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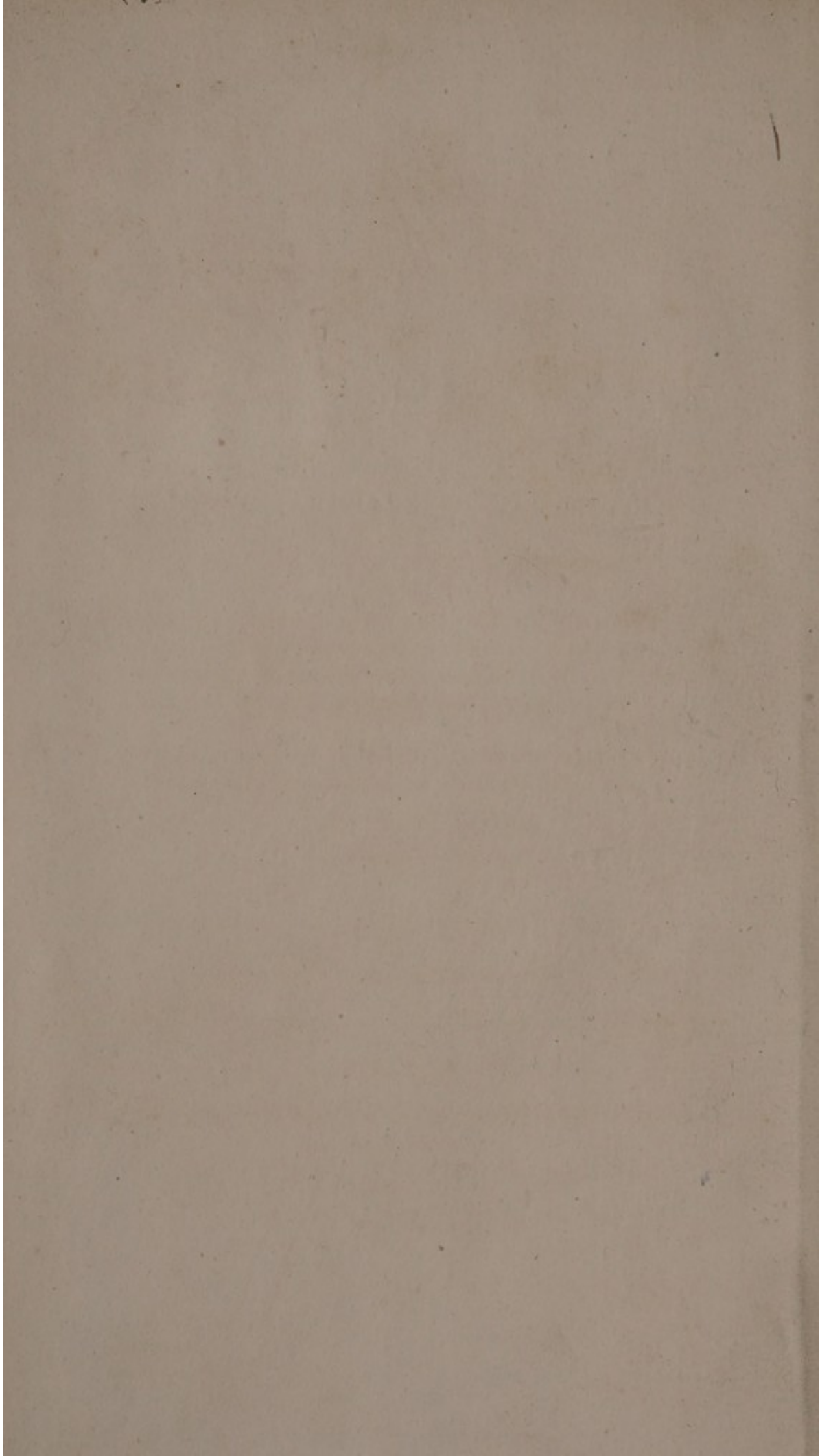
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ESSAYS

ON

HYPOCHONDRIASIS,

AND

OTHER NERVOUS AFFECTIONS.

BY

JOHN REID, M.D.

MEMBER OF THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS, LONDON;

AND LATE PHYSICIAN TO THE FINSBURY DISPENSARY.

THE SECOND EDITION,

WITH CONSIDERABLE ADDITIONS.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR LONGMAN, HURST, REES, ORME, AND BROWN,

PATERNOSTER-ROW.

1821.

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.

LONDON ·
Printed by A. & R. Spottiswoode,
New-Street-Square.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE following work having been out of print for some years past, I have been at length induced to submit to the Public a second edition of it, with considerable additions, as well as other alterations. Upon so fertile and extensive a subject, it would be easier to write a large book than a small one, as it is more difficult properly to select and compress, than merely to amass observations.

In a work intended for general perusal, it has been my care to avoid, as far as it could be done, not only all technical phrases, but also those minutiae of detail either in the narration of cases or in an

account of their treatment, more especially the pharmaceutical part of it, which would have been proper, and even necessary, in a volume meant exclusively for the professional reader. At the same time, I am not without a hope, that this collection of Essays, although divested as much as possible of a medical appearance, may contain remarks not altogether undeserving the notice of a practitioner in physic, as well as of the community at large.

J. REID.

Grenville Street, Brunswick Square.

May 24. 1821.

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ESSAY I.

THE INFLUENCE OF THE MIND ON THE BODY.

“ I seldom ever observed a heavy, dull, earthy, clod-pated clown, much troubled with nervous disorders, or at least not to any eminent degree.”

CHEYNE'S *English Malady*.

HE who, in the study or the treatment of the human machinery, 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 metropolis, 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 labor." *

The class of persons whose lives are

* *Coup d'œil sur les Révolutions, et sur la Réforme de la Médecine.*

P. J. G. Cabanis.

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 color of their calamities.

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 amongst the poor, especially amongst 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 labor of the poor man relieves him at least from the burden of fashionable ennui, and the constant pressure of physical inconveniences, 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.

“*Sig.* — By all the gods the Romans bow before,
I here *discard* my sickness.” *Julius Cæsar.*

“What care I for the limbs, the thews, the sinews of a man! Give
me the spirit, Master Shallow.” *Henry the Fourth.*

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 the 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 pa-

radoxical extravagance, scarcely yields to the doctrine of a modern, though already 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

* Of a late member of the English bar, whose strong original powers of mind had been obscured and enfeebled by the sensuality of his habits, it has been related that in the extremity of his last illness, when the shadows of death were fast coming over him, he, with a blasphemous audacity, swore, by God, that he would not die! In this state of morbid and impious rage, he struggled out of his bed, tottered down the stairs, and fell lifeless in the passage. From the exclamation of this unfortunate man, it would seem as if he fancied that he held the reins of life in his hands, and could arrest at will the rapidity of its descending career.

It is remarkable, that a similar story is related in Spence's Anecdotes, recently published, of Salvini, "an odd sort of man, subject to gross absences, and a very great sloven. His behaviour in his last hour was as odd as any of his behaviour in all his lifetime before could have been. Just as he was departing, he cried out in a great passion, 'Je ne veux pas mourir, absolument.'"

a person laboring 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 risk 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 indirect 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.

Imaginary sorrow is an expression which ought perhaps to be abolished altogether, not merely as a verbal absurdity, but because the employment of it is apt to mislead the judgment, and indirectly to harden the heart of those who are unduly influenced by inaccuracies of language. The ingenious speculatist who affected to disbelieve in an external, material world, was scarcely more irrational than he who doubts the existence of an internal, invisible world, in which we may more properly be said to live and have our being. Sufferings which arise from no palpable or assignable cause, are not the less real or pitiable on that account. There may be some recondite fault in the system of sensation,

which the searching knife of the anatomist is unable to reveal.

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 should 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 really 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 with 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 com-

posedly died about five or six o'clock that evening."*

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 show 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 repre-

* Cheyne's *English Malady*.

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

sented, 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 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.

In many diseases, especially in those which are called nervous, a suspension of the symptoms has not unfrequently been found to occur, in consequence of the same or indeed any other complaint attacking one who is particularly near or interesting to the patient. In cases even of contagious fever, a mother seldom feels herself sick, until the sickness of her child is over. The affectionate solicitude which is constantly kept up, even when it does not prevent the body from receiving contagion, often prevents the mind from being for some time aware of its influence. No sooner however does the recovery of her child take place, than in general it is succeeded by the indisposition of the parent, which, although it be delayed, cannot fail to be aggravated and rendered still more dangerous, by the extreme degree of

labour, watchfulness and anxiety that immediately preceded its appearance.

I was once consulted concerning an hypochondriacal 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 exer-

cise, and might thus be discouraged from further efforts at activity. In endeavouring to put the mind in motion, we ought to take care, lest we shatter so delicate a machine by the violence of the impulse.

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 ascendancy when struggling under the compression of a giant. After an attack of nervous affection, Romney observed in one of his letters, “ I feel like one escaped from an enchantment where some fiend presided.”

Madness may be said in general to arise from a deficiency in the faculty of self-

control. This disease shows itself, for instance, in the thoughts of the insane being all communicated in speech, without any restraint or discrimination. Whereas, in a healthy state of intellect, a man is always on the watch, that no disgraceful or ridiculous thought should straggle out of the secret inclosure of his mind. The passions which were disposed to predominate before madness, cannot fail to be rendered still more conspicuous afterwards. The veil is rent which concealed, the resistance is overcome which controlled them. What was before inlaid, now becomes embossed. Hence it happens that a man often appears most himself, when he is said to be beside himself.

Although in an actual disease of the mind, little comparatively can be effected by the enfeebled power of volition, much may be done by exertion, in guarding

against the first approaches of mental malady. By endeavouring from benevolent motives to smother the expression of our sorrows, we often mitigate their inward force. If we cannot imbibe the spirit, it is often a profitable, as well as a good-natured hypocrisy, to put on the appearance of cheerfulness.

By seeming gay, we grow to what we seem.

It was the remark of a person of more than common sagacity, "only wear a mask for a fortnight, and you will not know it from your real face." By assuming the semblance of what he is not, a man will gradually cease to be what he is.

Cheerfulness, and even hilarity, when unprovoked by unwholesome incentives, undegraded by brutality, or untainted by licentiousness, instead of being interdicted as a crime, ought to be prescribed and encouraged as one of the means of urging a perhaps too lazy circulation, and of pro-

moting a sufficient quantity and regularity of salutary secretions. A man may be merry upon principle, and make a point occasionally of taking a laugh, as others do a walk, for the benefit of his health. The advice of the old Spanish gentleman was sufficiently absurd, who, when his son was setting off on a voyage to the Indies, took leave of him in these words: "My son, in the first place, keep thy gravity; in the next place, fear God." A celebrated Italian comedy turns altogether upon a stratagem to cure an hypochondriac by making him laugh.

It is much in our power to look on the sunny side of things, instead of keeping the eye constantly fixed on the darkened hemisphere of human life. There is no faculty of the mind which it is of more consequence should be exercised and cultivated from the earliest youth, than that of self-control. This power is to be

improved by exercise, as well as that of the memory or the muscles. A person who has been brought up in the habit of doing every thing he pleases, will at length become incapable of being pleased with any thing.

ESSAY III.

THE FEAR OF DEATH.

“ Oh, our life's sweetness !

That we the pain of death would hourly bear,
Rather than die at once !”

K. Lear.

“ 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 amongst 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 native of barren regions.

Upon an apparently similar principle, after existence has lost every thing that could enliven or embellish it, we often become more enamoured of its actual 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 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 pe-

cular species of dotage, this fondness, as it were, for the mere function of respiration, can be explained only by that invincible 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 strewn, and induces a distaste for nearly every cordial which might otherwise have inno-

cently 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 its real or imaginary approach. His trembling 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 favorable 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 cheerfully 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 disorder, which I ascribed, at the time, to the tranquil cheerfulness 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 favorable 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.

One circumstance which may tend to protract the life of consumptive patients is, that they in general either do not expect a fatal event, or wait for it with an exemplary and enviable resignation. This interesting, and, for the most part, amiable class of invalids excite the sympathy of others in proportion as they appear to be divested of anxiety about

themselves. Those often seem to leave us most willingly, with whom we are least willing to part.

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 made to believe merely 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 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 Lesinky'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 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, for ever after, of inspiring con-

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

fidence 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 amongst 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.

If, during a serious illness, a patient hears of the death of some old acquaintance, especially if he be a person of nearly

the same age with himself, or affected with a somewhat similar complaint, it will, not so much from sorrow for the loss, as by existing or aggravating his selfish apprehensions, be calculated to produce an unfavorable effect upon the character and termination of his malady. Even in ordinary health, the grief we feel for the final departure of a friend, may often arise, in part at least, from the unwelcome hint which it gives us of our own mortality.

Another circumstance which has often accelerated death, is the preparation which we make for it in the disposal of our worldly property. Many a man has died of making his will. After having fixed the signature to his last testament, that kind of prelude to the funereal ceremonies, the spirits and strength of the invalid will often be found irretrievably to sink; no food will subsequently nourish, nor me-

dicine afford mitigation to his complaint. Such a fact constitutes a powerful argument in favor of performing this duty to survivors, whilst in a state of health and vigour, when the task will have a better chance of being judiciously executed, and, at the same time, without any risk of disturbance or injury to the body or the mind.

It often occurs to medical practitioners to observe in their patients an inexplicable conviction of the incurable nature of their disease, which, whilst it may help to make it so, is of itself a symptom of alarming, if not fatal presage. This presentiment appears like an instinct, or supernatural revelation of the future. I have not often found that a person, in fever for instance, has in fact recovered, whose mind has been strongly impressed with a persuasion that he would not, even when that persuasion has been unaccom-

panied with an anxiety or agitation of spirits which might obstruct recovery, or with that apathy or kind of fatalism which obstinately resists the application of the remedies that are necessary to his restoration. When a patient says, "There is no use in giving me medicine, I am sure that I shall die," he generally proves to be in the right. But this remark does not extend to the case of decided hypochondriacs, whose danger is for the most part in the inverse ratio of their alarm. At the present moment, I know a person of this class, whose conversation exhibits a general superiority of mind, attended however with a partial imbecility. His good sense deserts him only upon the subject of his health. His own opinion of his disease constitutes the worst part of it. His complaint appears to be seated in the stomach, and apprehension seems to be in great measure the creature of

indigestion. There is no circumstance attending his ailments that indicates danger, or is inconsistent with a fair chance of longevity, and yet for a considerable period he has been decidedly of opinion, without being able to give any reason for the inflexible belief, that he shall never recover, and has been long, in his own imagination, trembling on the very edge of the grave.

Instruments have been invented by which the most remote objects of vision may be drawn so near to the eye, as to seem almost in contact with it. Something analogous to this power exists in the mental mechanism of many an hypochondriac, by means of which he approximates to himself events at the greatest distance either in prospect or in retrospect, either before or behind him in the road of life. This power contracts the interval of time, as a telescope does that of space. The most

remote calamity which he anticipates, he feels, as if it were actually crushing him with its weight. From being in the habit of contemplating, with a morbid intensity, the close of his earthly career, he forestalls almost every day of his life, the agonies of dissolution. The spectre of human mortality is continually presenting itself before him in the full dimension of its horrors ; so that it is no wonder if actual death be often occasioned by the appalling apparition. It is similar with regard to the past ; although the substance of some great calamity has long gone by, its lingering shadow still continues to darken his path. Years make no impression upon the immutability of his feelings. The ideas of recollection are, in general, less lively than those which are produced by an immediate operation upon the senses. But with a certain class of hypochondriacs it is quite otherwise.

The pictures drawn upon the fancy exhibit a more distinct and vivid coloring than belongs to the realities of life.

Hypochondriasis is the more dreadful as a disease, from its being one of the tardiest ministers of death. It is a monster which delights rather in tormenting, than in devouring its prey. Under the influence of this malady, the materials of the human fabric for the most part moulder away almost as imperceptibly, as under the leisurely operation of time. We do not see the actual crumbling of the structure; although, after a certain interval, it may be observed to have lost a considerable portion of its bulk and solidity. The incrustation of melancholy, which gradually grows and thickens over the surface of the mind, seems in some measure to protect that part, and indirectly the whole of our frame, from the ravages of decay. The process of disease is often

more to be dreaded than its mortal termination. In many cases, it is not the tomb, so much as the shadowy and thorny avenue which leads to it, that is the proper subject of horror and of awe. Natural are, for the most part, more cruel than what are called violent deaths. So far as suffering is concerned, who would not rather die of a dagger, than of a dropsy, or fall at once in the field of battle, with an instantaneously mortal wound, than be doomed to bear for years the lingering agonies of cancer, or gradually to yield to the slow underminings of consumption?

Let him who crawls, enamour'd of decay,
Cling to his couch, and sicken years away,
Heave his thick breath, and shake his palsied head;
Ours the fresh turf, and not the feverish bed.

BYRON.

Mac Ivor, the proper hero of Waverley, in contemplating his approaching execution with philosophical calmness, re-

marks, "Nature has her tortures as well as art; and how happy should we think the man who escapes from the throes of a mortal and painful disorder in the space of a short half-hour! and this matter, spin it how they will, cannot last so long." The agonies with which dissolution is so generally accompanied, constitute one of the most melancholy mysteries in the providence of God. We ought to consider however as in some measure an explanation of it, that the bodily pain of the dying takes off from the edge of his mental apprehension, and that it is a mean, although a severe one, by which we are reconciled to the relinquishment of life, and our attention diverted from the horrors of that dark gulf into which we are about to plunge.

