ON
DYSPEPSIA;
RESULTING FROM
DISORDERED STATES OF THE MIND.

(Read before the York Medical Society.)

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"The different forms of animals," says the illustrious Cuvier, "may be regarded as so many different kinds of experiments ready prepared by Nature, who adds to, or deducts from each, different parts, just as we might wish to do in our laboratories, showing us herself at the same time their different results." This beautiful remark of the Gallic Aristotle may be extended to every grade of created objects. The increase of inorganic masses is effected by external agents, while themselves serve only as passive nuclei. The vegetable has a power, gradually becoming more perfect, as its organisation becomes more complex, assigned to it, by which it can take up food, and apply it to the nutrition and development of its component organs. The wandering animal requires a different mode of sustenance from that which satisfies the stationary plant; and hence, from the simple bag of the polypus, equally capable of digestion on both surfaces, up to the more delicately organised stomach of man, we find the necessary reservoir modified according to the wants of particular species, by which the animal is enabled to carry along with him the food, which even in his wanderings is constantly being converted into part of himself.

The stomach in man may be defined to be that organ of the body in which the food, after it has been torn and bruised in the mouth, and intimately mixed with the secretion from the salivary glands, undergoes the first of those important changes by which it is assimilated to the living tissues. As the human stomach, then, constitutes so very important a link in the chain of organs by which the food of man becomes eventually an integral portion of his own body, it is not very wonderful that its influence on the bodily health should have been by some overrated. Disordered conditions of its functions have been a fruitful source of inquiry to the scientific practitioner of our profession, and a very profitable source of emolument to those who estimate the importance of a disease by the quantity of medicine required for its removal. Organic lesions in the structure of the stomach yield very much in frequency to disordered conditions of that structure, and the latter have been named dyspepsia, difficult digestion, or, somewhat in the same spirit as the *unnamed* bone has received the name of *os innominatum*, indigestion.

Dyspepsia is, as far at least as we can discover, little experienced by any other order of animals than that, which, according to Lord Montbodo has been deprived of its fair proportion of coccygeal development. It appears also to be very rarely met with among the uncivilized nations, and we are not told that the Kamtschadanes, whose remarkable partiality to train oil is well known, suffer much from this frequent attendant upon the denizen of more favoured lands. Why is this? Man in the more favoured condition ought to be better able to guard against this insidious foe. He ought to be so, but in most things man errs much more frequently from wilfulness than from ignorance. To the luxuries sometimes, and to the cares much oftener, of civilised life, does indigestion owe its existence. The expectation, too, of being relieved from its grasp lessens the fear of its invasion, for in the present day there is not much fear of continued suffering, without some

remedy being exhibited, either to amuse, while nature cures the patient, or to assist her operations—

"Ac si condolet tentatum frigore corpus
Aut alius casus lecto te affixit, habes qui
Assideat, fomenta paret, medicum roget, ut te
Suscitet, ac natis reddat, carisque propinquis."

Difficult digestion may depend upon a variety of causes, as structural changes, excited action, atony, sympathetic derangement, "cum multis aliis quæ enumerare longum est." I purpose this evening to submit for your consideration a form of indigestion which is only cursorily noticed by some writers, and altogether unnoticed by others. This form of dyspepsia has its origin in a morbid condition of the mind, or rather of the organ through which the mind acts to convey its operations to the material world.

The influence which the mind exercises over the body in general, and the stomach in particular, cannot be doubted; its effects stare us in the face in the most ordinary duties of life. What a contrast is presented to us, when we compare the well-fed man of business, and his face tattooed by the lines of care, with the ill-fed peasant, and his rosy beaming countenance, of whom the poet sings,

"Thus they rejoice, nor think
That with to-morrow's sun, their *animal* toil
Begins again the never ceasing round."

