returned for wholesome and substantial food, is a practice that appears to me contrary to common sense, although it be not altogether so to ordinary routine. Under such circumstances, "to throw

in the bark," is to those who are asking for bread, giving a stone. There is no such thing as a permanently strengthening medicine. It is only what nourishes, that gives any durable vigour or support. Drugs, although not in general intoxicating, are at best unnatural stimuli; and of course are seldom to be resorted to, except in that state of the constitution in which it cannot be duly excited by the ordinary incentives to vital and healthy action.

If an exception should be made in favour of the chronic use of any medicine, it ought, perhaps, to be allowed in the case of steel. To a lady who enquired of Sydenham, how long she should continue to take this remedy, he replied, "thirty years: and if you are not well then, begin it again." It may appear somewhat singular, that the very same metal, which is so often employed as a weapon of destruction in the hand of the warrior or the assassin, should in that of an intelligent and discerning physician, be converted into one of the most powerful instruments to be found in the magazine of nature, for restoring health, and giving sometimes, as it were by magic, new life, vigour, and even beauty, to the human frame.

In the prescriptions of physicians, as well as in the peparations of cookery, a simplicity

ought to be observed, which is, in general, perhaps, not sufficiently attended to. A number of different dishes, which, separately taken, might be wholesome and nutritious, must all together form a compound that cannot fail to have an unfavourable and disturbing effect upon the organs of digestion. In like manner, a glass of port wine or a glass of Madeira, a draught of ale or one of porter, might, in a state of debility or fatigue, for a time at least, invigorate and refresh; while, if we take a draught, the same in quantity, but composed of all these different liquors, we shall find that, instead of enlivening and refreshing, it will nauseate and oppress. And yet something similar to this daily takes place in the formulæ of medical practitioners. A variety of drugs are often combined in ihe same recipe, each of which might be good, but the whole of which cannot. A mixture of corroborants or tonics, is not necessarily a tonic or corroborative mixture. A prescription ought seldom, perhaps, to contain more than one active and efficient ingredient. We should thus give that ingredient fair play; and by a competent repetition of trials, might be able to ascertain, with tolerable correctness, its kind and degree of influence upon the constitution: whereas, out of a confused and heterogeneous mass, it

is impossible for us to discriminate the individual operation of any one of the articles which compose it.

It may be proper here to observe, that although there should seldom be a variety in the same prescription, it is expedient, more especially in chronic cases, that the prescriptions should be occasionally varied, in order to secure, for any length of time, the production of the same effect. By changing the kind, we render it less necessary to increase the quantity of a restorative agent. When, as after a certain period, it will generally happen, any single remedy has lost in some degree its salutary action, the application of another, although not intrinsically superior in power, will often be necessary to preserve a continuity of progress towards a state of perfect restoration. A considerable dexterity in frequently altering, or in modifying anew, the administration of remedies, is in a particular manner called for during the protracted continuance of most nervous diseases.

In appreciating the value of a pharmaceutical course, we ought not to overlook its use in affording a certain degree of interest and occupation to the mind of a valetudinarian. In the absence of every diversion, even the swallowing of physic may be a source of amuse-

ment. The times for taking the different draughts or doses, are so many epochs in the chronology of an hypochondriac, which, by dividing, help to conquer the tedium of his day.

Such is the power of imagination, that the result of a medicine depends much upon the respect which a patient feels for his physician. Faith will give a virtue to the most inefficient remedy: on the other hand, a distrust in the ability of a professional adviser, will often defeat the tendency of his most judicious and seasonable prescription. It is often necessary that the mental disposition of the invalid should co-operate with the drugs, in order to give them their fullest efficacy. Practitioners, who by any means have become celebrated or popular, are often, on that very account, more successful than others in their treatment of diseases. A similar remark may be made with regard to medicines themselves. A new medicine will often obtain a fortuitous fame, during the continuance of which, there is no doubt that it actually produces some of those salutary effects which are ascribed to it. But the fault of these new remedies is, that they will not *keep*. For as soon as the caprice of the day has gone by, and fashion has withdrawn its protecting influence, the once cele-

