

general disorder. Disease is an error of action—a greater or less variation in the motion, rest, and revolutions of the different parts of the body—reducible like the revolutions of Health, into a systematic series of of periodic alteration, in the course of which the matter of a structure occasionally by its atomic changes alters its natural character and chemical relations, so much so in some cases, as to become even completely decomposed and disorganized. Whatever be the cause or causes of corporeal aberration, in obedience to the law of all matter, the first effects are change of motion and change of temperature. The patient accordingly has a feeling of heat or cold. His muscular motions, less under the control of their respective influences, become tremulous, spasmodic; or wearied, palsied, the functions of particular muscles cease.—The breathing is hurried on slight exertion, or it is maintained slowly and at intervals, and with a long occasional inspiration and expiration, familiar to you all in the act of sighing. The heart is quick, palpitating; or languid, or remittent in its beats; the appetite craving, capricious, or lost. The secretions are either hurried and increased in quantity, or sluggish, or suppressed. The body shows a partial or general waste; or becomes in part or in whole preternaturally tumid and bloated. Alive to the slightest stimulus, the patient is easily impassioned or depressed; his mind, comprehending in its various relations every shade of unreasonable sadness or gaiety, prodigality or cupidity, vacillation or cupidity, suspicious caution or too confident security; with every color of imagination, from highly intellectual conception to the dream like vagaries and reveries of hallucination. His sensations are perceptibly diminished or increased. Light and sound, for example, confuse or distract him: like the soft Sybarite, a rose-leaf ruffles him. With the smallest increase in the medium temperature of the atmosphere, he becomes hot and uncomfortable, and the slightest breeze shivers and decomposes him; or, as you may sometimes observe in the case of extreme age and idiocy, he becomes equally insensible to excess of light, sound, heat and cold.

### CAUSES OF DISEASE.

What are the agencies that give rise to

“Maladies  
Of ghastly spasms, or racking tortures, qualms,  
Of heart-sick agony, all febrile kinds,  
Convulsions, epilepsies, flrice catarrh,  
Intestine stone, and ulcer, cholick pangs,  
Demoniac phrenzy, moping melancholy,  
And moon-struck madness, pining astrophy,  
Marasmus and wide-wasting pestilence,  
Dropsies and asthmas, and joint-racking rheums?”

MILTON.

Gentlemen, the Causes of all these various diseases—Various in name, place and degree.—One only in their real nature—may be found

either in a deprivation or wrong adaptation of the identical forces which continue life, in health—the same natural agencies, in a word, by which every motion or event is produced throughout the universe. They comprise, therefore, every thing that connects us directly or indirectly, with the external world; and most, if not all of them, act upon us, in the first place, through the different modifications of nervous conception. The causes of disease, then, never originate in any one organ of the body—except in so far as that organ may be pre-disposed by an inherent weakness of the attractive power of the atoms of its parts to receive grave impressions from outward agencies that affect the more stable portions of the same body in a slighter manner.

To return to the causes of disease, are they not infinite? The earth and its emanations—the air and its electrical conditions—the degrees of temperature, dryness, and moisture of both—the nature and extent of our food and drink—the passions by which we are agitated, with all the other changes and chances of our social and individual position; these are the elements to which we must look, not only for the causes of disorders, but for the causes of health itself.

We have already analyzed the Life of Health;—we have seen that it consists in a periodic alternation of harmonious movements, some long, some short,—greater and lesser movements, otherwise *fits*; in Shakspeare's language, Life is a “*fitful fever*.” If so, what can the morbid modifications of that life be, but modifications of *fitful* or intermittent fever? “All diseases,” says Hippocrates, “resemble each other in their form, invasion, march, and decline.” “The type of all diseases,” he adds, “is one and the same.” What, then, is that type? If we succeed in proving to you that toothache, asthma, epilepsy, gout, mania, and apoplexy, all come on in *fits*; that all have febrile chills or heats; that *intermissions* or periods of immunity from suffering, more or less complete, are common to each; and that every one of these supposed different diseases may, moreover, be cured by any one of the agents most generally successful in the treatment of intermittent fever, popularly termed *ague*: to what other conclusion can we possibly come, but that this same *ague* is the type which pervades, and the bond which associates together every one of these variously named diseases? If, in the course of these Lectures, we further prove that what are called “inflammations,” also come on in *fits*; that the subjects of them have equally their periods of immunity from pain, and that these yield with equal readiness to the same remedial means,—who can be so unreasonable as to doubt or dispute that *ague* is the model or likeness—the type of all disease!