You are all, I doubt not, familiar with the efficacious mode of banishing epilepsy from a school in Germany by mental influence, when it had been produced by the same cause. Who has not seen, I may say experienced, the effect produced on the appetite by exciting or alarming intelligence, or the suspension of the process of digestion by the same causes? If the mind had no influence over the body, the homœopathist would soon be exposed to public scorn and derision, and bread-pills lose their efficacy in the cure of hypochondriasis. Paris, in his life of Sir H. Davy, gives an amusing illustration of this influence, in the case of a man under whose tongue a thermometer was placed, preparatory to administering nitrous oxide gas, at the suggestion of Dr. Beddoes, for the cure of a paralytic affection. The man, believing the thermometer to be the agent intended to perform the cure, soon cried out that he could feel its beneficial effects. The thermometer was applied for a fortnight with some ceremony, and a perfect cure effected. At the siege of Breda, the Prince of Orange is reported to have produced astonishing effects by a sham remedy, "such as had not moved their limbs for months before, were seen walking about the streets, sound, straight, and whole." The ingenious author of *Tristram Shandy* aptly compares the influence of the mind over the body to "a coat and its lining,—if you rumple the one you rumple the other."

It is a common error, and one fraught, too, with danger to health, to consider the sensations of hunger and thirst as mere physical actions depending upon the condition of the stomach, whereas, in reality, the brain has no little share in their production. When the food, which has been received into the stomach, has been applied to the purposes of nutrition, and the waste which is constantly going on in the body requires new materials to replace the old, the nerves of the whole body convey to the brain a sense of the condition of the parts to which they are distributed, and by a reflex action the stomach is reminded of its duty, and called upon to perform its share in effecting the reparation. Hence, feelings of uneasiness are produced, which Brachet found to reside in the nerves of the stomach; for a dog, which had been made to fast for twenty-four hours, when the nerves were divided showed no inclination to eat. This conclusive experiment, and the daily experience of the medical practitioner, are sufficient to refute the

attempts made to explain the sensations of hunger and thirst on mere physical action—as, for instance, that of Dr. Beaumont, who, mistaking in observations on St. Martin, the effect for the cause, asserts that hunger depends upon a distended state of the vessels which secrete the gastric juice. We further know, that nutritious injections thrown up into the rectum, will remove the sensation of hunger, and soaking the feet in water will assuage thirst.

The influence of the mind over the body is especially marked in the sympathy which exists between the brain and the stomach. Disease of the brain very rarely exists without producing a disordered condition of the apparatus of digestion. Insanity and dyspepsia very frequently alternate with each other, and the liability of insane persons to dyspeptic affections is well known to every one who has had any opportunity of observing the diseases to which these unfortunate individuals are peculiarly subject. Dr. Prichard says of them, “the appetite is affected, digestion is impaired;” the converse may also be observed, and the frequent dependence of cephalalgia upon disordered digestion is too well known to require any comment. As there is no doubt that the latter may give rise to the former, so I think it cannot be disputed that a reverse action is very frequently produced.