Against the inordinate fear of death, one of the most effectual preservatives is regular and active occupation. In this

way, poverty often precludes the access of evils greater than itself. The fear of death is felt most, where there is no intervening evil to obstruct the view of that ultimate calamity. He whose thoughts are absorbed in the means of living, can think little of the end of life.

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, honorably 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 a humble and quiet satisfaction.

The Christian is still more highly pri-

vileged. 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.

It is not the fear of death only, which is apt to overshadow the mind of the hypochondriac; he is often the slave of fear, which has no specific object. He trembles under the weight of indefinite apprehension. The terrors of the most gloomy superstition are scarcely more intolerable, than his state of vague and inexplicable timidity. He has no resolution, no enterprise. He is imprudently cautious. The foresight of possible evil, shuts him out from the chance of probable advantage. In reference to a highly

estimable person of a hypochondriacal cast, it was once remarked by an ingenious young lady, that "if he had built a ship, he would not have the courage to launch it." An excess of circumspection may be worse even than rashness. A man has been often immortalized, by an act of lucky indiscretion. A physician of nervous pusillanimity, rather than incur the risk of being thought to kill one of his patients, would *let* many of them die. He would not do any thing that would seem directly to destroy life; but he would often refrain from doing that which was absolutely necessary to its preservation, — as if murders from omission left no stain upon the character, and inflicted no wound upon the conscience.

ESSAY IV.

PRIDE.

“ Sick of a proud heart: you may call it melancholy if you will favor the man ; but, by my head, 'tis pride.” *Troilus and Cressida.*

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 pressed 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."

A young medical student, who was first a pupil, and afterwards a patient of the writer, suddenly took it into his head that he should realize a fortune by attaining academical honours. He accordingly, without making known his inten-

tion to any one, took coach for Cambridge, and entered himself at one of the colleges of that university. Upon his return he surprised his friends with the information of what he had done. Knowing that he had no pecuniary resources to supply the necessary expense of a college life, and that his mind was as unfurnished and unprepared as his purse for entering into such a course, his friends endeavoured to dissuade him from his purpose ; but neither argument nor ridicule could produce any impression upon the obstinacy of his resolution. He began the attempt to study the mathematics under a private tutor in London ; but, after some weeks of probationary labor directed to this object, to his preceptor it became evident, although not so to himself, that he would never succeed in that line of exertion, and he was again urged, with additional emphasis, to desist

from his visionary project. Upon which he declared, that if he were not allowed to persevere in the plan he had adopted, he should inevitably lose his senses. The events shortly justified his prediction ; he fell into a state of decided derangement, of which vanity was the predominant and characteristic feature. In one of my visits to him, when in a state of necessary confinement, he told me that he was the Farnese Hercules ; that it was he, in fact, that had written Dr Clarke's Travels in Russia ; that he had *done a job* also for Virgil, that is, had composed his Eneid ; that one of the finest paintings of Raffaelle had been executed by him ; that he knew every thing. It was not quite clear to me, whether he really fancied that all this was true, or that he merely wished to make his hearers believe it ; for maniacs, it may be remarked, are in general altogether unprincipled with re-

gard to veracity. Lying is a part of their disease. This unfortunate young man, after no very long time, recovered his senses, and amongst them a sense of humility, the loss of which had in this, as it has in many other cases, subverted the whole intellectual structure. He went afterwards to the Gold Coast, as a surgeon to the African Company, but died soon after his arrival on that sunny shore.*

* If this patient were still living, I should have felt some hesitation in recording the particulars of his case. A person recovered from insanity, or an hypochondriac, whose disease has never amounted to mania, for the most part feels a horror at his morbid history being laid open to the general eye. Such a person labors under a nervous consciousness of exposure in a publication of his case, even without any clue to the discovery of his name. A printed delineation of his symptoms he feels almost like a dissection of his breathing frame. Although it is more than five-and-twenty years ago, I still distinctly recollect the tone and manner of an unfortunate man suffering from a species of dropsy, which was pointed out to me, then a novice in the study of medicine, as a

Egotism, although neither technically nor vulgarly classed amongst the diseases incident to the human frame, well deserves a place in a system of nosology. Patients of this class are themselves the favorite 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 in-

very curious case: "I wish," said the poor man, "it were not quite so curious." A sympathy with such a feeling ought to deter a writer upon nervous diseases from inserting in his volume a variety of living instances, the particulars of which might otherwise have contributed to the information or entertainment of his readers.

stance 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 cal-

culated 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 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 system 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 amongst the most unfortunate of men. There is something apparently in the empire of an individual over nations, that renders him incompetent 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 had 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 description 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 arti-

culate 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 cloak 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.

A man who aims exclusively at his own welfare, will be sure to miss his object. As beauty cannot see itself except by reflection, so happiness is to be caught only by rebound. Even sensual indulgences would want nearly all their relish, if it were not for the salt of sympathy.

ESSAY V.

REMORSE.

“ Those wounds heal ill which men do give themselves.”

Troilus and Cressida:

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 paroxysm of phrenzy.

Remorse is considered, perhaps too indiscriminately, as a compensation for misconduct. 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 indulged often stands in the way of 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 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 vigour 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 practise the highest degree of virtue. The summits of moral excellence were never reached, without the foot having occasionally 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.

I have known more than one melancholy patient who was tortured by the imaginary consciousness of past crimes which he had not committed, and by the anticipation of future punishment which he had not deserved. I have been just looking over a long and interesting letter, written to me many years ago by a young lady who was at that time laboring under hypochondriacal apprehensions to a very distressing degree. "I cannot," she says, "altogether impute to any external cause, a complaint that seems partly constitutional, as I have been a sufferer, although in a slighter degree, almost from infancy. At a very early age, when I first felt inte-

rested in the important truths of religion, and promised myself the purest delight in regulating my life by its precepts, I was not only deprived of the happiness I had hoped for, but almost driven to despair, by the entrance of the most impious thoughts into my imagination, and which more particularly distressed me when engaged in exercises of devotion. It is true, my mind was perfectly passive in their reception, and therefore, I trust, not culpable, but that did not prevent my experiencing the agonies of remorse attendant upon sin. I am now less disturbed by this strange source of misery, but my mind is constantly under the influence of some melancholy or horrid idea that casts a gloom on every thing around me. ‘No disease of the imagination,’ Dr Johnson remarks in his *Rasselas*, ‘is so difficult to cure, as that which is complicated with the dread of guilt.

Fancy and conscience, then, act interchangeably upon us, and the delusions of the one are not distinguished from the dictates of the other.' I have too well experienced the truth of this observation, my prevailing terror being the dread of causing evil to others. The particular kind of evil is generally determined by the last unhappy event I chance to have heard or read of, which my imagination in some way or other too readily applies to myself. As an instance, I have had the horrors of setting the house on fire so strongly impressed upon my mind, that no efforts of reason have been able to overcome its ascendancy, which has so completely overpowered me, that I have suffered inexpressible misery from merely having occasion to enter or pass through a room at evening with a lighted candle, although conscious of having taken the utmost precaution, and have even re-

turned without a light to see that all was safe; yet has fancy, in the dead of night, painted the room in flames, with every aggravating circumstance attending conflagration, till my mind has been worked up almost to a pitch of insanity from terror. In vain has reason assured me of the absurdity of my fears, or religion bid me trust in Providence; imagination has proved too powerful for the dictates of either. The anguish I have suffered from this kind of horror has been so great, that perhaps the sensations of a murderer have at times little exceeded mine, although I would not willingly hurt a worm."

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 unfortunate 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 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 the criminal himself, the true color of his offences, it not less frequently throws a false glare upon the faults, as well as upon the virtues of mankind. We 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 highway-man, 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.

Remorse is never perhaps felt with more painful acuteness, than on the remembrance of any seeming deficiency either of duty or affection to one whose unexpected death has precluded all future opportunities of making atonement or amends. It is no uncommon thing for us to be ungrateful to a living benefactor, but it is seldom indeed that we prove unjust to his ashes. We rarely neglect altogether to pay the tribute which is due to kindness, but too often we neglect to pay it at the proper time. The

life of a beloved object might perhaps have been saved, by a seasonable exercise of but a small portion of that sensibility, which is expended in fruitless tears upon his grave. We offer the cordial of friendship after the lips are closed. It would seem as if in some instances, we could not come into the possession of our proper feelings, until death has prepared the way for the reversionary inheritance.

“ for so it falls out,
That what we have, we prize not to the worth
Whilst we enjoy it, but being lacked and lost,
Why then we rack the value, then we find
The virtue that possession could not shew us,
Whilst it was ours.”

It has often seemed to me as if the Roman Catholic notion of purgatory were, in some respects, a consolatory one. It gives, under the most melancholy circumstances, an active employment to our affections, and a useful efficiency to our regrets. It extends, with regard to certain

duties, the period of our probation. It furnishes a further opportunity of making up for what may have been wanting, in our attention to the offices of friendship. Prayers for the repose of departed souls, may tend at least to promote the quiet of the living. Whilst engaged in acts of even imaginary benefit to those whom we have lost, we can scarcely fail to feel a mitigation of our sorrows.

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 in-

dependently of all revealed truth, there is a doctrine of the heart, a religion of feeling rather than of belief.

Upon the mind of a convalescent from moral disease, it cannot be too deeply impressed, that neither nature nor supernatural revelation makes a duty of despair. The deep shades of the past ought to serve as a back-ground to set off the comparative brightness of his present state or of his future prospects. He who has escaped from the opening jaws of destruction, ought to pursue his onward course, without looking back upon the horrors from which he has been rescued. It not unfrequently happens, that a man by too obstinately contemplating what he has left behind, remains for ever after fixed in the retrospective attitude. His foot is arrested in the path of life; his imagination feeds solely upon what has gone by; fresh scenes that may present

themselves, afford to his mind neither nourishment nor gratification. In the drama of the world his part is closed, although he may be still doomed to continue on the stage. It is in this way, that melancholy and madness are often generated by the permanent pangs of memory, by the continual presence of the past.

ESSAY VI.

SOLITUDE.

“ Chiefly where solitude, sad nurse of care,
 To sickly musing gives the pensive mind,
 There madness enters ; and the dim-eyed fiend
 Sour Melancholy, night and day provokes
 Her own eternal wound.”

Art of Health.

AN hypochondriac should be a hermit in abstinence, but not in solitude. With no less beauty than truth, has the author of *Rasselas* depicted 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 au-

thority 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.

It is not so much from a stagnation of air, as from the want of a free circulation and ventilation, as it may be called, of thought, that some of those diseases which we are the least able to bear, are most

apt to originate. Amidst the purest breezes the mind still gasps for the refreshment of society.

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 unfavorable 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 reflection and amusement.

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.

A state of seclusion is often thought favorable to habits of study, but it more frequently leads to an indolent wandering of the mind. There is a great difference between meditation and musing, between reflection and reverie. That species of reverie which goes under the name of castle-building, is not only a very idle, but often a very injurious occupation.

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. A person of city tastes and habits, after a short visit to the villa of a friend, was asked how he liked the green fields; he replied, "they are very well for the cows." The shades of retirement, 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 retreat, 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 filled in society, the stimulus of public applause might have continued to supersede any more vulgar inebriety; and for the inspiration of genius would never

probably have been substituted the contemptible and destructive excitement of alcohol.

An unnatural exile from the world, so far from 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 desert.

That puny and invalid virtue which cannot bear the bustle of the crowd, it is not probable will stand more firmly in a state of absolute or comparative insulation. Monasteries and nunneries may be useful hospitals for some diseased and mutilated minds; but they ought to be

regarded only as a last and desperate resource. A man should not degenerate into a monk, whilst he is capable of performing the offices of a rational creature; and no female ought to take the veil, until she has tried every other remedy in vain. The lamp of life burns to waste in the sepulchre of solitude. Misery ought, in a more especial manner, to shun that seclusion, which it is too apt to seek. It is necessary to a pure relish for rural retirement, that a man should carry into it a mind unincumbered with painful remembrances, and unwounded by the infliction of any great calamity. How can he be expected to enjoy the vernal freshness of the fields, and the blue transparency of the sky, whose hopes have been prematurely withered, and whose moral prospects terminate in a clouded horizon? One reason more important than his defect of sight, why the eloquent author of

Rasselas felt so decided a distaste for country scenes, was perhaps the morbid melancholy, the radical wretchedness of his constitution. A wretchedness which originates in remorse, tends still more completely to paralyze the sensibility to all the fascinations of external and inanimate nature. This may be considered as one of the punishments, which in the present world is inflicted upon moral transgression. Had our first parents been allowed after the fall, to continue in the garden of Eden, the loss of their innocence would have robbed it of all its charms. It is remarkable, however, that melancholy, more especially when it amounts to absolute derangement, in general delights to shelter itself under the shadow of solitude. The visit even of the morning light is, in such cases, felt as an intrusion. Interruption of any kind produces distraction. The unfortunate

victim loves to feast upon his meal of misery without disturbance or control.

A too long protracted absence from society will often excite in more healthy minds, an antipathy to and even a dread of returning to the crowd. After some weeks of confinement to his painting-room, Sir Joshua Reynolds relates of himself, that when he again emerged into the public streets, he saw men as trees walking, and fancied them attentively observing him and intending him some mischief. I had many years ago a patient of a similar sort. He imagined the people he met, were either pointing or whispering at him ; amidst the population of a great town, he felt all the terrors of a man who is haunted by ghosts, or encompassed by banditti.

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, became 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.

We are apt to catch unconsciously the

impression which we observe in the countenance of a companion. Our features are darkened by the cloud which overshadows his brow, and the beams of joy and cheerfulness which sparkle in his eye, may be seen to brighten our own with a reciprocal radiance. But what is more remarkable, this will often take place without any internal sympathy, except so far as mental feelings may be produced by their bodily signs. For it is well known that by moulding our physiognomy to the external form of a particular passion, we become in a certain degree conscious of the passion itself. This result of imitation, which is temporary only when produced by a fugitive or an occasional cause, will be likely to be rendered permanent, and in a manner constitutional, by our being exposed more constantly to the circumstances which originally gave rise to it. The mask of

hypocrisy, after having been long worn, will either adhere too firmly to be removed, or if taken off, will leave behind it the impression of its shape. In like manner, that mimic propensity we have been referring to, if it be acted upon in one particular way for any considerable period, will be apt to produce an indentation upon the mind, which can never perhaps be obliterated. Often may we see a gloom cast upon a whole company, by the apparent dejection of an individual in it. If instead of the accidental and transient presence of such a person, we are destined to be domesticated, or to have daily intercourse with him, the influence of his temper we should feel gradually to grow into the texture of our frame. The spring of our own cheerfulness, which at first was only bent, would in time be broken. The melancholy of the poet Cowper, although it might ori-

ginally be traced to a secret and a deeper cause, appeared to owe the frequency of its recurrence, and its last dreadful and incurable aggravation, in part at least, to his having watched for many years with so acute a sympathy, the sufferings and successively advancing infirmities of one, with whom he had been long associated, and to whom he was tenderly attached.

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 a more than 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 vigor 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 expence 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 undigested 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, which, 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. The more a mind of small capacity is crowded with ideas, the greater is the danger of their jostling one against another, and thus producing tumult and

confusion. 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 another, 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 honors of the university, which however he was suddenly thrown into a 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, 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 cloaths, for the day. At length, he 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 by rest merely, 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 uniformly 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 that 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 labor of the research is never likely to be rewarded by the importance of the discovery. But in the present age a propensity to metaphysical researches is not

perhaps so much to be dreaded, as an undue dedication of our time to lighter studies. A considerable portion of the novels and poetry of modern times, may be regarded as having had an unfavorable effect upon the health, as well as morals, more especially of juvenile readers. A pampered appetite for high and intense sensation has a tendency to destroy our relish for more wholesome food, for what may be called the daily bread of life. A mind that has been addicted to this kind of reading bears some analogy to a stomach, the tone of which has been destroyed by intemperance. A circulating library may for the most part be compared to a chest of liqueurs, where there is nothing to nourish or strengthen, and every thing to stimulate and inflame. A predominant taste for this species of dram, for this debauchery of the imagination, may be considered in part as the

effect, and in a still greater degree as the cause, of the actual prevalence of what at present pass under the denomination of nervous maladies.

Nothing is more conducive to happiness and health than a moderation of temper and expectation. Exquisite enjoyment is an interruption of our habitual state, a deviation from the ordinary tenor of our existence. What was originally either pleasurable or painful becomes from custom almost alike indifferent. The high road of life however rugged is gradually trodden into smoothness, and if it were strewn with flowers, they would soon wither under the repeated pressure of our steps.

A habit cultivated in early life of being attracted and interested by external objects, is one of the best preservatives against the danger of a morbid abstraction in our more advanced years. In this circumstance perhaps consists the princi-

pal advantage of such studies as botany, chemistry, mineralogy, and other branches of natural history and philosophy. A lively lady once remarked to one of the first botanists of his age, "I have no pleasure in flowers, — they don't talk —" he replied, "they talk to me."

