

to me strange that so little on the subject is to be met with in the pages of medical literature. To fill up the hiatus is not my intention—vanity does not lead me quite so far; but my attention having been forcibly and painfully directed to one of the most depressing of the mental emotions—fear—operating through a weak mind upon a weakened body, I am induced to lay before the readers of the *Journal* the thoughts which were suggested at the time, as well as the details of the case which gave them birth.

The pulsations, agitation, coldness, palpitation, syncope,—depressing effects of *sudden* fear, making the strong man weak, the weak powerless,—are familiar to most persons. The feverishness, headache, sleeplessness*; the parched tongue, loss of appetite, impaired digestion, and that melancholy which “makes the hearts ache sad and heavy,”—though not so easily traced to their exciting cause, follow, not less certainly, the *continued* operation of this depressant. There is no misery, nor rack, nor torture, greater than this, and, sometimes, no greater danger. Of all forms of fear, the fear of death seems to be most powerful. It matters little whether that fear arise from real danger, or from its mere fancied existence. “If it be told them,” (the Chinese), says Riccius, “they shall be sick on such a day, when that day comes they will surely be sick, and will be so terribly afflicted that sometimes they die upon it.” Burton and others furnish us with many such instances.

The fear of death—*mors præor*—arrests the current of life at its very source, by impairing assimilation and arresting secretion. The bodily weakness thereby induced, reacting upon the disordered mind, and again reacted upon, exposes the frail frame-works to those noxious influences, those accidents and vicissitudes of life, while unequal to a struggle with them. This is but a faint picture of the case of Mrs. G., whom I saw for the first time in September last. Mrs. G.,—a pale anæmic creature, with hollow sunken eyes, and a look of anxiety or dread impossible to describe,—is in labor with a seven months’ child. I find her sitting upon a sofa, looking pale and downcast. The pains are frequent, and accompanied with slight oozing of blood. I desire her to be carried to bed, but her reluctance is extreme. I insist upon it; and she replies, slowly and sorrowfully, “Well, Doctor, I suppose I must, but I shall never rise from it again.” Regarding this as one of the prophecies so often heard and so little heeded at the bed side of parturient women,—

* I am not prepared to state whether the sleeplessness be the cause or result of want of food. It is not unreasonable, however, to suppose with Dr. George Johnson, that the two conditions exert a mutual influence upon each other.