brated recipe is divested of its beneficial properties, if it do not become positively deleterious; by which it would appear, that its reputation had not been the result of its salutary efficacy; but that its salutary efficacy had been, in a great measure at least, the result of its reputation. However sceptical a physician may be with regard to the inherent or permanent qualities of a specific in vogue, it is his duty, perhaps, to take advantage of the tide of opinion, as long as it flows in its favour. He may honestly make use of his patient's credulity, in order to relieve him from the pressure of his disease, and render the partial weakness of his mind instrumental to the general restoration of his corporeal strength. A wholesome prejudice should be respected. It is of little consequence whether a man be healed through the medium of his fancy or his stomach.

ESSAY XXVI.

ABLUTION.

PERSONAL cleanliness ought to be added to the list of the cardinal virtues, not only as being equally conducive with any of them to the welfare of the body, but as it is connected with, and for the most part implies, a certain degree of delicacy and purity of mind. For the generality of cutaneous diseases, there is not, perhaps, a better recipe in the pharmacopeia than is to be found in one of the periodical papers of the "World." "Take of pure clean water *quantum sufficit:* put it into a clean earthen or china basin: then take a clean linen cloth; dip it in that water; and apply it to the part affected, night and morning, or afternoon, as occasion may require."

At the same time, that I would wish to inculcate the importance of frequent ablution, I cannot too deeply impress my opinion of the danger that may arise from a careless and

indiscriminate use of the cold bath; a fashionable remedy which is much more frequently injurious than those who have recourse to it seem to be aware of. There are certain obstructions or irregularities which the shock of the cold bath may be calculated to rectify or remove: but that a course of shocks should be in general likely to invigorate a feeble, or give, what is called, tone to a relaxed constitution, is too glaringly inconsistent with the suggestions of ordinary sense, to harmonize with the genuine principles of medical philosophy.

A patient is, for the most part, to be raised to a state of strength, from the depression of chronic debility, only by those influences which act gradually and almost imperceptibly, like that of the air which he is constantly, though unconsciously, breathing, or that process of assimilation, which is every moment going on in the body, without his being aware of it.

Bathing in the sea is, in general, more beneficial, and less liable to danger or inconvenience, than the ordinary cold bath; principally, if not entirely, because the marine temperature being higher, the transition from one element to another is less violent in the former case than in the latter. As to the saline

particles of this, or any of the chemical constituents, upon which is supposed to depend, in a great measure, the virtue of other baths of medicinal celebrity, they can scarcely have any important effect upon the body during the usual period of its immersion. Regarding, as it seems reasonable to do, the act of bathing as in the generality of cases beneficial only so far as it performs the office of ablution, it will appear that the utility of every species of water is nearly equal, in reference to external application.

Ablution, which, in the Mosaic law, constituted one of its most important ceremonies, and, in the Christian, was originally inculcated as an essential and introductory rite, and which has been always enjoined as necessary for the preservation of health, has of late been happily extended to the successful management of disease.* It has been well ascertained that fevers may, in a number of cases, be *washed away* almost without any pharmaceutical assistance.

* In noticing the application of washing to the treatment of diseases, we cannot but refer, with gratitude and respect, to the scientific and benevolent exertions of the late Dr. Currie, whose splendid and solid talents, were employed with equal success, in restoring the health of the living, and embalming the memory of the dead. No selfish insincerity can be suspected in an expression of reverence for the character of one whose ear it will never reach. The voice of praise, however loud, cannot interrupt the silence, or penetrate the secrecy of the tomb.

Nervous diseases also, have been more effectually perhaps, than by any other remedy, relieved by the cold bath, which, while it tends duly to excite the too sluggish action of the vessels, clears away likewise that invisible filth, by which their cutaneous mouths are, by a criminal negligence, so frequently blockaded.