The most miserable species of servitude is theirs, who are mendicants for miscellaneous society, to whom talking is not an amusement merely, but the business of their lives, who, if they read or think, it is only to prepare for what may be considered their professional object, to lay up materials for conversational display. The wretchedness of so perverted a direction of taste and talent is glaringly evinced in the instances of such celebrated and unhappy women as Mad. du Deffand and Mad. de Stael, not to mention other cases of a similar nature which might be found on this side of the British Channel. That genius which illuminates society by

the brilliancy of its rays, often proves in solitude a consuming fire.

A poor hypochondriac went to consult an eminent practitioner at Paris, with regard to what might be the best remedy for the depression under which he laboured. The physician, as the best way to exhilarate the spirits of the invalid, told him to go to the theatre and see Carlini. The patient answered, "I am Carlini."

Hypochondriasis may be considered as one of the bitter fruits of a high state of polish and mental cultivation. Amongst barbarous nations it is said to be almost, if not altogether, unknown. If, in weighing the evils of savage against those of civilized life, we were to throw nervous diseases into the scale of the latter, it would be perhaps difficult to ascertain on which side the balance preponderated.

ESSAY VIII.

VICISSITUDE A CAUSE, AND CHARACTERISTIC
SYMPTOM OF INTELLECTUAL MALADY.

“ Against ill chances men are ever merry,
But heaviness foreruns the good event.”

Henry the Fourth.

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. The latter expression indeed applies to the external physiognomy and demeanor, rather than to

the internal state. 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 chillness of the surface, which serves only 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*. When any particular feeling is carried to its utmost verge, it will often usurp the external semblance of an exactly opposite condition of the mind. Who has not heard of the loud laugh of anguish, and the silent tears of enjoyment?

Morbid excitement and depression are found in the same individual fre-

quently, and often periodically, 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 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. Cowper says, in one of his letters, "I never received a *little* pleasure from any thing. That nerve of my imagination which feels the throb of any particular amusement, twangs under the energy of the pressure with so much vehemence, that it soon becomes sensible of weariness and fatigue." Whatever is exquisite is necessarily fugitive. He with whom every feeling is a passion, can never know the invaluable blessing of tranquillity.

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 cer-

tain 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, intemperate in his hopes or in his fears, intemperate in his friendship or hostilities, intemperate in the restlessness of his extravagance, or in his greediness of gain.

An indulgence in any paroxysm of impetuosity is not sufficiently considered in the relation which it bears to the well-being of the body. An irascible man, for instance, is not aware how much mischief he suffers from that violent impulse of resentment which would lead him to inflict an injury or an insult upon a real or an imaginary foe. No person, perhaps, was ever angry with another, with-

out having reason afterwards to be angry with himself.

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. The Stock Exchange alone has been found to be more productive of insanity, than all the other places of gambling resort combined, in either the eastern or western district of the metropolis. How many have fallen martyrs to the consols, or the victims of omnium! I recollect the case of an unfortunate young man, who sunk under 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 ima-

gination 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 cyder manufactory on the coast.

The late Dr Priestley remarked, that when any thing occurred to him, of a particularly pleasant or disagreeable nature, there soon happened something of a contrary character to compensate it; and there are few persons who, in reflecting upon their experience in this motley

world, may not have made a similar observation. The chequered scene of our present state may be compared to the black and white squares which regularly succeed each other in a draught-board. It would be desirable, if it were possible, that the good or evil, the joy or grief of the actual moment, should be so tempered by a recollection of the past, or an anticipation of the future, as to preclude an excessive indulgence of, or an entire absorption in our immediate feelings.

Although an evenness and quietness or 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.

SLEEP.

“ Sleep is not, as has often been supposed, a suspension of thought, but an irregular and distempered state of the faculty.” GODWIN.

IT has been a prevailing opinion of philosophers as well as of the vulgar, that perfect sleep implies the total absence of consciousness ; thought occurring only in those cases where it becomes incomplete or disturbed.

It will be allowed, that dreaming very frequently accompanies sleep ; so much so, that I should imagine there was scarcely a person who had not, in many instances of his life, remembered to have dreamt ; but it is also true, that there is scarcely a

person, who, after having awakened from this state, has not sometimes been unable to recollect what had been the subject of his thoughts, or even that he had thought at all. Hence it has been argued, that in such cases there had been a total absence of consciousness.

This want of recollection may be accounted for upon different principles. We cannot fail to have remarked, that a dream, which we were unable to recollect a short time after awakening, is not unfrequently recalled to our remembrance by some incident during the course of the day, which happens to be connected with the subject of it. Whenever, therefore, a dream is not recollected at all, it probably arises from the absence of some such associated circumstance. Our failure of memory in this case seems exactly analogous to what we observe so often to occur immediately after a state of reverie.

When we are abruptly roused from a reverie, by a companion who asks us the subject of it, we in general find ourselves at a loss to satisfy the enquirer ; having no more idea of what had just been occupying our thoughts, than if we had been during that time in a state of absolute insensibility.

There is scarcely one of the phenomena of sleep which seems so remarkable as the rapid manner in which ideas pass through the mind whilst it is in that state. Images present themselves in such quick succession, that an almost immense multitude of them appear to be crowded into the shortest period of time. Now this accelerated succession of ideas cannot fail to render the remembrance of them more than commonly difficult. For it is obvious, that the shorter the time an idea remains in the mind, the less likely is it to leave any deep or durable impression.

And accordingly we find, that men in whose minds the current of thought seems so sluggish as to threaten an absolute stagnation, are almost universally gifted by nature with memories the most faithful and tenacious.

Cases frequently occur in which persons are observed, by those who happen to be near them, to speak, or in some other way to give notice of an impression upon their minds, although, upon awakening, they are unable to recollect any consciousness.

We have reason to believe, that thought is uniformly connected with a vast variety of motions, where it is at the same time of so subtle a nature, as nearly to elude our consciousness. It seems, for instance, necessarily to precede every step that we take in the longest journey; since we find, that if the attention be at any time strongly bent upon a subject that is unconnect-

ed with the motion of our limbs, this motion will uniformly be interrupted. The same remark may be applied to the act of swallowing our food, and perhaps, even to the function of respiration. Now, if by the aid of reasoning we are able to detect the presence of thought, where we had least suspected its existence, why should we be unwilling to suppose that it uniformly accompanies sleep, although, in some cases, it may be so evanescent, as altogether to escape our recollection?

There are several circumstances which, if we were properly to attend to them, would account for the very sensible refreshment which the mind usually derives from sleep, although it be then as continually occupied as in our waking state.

Sleep, by entirely suspending the exertion of the voluntary muscles, promotes the repose of the body; and from

the intimate sympathy that exists between the intellectual and the corporeal parts of our frame, will thus conduce to the refreshment of the mind.

As any occupation which is monotonous induces premature fatigue, so we find, on the other hand, that we may protract the period of our mental, as well as of our corporeal, vigour to a very unusual degree, by sufficiently diversifying the *manner* of its exertion. The state of sleep, by varying incessantly the subject of our thoughts, in part secures us against the fatigue which otherwise we should suffer from continued thinking. It is remarkable, that our ideas when we are in this state seldom remain long in the same train; no sooner does one image offer itself to our contemplation, than it is removed by another, which in general bears no resemblance to, and seems not to have

any kind of connection with, the preceding.

Although in sleep the mind be continually occupied, in a state of vigilance only does it appear properly *active*; it receives ideas indeed in the former state, but seldom with any effort either to methodise or to detain them. Now from the experience of our waking hours, we learn, that it is efforts of this kind, and not impressions passively received; or, in other words, that it is voluntary attention, and not mere thought, that is calculated to induce fatigue. Ideas that are quite unconnected with the will might pass through the mind, I should conceive, for an almost indefinite period without exhausting it; unless, indeed, they happen to be associated with some violent emotions, or lead us to laborious exertions of the body, both of which tend equally,

whether we are asleep or awake, to wear away the vigour of our frame.

In the situation of a maniac, no circumstance impresses us with so lively an idea of his misery as the nearly constant vigilance to which that unfortunate being is in most instances condemned. Sleep, by which almost every other kind of unhappiness is at times interrupted or alleviated, is comparatively seldom allowed to this last of all human calamities. And yet it is remarkable, that the mind of an insane person rarely appears exhausted prematurely by this continual occupation of it; at the same time that he is, in nearly every case, a prey to the corroding influence of a morbidly acute sensibility.

May not this singular fact be in some measure explained, by considering the state of mind in mania as approaching very nearly to that which occurs in dreaming or reverie, in both of which

the current of thought seems in general to flow independently of the voluntary power?

Our not being able to ascertain the end which may be answered by dreams which we are unable to recollect, when, the thoughts being immediately forgotten, the mind seems to have been occupied to no purpose, cannot operate as any weighty argument against the reality of the fact; since it is impossible for us to doubt the existence of so many phenomena, the final cause of which we are, at the same time, perfectly at a loss to discover. Besides, nocturnal impressions cannot but be allowed to possess a degree of value during their continuance, although they should be entirely effaced by the light of day. The long dream of human existence ought not to be regarded as entirely destitute of at least temporary worth, although, at the con-

clusion of it, all its occurrences and variety of emotions are buried in the oblivion of the grave.

Constant conjunction is the only proof, which, in any instance, we can have of a conjunction that is necessary. Provided then that thought be in fact uniformly connected with our existence, we may suppose, that, like the animal function of respiration, or that of the circulation of the blood, it is so absolutely essential to life, that if the association were broken, death must inevitably ensue.

In every situation in which we can conceive ourselves to be placed, the body must, in some measure, be liable to impressions; and no impression can ever be made upon the corporeal, that has not an effect, however limited, upon the intellectual part of our frame. An impression of a certain force made upon the body will have such an effect upon the

mind, even in the soundest sleep, as immediately to awaken us. Does it then seem reasonable to believe, that a force which is not sufficient to awaken, will produce no effect at all upon the mind?

It is commonly remarked, that the tendency to dreaming diminishes, in proportion as we are less exposed to causes of corporeal irritation. But these causes do always operate in a certain degree; this tendency therefore can never be altogether counteracted. In proportion as the stimuli of light, noise, &c. are removed, sleep is observed to be accompanied with less sensibility; but these stimuli can in no case be entirely removed, consequently this sensibility can in no case be entirely extinguished.

An objection may arise, that if the mind be in fact influenced by every impression that is made upon the body, it

must be subject to an inconceivable number of them every instant of our existence. But this, however incredible it may seem, is, I should imagine, really the fact, although it must be allowed, what indeed every man is conscious of, that we are unable to attend to more than one idea at the same time; or, in other words, that, however vast the assemblage of simultaneous impressions, they invariably *coalesce*, and assume in this way the appearance of unity. Our perceptions are in general composed of a number of minute ones, which cannot be individually distinguished. Every idea, for instance, that is presented to my mind, will, in a certain degree, be modelled by those that preceded it — by the state of my corporeal health — by my situation with regard to external objects, and by a variety of other circumstances which influence me, without, in general, my being

at all aware of their operation. No impression is *lost*, although many are prevented from conveying a separate report to the mind, by reason of the predominance of some more violent impression. Every one of those faint notes which in a concert of music we are unable separately to perceive, has still an effect in swelling and modifying the prevailing sound. That which acts in so slight a degree upon our bodies, that we are not at all aware of its operation, would be perceived distinctly by the mind, if we were placed in a situation that was quite insulated from all other impressions. If, for instance, every sense, except that of hearing, were completely closed, and all other sound annihilated, the falling of a feather upon the earth would be heard at an inconceivably greater distance, than that at which we now perceive the report of a cannon.

It is remarkable how much the vivacity of our conceptions is increased, by merely the partial removal of external agents. So that, although the exclusion of light, noise, &c. be in general found favorable to the approach of sleep, there are circumstances in which it is obviously otherwise. For when we happen to be subject to any internal causes of violent irritation, the mind may, in a great measure, be diverted from them by stimuli from without. A child, for instance, who, from the superstitious tales of its nurse, has unfortunately imbibed a dread of supernatural beings, will often be unable to sleep when surrounded by total darkness and silence. But, besides such cases of infantile imbecility, I have in several instances remarked, that persons endowed with an imagination more than commonly active, especially when it has

been excited by some very interesting idea, have found it less difficult to compose themselves to sleep amidst the blaze of noon, and the noises of a crowded and busy street, than at a time when midnight had removed from them almost every thing which could in any way act upon their external senses.

Thought is, in the strictest sense of the expression, *independent of the will*; it is obvious, that at no time can we choose whether we will think or not. But respiration, the circulation of the blood, and every other action of the system which is independent of the will, continues during sleep. Shall we then, contrary to analogy, presume, that thought alone, of all the involuntary functions, is suspended during that state?

Philosophers have often been at a loss to ascertain any sufficient reason, why

man should have been doomed to waste so large a portion of his existence in a state of insensibility: a difficulty that immediately vanishes, after we have admitted the force of the preceding arguments.

If, on the contrary, the current of thought in sleep be not only uninterrupted, but even more rapid than when we are awake; and it also be granted that the life of an individual ought not strictly to be measured by the revolution of the heavenly bodies, or by changes that take place in any thing external, but merely by the number of ideas that pass through his mind; we seem authorized to conclude, however strange the inference may at first sight appear to be, that sleep, so far from abridging, as it has in general been supposed to do, tends considerably to add to the quantity of human exist-

ence! When too, we reflect that the combinations of our ideas in dreams are, for the most part, different from those which we form in our waking hours, sleep will appear useful in another light, as giving an additional variety, and a more permanent novelty, to our lives. Another circumstance which enhances the value of sleep, is, that in that state our conceptions are often more lively than they are accustomed to be during vigilance. The exclusion, in a very considerable degree, of external agents, and the suspension, in a great measure, of other faculties, seem to give greater scope to the operation of fancy.

In connection with this remark, it may not perhaps be useless to observe, that those persons have a peculiar motive for guarding against an intemperate indulgence in sleep, over whose minds the

imagination has a more than common ascendancy during their waking hours. Long continued dreams cannot fail to confirm the power of fancy, by protracting the period of its empire.

ESSAY X.

WANT OF SLEEP.

Thou hast no figures and no fantasies
Which busy care draws in the brains of men,
Therefore, thou sleep'st so sound.

Julius Cæsar.

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 vigor, 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 re-

cruited 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 solitudes, 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 favorite idea, will be apt to acquire an ascendancy, 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. "It is not generally known, that anxiety and sleeplessness during the American war, are believed, by those persons who had the best opportunity for forming an opinion upon the subject, to have laid the foundation of the malady by which the King was afflicted during the latter years of his life." — *Southey's Vision of Judgement*.

I have been often solicited to recom-

mend 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. In these cases I 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.”

Want of sleep is often occasioned by some obstruction of the cutaneous pores. The warm and cold baths are not opposite remedies, inasmuch as they have the salutary property, in common, of purifying the surface of the body. In promoting tranquillity, both corporeal and mental, a

clean skin may be regarded as next in efficacy to a clear conscience. Some years ago, I was called to one of the most notorious characters in London. He was an hypochondriac, the principal feature of whose complaint was an obstinate watchfulness. He had, in rotation, tried nearly all the doctors, great and small, in the metropolis; but they seemed all to have been equally inefficient. No medicine could be applied to the seat of his disease: no contrivance of art could lull his conscience to repose. With all his dexterity in fraud, for which he was perhaps unrivalled, he was unable to cheat himself. In our public courts of justice he often, by the application of technical subtleties, braved the judge upon the bench, but he trembled before the secret and more formidable tribunal that was established within his own breast. The laws of England may be evaded,

but those of nature cannot. Junius says somewhere that, upon his honor, he never knew a rascal that was a happy man. No one, I believe, ever knew a rascal that was habitually a sound sleeper.

Some writers upon nervous diseases have recommended, in order to produce sleep, heavy and substantial suppers, as if we could keep down the spirit of watchfulness by laying a load upon the stomach. This, in some instances of violent mania, may have answered the purpose, but, in ordinary cases of morbid vigilance, would in general be found to produce quite a contrary effect.

Pharmaceutical remedies are rarely in such cases of any permanent avail. Opium is dreadfully pernicious in its effects upon the feelings and constitution, more particularly of an hypochondriacal patient. It will not always produce sleep; in mania

it very seldom does ; and, when so far effectual, the sleep it produces is generally of an unrefreshing nature. Hyoscyamus, or the henbane, is much less injurious than opium ; but, if it be not equally noxious, it is often altogether nugatory.

Bodily exercise carried to fatigue, is the most innocent, as well as the most effectual of all opiates. A man must work hard in order to earn the privilege of peaceful and continued slumbers. The repose of the night is to be purchased by the labor of the day.

The inward corrodings of remorse, the agitations of conflicting, and the irritation of frivolous passions, prove unfavorable to sleep. But grief that is profound and unmixed with any base alloy, is found in general to be soporific in its influence. A poet who was by no means deficient in knowledge of human nature seems in

this particular to have mistaken it, when he observes of sleep,

‘ She, like the world, her ready visit pays
Where fortune smiles; the wretched she forsakes:
Swift on her downy pinions flies from woe,
And lights on lids unsullied by a tear.’

