

been employed. It was these and not the disease which produced inveterate constipation. It is their natural effect. They weaken and exhaust the nerves not only of the bowels, but of every other internal organ, until at length none of them are equal to their duties; and in addition to their disturbed action, we have a variety of other symptoms, as nervous anxiety and excitement—distressing sensations of the head, occasionally presenting those indications which are imagined to forbode an attack of apoplexy, but without any just foundation. The symptoms lead to further exhausting measures, and to consequences which we leave to the surmise of others.

The patient, whose case is here alluded to, when he came under our care was about *thirteen* stone in weight, and was still suffering from the head affection and other derangements, for the cure of which such active treatment had been used. At the very moment he consulted us, he was told, in a very decisive tone, of the sad results that would follow if his bowels were not acted upon daily. We took a widely different view of his case. We regarded their comparative repose or freedom from disturbance as essential to the restoration of their exhausted energies. Otherwise it would be in vain to attempt to invigorate the body. For this to increase in strength—in the activity and correctness of its vital actions, it is clear that in a given period it must acquire more than it loses. One mode of making the gain to exceed the loss, is to diminish the latter. One channel through which this loss finds a ready exit, or by which it is produced, IS THE FREQUENT ACTION OF THE BOWELS. If we allow them rest, within proper limits, they are soon in a condition to do something for themselves; and whilst they are struggling to gather together their powers for the desired effect, the food which has been digested is carried *into* and left in the system, and not drawn *out* of it by the prejudicial influence of purgatives.

The reader will probably exclaim, What, allow the bowels to be confined for several days! There is no rule for

their action in disease, and not one that can be defined as co-existing or necessary to health. Nature, if she were better understood, would be much less interfered with in matters of this kind. Concerning many of her operations we have no particular anxiety—the changes to which they are subject do not arrest our attention, unless accompanied with some painful or unusual sensation; but this is not the case with the bowels. We think it needful that they should act as regularly as the best adjusted time-piece. An alteration in diet, in regard to quantity or quality—in the activity of the digestive functions—in the habits of the individual, especially in reference to bodily or mental exercise—in the vicissitudes of temperature, or other conditions of the atmosphere, are circumstances which are never taken into account; and though the temporary constipation may give rise to no uneasy feeling—no pain of head—no heat of hands—no flushing of the face—no dryness of the mouth, yet the bowels must be worked at, and nature in vain pleads for rest for a portion of her important organs.

The case, which has led to these remarks, has rapidly improved under a different system of treatment. For a time we did not at all disturb the bowels. We had other objects in view, viz., the strengthening of the digestive organs, the production of more abundant blood, and its more liberal distribution throughout the body—effects which were incompatible with the frequent action of these organs, or indeed with that degree of action which would be natural in an ordinary state of health. If the muscles of the arm are fatigued with labor, rest is essential to the restoration of their strength; and the same argument applies with undiminished force to the bowels—with this difference, that on the prolonged repose of the latter—the duration of which is to be measured by the extent of the previous demands made upon them, *depends the well-being of the whole animal system.* The analogy, which is physiologically just, never enters into the consideration of the profession they