To the mansions of the wealthy, a bath ought to be considered as an indispensable appendage: and if institutions for the corporeal purification of the lower classes of society were generally established, such a measure could not fail to produce an incalculable diminution of disease; and would thus supersede, to a certain degree, the more expensive necessity of hospitals, and that of the other medicinal asylums for popular refuge and relief.

ESSAY XXV.

BODILY EXERCISE.

"WHATEVER hope the dreams of speculation may suggest, of observing the proportion between nutriment and labour, and keeping the body in a healthy state, by supplies exactly suited to its waste, we know that, in effect, the vital powers, unexcited by motion, grow gradually languid; that as their vigour fails, obstructions are generated; and from obstructions proceed most of those pains which wear us away slowly by periodical tortures, and which, although they sometimes suffer life to be long, condemn it to be useless; chain us down to the couch of misery; and mock us with the hopes of death."*

A man, it should be considered, may sit and lie, as well as eat and drink, to excess. There is a debauchery of inaction, as well as of repletion or stimulation. No other abstinence, however salutary, can compensate the mis-

* Johnson.

chief that attends upon an abstinence from exercise.

There is not any means better adapted than bodily exercise for the cure, as well as prevention, more particularly of what are called nervous diseases. A man suffering under a fit of the vapours, will often find that he is able to walk it off. He can be exonerated from the load upon his mind by the violent or continued agitation of his body. I have heard of an eminently successful manager of the insane, who cured his patients by putting them to hard labour. By making them literally work like horses, he brought them to think and feel again like rational beings.

Of the important effects arising from bodily labour, assisted, perhaps, by mental excitement, we have a remarkable instance recorded in the "Monita et Precepta," of Dr. Mead. "A young student at college became so deeply hypochondriac, as to proclaim himself dead; and ordered the college bells to be tolled on the occasion of his death. In this he was indulged: but the man employed to execute the task, appeared to the student to perform it so imperfectly, that he arose from his bed in a fury of passion, to toll the bell for his own departure. When he had finished, he retired to his bed in a state of profuse perspiration,

and was from that moment alive and well." It would seem, in such a case, as if the skin having been relaxed by exertion, hypochondriasis evaporated through its pores.

Improvements in the mechanism of modern carriages, by which they are made to convey a person from place to place, almost without giving him a sense of motion, may be one of the circumstances that have contributed to the encreased prevalence of those maladies which originate in a great degree from a fashionable indulgence in lassitude and languor.

Walking is, no doubt, best adapted to a state of unblemished health or unimpaired vigour. But, for the feeble and hypochondriacal, or those who are affected by any visceral obstruction or disease, riding on horseback is for the most part preferable to any other kind of excise. For pthisis, Sydenham regarded it as an absolute specific. I have myself frequently seen instances of broken-up spirits, and apparently ruined constitutions, in which an altogether unexpected restoration to strength and cheerfulness, has been effected by horse exercise, when almost every other method of recovery had been tried without any sensible advantage. To many of my nervous, as well as bilious patients, I have recommended it, as

almost my sole prescription, to *live on horseback*.

No persons, perhaps, more strikingly illustrate the importance of bodily exercise, than that class of *bon vivants* who combine with a luxurious mode of living, amusements, which consist in strenuous and almost indefatigable exertions. The sportsman works as hard for pastime, as the ordinary day labourer is obliged to do for bread. The toils of both are equally arduous; and differ only in the one being a matter of choice, and the other of necessity. The unwholesome pleasures of the table are in a manner compensated by the salutary enjoyments of the chase. An evening of noisy and jovial intemperance, not unusually crowns a day of equally jovial and noisy activity; and a man will often be found for a long time to escape the dangers of the field, and the still more imminent dangers of the festival. The follower of the hounds is on the road to health, although he may not be in search of it: and if it were not for the excesses, which are too frequently connected with his manner of life, it might prove singularly conducive to vigour and longevity. As it is, however, the fox-hunter seldom dies of a broken neck, to which he seems continually liable, but very generally of a broken consti-

tution, to which his habits, more inevitably, although less obviously expose him. He stands out longer, indeed, than the sedentary or indolent debauchee ; but yields at length to the destructive power of licentious indulgence, with all the sufferings, although without any of the glory or the merits of a martyr. Coxe, I think, states, in his History of the Bourbons of Spain, that hunting first became there a royal amusement, or at least, was more assiduously cultivated as such, in consequence of its having been professionally advised as an antidote to the hypochondriasis, to which that august family were constitutionally liable.