I have an intimate friend who, whenever anything occurs to distress him extremely, soon becomes drowsy and falls asleep; and this I believe to be no uncommon case. An Edinburgh fellow-student once informed me, that upon hearing suddenly of the unexpected death of a near relation, he threw himself on his bed, and almost instantly, amidst the glare of noon-day, sank into a profound slumber. The experience of another person I might also state, who, during the illness of his dearest friend, which he had but recently discovered to be hopeless, forced himself to read aloud in order to amuse her. By a

violent and painful exertion, he kept his eyes open and his voice in exercise, but his mind was absolutely unconscious of what he uttered, although the work before him would, under other circumstances, have been particularly calculated to awaken his attention. As others have been known to walk, so he read in sleep. Grief, when it is heavy, not only weighs down the eye-lids, but, by its pressure upon the brain, tends to produce a stupor of all the faculties.

Next to involuntary vigilance ranks the almost equal distress of anxious and agitated slumber. Those who wish to sleep composedly, ought if possible to avoid any thing which agitates or excites them immediately before going to bed. The dissipation of a London winter is in various ways unfriendly to the soundness of nocturnal repose. The brilliant crowd of images which move before the fre-

quarters of routs and dramatic exhibitions, recur with even greater vivacity when the eyes are closed. The lights with which the saloon or theatre were adorned, continue to irradiate and kindle the imagination when they can no longer operate upon the external sense.

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 vigor 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,
Quæsitæ cælo lucem ingemuitque reperta.”*

ESSAY X.

INTEMPERANCE.

“ Here’s that which is too weak to be a sinner, honest water, which never left man in the mire.”

Timon of Athens.

“ **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 en-

tirely exhausted. Extraordinary longevity has seldom, I believe, been known to occur, except in persons of a remarkably tranquil and slow-paced circulation.

But if intemperance curtailed merely 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 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 breaks 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 pure and 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 vigor 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 ad-

not the worst result of intemperance.

vance 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 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, in the regular course of nature, that season could 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 expose a miserable fragment, as the only relic of their preceding splendor.

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 fictitious 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 fall from the torch of genius, by which it is converted into a firebrand of mischief.

We are apt to complain of the heaviness and wearisomeness of volumes, where the pains taken by the writer have not been sufficiently concealed. But the apparent result of excessive care is much to be preferred to the headless 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 frequently 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 ac-

cumulated 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 vigor, 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 once it has 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 relict of it in the frame, there is danger of a relapse of this moral malady, from which there seldom is, as from physical disorders, a gradual convalescence. The man who has been the

slave of intemperance must renounce her altogether, or she will insensibly re-assume 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 vigor 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 to be 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 swallow, 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 thus most effectually ruin 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 must, after all, be allowed to be 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 vigor, labor under the corporeal imbecility of the celebrated poet, and who ought therefore to be equally nice in their notions of excess. The mischief, and of course, the guilt of intemperance, vary considerably according to the 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 vigor 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.

Alcohol ought not to be had recourse to even in more advanced life, except upon some extraordinary occasion, when a deficiency of immediate vigor obliges us to draw upon the future for supply. A prudent man, however, will be careful how he at any time mortgages his constitution, but in early youth a want of this caution is particularly to be dreaded. There is a kind of compound interest to be acquired in vital as well as in pecuniary property. In our first years, deviations comparatively slight and transient from the strait line of sobriety and nature, inflict perhaps a more essential injury upon the imperfectly formed and insufficiently cemented fabric, than it would be

likely afterwards to receive from the attacks of more permanent and outrageous excess.

The actual habits of an hypochondriac may be temperate, but it will generally be found upon enquiry, that they were not always so. He is now probably reaping that harvest of mischief, the seeds of which were sown in the season of his youth. It is often in the power of moral reform to stop the progress of injury, but it can seldom obliterate that which has been already inflicted. No revolution of habits can regenerate the decayed principle of life. We shall never be what we might have been, had we not once transgressed. Bankrupts in constitution cannot, like commercial insolvents, be restored to their former condition. For a considerable time, we may not seem to ourselves to be poorer for our early extravagance, but the debt in which it has involved us must

be paid at last. It often unfortunately happens in such cases, that care becomes excessive at a period when it can no longer be of much advantage. After having wantonly poured, as it were, upon the ground the first sprightly runnings, a man becomes absurdly parsimonious of the dregs of vitality. He throws away the kernel, and hoards with an insane avarice the dry and empty shell.

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 innoxious 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. 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 ardor 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 me-

dical 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 often provides him also with a temporary instinct, which is still more sure in its dictates than the reasoning faculty.

To some hypochondriacs we ought not to proscribe the moderate use of wine, as by so doing, we may be in danger of excluding them altogether from the enjoyment of that social intercourse, which is the only medicine of a life that may, under certain circumstances, be regarded as

a long disease. Those who have lived in the habit of taking two or three glasses of wine after dinner, and who have seldom exceeded that quantity, it would be an act of almost gratuitous cruelty to deprive of so scanty an indulgence.

There are persons who carry the doctrine of abstinence to an absurd and even ridiculous extent. Such are they who tell us to abstain not from wine only, but even from water, unless it be purified by an artificial process. The spring which issues from the bowels of the earth, needs not the chemist's art to render it salubrious. The laboratory of nature requires for such a purpose no aid from the laboratory of man.

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. Nothing acts as so powerful a sedative upon virtuous efforts, as the consciousness of the loss of reputation; and no circumstance is so directly calculated to rob a

man of his good name, as a habit of intemperance. It is a very difficult task, in such cases, to get the stain of wine out of the character; but it is not quite so impossible as to change the spots in the leopard's skin. We ought never to think that the day of grace is past, or that, however desperate our circumstances, we are out of the pale of possible salvation. 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. Bent almost to the earth under the burthen of his regrets, he is unable to look up so as to contemplate the brighter prospect which may at length open upon his path. 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 condi-

tion. 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 accomplishes his purpose. The intemperate man instead of forgetting himself, as he is said to do, is in general the most selfish of mortals ; but sympathy, when not altogether eradicated by this destructive habit, will often give a chance of rescue from its dominion. I have known a man who, a long continued course of excess not having rendered him callous to conjugal tenderness, was thus enabled at once to break the

spell. The wretchedness to which he might otherwise have submitted as his inevitable doom, he could no longer bear to see reflected on the countenance of his dearest friend. The apparently inseparable community of their fate produced an alteration in his conduct, which would not in all probability have been effected by the prospect of his individual and insulated ruin.

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, would justify this representation from the charge of extravagance. I recollect the forcible expression of a person who, in speaking of the miserable effect which the use of opium had produced upon his feelings, remarked that it excited in him "an appetite for death."

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 received some years ago an anonymous letter, which I afterwards learnt was written by a veteran hypochondriac,

who had practised medicine in London for more than half a century. The concluding passages in it convey an impressive lesson with regard to the evil arising from an habitual use of opium. " I am sensible that in this tedious and extraordinary letter there are twenty faults, but if you will excuse me for writing it, you will doubly excuse the composition, when I solemnly and truly declare, that I was not during the writing of it a moment free from the most excruciating torments both of body and mind. I have seen and heard of many laboring under dreadful afflictions, but I never can believe that any ever endured for so long a time such excruciating agony. Every night I expect will be the last. May no man suffer what I have suffered ! The laudanum has kept me alive for more than two years, but it has lost its charm. I never would recommend any man to introduce it so

long as to make it habitual, for it would most likely make him as it has made me, wretched beyond compare."

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.

The use of opium, which is often begun with a view to relieve bodily pain, is

apt to be afterwards recurred to whenever it is necessary to compose irritability, to animate languor, or to elevate depression.

When opium is employed as a remedy in cases of merely physical disease, it may not be liable to the same objection. When used however for a length of time without any considerable interval, 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.

It would be well if a drug which is so liable to become a part of the daily regimen of an hypochondriacal invalid, and which often renders him incurably such, were never used in any form or quantity, except under the especial sanction of professional authority; and it may at least be doubted, whether even the sanction of professional authority be not in general

too carelessly and too lightly lent to the employment of a medicine, the application of whose extraordinary powers ought to be reserved for occasions of proportionate emergency.

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 immediately 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 the victims of what has been considered their good fortune. A sudden accession of opulence or honor 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 in some instances may tend to protract life, almost in proportion as it deducts from the vivacity of its enjoyment.

ESSAY XII.

EXCESS OF ABSTINENCE.

“ But more immedicable ills

Attend the lean extreme.”

Armstrong

“ Let me have men about me that are fat.”

Julius Cæsar.

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 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 an 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 unreasonable, 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. I recollect a case in dispensary practice,

which was almost the first presented to my notice, where the patient obviously died in consequence of too long an interruption in the supply of nourishment. The moment of her death was unperceived and silent, like a watch which stops without giving either sound or notice, merely because it has not been wound up afresh before the periodical exhaustion of its power of movement. 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.

“ To enjoy is to obey.” A gratuitous abstinence is a species of practical impiety. He who sullenly rejects, and he who wantonly abuses the proffered favors of Providence, are alike guilty of ingratitude. That piety should consist in privation, and virtue in self-inflicted and unnecessary torture, is a doctrine which has been professed indeed by monks and hermits, but which is altogether unworthy of rational and enlightened man. Many are the instances upon record, where a superstitious abstinence has proved mischievous, and even fatal in its

effects. Fanatics have become delirious from voluntary famine. A misguided conscience has conquered the cravings of hunger, and has resisted the demands of a still more imperious instinct. Men have fancied, that in proportion as they rebelled against the laws, their conduct has been well-pleasing to the Author of nature. Voluntary violations of our duty are not more injurious, than erroneous conceptions with regard to its dictates and its limits.

ESSAY XIII.

MORBID AFFECTIONS OF THE ORGANS OF SENSE.

“ Why, then your other senses grow imperfect
By your eyes’ anguish.”

Lear.

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 Struldruggs; 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 surprizing manner."

Whatever may be the physiological mode of accounting for it, there is scarcely any symptom more frequently attendant upon maniacal or hypochondriacal disorders 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.*

* 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."

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 for the most part 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 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 ophthalmic 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 sometime before 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, extremely liable to fits, and was apt to fall down insensible upon occasions of the slightest degree of agitation or surprise. Her complaint seemed to consist, not in an injured state of the eye, but in a debility of the nervous system in general, that *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 defect of sight. Both symptoms had in all probability a common origin in nervous weakness or derangement.

One of the most decided tests of medical sagacity consists in the power of almost instantaneously distinguishing between the origin of a malady and the outward phenomena which it produces. A disease is not always external when it appears to be so. If the hand of a clock go wrong, it is seldom owing to any fault in the hand itself, but is to be attributed to some irregularity or defect in the internal machinery, of whose movements the hand serves merely as the superficial index. By correcting a symptom, it is possible that we may only give deeper root to the essential malady. It is either from ignorance of, or a disregard to, this circumstance, that empirics so often gain an undeserved reputation.

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 of course 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 particles of unguent, is only betraying the patient into a flattering and faithless anticipation of recovery, without any chance of eradicating, or even touching the root of a disease, which is more properly the object of medical than of surgical treatment. †

* "Philosophy I fear does not warrant much faith in a lotion." — JOHNSON'S Letters.

† Such distinctions, although they ought by no means to be neglected, may sometimes be carried to an absurd and even ludicrous extent. When at Calais during the truce of Amiens, as I was walking on the sea-shore, a particle of sand lodged itself under my eye-lid. Happening at the moment to be near a shop that wore a pharmaceutical aspect, I entered and re-

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

requested the person whom I saw there to remove the troublesome intruder, by means of the feather of a quill that was lying upon his desk. The performance however of this simple act he scrupulously declined. "Pardon, Monsieur, nous sommes chymistes, pas chirurgiens; il n'est pas à nous à *opérer*."

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 ophthalmia, but of acute and chronic headache, 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 precluding altogether the possibility

of that amusement and diversion of mind which 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 ordinary 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 cordial; 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 once 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 XIV.

PHYSICAL MALADY THE OCCASION OF
MENTAL DISORDER.

“ The body and mind are like a jerkin and a jerkin's lining,
rumple the one and you rumple the other.”

STERNE.

AMONGST a great number which have fallen under my observation, I recollect a remarkable case, in which 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 mention 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 du *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 léger accident, qu'un atome déplacé, pour te dégrader, pour te ravir cette intelligence, dont tu parois si fier !”

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.

What enfeebles the body will indirectly weaken the faculties of the mind, and there is a nearer connection than is generally imagined between mental weakness and derangement. There cannot be a

more erroneous opinion than that persons only of a more than common vigor of intellect are capable of madness. *Violence is not strength.* In typhous 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; hysterics 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 exhibit symptoms of morbid energy, much greater than the patient would have been capable of displaying in the state of her most perfect health and vigor.

These fugitive and abrupt exhibitions of morbid energy are very far from indicating genuine strength, which shows 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. So far from its being true that madness, in any of its modifications, necessarily arises from an excess of intellectual vigor: although it is not in every case, in many cases it is, a symptom of radical imbecility or of premature decay.

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 apt to lean 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, than

* 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.

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.

THE ATMOSPHERE OF LONDON.

“ It is not air, but floats a nauseous mass
Of all obscene, corrupt, offensive things.” ARMSTRONG.

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. 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 vegeta-

tion, 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 summer 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 crystallization, it is fair to imagine, cannot be particularly favorable 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 can scarcely fail to be as 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 influence of its prevailing habits. It is not so much perhaps from the change of atmosphere, as from that of hours and employment, that a person experiences restoration and relief in retiring from

London, after the exhaustion of a winter campaign. A conformity with the etiquette of polished life, is inconsistent with the preservation of vulgar health. Complaisance of this kind is as destructive as contagion. Those who are supposed to fall a sacrifice to foul air, are frequently in fact martyrs to the idolatry of fashion. 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 favorite amusement awaken the dormant energies of the animal fibre.

Now when the mind is quickened, out of doubt
The organs, though defunct and dead before,
Break up their drowsy grave, and newly move
With casted slough, and fresh celerity.

Upon a similar principle, they are, for the most part, only the vacant and the idle, the "lilies of the field 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 as peculiarly disposing to melancholy, and the favorite season of

suicide. A man, when he feels dejected from any cause, is apt, like the sympathising friend of Yorick, to "blame the weather for the disorder of his nerves." But 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 a mental invalid 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.

The custom which prevails amongst the more fashionable or valetudinarian inhabitants of London, of retiring from

it during the autumnal months, conduces equally to health and to enjoyment. In order to feel, in the highest degree, the refreshing influences of the country, it is necessary that we should spend the greater part of our time in the midst of a great town. To the epicure in climate, pure air is a luxury, but like other luxuries, it ceases to be such, when it becomes an article of daily diet, of our familiar food. The air of the country stimulates and enlivens, but like other cordials, it appears in general to act only for a short time, and to produce, in some instances, a similar exhaustion. That this, however, is not universally true, is evinced by the permanently salutary effect in many cases of the marine atmosphere. The breezes of the ocean often seem to bear healing under their wings; and are particularly adapted for restoring those convalescents, who have little other relic of disease

than the weakness or emaciation which it generally leaves behind. For this reduced and debilitated condition the air of the coast operates like a specific. It proves, when combined with gentle exercise, the best perhaps of all known corroborants, and sometimes produces effects the most astonishing in filling up the exhausted form, and in giving new nerve and muscle to a frame that has been attenuated and almost dissolved by long continued malady, medicine, and confinement.

But common as it is, nothing surely can be more cruel and absurd than to send, in contempt as it were of our unsparing and changeful climate, persons far advanced in the alarming symptoms of hectic, from their own warm and comfortable habitations, to undergo the last struggles of nature in cheerless and unaccommodating lodgings on the coast, or

at some other gaily frequented watering-place. For consumption, home is the best hospital, and the most effectual remedy is repose. A melancholy delusion is exhibited in the etiquette of sending a cast-off patient, after his faith, his fortune, and his frame have been well nigh exhausted, to the medicinal fountains in the vicinity of Bristol, where the undermined and crumbling fabric of his constitution may quietly moulder away, out of the sight of those professional advisers, who anticipated and were conscious of being no longer able to avert or retard the period of its inevitable destruction. Clifton may be regarded merely as a fashionable asylum for the dying, an anti-chamber to the grave; where miserable emigrants from home, pilgrims to a land of flattering but faithless promise, nearly lifeless and semi-transparent spectres may be seen waiting

upon the brink of this, for their passport to another shore.

Before quitting the subject of this Essay, it may be proper to notice the evil and danger which arise from churchyards situated in the midst of a great and populous city. Those consecrated spots, which were destined merely to be the peaceful repositories of the dead, are thus too frequently converted into fertile sources of mischief and misery to the living. Such must be more especially the case in cemeteries which are excessively and even indecently crowded, in which stratum above stratum of cadaverous matter lie in the closest contact, and where one body is not unfrequently mutilated or removed to give place to another. A soil like this, composed principally of human relics, constitutes an accumulated mass of malignant and almost irresistible contagion. Inde-

pendently of such considerations, there is scarcely any man, in spite of all his reasonings, but must feel a repugnance to molest the quiet, and to violate the sanctity of the grave.

ESSAY XVI.

DYSPEPTIC AND HEPATIC DISEASES.

We're not ourselves

When nature being opprest, commands the mind

To suffer with the body.

SHAKSPEARE.

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 a 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 labor of digestion, as well as with any other labor. 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 es-

cape many other trials, have often to undergo the severest trials of resolution.