Cerebral dyspepsia (if such a term be admissible) may be one of two kinds—viz.,

1. That depending upon over action of the mind, or the consequent exhaustion produced by such over action.

2. That depending upon want of mental action.

The former of these two forms of dyspepsia is seldom met with in the higher or lower classes of society. It is almost entirely confined to those who constitute the middle classes of our social community. He whom Providence has placed in a higher sphere, eats, and drinks, and loads his stomach with improper food, but long continued anxiety seldom harasses his mind, for he can often banish care in the busy scenes of gaiety, or the pleasing changes of travel. Secure amidst the storms of fortune, he lives a life of tranquil ease, unless he chooses to exchange the domestic tranquillity of private life for the busy arena of political contention, and for a prospect of those places of power and of patronage, where, to use the words of Sir W. Scott, “the pleasure of serving the country is combined with other important gratifications, which, to render them the more acceptable, occur regularly once a quarter.” The lowly-born also, though he, too, may often load his stomach with innutritious and indigestible food, goes on in the even tenor of his way, and, perhaps less often in these later days, has no thought beyond his present station; no ambition to gratify; no successes to envy. But when we view the lot of that class which connects the palace with the cottage, we find men placed under very different circumstances. We find men with refined feelings, cultured minds, and sensibilities rendered acutely accessible to injury or to insult, doomed to struggle with all those untoward circumstances which frequently cast the leaden chains of misery around many a son of genius and misfortune. Here we find many an one with an innate consciousness of being capable of better things, doomed to never-ceasing drudgery and labour, to maintain a bare existence. Can we be astonished that, in the mind of such a man, even the soothing precepts of religion may be unable to prevent some feeling of repining, when he beholds, in advanced life, men much inferior in real merit, by mere fortunate coincidences, or even unworthy means, obtaining that favour with his fellow mortals of which he feels himself to be unjustly deprived? It is true that men of all classes of society have like passions and feelings, and that some, even nobly born, stimulated by the love of applause, or incited by nobler inducements, are met with among the most laborious cultivators of the fields of science and of literature; but to

them the labour is a voluntary pleasure; to the middle-man it is a task. It is the continued, unceasing, unchanging straining of the mind, only met with in those who are compelled to earn their daily bread by mental labour, that the state of mind is produced, which is the cause of the disease under our notice.

Symptoms.—Individuals of every age after puberty are victims to this affection, as we might, *a priori*, expect in a disease over which circumstances exercise so much control. Those who are of what has been named the sanguine temperament, are most liable to its attacks. The sufferers are generally individuals connected with one of the professions, or engaged in extensive commercial speculations, or placed in situations entailing upon them very serious responsibility. Persons with large heads seem especially liable to this form of dyspepsia. The victims to this malady are generally men who think much, and bring under the investigation of their reasoning faculties all the occurrences of life. They are generally of spare habit, as are indeed almost all deep thinkers; a fact well known to Shakspeare, no careless observer, who makes Cæsar to exclaim—

“*Cæsar.* Let me have men about me that are fat, Sleek-headed men, and such as sleep o’ night; Yond’ Cassius has a lean and hungry look: He thinks too much; such men are dangerous.

Antony. Fear him not, Cæsar, he’s not dangerous; He is a noble Roman, and well given.

Cæsar. Would he were fatter!”

But to revert to a more particular description of the disease. We see exhibited many of the ordinary phenomena of gastric dyspepsia, such as loss of appetite, sense of weight at the stomach, heartburn, &c.; but this form may readily be distinguished by the co-existence of an unnatural state of mental irritability. The feelings are changed; and thus the placid, gentle individual, becomes irascible and petulant; within his bosom he may feel and regret the change, but it is one over which he has little control, unless his mode of life be changed, and his feelings moderated. Flashes of pain are experienced in the forehead, and the eyes often feel distended, and as if irritated by some foreign body. The tongue is generally coated, though sometimes it is morbidly red and clean. The pulse is little affected; sometimes, however, it is quicker and smaller. The countenance is pale, a little anxious, and not unfrequently tending to a sallow appearance. The urine is at first high coloured, and rather scanty, but, as the disease progresses, it becomes pale, or straw-coloured, and abundant. The sleep is generally disturbed, and the patient is harassed by dreams of an anxious, and often of a distressing, character. The bowels are torpid, and the alvine evacuations not unfrequently exhibit a deficiency of bile.

Causes.—The exciting causes are long-continued mental anxiety, literary toil, especially when combined with a sedentary mode of life, sudden mental emotions, and disease of the brain.