ESSAY XXVI.

REAL EVILS, A REMEDY FOR THOSE OF THE IMAGINATION.

The author has often been applied to by hypochondriacs, who fancied themselves phthisical. Hypochondriasis and phthisis are seldom united. Danger of this latter disease is, for the most part, in the inverse ratio of apprehension. He who thinks himself consumptive, will very rarely be found to be so. Prevalent as phthisis unfortunately is, the fancy is much more frequently disordered than the organs of respiration. In the absence of any other malady, the physician is often called upon to cure an *alarm*.

I was once consulted by a hypochondriacal young man, who conceived, without the smallest foundation, that he was afflicted with a diseased liver. He had previously applied to several of his friends, who smiled at his complaint, as the fiction merely of a capricious

imagination. Seeing, though his disease was exclusively mental, that, at the same time, it was too deeply rooted to be removed by argument or ridicule, I listened to the statement of his feelings with the most respectful attention; apparently coincided with him in his notion of the malady; and professed to treat it as if it were in fact a disorder of a particular viscus. The patient had taken, only for a short time, what had been prescribed ostensibly for his liver, before he found that the pain in his right side, and other symptoms which he attributed to a deranged condition of that organ, were considerably alleviated: and in little more than a month, every trace of his hepatic affection was completely obliterated. It is long since he has been restored to a state of healthy activity and unobscured chearfulness.

A diseased fancy will not unfrequently produce nearly all the symptoms, or at least all the sensations of bodily disease. But any very serious malady of the latter kind is calculated, on the other hand, to dissipate the clouds which hover over the imagination. Hypochondriasis may often thank calamity for its cure.

Some years ago, I knew a lady who had for a long time been a miserable victim to the vapours, but who was completely cured of

this complaint by the supervening of another, which was more immediately alarming, and which precluded indeed the possibility of much longer life. No sooner was her new disease ascertained to be an aneurism of the aorta, and the necessary result of that complaint was explained to her, than all her nervous feelings vanished: and she even bore the announcement of her inevitable fate with a calmness which is seldom exhibited under such trying circumstances. The near prospect of death, instead of overpowering, seemed to brace anew the relaxed energies of her frame; and what is well worthy of remark, so far from being, during her subsequent days, selfishly absorbed by her real, as she had been before by her imaginary ailments, she interested herself almost continually and exclusively about the happiness of others; and, in proportion as she became more amiable, found herself less wretched.

In the crucible of serious sorrow, the affections are, in general, purified and refined. But trials of a lighter sort have often an undesirable rather than a happy influence upon the character. A high degree of heat *melts*, a lower merely soils and tarnishes the metal which is exposed to its influence. Truly tragical misfortune begets a kind of heroic com-

posure. Distress, when it is profound, becomes the parent of equanimity. It renders our feelings proof against the petty hostilities of fortune. What were before cares, are, under such circumstances, often converted into comforts. Even pain of body operates as mental relief. Adversity, when it assumes its more awful form, lifts us above the level of the earth, so that we are no longer incommoded by the roughnesses or inequalities of its surface. From this state of elevated sorrow, a man looks down upon the common-place troubles of life with the same sort of contempt or indifference as upon the toys and trifles of his childhood. The mind itself is enlarged by the magnitude of its misery.