What are called dyspeptic and bilious diseases, may for the most part be attributed to some error in diet, or excess in epicurean indulgence. They are to be found principally amongst persons who, in their habits of living, sin against the stomach, an organ which always sufficiently revenges itself upon those who impair or trifle with its texture. Hippocrates, one of our most venerable fathers in medicine, tells us that he who eats and drinks little will have no disease. Dr. Cheyne, who had suffered dreadfully from the effects of an opposite course, laid it down that, in the regulation of our diet, we ought to aim at "the lightest and the least." Those persons can scarcely expect to escape the horrors of indigestion, whose meals emulate in frequency and continuance the pasture of

an animal at grass. He who is sparing in the quantity, need not be very scrupulous with regard to the quality of his aliment. By making it a habit to rise from table with a certain degree of appetite, a man may save himself a great deal of trouble in the selection of his food. Nothing is more common than for an invalid to enquire of his physician, what dishes are proper for him and what are not so. His doctor might almost as reasonably be required to tell him what was most agreeable to his palate, as what best agreed with his stomach. Upon such points a patient can alone judge for himself, the proverbial difference in tastes being scarcely greater than the real difference in the individual faculties and peculiarities of digestion.

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. If we confine ourselves in our most substantial repast to one dish, and that not a dish which is calculated to provoke rather than to satisfy the appetite, we may spare ourselves all anxiety with regard to the wholesome and unwholesome; a mean and servile solicitude which debases the mind of a man, and can do little good to his body. To live rigidly by rule, is not to live in any valuable or dignified sense of the word. I never could respect the character or envy the longevity of Cornaro.

People who are naturally feeble or have been debilitated by disease are apt to fancy that they can scarcely take suf-

ficient nourishment; but it ought to be remembered that taking food is not always the same thing as taking nourishment. By receiving too much into the stomach, we obstruct the process of assimilation. The general frame may be thus starved by an excessive, as well as by a defective quantity of the ingesta.)

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 be still kept with a kind of sacred punctuality, as salutary intervals of abstinence, which give to the stomach a periodical holiday, and afford an occasional respite from the daily drudgery of digestion.

The evil of repletion is, however, often aggravated by previous inanition. The injury to the digestive organs, and of course, to the general health, is incalculably great from the prevailing fashion of late and large dinners, from a daily alternation of emptiness and oppression.

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.

———— *Ille horridus alter*

Desidia, latamque trahens inglorius abum.

It is a common opinion that animal food is less easily digested than vegetable, and that persons who have weak stomachs ought therefore to abstain in a great de-

gree, if not entirely from the former species of diet. This I consider as a notion altogether as unfounded, as that of Sir Andrew Aguecheek, who thought the flesh meat that he took was unfavorable to the fertility of his fancy. "But I am a great eater of beef, and I believe that does harm to my wit." It appears to me that in animal food there is a greater quantity of nutritive matter in the same compass, and that it is with more facility than any other kind of food, converted into the substance of our frame. Persons afflicted with dyspepsia or with gout, diseases which are intimately connected, have often been induced by their sufferings to refrain alike from meat and from wine, as if these articles of diet produced, though in a different degree, a similar effect upon the constitution. But I have repeatedly observed, that, although an abstinence from the latter has, by invigorating the

frame, diminished the susceptibility to disease, the privation of the former has been attended with a contrary effect. The difference between a beef-steak and a bottle of wine to a man, bears some analogy to the difference to a horse, between a feed of corn and the application of the spur. The one gives solid support, the other merely excites to action, which is followed by proportionate exhaustion and fatigue.

In the more self-indulgent classes of society, which although not in general so denominated, ought in a rational and moral view, to be regarded as the lower orders, it may be remarked that coughs originate not so frequently from a diseased condition of the lungs, as from a depraved state of the principal and more immediate organ of digestion. Hence arise those chronic coughs which are almost universal amongst the obstinately intem-

perate in eating as well as in drinking. Such coughs become particularly troublesome early in the morning, when the tone of the stomach has not been as yet duly excited by the natural and artificial stimulants of the day. The violent paroxysms of coughing often produce a tendency to vomiting. In such cases emetics give relief, which are on that account by these spendthrifts of constitution so frequently resorted to, as in some instances to become a part of their habitual regimen. An emetic relieves a person for a time from the filth and burthen of a debauch; but this medicinal mode of purification is scarcely less injurious than intemperance itself. I knew a man whose conduct in every other respect was highly exemplary, who was in the habit of clearing his stomach in this manner on returning from a dinner party. The violent action of an emetic under these circum-

stances, was the immediate occasion of his death.

A less injurious mode of relief from the effects of indigestion, is the use of warm diluents. There may however be an intemperance in weak as well as in strong liquors, especially when the former are taken at a high temperature. The celebrated Burke was as much in the habit of refreshing herself by draughts of hot water, as the no less celebrated Pitt by potations of wine ; and many a prude in regimen, who prides herself in the fancied consciousness of her dietetic discretion, gradually wears away the tone and vigor of her frame, by an inordinate indulgence in gruels, broths, and teas. Such gossip cordials relax as certainly, although not in so great a degree, as the poisonous products of fermentation. By the constant application of hot liquids, we may imagine the coats of the stomach

to be *soddened*, in the same manner as the fingers of a washerwoman appear to be by a habit of tepid immersion.

In spite of these observations, I am still inclined to think, that there are many cases in which a taste for tea ought to be encouraged rather than condemned. This taste has a tendency to preclude the more prevalent, and after all more mischievous propensity for vinous stimulation. Many persons distinguished for their longevity have been known to indulge habitually in the use of tea ; which we may account for, not from its being in itself a wholesome beverage, but from a fondness for it generally implying a distaste for potations of a much more decidedly pernicious nature. Tea will produce in some very irritable frames, an artificial state resembling intoxication ; but it is a cloudless inebriety. Tea removes the film from an eye that has been obscured by a gross

and stupifying intemperance, and tends to improve a susceptibility to the true relish of social and intellectual enjoyment.

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 vigor, 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 is a very common thing amongst the dyspeptic to fancy

themselves bilious. The idea of an excess of bile often arises merely from those uneasy feelings in the abdomen, that are apt to accompany indigestion; from a foul taste and a furred tongue upon awaking in the morning, and from that sallowness of the skin which is usual in various cases of habitual or constitutional weakness. But none of these circumstances, either separately or in combination, afford unequivocal evidence of an overflow of bile. The uneasy feelings and the foul taste may be attributed to the general ill condition of the organs of digestion. As for the yellow hue of the complexion, it may be accounted for by the unhealthy state of the cutaneous glands, without the bile having any share in it.

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 con-

scious 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. Amongst the signs of hepatic disorganization, may be classed 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 favorable operation in hepatic disorders. 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 honorable 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 permanent 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.

The countenance, and not only the physical, but even the mental constitution, will often retain through life the impression of a mercurial course. It frequently leaves a man in a diseased state, which becomes worse rather than better as age advances, where the susceptibility to uncomfortable feeling is excessive, and connected at the same time with an almost paralytic insensibility to enjoyment. The instrument is

so entirely out of tune, that no hand, however delicate or dexterous, can draw from it an harmonious note.

Between the diseases which form the particular subject of this Essay and hypochondriasis, the connection is intimate and almost inseparable. The assimilation of the food has an important effect upon the regulation of the mind. A sourness of the temper may often be traced to acidities in the stomach. He who does not digest well, is not likely either to act or to feel aright. A morbid secretion of the liver will give a tinge to a man's character as well as to his complexion. He whose disposition to goodness can resist the influence of dyspepsia, and whose career of philanthropy is not liable to be checked by an obstruction in the hepatic organs, may boast of a much deeper and firmer virtue than falls to the ordinary lot of human nature. A

disorder in the physical part of our frame, produces not so frequently a total obscuration, as a twilight of the intellect, an intermediate and equivocal state between entire sanity and decided derangement: the state in which a large proportion of hypochondriacal men, and hysterical women may be considered as nosologically placed.

ESSAY XVII.

PALSY, IDIOCY, SPASMODIC AND CONVULSIVE
AFFECTIONS.

That's he that *was* Othello!

SHAKSPEARE.

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 that 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 powers 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 universal, except in the muscles about the neck and face. He presented the spectacle of a living head moving upon a motionless and apparently deceased trunk. Death soon, however, completed his 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.

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.

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. Labor 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 laboring 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 is 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 humiliation. It is that unjustly envied class of men, which is most 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.

Swift lived to accomplish his own prediction. His fate corresponded to his melancholy presentiment with regard to it. He became at length like the tree which many years before he had seen withered at the top. His mind died

before his body. There was a stagnation of rational thought long before his blood had ceased to flow. The embers only remained of so many coruscations. 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 recollection, 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 labor, 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 the same time, 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, accompanied occasionally by a diarrhoea, 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 paralyzed 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 habit of the patient was 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 be 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 a 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 resus-

approached within her reach, it ceased to

citation took place of those powers, which might perhaps have been irrecoverably extinguished by an ill-timed expenditure of the vital fluid.

A curious and interesting case fell some time ago under my professional observation of a new species of paralysis, a palsy of the heart, a sudden congelation of the affections. Although before by no means deficient in natural feeling, the patient could now, as she said, see without emotion every one of her family lying dead at her feet. She continued to be influenced by an anxiety to do what was right; almost the only sense indeed that seemed to be left her, was an abstract sense of duty. She had entertained an ardent and tender passion, but many difficulties had been thrown in the way of its indulgence. These however had been at length overcome. But when the object approached within her reach, it ceased to

be an object of desire. Her love had struggled so long against the current of opposition, that it expired, as if exhausted by its efforts, upon landing on the wished-for shore. This is not the only instance that I have known, in which a long continued excess of suffering has produced a morbid apathy. It is an unalterable decree of nature that extreme wretchedness must in no long time terminate in death, derangement, or torpidity. Sensation cannot be wounded for any considerable period, without its being altogether destroyed. It is a law which kindly limits the possible degree, in the extension of human calamity.

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 exertion 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 circumstances 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 that 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 loco-motion 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 fluttering 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

be 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 melancholy 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 paroxysms, 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 heredi-

tary 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. When he had, in consequence of professional advice, been induced to relinquish this peculiarly unsuitable occupation, the fits occurred more rarely and assumed a less alarming appearance.

A paroxysm of epilepsy, it may be observed, is more frightful than perilous. It is more eminently menacing to reason than to life, although the frame in its corporeal as well as mental part cannot fail to be injured in a certain degree, by the wear and tear of every violent and morbid convulsion.

It is remarkable how much epilepsy is the result of association and habit. Break the association, stop the clock which should announce the period of the accustomed paroxysm, and you will often prevent, not the next fit only, but any future attack of the disease.

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.

Fits, and even habits of nervous affection, are often induced by some sudden and impetuous movement of the mind. It particularly behoves, therefore, those who are inclined to maladies of this class, to study the science of self-government; and others who are connected with them, ought to be anxiously afraid of giving rise to any unnecessary cause of fretfulness or irritation. In one of the modern comedies, a pampered and gouty nabob upon some opposition to his wishes, cries out in a rage, "The doctors order that I should not be contradicted." Ludicrous as this exclamation may appear in the

play, there are instances in which such professional advice may be seriously and judiciously administered. I well recollect a lady who, in a state of nervous languor and irritability, very much the result of self-indulgence and the indiscreet kindness of her friends, gave general orders that nothing unpleasant should ever be told her. Her weakness in this respect, resembled the childish cowardice of those who, in a thunder-storm, close their window-shutters or their eyelids, that they may not see the lightning which plays about their habitation, as if when not dazzled by the flash, they were proof against the peril of the electric power.

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 the 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 his 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

* Art of Preserving Health.

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.

Bath is a favorite 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 observation, 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 favorable 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 often 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 the adoption of that regimen and method of life, and occasionally the use of those pharmaceut-

ical 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 vigor 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 con-

tinually having recourse to the doses of pharmacy, in order to relieve the *ennui* of indolence, 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.

Dr. Beddoes in his *Hygeia* notices an imperfect catalogue of epileptic remedies, with the titles of the works in which their effects are described, which occupies an hundred and fifty pages. There is often an important difference between a medicine and a remedy, although they are too generally considered as synonymous.

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 superabun-

dance 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 colors 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 color; another could bear the sight of no light color whatever; in con-

sequence of which the papers and wainscoat 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, repeatedly 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 belonged to this class of patients.

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

She was subject to attacks of convulsion, accompanied with the most excruciating pain at the top of the head ; these symptoms were once 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.

It may also be remarked of this class of persons, that although upon some extraordinary occasion their courage may be forced up to a very high pitch, they appear to be subsequently exhausted in proportion to the efforts which they

have made. They feel more after an escape than during the encounter; when an evil is past, than whilst it is pending. What may, by a little license, be called the retrospective apprehension, is sometimes more lively than what was felt in the actual prospect of danger. The firmness of the mind is seldom in such instances shattered immediately after the shock which it has received. The shell seems to sleep upon the ground for some time before the destructive explosion.

Between sensibility and irritability there is an important distinction. The former is to be measured by the permanence and force of sensation, the latter, by the suddenness and facility with which sensation is excited. When it is excited to any great degree by trifling or imaginary causes, it implies the existence of disorder, although in other respects the faculties of the system remain healthy and unim-

paired. “ On comparing the situation of an hypochondriacal female liable to distressing agitations from the most trifling causes, as the dropping of a hair pin upon the floor, with that of the engineer who stands unmoved amidst the thunder of a battery; of the seaman who maintains his footing upon the deck or ropes of his vessel reeling under the shock of the elements; or of the Indian who exhibits the signs and probably feels the throb of intense delight, whilst the flames are preying upon his flesh; how astonishing do we find the range in human susceptibility to the effect of the powers by which we are surrounded !” — *Dr. Beddoes' Hygeia.*

Such differences in individuals often take their rise from hereditary stamina, but not unfrequently they appear to be in a great measure produced, and are always magnified or diminished by habits and external influences. A porter has a

stronger back than another man, because he is more than other men accustomed to make use of it. The mental laborer for a similar reason will be likely to acquire, if he were not originally endowed with a more than ordinary degree of mental power; and in like manner, an irritable person who nurses his nerves by a hot-house kind of treatment, will be apt to aggravate the unfortunate peculiarity of his constitution, and to convert a more than common delicacy into absolute disease.

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

sequence 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.

“ For he himself is subject to his birth.”

Hamlet.

“ 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 creatures 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 circum-

stances, consecrate the conjugal union. In a case like this, marriage itself is a transgression of morality. A man who is so situated, by 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 develop 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 ca-

lamity 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 grandchild 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.

An hereditary tendency to insanity, it must be acknowledged, often holds a close alliance with the best qualities of the head and of the heart. Those rudiments of the intellectual frame which are most apt by neglect or error of education, to be fostered into madness, will, if properly subdued and tempered by a judicious and early discipline, be calculated in an eminent degree to ennoble and animate the character. Insanity often arises from a too violent impulse towards what is sublime and beautiful in morals and in mind. It not

unfrequently consists in the excess of what is good, in passing the limits of the highest excellence. Properties which it is pleasing to contemplate, it is not always desirable to possess. Those exquisite charms that are felt by lovers, and are celebrated by poets, and the splendor of that genius which dazzles and delights, both touch alike on the confine of disease. Beauty is allied to phthisis, wit is contiguous to insanity.

ESSAY XIX.

OLD AGE.

“As soon may the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots.”

JEREMIAH.

CORNARO, in his celebrated little treatise on health and long life, introduces one of his paragraphs thus absurdly; “since nothing is more advantageous to man upon earth, than to live long —”

It is matter of surprise, that by a person of an unimpaired reason, longevity should ever be regarded as an object of ambition or desire. The wick of life emits, in proportion as it lengthens, a dimmer and more languid flame. Man, in com-

pleting 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 longer, 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 vigor, 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 less ; 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 disease, when it occurs at a very advanced period of life. In the instance of an aged melancholic, we might almost as well 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 closely 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.

We are apt to be unconscious of the clandestine and fraudulent encroachments of time. We often fancy ourselves ill, merely because we are no longer young. I have been consulted by more than one person who complained of a disease in his eyes, from finding to his astonishment and dismay, that he was unable to read small print by candle-light so easily as he could ten or fifteen years before, not at all thinking that this was a complaint for which the use of spectacles was the only remedy. Only a few days ago, a lady in her ninety-third year, was puzzling herself about a dimness that had gradually come over her

defect

sight, and asked me, whether I could not give her some lotion that would remove it. If our spirits are not so lively, nor our limbs so active, nor our digestion so perfect and expeditious as in the earlier periods of life, it does not occur to us that we may labor under no other malady, than that inevitable decay of nature, which shows itself alike in the fall of the leaf, and in the gradual fading of the human faculties.

When we consider the complexity of the human frame, and the number of points at which it is exposed to fatal injury, an old man becomes the object of our wonder, no less than of our veneration.

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 vigor, 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 show 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 impo-

tency 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 dis-

temper or disorganization, be healed with the same readiness 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 movements, 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 strait-waistcoat are often, it is to be feared, too hastily employed. It takes less trouble to fether 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 to resentment, at any act that offers itself in the shape of an injury or an insult.

Hence, it will not appear surprising, that so 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 resemblance 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 licence 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 labored 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; that 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 humorous 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 frenzy; 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 a 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 depôts 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.

