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For two or more years I had been fighting against the inroads of what seemed to myself and to others as approaching consumption. During this time I was never without a wearing cough, producing the most painful effect upon my lungs with consequent loss of sleep as well as of appetite. My flesh finally began to wear away under this strain with fearful rapidity while still trying to keep up and continue my public labors, till at last I was forced to succumb to what seemed the inevitable.

The trouble of my lungs produced its reflex action upon all other parts of my system. My liver became torpid, my digestive apparatus had almost ceased to perform its functions, dyspepsia set in with its horrible nightmare, the kidneys began to fail in their official duties, with constant attacks of inflammation of adjacent parts, and with numerous attacks of pleurisy, which at times, as it seemed, would surely end my existence.

With indigestion came the most virulent constipation, which necessitated a constant resort to cathartics, none of which produced more than temporary relief, while leaving the dilapidated system in a worse condition than before.

At last, reduced to a skeleton, with hardly the shade of the color of life remaining in my face, I was forced with terrible reluctance to give up all work and subside into almost entire inactivity, with scarcely energy enough left to leave my room or to walk a single block without stopping to rest.

In this forlorn and despairing condition, I saw only in the near future the lingering fate of the consumptive, to which my brother Samuel, two years younger than myself had patiently succumbed a short time before.

I sought the counsel of the able doctor who had attended my brother and who had seen him die, and with all the frankness which I urged him to exhibit, he told me that my case was precisely that of Samuel's, and that within less than a year I might assuredly expect to follow him to the same churchyard.