Such may be conceived, for instance, to be the mental situation of a man of even ordinary feeling, under the recent and irretrievable loss of one whose soul had been in a manner amalgamated with his own; between whom and himself, there had long been not a sympathy merely, but a unity almost of consciousness. To the ordinary weight of the atmosphere we become, on account of its unceasing pressure, altogether insensible. But the sudden removal of this imperceptible weight would occasion agonizing convulsions. In like manner, where the unwearied assidui-

ties of domestic tenderness, of which from long familiarity with them we are apt to grow almost unconscious, are, by the most solemn of human events, for ever withdrawn, our eyes are often, for the first time, opened to our late happiness by the conviction of its irrevocable departure.

ESSAY XXVII.

OCCUPATION.

Business, attended with extreme care and uneasiness, is, perhaps, less undesirable than the having no subject at all of uneasiness or care. The worst kind of air is not more certainly fatal than a vacuum. Inaction is not rest: recumbency is not repose. Although we squander our exertions upon an insignificant or undeserving object, the pains we take to attain it are attended with advantage as well as pleasure. The means are necessarily useful, however worthless may be the end. That the passion for gaming should prevail, as it so frequently does, in minds of a superior order, is to be attributed to a principle different from avarice. Men of that character love the dice, in general, not so much from the prospect of the wealth which they may chance to

from the table, as from that very agitation of mind, and that strain of attention, which seems so unenviable to a tranquil and disengaged spectator. Gambling is a miserable refuge from the still greater miseries of indolence and vacuity. So dependent is the mind of man upon novelty and expectation, or, in another word, upon engagement, that he adds artificial chances to those which are inseparably attached to his nature and condition. As if the inevitable vicissitudes of human life did not sufficiently endanger his peace, he exposes himself, unnecessarily and wantonly, to be trodden under the foot of fortune, or to be crushed by the revolution of her wheel.

Expectation is the vital principle of happiness. It is that which constantly stimulates us to exertion, and fills up the vacant spaces of life. We are in general more interested by a precarious good in prospect, than by the most valuable realities in our possession. The blossoms of hope are better than the ripened fruits of fortune. We complain of the vicissitudes and uncertainty attending upon our present state: and yet it is, in this very uncertainty and vicissitude, that its interest, and of course its value, principally consists. Anticipated change constitutes the predominant

charm of life. What we imagine that we may be, reconciles us to an endurance of what we are. Were a map to be presented to us, in which we could discern the windings of our future way as distinctly as we can look back upon our past past route, our desire to proceed in the journey of life would be no greater, than it is to retrace the steps which we have already trodden. If we could lift the curtain which divides the future from the present, we should find that it was like one of those beautifully coloured transparencies, which are contrived so as to intercept the view of uninteresting or disagreeable objects.

There is an important practical difference, which is not, perhaps, sufficiently attended to, betwixt effort and mere occupation of mind —between agitation and action—between strong motions and strenuous exertions. To the former the hypochondriacal are often peculiarly liable: but they seem in general to be disinclined to, and in some instances to be almost incapable of the latter. There is often a pressure upon the spirits, which takes away, or essentially impairs, the power of voluntary movement. Many a melancholic invalid is conscious of what the poet Cowper remarks relative to himself. "I have that within me, which hinders me wretchedly

in every thing that I ought to do; but is prone to trifle, and let every good thing run to waste."

The possession of that pecuniary abundance which supplies a man with the conveniences and accommodations of life, is often an unfavourable circumstance in his lot. A specious and external welfare is not unfrequently the indirect cause of that inward condition, which is in fact, the more to be deplored, as it presents no ostensible claim upon our sympathy and compassion. No one feels so strongly as the affluent and listless hypochondriac, the vast difference between prosperity and happiness, betwixt possession and enjoyment. Opulence is the natural source of indolence, and indolence of disease. Necessity, inasmuch as it impels to labour, is the mother of hilarity, as it proverbially is of invention. Toil was made for man: and although he may often inherit what is necessary to his existence, he is, in every instance obliged to earn what is essential to its enjoyment. If we wish for habitual cheerfulness, we must work for it; there is no "royal road" to good spirits. For the most part, we find that none are more uneasy in themselves, than those who are placed in what are called easy circumstances. Few persons have resolution

enough to supply the place of necessity. The lounger's life is in fact a life of the most irksome labour. Upon him who has no other burden to carry, every hour presses as a load. Instead of flying by him with an evanescent celerity, time tediously hovers over his head. The sun, as in the days of Joshua, seems to stand still.