There are no circumstances in my professional life on which I look back with a more sincere self-gratulation, than on those cases where I have rescued persons who had some incipient or transient symptoms of insanity, from the threatened terrors of a madhouse. By a proper attention to their physical health, and a considerate observance and soothing of their mental agitations, they became in several instances speedily convalescent, and were soon restored to their former place in domestic and general society.

The subject of lunacy and of lunatic asylums, is one of peculiar interest to

the British practitioner. By its visible and rapid extension, insanity renders itself every day more deserving of the title of the English malady. Madness strides like a colossus over this island.

Hamlet. — Ay, marry, why was he sent into England?

Clown. — Why, because he was mad. He shall recover his wits there; or if he do not, it is no great matter there.

Hamlet. — Why?

Clown. — 'Twill not be seen in him; there themen are as mad as he."

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 découvre pas le danger, — quand il est accru, on n'en découvre plus de remède.”

MONTAIGNE.

No subject has excited so little, or deserved so much the attention of scientific men, as that of mental derangement. For scrofula and cancer, for an obstructed liver, or an inflamed lung, new specifics or recipes are almost daily tried or suggested; but for an inflamed or obdurate mind, for those aberrations of the sensibility which so irritate as to disorganize

the reason, for a mutilation or scirrhus of the intellectual faculty, we hear of no effectual or scarcely even of a pretended prescription. The human understanding has not been sufficiently exercised in the study of itself, in an investigation of the means which are necessary for correcting its own errors or irregularities, and for postponing the period of its inevitable decay. In mental diseases, as well as in those of the lungs, much may be done in their nascent state, to crush their growth and to annihilate the embryo malady. But 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 favorite 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.”*

We continually meet in society with indistinct sketches, which are only more highly colored and more completely filled up in the hospital models of lunacy.

There are floating atoms or minute embryos of insanity, which cannot be dis-

* Rasselas.

cerned 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 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 cor-

rect 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 portfolio, 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 favor 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 a subject 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 seek for coruscations 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.

The process of convalescence from mental disorder, when it has actually begun, is seldom rapid and regular in its advance. The dawn of reason only gradually and with apparent difficulty gains upon the surrounding darkness. This, however, is not always the case. There are instances in which the curtain

of melancholy delusion is suddenly withdrawn; where the eye of the mind seems to be couched all at once by a miracle of Almighty power; "Let there be light, and there was light."

ESSAY XXII.

BLEEDING.

“ To break into the bloody house of life.”

King John.

THAT sacred reverence for the blood, the vital fluid of the human frame, which has been inculcated by the dictates of ancient and holy writ, and sanctioned by the fatal results of modern medical experience, is by no means sufficiently observed in the ordinary treatment of diseases.

Pneumonia, or a 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 in-

dispensable necessity. If blood-letting be had recourse to at a proper period, and to a sufficient extent, which 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 complaint 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 inflammation or too high excitement, but merely from nervous weakness and depression. In the latter case, venæsection is often 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 instru-

ment, whose tones are already defective from want of sufficient tension.

In obedience to an absurd routine, the curable patients of Bethlehem were formerly bled without discrimination, about the commencement of June and the latter end of July. In mania, bleeding lowers the physical force, without in general correcting the mental error. It weakens the external expression, without impairing the internal strength of the disease. It converts the fury of madness into the passive sullenness of melancholy. M. Pinel, who had great experience upon this subject, observes that the use of the lancet in mania frequently produces idiocy.

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.

23
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. 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.

Local inflammation so far from operating invariably as an argument for, may constitute, in some instances, even an objection against the application of the lancet. Local 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 vigor. Hæmorrhages seldom, comparatively, arise 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 vigor, 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. I think it may

be laid down as a practical rule, that few men beyond sixty years of age, and no man above seventy, will suffer without danger any considerable subtraction of blood. 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.

To the phthisical patient there can be little doubt that bleeding proves generally injurious, by the weakness which it aggravates or occasions. In cases of hopeless consumption, it hastens the march of an inevitably fatal malady, it hurries those steps which are unalterably pointed towards destruction. By no dexterous management of the reins can we turn this disorder out of its course, but we may restrain in some degree the rapidity of

its progress, and cause it to move at a more leisurely and easy pace to the grave.

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

* See an excellent practical paper on this subject in the last (the 8th) volume of the Medical Transactions of the College of Physicians of London, by Dr. Latham.

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 juniores et robusti non tam obnoxii sunt his morbis (apoplexy and palsy) quam pueri infirmi, et effæti senes, in quibus vires nutriendæ sunt et excitandæ, potius quam minuendæ; dum multa sanguinis profusio, quemadmodum in submersis fieri dicitur, omnes naturæ conatus reprimat et tenues vitæ reliquias penitus extinguit. Quod si consulamus experientiam, hæc, quantum possum judicare, testatur copiosas sanguinis missiones sæpe nocuisse, easque in non paucis ægrotis, tutius fuisse prætermittas.” *

* The commentaries of Dr. Heberden from which the above quotation has been made, comprise the scanty but invaluable results of a long life of exten-

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 employed.

It should be remarked, however, that weakness is not always an insuperable argument against the propriety of bleed-

sive 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.

ing. 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 circulation.

By most practitioners it is imagined, that what is called local bleeding, is pre-

ferable, 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. From whatever part the water be taken out of a canal through

ESSAY XXIII.

PHARMACY.

—

“ Il n’y a de bon pour le corps que ce qu’on digère. Quelle médecine vous fera digérer? L’exercice. Quelle réparera vos forces? Le sommeil. Quelle diminuera des maux incurables? La patience. Que peut changer une mauvaise constitution? Rien.”

VOLTAIRE:

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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, which I shall here venture to advert to, 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 vigor or support. Medicine, as it is usually administered, interferes with appetite before a meal, and with digestion after it. 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.

Life, according to Brown, is a "forced state;" but we should employ no more force than is necessary, in the phrase of Dr. Cullen, "to counteract the tendency to death." It is contrary to culinary economy to use the bellows, except where the fire is near being extinguished, and then only with a gradual and cautiously adjusted application of its power.

If an exception should be made in favor of the chronic use of any medicine, it ought, perhaps, to be allowed in the case of steel, 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, vigor, and even beauty, to the human

** Læcis alit pascuntur: prondit aura succat.*

frame. 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." Steel was known as a remedy to practitioners of the most distant antiquity. Melampus, a Greek, one of the earliest who attempted to treat diseases, is related to have cured Iphicles, a companion of Jason in the Argonautic expedition, of a most deplorable species of debility, by giving him the rust of iron in wine.

In the prescriptions of physicians, as well as in the preparations of cookery, a simplicity ought to be observed, which is, perhaps, not sufficiently attended to. A number of different dishes, which, separately taken, might be wholesome and nutritious, must altogether form a compound that cannot fail to have an unfavorable 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 the 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 here be proper to observe, that although there should seldom be a variety in the same prescription, it is expedient, more especially in chronic cases, that the prescription 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 other diversion, even the swallowing of physic may be a source of amusement. 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 ^{al.} 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. There is a repose in an implicit confidence that is eminently favorable to the restoration of health, as whatever tends to agitate the mind must interfere with the process of convalescence. Practitioners, who by any means have become celebrated or popular, are often, on that very account, more successful than others in the treatment of diseases. A similar remark may be made with regard to medicines themselves. A new medicine will frequently obtain a fortuitous fame, during the continuance of which, there is no doubt that it ac-

tually 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 so soon as the caprice of the day has gone by, and fashion has withdrawn its protecting influence, the once celebrated recipe is divested of its beneficial properties, if it become not 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 favor. 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.

The changing of a medical attendant may be useful, as well as the changing of a medicine. A new one gives new hopes, and refreshes that confidence which has been fatigued and exhausted by repeated disappointment. From another plan, or another prescriber, the patient fondly looks for that success which he has not experienced from the persons or things which he has already tried. A physician or a drug may operate beneficially for a certain time, but a too long continued use is apt to destroy the utility of either.

A kindness of manner on the part of the practitioner that bespeaks an interest

in his patient's health, may not unfrequently prove conducive to its restoration. A person will get well, or which in many cases amounts nearly to the same thing, will endeavor to fancy himself well, in order as it would appear to oblige his physician. On the other hand, a brutality, rudeness, or arrogance of demeanor, seems in some instances to induce a spiteful obstinacy in the disease.

Upon the same principle of the influence of the mind upon the body we may remark, that as soon as it can be done without danger, every thing ought to be removed from about a convalescent that is associated with the idea of sickness. As long as he continues immured amidst the gloom of those apartments to which he has been for weeks or months necessarily confined, until he has discarded the dishabille as well as the diet of indisposition, and has begun again to breathe

the ordinary air, and to resume in every respect his wonted course of life, he will not be likely to feel himself perfectly restored to the former condition of his spirits or his health.

One of the most important results of modern improvement in medicine is, that it has revealed to us the hidden virtue of poisons, or at least of what used to be regarded as such. For there is not perhaps in nature such a thing strictly and abstractedly as a poison. It is to an insufficient acquaintance with its qualities, or with the proper manner of applying it, that we are to attribute to any substance its deadly operation. With regard to forms of medicine as well as of government, it may be observed that

“Whate’er is best administer’d, is best.”

In arsenic, which the comparative ignorance of man was wont to consider as

a mortal drug, his more advanced experience has detected the most salutary properties. The same remark might be made in reference to other articles which are now engrafted with propriety into the established pharmacopœia. So that from an analogy somewhat more extended, it may not be unphilosophical to infer, that there is no agent, however deleterious it may appear or prove to be in the present imperfection of our science, which by a more complete and accurate knowledge of its properties, may not be transformed into an important auxiliary to the powers and materials of the medicinal art. There is nothing which abuse may not convert into a poison, or a right use into a valuable remedy.

“There is a soul of goodness in things evil.”

An observation occurs in the work of a sensible medical writer, which although

it may appear merely a bon mot, is in fact a serious truth. That "there is a great deal of difference between a good physician and a bad one, but in many cases very little between a good physician and none at all." A French minister once enquired of an eminent merchant at Paris, in what way he could be of service to the interests of commerce. "Laissez nous faire," was the reply. Medical men are apt to consider themselves, and are generally regarded by others, as unfaithful to their duty unless they are *doing* something, either performing some painful operation or administering some powerful remedy; whereas in no small proportion of cases the best thing that he can do is, to let the patient alone. "There is an inherent bias observable in the animal economy to restore health. As the surface of a lake which clearly reflects the sky and hills and verdant scenes around

its borders, when it is disturbed by the falling of a stone, immediately endeavors to recover its scattered images and restore them to the same beautiful order in which they were wont to appear; in like manner when the natural course of the animal economy is interrupted and disturbed by disease, the powers of the constitution are continually endeavoring to restore its organs to the perfect use of their functions, and to recover its usual vigor and serenity." * A restoration to health no doubt often takes place independently, or sometimes even in spite of medical treatment. A long continued course of medicine will appear to cure a disease, merely because during a long continued course of medicine, the disease will have had leisure to cure itself. Those who place so perfect a confidence in what are called alterative doses of physic, are not

* Moore's Medical Sketches.

aware that in most cases of their apparent efficacy, the only real *alterative* is time.

Although it is often expedient that the patient should have a high opinion of the virtue of physic, in order that it may have the desired operation in cases of unavoidable disease, much evil may be attributed to a superstitious and exaggerated estimate of its powers. Men are frequently less careful in the preservation of their health, from an idea that the wounds inflicted upon their constitution may at any time be healed by the resources of the medical art. But no drug has yet been discovered that can act as an effectual antidote to the poison of intemperance. Bark has but a feeble effect upon a stomach that has been long accustomed to brandy, and a frame, the stamina of which have been destroyed by an inordinate indulgence of the sensual appetites, will in no instance be regenerated, or

even derive considerable relief, from a recourse to any of the pharmaceutical preparations.

An amusing instance of the unreasonable expectations entertained from the efficacy of drugs, occurred not long ago in a person who came to me to ask for some corroborative medicine that might enable him to go through a chancery suit which was impending over him. He was not then ill, but he expected to be so. He wished for bark, or some more efficient tonic which might give him strength to bear up against the intrigues of villany, and to prop his mind under the pressure of unmerited reproach. This patient, if he might be called such, reminded me of a knight of some literary notoriety, who relates of himself that whenever he was in love, to which passion in his youth he was much addicted, he used to swallow great quantities of the cinchona, in order

to cut short this species of fever, or to counteract its debilitating influence upon his frame.

In instances of decided mental derangement, the medicinal part of the treatment is, according to the best authorities, of very little avail. Even bleeding, blisters, setons and aperients are not in such cases to be considered as remedies, except where their necessity or utility is indicated by the state of the corporeal habit. There is no medicine properly anti-maniacal, no physical febrifuge for the exacerbations of the mind, no evacuant which can exonerate the intellectual part of our frame from the load that oppresses or obstructs the freedom of its operations. We are by no means sure by letting blood, to abate an inflammatory state of the imagination, much less can those irritating applications to the surface which barely puncture the skin be expected to pene-

trate the deep recesses of the understanding. Delirium properly so called, is often relieved by medicine ; but delirium without fever, which according to Dr. Cullen constitutes insanity, requires, notwithstanding a certain similarity in the symptoms, an essential difference in the method of cure. It may here be observed, that it is no uncommon thing for those to regulate the treatment of a malady by its name, who do not know or do not reflect that a difference in the age, the sex, the previous habits or original stamina of the patient, cannot fail in every instance to create an important diversity in the character of the disorder. Scarcely a single disease can be pointed out in the whole system of nosology, which is not capable, in different circumstances, of being cured by means directly opposite to each other.

In no department of our profession

does the practice of it appear so cruelly absurd as in the mismanagement of infants. I once ventured to observe, that “of the cases of mortality in the earlier months of our existence, no small proportion consists of those who have sunk under the oppression of pharmaceutical filth. More infantile subjects in this metropolis are perhaps diurnally destroyed by the mortar and pestle, than in the ancient Bethlehem fell victims in one day to the Herodian massacre.” I plead guilty to the charge of rashness and hyperbole, which were brought against this remark when first published, but I wish that the years of experience and reflection which have since intervened, had convinced me that the remark was altogether destitute of foundation. When we contemplate a church-yard, the earth of which is composed in great measure of the bodies of infants, it is natural for

us to fancy, but surely it is not reasonable for us to believe, that those beings were born for no other purpose than to die, or that it is within the design of nature that the pangs of production on the part of the mother should, on that of her offspring, be almost immediately succeeded by the struggle of dissolution. Fault must exist somewhere; it cannot be in the providence of God, it must therefore attach to the improvidence and indiscretion of man. Consequences as fatal originate from ignorance as from crime. Infanticide, when perpetrated under the impulse of maternal desperation, or in the agony of anticipated disgrace, is a subject of astonishment and horror; but if a helpless victim be *drugged* to death, or poisoned by the forced ingurgitation of nauseous and essentially noxious potions, we lament the result merely, without thinking about the means which inevitably led to its oc-

currence. Conscience feels little concern in cases of medicinal murder. The too ordinary habit of jesting upon these subjects in convivial or familiar conversation, has an unhappy tendency to harden the heart, and inclines us to regard with an inhuman and indecorous levity, those dark and horrible catastrophes which too frequently arise from professional ignorance or mistake.

Paley, that eminent moral philosopher, was never in so lively a manner impressed with the benevolence of the Deity, as when he saw little children at play. Children when healthy are almost universally happy. To this general rule however, I have known some exceptions. One is particularly impressed upon my memory. The child I refer to, who was between five and six years old, would often look out of spirits, and be heard to sigh. When asked what was the matter, he replied, "I am

low." He was born in sorrow and had been in the habit of seeing his maternal parent in deep affliction. He only echoed a phrase of melancholy familiar to his ear, and heaved an hereditary sigh.

As a contrast to this case of infantile hypochondriasis, I am more agreeably reminded of a fine boy of the same age as the former, who, whilst he was frolicking about the room in a state of plethoric vitality, cried out, "What a funny thing it is to be alive!"

The complaints of an hypochondriac may often be traced to the misfortunes or mismanagement of the first stage of his being. A spoiled child generally becomes an hypochondriacal adult. The mature man suffers in this manner from the indulged follies of the infant. The miniature and perhaps invisible evil in the constitution is gradually developed and

expanded by the growth of advancing life. One of the most important requisites in the medical character, is the capacity of detecting a morbid tendency, before it has had time to ripen into actual and established malady.

We may often hear it said of a person, that "he is a stupid man to be sure, but he is a very good practitioner;" as if to understand the movements, and to be able to correct the errors of so delicate and complicated a machine as the human frame, required scarcely a common allowance of intellectual acumen. To a person who reflects however upon the subject it must appear, that a more than ordinary quickness and clearness of mental sight, is essential to the character of a properly qualified physician. Often, in acute and perilous disorders, not more than a few hours are allotted to the professional attendant for the effectual exercise of his

skill which if, from a timid hesitation with regard to the treatment, or a too late detection of the actual essence of a disease, he unfortunately permits to escape unimproved, no future effort of recollection or sagacity can avail to counteract the mischievous and sometimes fatal consequence of his error or neglect. A late advocate at the Scotch bar, habitually brilliant from the scintillations of his wit, once, by an ebullition of it peculiarly happy, excited a convulsion of laughter that spread universally around him, with the exception of one learned gentleman on the bench, whose gravity appeared to be undisturbed by the bon mot; until after many minutes of solemn consideration, and when the orator was occupied with quite a different topic of his harangue, he suddenly exclaimed, to the no small surprise and amusement of the court, " Oh, I see it now ! " The tardy

perception of the venerable judge, betrayed on an occasion like the above, was highly pleasant and entertaining; but how different from pleasant and entertaining, would the discovery of a similar slowness of discernment be in a medical practitioner, who, after the mortal termination of a disease, the nature of which he had not previously understood, should be heard to exclaim, "Oh, I see it now!"