With regard to the proximate cause, we can only substitute a deduction from the symptoms for an opinion drawn from pathological phenomena. The brain appears at first to be in a state of active congestion, or even inflammation. This state is sometimes very indistinctly marked, and soon runs into a very opposite condition. Reflashes of pain, any photophobia that may be present, the scanty secretion of urine, and other marks of excitement, soon give place to other symptoms clearly depending upon a deficiency of nervous power. The countenance becomes pale, the patient is irresolute, nervous, and his ideas are more slowly perfected, and his actions betray the disorder of his mind, unless, as is sometimes the case, sufficient strength of mind remains to enable him to conceal his unfortunate condition from those around him. The vessels of the brain in the latter stages are

evidently congested, for sudden and powerful excitement will often banish the disease for some time. I cannot conclude this part of my subject without quoting the words of Dr. Caldwell, whose eloquence of expression, elegance of diction, and consummate judgment, must win for him the admiration of every one familiar with his lectures on physical education. "Dyspepsia," he says, "commences, perhaps, as often in the brain as in the stomach—possibly oftener. That this is true of the disease in Europe will scarcely be denied, after a fair examination of the facts connected with it. It is there, almost exclusively, a complaint of the studious and the scheming, who, overtasking their brains, injure them by toil." He further adds, "Dyspepsia and mental derangements are among the most grievous maladies that affect the human race; and they are more nearly allied to each other than they are generally supposed to be. So true is this, that the one is not unfrequently converted into the other, and often alternates with it." And here it may not be out of place to say a few words on the subject of Dr. Caldwell's labours. The importance of due attention to the education of the physical powers is not sufficiently recognised by the medical practitioner. The too early exercise of the mind, as the accompanying deprivation of the physical exertion, by which the irritability of early life is directed to a salutary end, often lays the foundation of mental disease, and a consequent life of misery. Nor is this the only error; they are numerous as the hydra-headed monster, and it is surely the duty of every medical practitioner, as the legitimate guardian of the public health, to endeavour to diffuse within the sphere of his influence correct principles, deduced from physiological truths, by which the powers of the body may be brought to their most perfect state of development.

Treatment.—In the treatment of this form of dyspepsia the physician must not be anxious to exercise his right of prescribing, nor must the general practitioner think too much of his apothecary's license. The medical practitioner must here merge for the most part his professional in his private capacity, and remember only that he is the friend of the sufferer; he may employ medicinal agents to improve the general health, and relieve the effects of the disordered state of the mind; but I fear few are so well armed with potent drugs as to answer in the affirmative the poet's question—

"Who can administer to a mind diseased,
Pluck from the brain its rooted sorrow,
Raze out the written troubles of the mind,
And with some sweet oblivious antidote
Cleanse the foul bosom of that perilous stuff
That weighs upon the heart?"

The secondary disease of the stomach may be alleviated by medicine, but the primary disordered condition of the mind can only be removed by moral treatment. The patient's confidence must be gained, his feelings understood, his general tone of mind comprehended, and his circumstances in life considered. He must never meet with careless indifference or cold neglect. If he be toiling, and struggling with the world, buffeted amidst the waves of its many hardships, he must be encouraged, and persuaded to look forward to brighter and to happier days, and must be kindly and judiciously warned of the danger and even sinfulness of allowing dark and dreary forebodings to occupy his mind. If literary toil be grinding down the powers of his mind, he must be reminded of the advice—

Cura ut sit mens sana in corpore sano;

and, taught by the examples of Vico, Tasso, Kirke White, Scott, Southey, and many other too ardent cultivators of the garbages of science, and of literature, that, as the bow never unbent becomes useless,

so the mind constantly on the stretch becomes in like manner feeble and worn out. Who can read the affecting account given by Lockhart of Sir W. Scott's appearance at a scientific meeting in Naples, during his last travel in search of health, without feelings of regret and sorrow? If wild schemes of ambition be harassing his mind, and distracting his thoughts, he must be reminded of the uncertainty of human affairs, and, if possible, be led to contemplate the lowly precepts of Christianity. No more illustrations of perverted moral feeling, and mental power, are needed; in short, the state of the patient's mind must be thoroughly understood, that its equipoise may be restored.

