

When food is received into the stomach, the secretion of the gastric juice immediately commences; and when a full meal has been taken, this secretion generally lasts for about an hour. It is a law of vital action, that when any living organ is called into play, there is immediately an increased flow of blood and nervous energy towards it. The stomach, while secreting the bile, displays this phenomenon, and the consequence is that the blood and nervous energy are called away from other organs. This is the cause of that chilliness at the extremities which we often feel after eating heartily. So great is the demand which the stomach thus makes upon the rest of the system, that during and for some time after a meal, we are not in a condition to take strong exercise of any kind. Both body and mind are inactive and languid. They are so simply because that which supports muscular and mental activity is concentrated for the time upon the organs of digestion. This is an arrangement of nature which a regard to health requires that we should not interfere with. *We should indulge in the muscular and mental repose which is demanded; and this should last for not much less than an hour after every regular meal.* In that time the secretion of bile is nearly finished; the new nutriment begins to tell upon the general circulation; and we are again fit for active exertion. The consequence of not observing this rule is often very hurtful. Strong exercise, or mental application, during or immediately after a meal, diverts the flow of nervous energy and of blood to the stomach, and the process of digestion is necessarily retarded or stopped. Confusion and obstruction are thus introduced into the system, and a tendency to the terrible calamity of dyspepsia is perhaps established.

For the same reason that repose is required after a meal, it is necessary in some measure for a little while before. At the moment when we have concluded a severe muscular task—such, for example, as a long walk—the flow of nervous energy and of circulation is strongly directed to the muscular system. It requires some time to allow this flow to stop and subside; and till this takes place, it is not proper to bring the stomach into exercise, as the demand which it makes when filled would not in that case be answered. In like manner also, if we be engaged in close mental application, the nervous energy and circulation being in that case directed to the brain, it is not right all at once to call another and distant organ into play; some time is required to allow of the energy and circulation being prepared to take the new direction. It may therefore be laid down as a maxim, that a short period of repose, or at least very light occupation, should be allowed before every meal.

It is remarkable that these rules, although the natural reasons for them were not perhaps well known, have long been followed with regard to animals upon which man sets a value, while as yet their application to the human constitution is thought of only by a few. Those intrusted with horses and dogs will not allow them to feed immediately after exercise; nor will they allow them to be subjected to exercise for some time after feeding. Experience has also instructed veteran soldiers not to dine the instant that a long march has been concluded, but to wait coolly till ample time has been allowed for all the proper preparations.

Although strong mental and muscular exercise should be avoided before, during, and immediately after a meal, there can be no objection to the light and lively chat which is generally indulged in where several are met to

eat together. On the contrary, it is believed that jocund conversation is useful towards the process of nutrition. Dr. Combe, in one of his invaluable works, 'The Physiology of Digestion,' observes the following:—'The necessary churning or agitation of the food is, from the peculiar situation of the stomach, greatly assisted by the play of the diaphragm and abdominal muscles during inspiration and expiration; and the diminution of the vivacity and extent of the respiratory movement which always attend despondency and grief, is one source of the enfeebled digestion which notoriously accompanies depression of mind. The same cause also leads necessarily to an unfavourable condition of the blood itself, which in its turn weakens digestion in common with every other function; but the muscular or mechanical influence is that which at present chiefly concerns us. On the other hand, *the active and energetic respiration attendant on cheerfulness and buoyancy of spirits adds to the power of digestion, both by aiding the motions of the stomach and by imparting to it a more richly-constituted blood.* If to these causes be added the increase of nervous stimulus which pleasing emotions occasion in the stomach (as in the muscles and organs of secretion generally), we shall have no difficulty in perceiving why digestion goes on so well in parties where there is so much jocularity and mirth. "Laughter," says Professor Hufeland of Berlin, "is one of the greatest helps to indigestion with which I am acquainted; and the custom prevalent among our forefathers, of exciting it at table by jesters and buffoons, was founded on [or rather, accidentally in harmony with?] true medical principles. In a word, endeavour to have cheerful and merry companions at your meals: what nourishment one receives amidst mirth and jollity will certainly produce good and light blood."

#### WHERE IS MY TRUNK?

It is well known in Scotland that the road from Edinburgh to Dundee, though only forty-three miles in extent, is rendered tedious and troublesome by the interposition of two arms of the sea; namely, the Friths of Forth and Tay; one of which is seven, and the other three miles across. Several rapid and well-conducted stage-coaches travel upon this road; but, from their frequent loading and unloading at the ferries, there is not only considerable delay to the travellers, but also rather more than the usual risk of damage and loss to their luggage. On one occasion it happened that the common chances against the safety of a traveller's integuments were multiplied in a mysterious but somewhat amusing manner—as the following little narrative will show.

The gentleman in question was an inside passenger—a very tall man, which was so much the worse for him in that situation—and it appeared that his whole baggage consisted of a single black trunk,—one of medium size, and no way remarkable in appearance. On our leaving Edinburgh, this trunk had been disposed in the boot of the coach, amidst a great variety of other trunks, bundles, and carpet-bags belonging to the rest of the passengers.

Having arrived at Newhaven, the luggage was brought forth from the coach and disposed upon a barrow, in order that it might be taken down to the steamer which