ESSAY XXIV.

ABLUTION.

“ Ev’n from the body’s purity, the mind
Receives a secret, sympathetic aid.”

THOMSON.

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 pharmacopœia 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 oftener, 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. By taking off heat from the system, when from its enfeebled state, or other circumstances, it has not the power of generating heat in a sufficient quantity, it is particularly likely to be injurious to those weakly persons and delicate young females, to

whom it is too much the fashion to prescribe it as a tonic or corroborant. To the latter indeed, it may often be in other ways attended with inconvenient and even dangerous effects. In both sexes, pulmonary consumption frequently may be traced to the injudicious administration of this powerful and equivocal agent. 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.

How large a proportion of the deaths which we see inserted in the public papers have occurred at sea-bathing places where, it is observed, the patient had gone for the benefit of his health ! The more than ordinary expedition with which the destroyer executes his destined task in those fashionable resorts of mingled gaiety and sickness, is strikingly exhibited to our view in their crowded records of mortality. This would tend, one should imagine, to counteract in some measure that disposition to hope so easily imbibed, and so tenaciously cherished by the multitude of credulous invalids who, on the approach of each

returning autumn, hasten with eagerness to the coast, fondly expecting to find amidst the waves and the breezes of the ocean, that relief which elsewhere had been sought for in vain. Bathing in the sea is however, 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 its external application. The waters of that city which originally derived its name from them, can have no real superiority in their external use, over waters which are equally heated in any other place. A warm bath in Middlesex is as good as a warm bath in Somersetshire. What are called medicinal springs may indeed from the influence of faith produce wonderful results, in the same manner as miracles have been wrought in periods of superstition, at fountains which have been hallowed by some patron saint. Their natural efficacy was improved by their supernatural reputation. They were really salutary, because they were supposed to be sacred. It was the imputed holiness of the well, which gave it in a great measure its healing quality.

Ablution which, in the Mosaic law,

constituted one of its most important ceremonies, 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 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, with equal success were employed in restoring the health of the living, and in 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.

The washing of those parts of the body which are usually covered, is perhaps more necessary to health and comfort than of those that are exposed to the external air, a circumstance which, by favoring the process of evaporation, tends to prevent the accumulation upon the surface of that secreted matter, which when allowed to remain there, is apt to produce, in addition to a state of uncomfortable languor, febrile and a variety of cutaneous diseases.

Many persons in this part of the world, one might imagine from their practice, entertained a medical theory similar to that of a tribe inhabiting the Great Desert in Africa, noticed in a recent volume of travels. "No people have more aversion to washing than the

Tuarick generally have. Even in performing their necessary purifications, which require that a man should wash in a particular way before his prayers, they avoid water, and make use of sand. Many attempts were made by us to discover the reason why they kept themselves in such a dirty state; but to all our enquiries we obtained nearly the same answer, 'God never intended that man should injure his health if he could avoid it;' water having been given to man to drink and cook with, it does not agree with the skin of a Tuarick, who always falls sick after much washing."* It were most earnestly to be wished that an approximation to habits of this kind should doom the offender to a residence in the Great Desert, as the proper associate of his fellow-savages.

* Lyon's Narrative of Travels in Northern Africa.

The warm bath has a remarkable influence in composing the mind when in that state of violent irritation, which often leads to the use of laudanum, or some equally deleterious opiate. This remedy has been for many years considered at the retreat at York as of greater efficacy in certain cases of insanity, than all the other medical means which have been employed. There is no agent which equally with the tepid bath is calculated to promote the general tranquillity of the constitution. It will often induce sleep when the more direct and accustomed opiates fail, and with all its beneficial tendency, it is followed by none of those evil effects that are apt to arise from the drugs more generally employed to allay uneasiness, to restore composure, and to conquer the obstinacy of an involuntary and unnatural vigilance. The notion that the warm bath is relaxing,

may in a great measure be derived from the effect which it is observed to produce upon inanimate matter ; as if the nerves and muscles of the human frame were like the strings of a musical instrument. The warm bath is, in many cases, a congenial and salutary cordial ; it animates torpor and elevates depression ; on which account, when intemperately employed, or in cases where there is already a too vigorous excitement, there is a chance of its proving deleterious. In furious mania for instance, it has been known to produce mischievous effects.

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 all the other medical asylums for popular refuge and relief.

ESSAY XXV.

BODILY EXERCISE.

To cure the mind's wrong bias, Spleen,
 Some recommend the bowling-green;
 Some hilly walks; all exercise;
 Fling but a stone, the giant dies!

GREEN.

“WHATEVER hope the dreams of speculation may suggest, of observing the proportion between nutriment and labor, 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 vigor 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." *

The late Dr. Beddoes remarked that it is one of the evils of such a climate as ours, that it supplies so strong an inducement to a chamber life.

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 mischief that attends upon an abstinence from exercise.

There is not any means better adapted than bodily exercise for the cure, as well

* Dr. Johnson.

as prevention, more particularly of what are called nervous diseases. One of the best moderators of too acute feeling, is labor carried to fatigue. A man suffering under a fit of the vapors, 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 knew a delicate and nervous lady who, to counteract the influence of domestic vexation, often used to walk ten miles and back again; and 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 labor, assisted perhaps by mental excitement, we have a remarkable instance recorded in the "Monita et Pre-

cepta," 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 circum-

stances that have contributed to the increased prevalence of those maladies, which originate in a great degree from an indulgence in lassitude and languor. A man may lose his life not only by a sudden and violent overturn, but by a vehicle which carries him too smoothly along. The notion of taking exercise upon springs of fashionable construction, is scarcely less absurd than that of taking an airing with closed windows. An objection was once made by the physicians, of I do not recollect what reign, to a projected improvement of the pavement of London, as being likely to injure the health of those of its inhabitants who used carriages. Driving a spirited and somewhat unruly horse in a gig, although attended with a certain degree of peril to life or limb, I have more than once prescribed in cases of hypochondriasis, as not only requiring bodily exertion, but as

being calculated actively to engage the attention. Almost any remedy that is likely to be successful, is to be recommended in so dreadful and desperate a malady.

Walking is no doubt best adapted to a state of unblemished health or unimpaired vigor ; 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 exercise. Horse exercise is particularly calculated to remove the obstructions and to brace the relaxed energies of the frame. Sydenham had such confidence in it, that he considered it as an absolute specific for phthisis ; and in one of his medical treatises observes, that if any man were possessed of a remedy that would do equal service to the human constitution with riding on horseback twice a day, he would

be in possession of the philosopher's stone. 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 *bons vivans* 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 vigor 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 constitution, 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.

There is not a single power of the body or the mind, which inaction does not enfeeble or destroy. The lameness of gouty feet for instance, is often owing to their not having been sufficiently used. It is but a fair retribution that we should

be deprived of a faculty, which we have not enough valued or employed. Between the two principal causes of gout, there is a natural alliance. Men are apt to indulge to excess in the luxuries of the table from a deficiency of other occupation, and there is a tendency, on the other hand, in gluttonous indulgence, to induce sluggishness and a disposition to intemperate repose. It is upon exercise, associated with regularity and moderation of living, and not upon any of the artifices or felicities of pharmaceutical composition, that the arthritic is to depend principally for a defence against the inroads of his painful and fearful malady. Drugs can assuage for a time the torture, but are insufficient to eradicate its cause. A paroxysm may be abridged by this means, but a tendency to its recurrence upon the application of any exciting cir-

cumstances, cannot be thus effectually and permanently counteracted.

Tollere nodosam nescit medicina podagram.

Posture is nearly connected with the subject of bodily exercise. The usual attitude of a person occupied in reading or writing, tends to obstruct the passage of the blood through the pulmonary and abdominal vessels. Those therefore who are habitually engaged in this manner ought, as much as possible, to stand to their employment. Standing, as it implies muscular exertion, may be regarded as a species of exercise. A valuable treatise might be written on what may be called the diseases of the desk.

Some years ago, I was consulted by a lady with regard to the health of several of her daughters, the complaints of each of whom might be ascribed principally, if not solely, to the confinement, sedentary

habits, and other circumstances, which made a part of the austere and inauspicious discipline of a fashionable boarding school. The representations which they gave could not be doubted, although scarcely credible, of the unwholesome regulations which were enforced in some of these manufactories of infirmity and disease. Instead of mills for grinding old women young, we have in many of these seminaries, mills for grinding young women old. The natural functions are in such institutions too often sacrificed to the attainment of artificial accomplishments. They treat the human frame as if it were a child's watch; much pains are taken about the polish and gilding of the surface, but scarcely any in preserving the integrity and regular action of the internal machinery; and if it look well on the outside, it is a matter of little consequence how it *goes*. Far is the writer from

meaning to involve in one unsparing censure, all the existing institutions which are dedicated to the early formation of the female character. There are happy, and in number, daily increasing exceptions, where a proportionate and prominent part of the plan of education is made to consist, as it ought, in the cultivation of that physical well-being, which is the basis of even moral and intellectual merit, and therefore of every thing that is truly estimable and permanently desirable in existence. There is no species of speculative knowledge, that can compensate a practical ignorance of health.

ESSAY XXVI.

OCCUPATION.

Le meilleur moyen de calmer les troubles de l'esprit n'est pas de combattre l'objet qui les cause, mais de lui en présenter d'autres, qui le détournent et l'éloignent insensiblement de celui-là.

Memoires de Mad. la Baronne de Staël.

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 sweep from the table, as from that very agitation of mind, and that strain of attention, which seem so unenviable to a tranquil and disengaged spectator. Gaming 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 un-

necessarily 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 seem 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. Although dissatisfied with the good which has already arrived, we still fondly expect that the

stream of time is bearing for us some richer freight upon its bosom. 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 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 it to be like one of those beautifully colored 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 emotions 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 unfavorable 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, between possession and enjoyment. Opulence is the natural source of indolence, and indolence of disease; necessity, inasmuch as it impels to labor, 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. Every man possesses the raw material of happiness, but it must be wrought up for use by his own industry. 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 lounge's life is in fact a life of the most irksome labor. 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 above his head; the sun, as in the days of Joshua, seems to stand still.

Leisure is frequently the cause, although not often the subject of our complaints. I was once consulted by a hypochondriacal 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 ; as it remained in his power to reinstate himself in his former situation, which after having resumed, 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. Daily bustle is to some persons as necessary as their daily bread.

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 dis-

charged 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 endeavors 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 favor 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.

Although there is little happiness in possessing, there is great in the progress of acquiring wealth. So it is with regard to rank. Pleasure consists not in high station, but in gradually raising ourselves to it; not in having started first in the race of ambition, but in having passed competitors in the course.

Poverty is often a preservative against the inroads of despair. The extremely poor are for the most part too miserable to be melancholy. They are occupied too much with painful sensations to have leisure for the luxury of sentimental distress. The unwholesome indulgence of

their feelings is precluded by the almost uninterrupted continuance of their exertions. They expend life in supporting it. Their attention is by necessity riveted to the immediate hour. They can seldom therefore suffer or enjoy from either retrospect or anticipation. The fear of death, for instance, is principally felt where no intervening evil obstructs the view of that ultimate calamity.

Scarcely any evil is more intolerable than that sense of vacuity which the mind often suffers, that has no object commensurate to its powers, or whose faculties of action or of feeling are not called out by some imperious necessity. Whatever thorns may lie in the path of ambition, the agitations of public are perhaps preferable to the languors of private life. Upon a similar principle, national commotions have proved favorable to the health of individuals. It has been

remarked that nervous diseases have disappeared during the conflicts of civil war. The reign of hypochondriasis has been suspended by a political rebellion. By a happy contrivance of nature, the existence of one species of distress has a tendency to prevent the occurrence or to check the prevalence of another. It seems to be ordained that a certain measure of calamity should invariably mix itself as a component part in the mass of terrestrial experience. With regard to different persons, as well as to the public at different periods, it may be remarked that the principle of evil, although infinitely diversified in the external and obvious shape which it assumes, is universal and much more than is generally imagined, impartial in the exercise of its power. It is the kind rather than the degree of happiness or misery, which constitutes the real difference between the apparently

various conditions either of individuals or of generations of men.

We are told by M. Pinel that there is a lunatic hospital in Spain, where the poorer classes are made to work and are generally cured, whilst the grandee who is not compelled to labor, is generally incurable. So necessary is employment, that no innocent form which it can assume, ought to be rejected or despised. I once recommended to an hypochondriac to engage in the composition of a novel, which seemed to answer, during the time that he was occupied with the task, the purpose for which it was prescribed. By interesting himself in the distresses of fictitious beings, he diverted his attention from sufferings which were no less the offspring of his imagination. Novel reading was the greatest source of relief to the mind of Cowper, at the period of its deepest disorder and despair. A work of

fancy would awaken his feelings when they were dormant to the realities of life. A good novel is perhaps the most arduous, and certainly not the least useful product of human genius.

Dr. Johnson observed, that "a woman was happier than a man because she could hem a pocket-handkerchief." A needle and thread are a small artillery which can often repel the force of the mightiest passion. This apparently trifling occupation of the fingers draws off, as it were, the superfluous and oppressive sensibility of the mind. 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. Philosophi-

cally considered indeed, 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 de-

gree in which this desirable faculty is possessed.

Dr. Paley remarks in the preface to his valuable volumes on Moral and Political Philosophy, that "whatever is the fate or reception of this work, it owes its author nothing. In sickness and in health I have found it that which can alone alleviate the one or give enjoyment to the other, occupation and engagement." From a similar feeling, some of our finest writers have regretted the completion of their most elaborate works. When Gibbon had finished his history of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, which will ever remain a monument of his genius, his taste, and his intellectual energy, he laments rather than rejoices at the conclusion of his task. This employment, combined perhaps with the prospect of fame from the result of it, constituted the happiest moments of his life.

The gigantic author of the English Dictionary complained of his morbid indolence. Johnson fancied that he had been idle, after he had achieved the greatest literary work that had ever perhaps been executed by an individual. But when that edifice of talent was completed he almost wept over its accomplishment.

The advantage of indispensable 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 minds 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.

Although the indolent hypochondriac may not be awakened to effort by any direct and undisguised attempt to rouse him from his inertness, it is possible that by some skilful manœuvre, or by some benevolent and judicious fraud, he may be cheated into exertion. Let the most arrant sluggard be confined to his bed by the order of his physician, or the necessity of his disease, and he will probably be restless and *fidgetty* in the extreme.

Tell him that he ought to lie still, and he will feel an irresistible propensity to rise. Give the most favorite delicacy as a medicine, and it will no longer be palatable. A task is not necessarily a labor or exercise of any kind ; it is something which is enforced or prescribed.

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 should 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.

The hypochondriac is a pedant, who is absorbed in one subject, and who is apt to obtrude it upon the attention of others who feel no interest about it. He acts, or rather talks, as if every one he met with had a deep concern in the condition of his bowels. Unlike other egotists, who are fond of displaying their brilliant or agreeable qualities, he seems on the con-

trary to be perversely ostentatious of his infirmities and defects, and has an unnatural pleasure in exposing to every casual acquaintance, all the imbecilities of his physical and intellectual character. He is never happy but whilst expatiating on his misery, and is extremely offended with any one who endeavors to persuade him into a more comfortable state of feeling. The history of his symptoms might not improperly be disclosed to his professional adviser, but in this respect he is too apt to regard every friend as a physician, and a friend as no longer deserving of the name, who betrays the least degree of weariness or ennui whilst listening, or endeavoring to listen to his vain and unprofitable repetitions. His conversation moves in a circle, of which himself is the perpetual centre.

A man who is well, in the most perfect and comprehensive sense of the

word, feels himself a constituent part, a living member of the social body ; an artery which, however small, beats in unison with the general pulsation. We ought to regard one without benevolence, as we should a person destitute of sight, or any other inlet of pleasurable sensation. The malevolent man, however mischievous, is doomed to suffer more than it is in his power to inflict. There are, on the other hand, heroes of philanthropy, who cannot stoop to everyday occasions ; who by a single achievement of generous energy, would rescue your life from destruction, but by overlooking the smaller delicacies of humanity, would render it miserable in detail. As the longest duration of human existence is an aggregate of seconds, so is its happiness composed, in a great measure, of little felicities, produced by minute kindnesses and momentary attentions.

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 that 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 ate 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 in 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 storehouse 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. Who would condescend to be absorbed in such selfish and paltry anxieties, in order that he may be allowed to crawl a few months or years longer on the surface of the earth, instead of being laid quietly beneath it? 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.

Of all occupations, that which has the good of others for its objects, is the most salutary to the person employed. It ought

to be the favorite care of education to sow the seeds of kindness in the spring-time of life. There can be no doubt that it is in the power of a parent to enrich the heart of his child as well as his understanding, and that by a proper system and example, philanthropy might be taught as well as philosophy. Every other kind of toil soon becomes wearisome, but it is the peculiar property of true benevolence to be never exhausted by its exertions. It is like those odoriferous substances, which after the longest period are not sensibly impaired by the effluvia which they have been constantly exhaling.