With regard to medical treatment, we find that the condition of the general health, and the exhausted state of the nervous power, do not permit much depletion. When much excitement has been lit up, or the vessels of the brain are congested, a few leeches, or a moderate cupping, will prove beneficial. The shower bath is a most valuable remedy, but some caution is required when it is at first exhibited. Aloetic purgatives, with ammonia, sulphate of iron, oxide of lime, the chalybeate mineral waters, with an occasional dose of some mild mercurial, have, as far as my experience tells me, the most control over the secondary affection of the stomach. Change of air, or rather we ought to say, of scene, is to be strongly recommended, when it can be obtained, and if it be not within our patient's reach, the mind may sometimes be beneficially directed to pursuits which do not so powerfully affect the organ of intellect; thus gardening, farming, botany, geology, or any other pursuit, which, while it directs the powers of the mind to pleasing objects, at the same time secures a due exercise of the body, is to be strongly recommended and enforced.

2. The other form of dyspepsia, depending upon a disordered condition of the mind, is more rarely met with than the one to which I have just drawn your attention; it is principally confined to the upper ranks, though occasionally it will select an unfortunate victim from among the middle classes.

This condition of the mind is analogous to that described by Dr. Johnson, when he makes Rasselas thus unburthen his mind to the venerable sage: "That I want nothing," said the prince, "or rather that I know not what I want, is the cause of my complaint. If I had any known want, I should have a certain wish; that wish would excite endeavour, and I should not then repine to see the sun move so slowly towards the western mountains, or lament when the day breaks and sleep will no longer hide me from myself. When I see the kids and the lambs chasing one another, I fancy that I should be happy if I had something to pursue. But, possessing all that I can want, I find one day and one hour exactly like another, except that the latter is still more tedious than the former. Let your experience inform me how the day may now seem as short as in my childhood, while nature was yet fresh, and every moment showed me what I had never observed before. I have already enjoyed too much; give me something to desire." This state of mind answers to the "ennui" of the French, and to the "blue devils" of our sometimes not very classical language.

The secondary dyspepsia generally depends upon defective enervation, and may readily be distinguished from the first form to which we directed attention, by the state of the mind. In the one the brain has been in a state of over action, in the other action is wanted. In the one too much stimulus has been followed by exhaustion; in the other the requisite stimulus has never been applied. Thus we have general languor and listlessness, and these, too, quite disproportionate to the physical strength. The rationale of the disease seems clear. The brain, like every other organ, requires an extrinsic stimulus, without which it remains feeble and inert. If the

nervous centre be feeble in power, its off-shoots cannot but participate in such condition. The nervous energy of the stomach is consequently too feeble to perfect the process of digestion, and it is consequently very imperfectly performed.

In this form moral treatment is absolutely required. The patient must be roused, even if, like the Prince of Abyssinia, he seek relief in the miseries incidental to life. Active pursuits are to be recommended. Horse exercise is a valuable adjunct to other means, and may be made subordinate to many plans of interesting the feelings, and calling out of their dormant condition the mental faculties.

If tonics be given, they must be conjoined with aromatics; capsicum, musk, and assafoetida, are often useful.

Such are the two forms of dyspepsia to which I wished to draw the attention of this society; their importance, I trust, will not be denied, and that I may not be deemed presumptuous in stating my sincere conviction, that many an unfortunate victim to these diseases has been loaded with medicine when, in reality, moral treatment alone was required; but in the present day, and with the present race of medical practitioners, a better state of things may be looked for. The treatment of disease is widely different from that which prevailed when the successive doctrines of the chemical and humoral pathologists, of Brown, and of Broussais, held possession of the medical world. Medical men have been led to connect disordered symptoms with disordered functions, and have been reasonable enough to be guided by the light of physiology and anatomy to the suffering structure. They have been enabled to dispel the incubus of Esculapian reasoners, and have reduced a destructive, nothing-at-all-pervading universality, into submission to the ordinary laws of matter and vitality.

LACERATION OF THE VAGINA,

WITH ESCAPE OF THE CHILD

INTO THE ABDOMINAL CAVITY.

TO THE EDITORS OF THE PROVINCIAL MEDICAL AND SURGICAL JOURNAL.