I was once consulted by a hypochondrial patient who had been the greatest part of his life a journeyman taylor; but who, by an unexpected accident, became unhappily rich, and consequently no longer dependent for his bread upon drudgery and confinement. He accordingly descended from his board. But Charles the Fifth, after having voluntarily descended from his throne, could not have regretted more severely the injudicious renunciation of his empire. This man, after having thrown himself out of employment, fell ill of the tedium of indolence. He discovered, that the having nothing to do, was more uncongenial to his constitution, even than the constrained attitude, and the close and heated atmosphere in which he had been accustomed to carry on his daily operations. In one respect, however, the repentant mechanic was less unfortunate than the imperial penitent. It

remained in the power of the former to reinstate himself in his previous situation, which, after having resumed it, no motive could, a second time, induce him to relinquish.

It is more difficult than is generally imagined, "to realise an independence." For this purpose, a mind richly endowed is at least as necessary as a well-replenished purse. To set a man up in a business, requires, for the most part, a certain capital. To set him up comfortably in a state of idleness, besides a pecuniary competency, requires also a capital of a different sort. To render retirement tolerable, we must carry into it a stock of ideas, in addition to our other funds. We cannot fill up the vacancy of leisure, except from the fulness of our internal resources.

The drudge of mercantile or mechanical employment patiently waits for the period, when he expects to be repaid for the hardships of his present servitude, by a final liberation from his fetters. But when the wished-for period arrives, he generally finds, in the emancipation which it brings, a punishment for the desertion of his active duty, rather than a recompence for having so long discharged it. What at a distance appeared the most enviable privilege, proves, upon trial, to be

almost the severest penalty that could have been inflicted upon his unlicensed expectations.

A man, the best part of whose life has been spent in endeavours after wealth, however successful he may be in the attainment of his object, will scarcely ever become independent of the pursuit. The slave of mercenary toil is transformed into the more miserable victim of mental malady. Hypochondriasis fixes its unsparing tooth upon the leavings of avarice. The former, indeed, often assumes the shape of the latter, more especially when it attacks the veteran votaries of Mammon. The retired tradesman continuing to part with his money, although he has ceased to acquire it, finds that the balance of his books is not so much in his favour as formerly. He begins to fancy that the fountain must soon be exhausted, from which flows a perpetual stream of expenditure. He is haunted by the spectre of poverty. It is not improbable that he may thus starve himself from a horror of famine, or be driven to live in a mad-house by the fear of dying in a jail.

So necessary is employment, that no innocent form which it can assume, ought to be rejected or despised. Some men are too proud

to be pleased with what interests or amuses the generality of mankind. Their dignity would be impaired in their own eyes by a participation in ordinary pastimes. But when the mind is left vacant of graver concerns, it is of the highest moment, that it should be capable of engaging itself in trifles. Philosophically considered, almost all the subjects of human occupation are trifling, when compared with the incalculable importance of occupation itself. An intellect of the most perfect organization possesses that compass of contractility, which enables it to take up the most minute, as well as to grasp the largest object within its reach, and for the time to be equally filled with either.

Sir Isaac Newton, with no less justice, perhaps, than modesty, ascribed the superiority which he appeared to possess over other students of philosophy, merely to his greater patience or more continued controul over his attention: such a controul over the attention is not more essential to the acquirements, than it is to the healthy condition of the mind. The healthy condition of the mind may, indeed, for the most part, be considered as bearing an exact proportion to the degree in which this desirable faculty is possessed.