That benevolence is of the highest order, whose prospects extend beyond the grave. The hope of a future life is the only one that can certainly last to the end of this. How much more enviable is the disinterested and enthusiastic mis-

sionary, than the cold and selfish hypochondriac ; he who is engaged in promoting, as he imagines, the spiritual and eternal interests of his fellow-creatures, than he who is absorbed in the care of his own temporary and merely bodily welfare ! How much happier is the man whose faith can remove mountains, than one whose fears are apt to magnify into a mountain the slightest unevenness in his path !

ESSAY XXVII.

REAL EVILS, A REMEDY FOR THOSE OF THE
IMAGINATION.

“Great griefs, I see, medicine the less.”

Cymbeline.

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 disor-

dered 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 pre-

scribed 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 cheerfulness.

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 super-

vening 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 be-

came more amiable, found herself less wretched.

I was once acquainted with a person who, at the age of five-and-forty, declared that he had never known a misfortune in his life. With such a being it is scarcely possible to feel a sense of friendship or even of fellow-creatureship. That man's moral education must be very imperfect, who has taken no lessons in the school of adversity. The mind must be wounded before it will give out the balm of human kindness.

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 composure. 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, when the unwearied assiduities 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.

We are apt to be stunned by the blow of any very great misfortune. Its immediate effect is a dimness of perception

and a confusion of ideas. A calamity may be of such a magnitude, that like any vast object of nature or of art, we must be removed to a certain distance from it before we can take into our view its entire dimensions. Time may obliterate fanciful and superficial sorrows, but it adds to those which are justified and nourished by reflection. In such a case, the current of melancholy thought deepens the channel in which it flows. Human felicity is of so frail and delicate a texture that it is susceptible, from the slightest accident, of tarnish or decay. We cannot be made invulnerably happy by any combination of events, however fortunate, but, on the other hand, a single event of a calamitous nature will often be found enough to darken the remainder of our days. The sunshine of life is continually liable to be interrupted by clouds,

but there are clouds which no sunshine can disperse.

The employment of a physician disposes him to think worse of the aggregate of human suffering, but on that account somewhat better of his peculiar share of it. The more narrowly we look into the interior of families, and the closet-history of individuals, the greater approximation shall we find to a general equality in the lot of life.

APPENDIX.

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APPENDIX

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APPENDIX.

A TRANSLATION of the first edition of the foregoing work into the German language having been published at Essen, by Dr. Haindorf*, with various notes and additions, it appeared to me desirable to put the English reader in possession of a few of the most interesting original passages; which, without unnecessarily swelling the size of the volume, might in some degree contribute to his entertainment.

* *John Reids, M. D., Mitglied des Runigl. Collegiums der Aerzte zu London, &c. Versuche über Hypochondrische und andere Nervenleiden. Aus dem Englischen übersetzt mit Anmerkungen und Zusätzen von D. A. Haindorf, vormaligem Staabarzt bei dem Provinzial-Lazareth zu Münster, Lehrer der Heilkunde und praktischen Arzt daselbst.*

ADDITIONAL OBSERVATIONS
OF
THE TRANSLATOR.

ESSAY II. — VOLITION. — (Page 25.)

THE following auto-biography of one of my patients, as bearing a relation to the healing power of the Will, and as the confession of an invalid, appeared not unworthy of being communicated.

“ I had always a great deal of self-love, and considered myself as being, on account of my fine feeling, superior to other persons. With much inclination for the mystic and the extraordinary, I was guided by my sensibility, and never by my reason in forming my judgment; and my only passion was to compose poems. I never was courageous, and accused those who were so of not being able to discern danger. From my earliest youth my happiest sports were disturbed by an anxious dread of death. This dread became a deep melancholy from the circumstance of my seeing in my fourteenth year, the bleeding corpse of a person killed by a fall; and this gloomy state of mind was not dissipated in less than two or three months. Some time after I had a disorder in my chest, and frequently spit blood, and my peace of mind was now completely destroyed. Childish fears and self-pity occupied me incessantly, all the joys of life had

vanished for me. Neither amusements nor laborious employment could drive away from my mind the image of corruption, the melancholy idea of the fragility of earthly things, and the contemplation of death. I became emaciated, and appeared to be in a consumption. Thus I reached my twenty-second year. At that time I met with Haal's Work, entitled 'Method of Curing Sickness by the force of the Will.' I was deeply impressed with the following words of his: 'Let your ailments alone, as if they did not affect you in the least;' and I was persuaded that his method must be successful. My anxiety respecting the future gradually disappeared, and my melancholy completely left me after my illness had lasted three years and a half. Fresh spirits then pervaded mind and body, and I felt as if I had received a new existence.

"This happy state lasted six months, when I awoke one morning very uneasy, thinking my old complaint was returned, and my thinking so really occasioned it to attack me once more. From that period I deemed my state of mind incurable; for I considered, never can an illness be conquered which has lasted so long, and whose temporary cure depended merely on deception. No Kantian will ever be able to delude me again so happily. It is true, I now perceived that my uneasiness proceeded solely from my fancy, and that I grieved about what is in reality no evil at all; yet this consideration affords me no relief, since the contemplation of death subdues my reason with gigantic force. I endeavored to direct my ideas to-

wards other objects, but in vain. I feel a fear of *fear*, uneasiness about *uneasiness*, and have not the least hope of relief; in short, language is too poor to express the tortures which I suffer.

“ My mental malady is perhaps the only example of cause and effect being one and the same, for as I figure to myself that my unhappiness cannot cease, it is natural that this very idea should produce the greatest unhappiness. I know that I have nothing to fear, and yet I fear. This often appears so paradoxical to me, that I fancy I feel two wrestling natures within me, one of which points to the north pole, the other to the south.”

My patient concluded his letter by observing, “ My disorder can be cured only by feelings of more force than my *fixed idea*, and should such feelings ever be mine, I shall recover, and this is my hope and my comfort.” He was at length indeed cured of his *fixed idea*, but died of a consumption that lasted three years, during which, his mental malady gradually disappeared as the fatal disorder became more and more formed, a melancholy counterpoise to hypochondriasis, and what he had instinctively prophesied would happen. These metamorphoses of disorders, at first apparently mental, into bodily sufferings terminating in death, particularly occasioned by consumption, are far from being uncommon.

ESSAY III.—FEAR OF DEATH.—(Page 47.)

ALTHOUGH most persons who are enlightened by a higher wisdom, and fortified by religion, are enabled

to raise themselves above the fear of death, yet, it is not the less true, that for many this fear is difficult to conquer; and this serves to explain why physicians and philosophers have occupied themselves in finding various methods of counteracting this natural impulse. The phenomenon having been observed that, even at a very advanced period of life, the hair and teeth grow again; and that in lower degrees of animal life, every part is produced anew, a hope arose that what was possible in particular parts, and in a lower order of beings, might also be realised altogether in superior creatures. Many secret societies have endeavored to discover such an universal remedy, and the natural instinct of man for life has led many, even against sound reason, to make attempts to lengthen it.

Humbled as we must feel by the conviction of the nothingness of our earthly knowledge, we shall do well to submit quietly to our destiny, although it may not be in our power to prove the absolute necessity for its present course. In this state of uncertainty, therefore, between the theoretical possibility of avoiding death, and the practical necessity of at length yielding to it; to render this catastrophe as supportable as possible, to deprive death of its terrors, and lessen its apparent bitterness, is equally conformable to the highest wisdom, and conducive to the happiness of life. A wise man will calmly contemplate his end, as a release from all earthly cares; and the hopes of a happier futurity, which never quit him,

will elevate him beyond the terrors of death. He has considered this mortal life as a lesson, and acknowledged the equality of human destiny and its constant alternation; this world has therefore lost its charm for him, and in looking upon his death as the passage to another world, how can it terrify him who acknowledges it to be necessary in the order of things? "I would willingly," says P. Richter, "give my life, were it possible to transfer it, to any dying person who wished it. Meanwhile, let not any one suppose I mean to say that because there is for me an eclipse of the sun, there must also be one in America; or that because flakes of snow are falling upon my head, the winter has set in on the Gold Coast. Life is beautiful and warm; even mine was so once!"

But should some fortunate beings who have merely tasted the sweetness of life, and have wandered through its paths with very little reflection, think death bitter, let them be told, that nature has for them, as well as for others, done much to mitigate the horrors of the scene.

When man dies at an advanced period of life, when death appears the consequence of exhaustion, he sinks from a state of somnolency into his long sleep; and what bitterness can death then possess? Should he be carried off in youth, or by a violent illness, the superfluous vital powers are quickly destroyed, consciousness is weakened by the visions of fancy, and he departs from life in a dream. In consump-

tion, hope is never extinguished, and while death is hovering on his lips, the patient is still forming plans for a long life. In other disorders, such extraordinary calmness is often displayed, that the patient speaks of his own death as of that of another, and frequently settles the hour of it with precision. In those cases in which death appears terrible on account of bodily suffering or restlessness, or anxiety about the survivors, it is rather the illness than death itself that presents an image of horror to those who witness it. But who can have an accurate idea of the beauty of the harbour, if he confuses it with the storms of that ocean, from which it is a refuge, and which are hushed in its calm repose! Even admitting that we can only reach this calm repose by a narrow path in the midst of rocks and whirlpools, what coward would hesitate to venture through it to such a termination of his journey?

Even in the most painful disorders, death is usually preceded by some minutes of ease, or even by bright and cheerful visions; its wings rustle more and more gently as it approaches nearer to us. Of one who has just expired, how placid is the countenance, how composed is the attitude! The features which once were distorted by passion are smoothed by the hand of death, so that many persons are thus rendered in a few minutes, more beautiful than they had ever been during their life. Death is not a horrid spectre; he is our last friend; a quiet spirit in the form of a fair youth, as the ancients represented him, who extinguishes his

torch and invites us to rest. What follows does not belong to *him*. The skeleton in the grave is no more death, than an animated being is that skeleton; and it is absurd to embitter our life and its end by images of horror which perhaps exist no where in reality.

ESSAY IV. — PRIDE. — (Page 49. line 16.)

It happened at W ———, that a gentleman, whose pride was well known, was one evening refused admittance to the nobility's box. He was highly incensed; and the next morning it was found necessary to put him into an asylum for lunatics. No art could there succeed in restoring the disturbed equilibrium of his mental powers; and after a residence of ten years, he died there in a state of misery and stupefaction.

ESSAY V. — REMORSE. — (Page 64. line 21.)

As in the cultivation of science or the fine arts, our efforts should not be directed towards gaining a remuneration, so should virtue not strive for a reward. By such views and aims the nature of both is destroyed. The self-approbation accompanying every virtuous action, is sufficient recompence, as the painful feelings attendant on guilt are sufficient punishment. The rewarding and punishing letters of credit upon eternity, are the wretched resources of an artificial morality which too often occasion the real value of virtue, and the real nature of crime, to be mistaken. No sophistry can avail in denying the power of what

we call a good or a bad conscience. It is, indeed, peculiarly modified in various nations and individuals, but it exists every where, an internal physical law in man, and to be regarded as a law of nature.

ESSAY X.—INTEMPERANCE.—(Page 171. line 18.)

DURING my daily intercourse with sick persons, particularly with those disordered in intellect, I have often met with this case, and it was usually the consequence of reading those authors who paint human crimes and frailties in the most terrific colors, with a view of deterring us from them. Such overwrought pictures of human misery are more calculated to plunge into ruin a depressed and suffering mind than to improve it, since hope of recovery alone can accomplish that end; and such writers from their passion for exaggeration completely leave that out of the question.

Note 2. (p. 180. l. 6.) Without due caution, good fortune may become the worst enemy of our physical and intellectual well-being. The favorite of fortune is little oppressed with the burthens of life; he gets with ease what others must toil to obtain, and hence he is too apt to believe that he has privileges beyond his fellow-creatures, that he may claim as right what is merely the result of circumstances. At length he loses all sympathy with others, and thinks he may with propriety drive away from him the unfortunate persons whose complaints disturb his enjoyments. To this depravation of his

moral character is added perhaps the loss of health. Easily disgusted, and as incapable of exciting as of feeling sympathy, he remains solitary and deserted, although surrounded by all the goods of the earth. How frequently has it happened to me to meet with men, who having without merit risen to the highest honors and offices, were discontented with their lot, and complaining bitterly of the unfeelingness of others, forgetting that themselves were to blame for it. Surely, such a favorite of fortune is rather an object of compassion than of envy.

The unfortunate man who has not been too heavily oppressed, nor his energies too much worn by calamity, will find it less difficult, than it is to the prosperous, to travel through life without stumbling. The want of exterior attractions opens to him the source of a more intellectual and refined existence, and gives him even here the foretaste of a better and a future one. In proportion as he is deprived of earthly comforts, do those of a heavenly nature shine more clearly and brightly to him. Should men refuse him their sympathy, yet silent nature will afford to his feelings, softened as they are by sorrow, joys which the happy know nothing of, but which they would envy him, had they once tasted them. Accustomed to privations, he is little shaken by the vicissitudes of fortune; and being free from the moan anxieties of pride and ambition, he becomes not indeed indifferent to earthly good, but easily consoled under its loss.

ESSAY XII. — MORBID AFFECTIONS, &c.

(Page 191.)

IN the town of W—— I was one evening called to visit a young lady, who was supposed to be dangerously ill with convulsions. Her relations told me that other remedies having failed, she had for some time past been magnetised by her medical attendant. I found her lying on the sofa in a kind of extasy, and was informed that this state recurred several times in the day, but not with so much violence as then. She was accustomed during the fit to speak of higher things, and appeared quite unconscious of the world in which she lived. All belonging to her were assembled about her, to contemplate the wonder, as if she were a saint. As the lady had in the paroxysms of a disease which was supposed to deprive her of her senses, placed herself in the most elegant attitude on the sofa, had arranged her fine light hair very nicely, and had bestowed great attention on the choice of her attire altogether, these circumstances, added to the state of her pulse, inspired me with some doubts respecting her unconsciousness, and supernatural visions. I therefore endeavoured to comfort those about her, by saying, “Be under no uneasiness; this is an ordinary case. Magnetism is not necessary to cure it. I will only cut off the patient’s hair, and apply a cold cataplasm.” The instant I drew out my case of instruments, the lady roused herself from her extasy,

and has never had a similar attack. She took some strengthening medicine, and is now a stout and healthy young woman.

NOTE 2. Page 122. — To give too much importance to these trifles, would tend to increase incalculably the number of causes that produce mental aberration; and if we must allow that such a case is occasionally to be met with, (and I have in my “Pathology and Cure of Mental Disorders” mentioned several,) yet it is certain, that for the most part, there was a predisposition for the disorder. They may be compared to a heap of snow on a mountain, which a bird flying over may precipitate to the bottom, because from its foundation being already melted, it was predisposed to fall.

ESSAY XX. — LUNATIC ASYLUMS. — (Page 311.)

THE venerable M. Pinel, who was the first to free insane persons from ligatures and chains, and treat them with mildness and kindness, selects his superintendants and nurses from amongst those who have previously been in the same unfortunate state, and restored to reason by his skill and gentleness. When employed, therefore, in nursing and attending upon the patients, they perform the duty with real kindness and consideration, and are the better qualified to judge of their frame of mind, and even when most violent, to manage them by the force of sympathy more effectually than can be done by threats and fetters. I seldom perceived that such recovered persons relapsed into their former disorders, from their

constant intercourse with the insane. Most of them remained well, and happy in the consciousness of their incessant usefulness.

ESSAY XXI. — THE IMPORTANCE OF COUNTER-
ACTING THE TENDENCY TO MENTAL DISEASE.

(Page 317.)

WE should have fewer disorders of the mind, if we could acquire more power of volition, and endeavor by our own energy to disperse the clouds which occasionally arise within our horizon; if we resolutely tore the first threads of the net which gloom and ill-humour may cast around us, and made an effort to drive away the melancholy images of a morbid imagination by incessant occupation. How beneficial would it be to mankind, if this truth were universally acknowledged and acted upon, viz. that our state of health, mental as well as bodily, principally depends upon ourselves.

LUCID INTERVALS. — (Page 319.)

A GREAT disadvantage resulting from confining the insane in public asylums, is, that during intervals of reason, the *apparatus* of madness cannot always be withdrawn from their observation, and that consequently surrounding objects are liable to recal to their memory their former condition. The screams and shouts of their companions, the indifference in the countenance of the attendants, sometimes also the unfavorable situation and arrangement of their apartment, may all tend to promote a return of their

disorder. Let those whose lot it is to have an insane member in their family, think, if placed in the hands of strangers, of the nameless misery he must endure when, in moments of returning consciousness, he finds himself alone and forsaken, confined with madmen, and those who, if not cruel, are indifferent to him.

Every other method of cure should therefore be tried, previously to submitting those who have the greatest claim on our pity to the care of public asylums, where, with the best intentions on the part of the physicians and manager, the great number of patients must prevent the individuality of their disorders from being sufficiently attended to. Such a measure should never indeed be resolved upon, except in those cases where the disadvantages of a private mode of treatment preponderate, as when there is a difficulty in procuring a physician who understands the management of insanity, and has leisure to attend to it, or when the peculiar character of the disorder appears to require it.

THE END.

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