GENTLEMEN,—Although cases of rupture of the uterus, of laceration of the vagina, and of rupture of the uterus with laceration of the vagina, are, unfortunately, not rare, I am not aware that there is any case on record, resembling the following in its essential particulars; I therefore beg to offer a rough sketch, taken from notes made at the time, for the pages of your journal, should you think proper to insert it. I will not presume to trespass on your columns with autographic remarks on the peculiar features of the case, but leave them for those whose obstetric experience would better qualify them, and confine myself to a plain statement of facts.

I am, Gentlemen,

Your most obedient servant,

HENRY BLENKINSOP, M.R.C.S.

Warwick, Dec. 5, 1841.

Mrs. B—r, in labour with her sixth child, was attended by a midwife at a quarter past four in the morning of November 27, 183—; at eleven o'clock; the membranes being ruptured during the preceding pain, the midwife felt the head presenting, but (to use her own words), "the pains being slack," she left her patient till four, p.m. At ten o'clock the head had advanced a little, and the pains were stronger, but they soon became "very slack;" at two, a.m., they were more powerful, and all seemed to progress favourably; between three and four the woman had two, more than usually severe, expulsive pains, in the midst of the

last of which a noise was distinctly heard in the room as of something burst or torn through, when, placing her hands on the lower part of the abdomen, the poor woman shrieked out to the midwife to help her up, which was done; and, with assistance, she got off the bed, complaining of agonizing pain in the abdomen. A little gruel and some gin-and-water were given to her.

The midwife, seeing that all uterine action had ceased, became alarmed, and sent for a medical man; who, after having made some unsuccessful attempts at delivery, by the feet, without being aware of the real situation of the child, sent for the assistance of my father, whom I followed in a few minutes. On my arrival, a little before nine o'clock, a.m., I found that the patient had just expired, and the midwife narrated the above history of the case. Placing my hand on the abdomen, I fancied I could trace the body of the child, and, having provided myself with the requisite instruments, I cut through the parietes into the abdominal cavity, exposing to our view the great omentum; on raising which we perceived the child, a full-sized male, lying obliquely across the abdomen; the head in the direction of the right hypochondrium, the legs toward the left iliac region; the placenta was underneath the child. Having removed these from their situation, I proceeded to examine the uterus, expecting to find it ruptured; much to our surprise, however, this organ presented not the slightest lesion, and was contracted to the size it usually is in a few hours after labour. I now introduced my hand into the vagina (*per vias naturales*), and found that it passed without any obstruction into the abdomen, between the uterus and rectum, disclosing the existence of a large opening in the upper and posterior part of the vagina, the uterus being torn away from its posterior pelvic attachments. I carefully removed the uterus with as much of the lacerated portion of the vagina as, under the circumstances, I could obtain, and, on a more minute examination, the uterus proved to be quite free from the slightest participation in the injury.

I could not discover any ulceration or cicatrix in the vagina, but, had there been either, the ragged state of the parts would have made it difficult to trace their existence.

No instrument had been employed in this case, nor do I believe, after making the strictest inquiry, that there had been any violent manual interference.

CASE

OF

SPONTANEOUS RUPTURE OF THE UTERUS.

By WILLIAM GILL, M.R.C.S.

— Robinson, aged 30, of Wolverhampton, has had six children, and generally good labours. I was sent for by Mrs. Grainger, midwife, on October 28, 1839, on Monday, at three o'clock, p.m. Mrs. G. had then been in attendance about eight hours. She mentioned that, from the commencement of the labour to the present time, the pains had been contrary, and produced no effect upon the head of the child, which had continued fixed in the lower part of the superior aperture.

Upon examination, I found the presentation natural; the os uteri well open and dilatable; and it appeared to me that, with some good bearing-down pains, the child would soon be born. The pains, however, were not of the right kind, being chiefly confined to the abdomen, and evidently of an irregular spasmodic character. The midwife had administered small doses of ergot of rye before my arrival, but without any good effect. The membranes were not