

Spiritual dyspeptics.

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THERE is a class of weak-handed and feeble-kneed professors in Christ's Church who are self-made invalids. Their spiritual debility is the direct result of their own sins and shortcomings. In their case, as in the physical hygiene, disease is the inevitable punishment of transgression against the laws of health.

Is not the inebriate's bloated and poisoned frame the immediate legacy of his bottle? Is not a shattered nervous system the tormenting bequest which a high-pressure of sensuality leaves to the transgressor? The indolence which never earns its daily bread cannot earn the appetite to enjoy it; the gluttony which gorges the stomach is but fattening an early banquet for the worms. *Dyspepsia is only God's appointed health officer, stationed at the gateway of excess*, to warn off all who approach it, and to punish those who will persist in entering the forbidden ground. In like manner spiritual disease is the inevitable result of committed sin, or of neglect of religious duty. It requires no profound skill to detect the cause of Mr. A——'s dyspepsia, or Deacon B——'s spiritual palsy, or of poor Mr. C——'s leprosy. How can a Christian be healthy who never works? How can a man's faith be strong who never enters his closet? How can a man's benevolence be warm who never gives? A want of appetite for giving always brings on a lean visage in the church; but I do like to hear my neighbour M——pray at the monthly prayer-meeting, for the fluency of devotion is quickened by his fluency of purse. He *dares* to ask God's help in the salvation of sinners, for he is doing his own utmost too. And I have known one resolute, sagacious, Christ loving woman to do in the mission school what Florence Nightingale did in the hospitals of Scutari; that is, teach the nurses how to cure, as well as the sick to recover.

If this brief paragraph falls under the eye of any spiritual dyspeptic, let us offer to him two or three family counsels. My friend, your disease and debility are your own fault, not your misfortune. It is not a "visitation from God," but a visitation of the devil that has laid you on your back, and made you well-nigh useless in the Church, in the Sabbath-school, and in every enterprise of Christian charity. Having brought on your own malady you must be your own restorer, by the help of the Divine Physician. You are not only useless to your pastor, but uncomfortable to yourself. You must get well. Let us tell you how.

1. You need a wholesome diet. Instead of the surfeit of daily newspapers and political journals, or the spiced stimulants of fiction, give your hungry soul the *bread of life*. Your moral powers are weak for want of nourishment. There has been a starvation of

bible-truth, of sound experimental works, of inspiring religious biography, of "books that are books." Nothing will give sinew and bone to your piety like the thorough reading and thorough digestion of the Bible. All the giants in the history of the Church have been large and hungry feeders on the Bible.

2. You want exercise. God has given you powers and faculties and affections to serve Him with. But for want of use, those limbs of the soul are as powerless as the bodily limbs of a fever patient who has not left his couch for a fortnight. Never will you recover your appetite for the word and the ordinances, never will the flesh of spiritual joy mantle your countenance, until you have laid hold of hard, self-denying work. Nothing will impart such earnestness to your prayers as to spend an hour before them by the bedside of the sick, or in close conversation with an enquirer for salvation; nothing will excite a better appetite for a Sabbath sermon than a morning spent in *business-like* devotion to your Sabbath-school-class; and a little uphill work in behalf of some discouraging movement of reform will harden your muscle amazingly. Oberlin, Wilberforce, Elizabeth Fry never knew the meaning of "dyspepsia." You are dying from confinement and indolence. There is but one cure for selfishness, and that is—sacrifice; but one cure for timidity, and that is to plunge into a disagreeable duty before the shiver has time to come on. Some Christians are paralyzed for life by the monomania of fear. Would it not be well for those who have trembled for years at the bare thought of prayer in public to force themselves into an utterance? They will be amazed to find how one resolute trial, in the strength of God, will break the tyrannous spell for ever. Try! my friend! Lay hold of any dreaded or disagreeable duty, and try. God never leaves His child to fail when in the path of obedience; for if the Christian does not succeed in pleasing himself by the method of his performance, he pleases God by the sincerity of his good endeavours. And the very attempt to discharge duty will give you strength. When the duty is fairly achieved, the sense of *having done it* will send an exquisite thrill of satisfaction through the soul, and will be a source of one of the purest joys that you can know this side of heaven. I question whether we ever realize a sweeter delight than when we stand beside some heaven-directed undertaking fairly accomplished, or some painful task nobly wrought out; some trying testimony manfully borne, or some bitter persecution fairly weathered out into the repose and sunshine of victory. Such joys the half-hearted, cowardly, dyspeptic Christian never experiences. The "weak hand" plucks no such chaplet. The "feeble knees" reach no such goal of triumph. They are awarded only to the vigorous of spiritual sinew, to the Bible-reader and the Bible-worker too! Dyspeptic brother! we commend to you the double remedy—*Bible-diet* and *Bible-duty*. If these do not restore you, we fear your case is past all medication.