The advantage of indispensible occupation, is never more unequivocally evinced than in cases of heavy calamity. The apparent aggravation of an evil, will not unfrequently be found to constitute, in fact, the source of its most effectual relief. The situation of a widowed female, left in needy circumstances with a large family, is often less truly deplorable than that of an opulent and childless dowager, who, in the absence of other objects of interest and attention, has leisure and every accommodation for pampering her sorrow, and of nursing dejection until it ripens into derangement. Children, in the former case, are, indeed, heavy weights hanging upon the mind of the mother; but, like the weights pulling upon the machinery of a clock, they are necessary to keep it in motion. Such *incumbrances*, as they are often called, may be compared to a *drag* upon the wheel of a carriage, which prevents it from being precipitated to its destruction.

Salutary as occupation in general is, it is far from being so when it consists almost exclusively in an attention to a man's self, and more particularly to his corporeal sensations and infirmities. The hypochondriac often destroys his health, by taking too much care of

it. The maker of a watch will tell you, that there is no way more certain of injuring it, than the constantly meddling with its machinery. In like manner, it is impossible to be perpetually tampering with the constitution, without either disordering its movements or impairing the elasticity of its spring. A valetudinarian is apt to treat himself, as a doating mother manages her child, whom she ruins by over-nursing; whom she fondles and dandles into delicacy and disease. So solicitous is she to protect him against the inroads of distemper, that she closes against him nearly every avenue of health as well as enjoyment. He is scarcely allowed to take the air, lest he thould take a cold along with it; and is often restricted in the free use of his limbs, from the apprehension of accidental fracture or possible fatigue.

Lord Chesterfield somewhere observes, that a gentleman, after having once dressed himself with proper care, will think no more about his dress during the remainder of the day. In like manner, after having adjusted his habits of regimen, according to the most approved model, a wise man will banish the subject from his mind. He will, as uniformly as he can, adhere to the rules of living which

he has laid down for himself; but will have them as little as possible in his thoughts.

There are petit-maitres with regard to health as well as dress. Both are almost constantly employed in examining themselves; the one from an anxiety to know whether every thing about him, the other, whether every thing within him, is exactly as it should be. Each of these characters is, to a certain degree, an object of pity. But the coxcomb has, in one respect, the advantage over the hypochondriac; inasmuch, as the latter is, in general, less satisfied with the state of his inside, than the former is with the appearance of his exterior.

To be always considering "what we should eat, and what we should drink, and wherewithal we should be clothed," in order to avoid the approach of disease, is the most likely means of provoking its attack. A man who is continually feeling his pulse, is never likely to have a good one. If he swallow his food from the same motive as he does his physic, it will neither be enjoyed nor digested so well as if he eat in obedience to the dictate of an unsophisticated and uncalculating appetite. The hypochondriac who is in the habit of weighing his meals, will generally find that

they lie heavy on his stomach. If he take a walk or a ride, with no other view than to pick up health, he will seldom meet with it on the road. If he enter into company, not from any social sympathy or relish for interchange of thought, but merely because company is prescribed for his disease, he will only be more deeply depressed by that cheerfulness in which he cannot compel himself to participate; and will gladly relapse into his darling solitude, where he may indulge his melancholy without risk of interruption or disturbance. "The countenance of a friend doeth good like a medicine," but not if we look upon it merely with a view to its medicinal operation.

The constitutional or inveterate hypochondriac is apt to view every thing only in the relation which it may bear to his malady. In the rich and diversified store-house of nature he sees merely a vast laboratory of poisons and antidotes. He is almost daily employed either in the search after, or in the trial of, remedies for a disease which is often to be cured only by striving to forget it.

But even if such a plan of life were really calculated to lengthen the catalogue of our days, it would still be equally wretched and

degrading to the dignity of our nature. Nothing, surely, can be more idle and absurd than to waste the whole of our being in endeavours to preserve it; to neglect the purposes, in order to protract the period, of our existence.

——— Propter vitam, vivendi perdere causas.

Juvenal.

FINIS.

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