

means, simple, efficient, and calculated to remove or relieve the evil.

All actions of the body are *nervous*, or in other words depend on nervous power for their manifestation. This doctrine we are aware is in opposition to prevailing theories or hypotheses concerning the vital functions in their natural and disordered states. We have elsewhere endeavored to establish this proposition,\* and no one has yet questioned its accuracy. The blood, whether we study the causes of its motion, or the appropriation of its elements to the purposes of the animal economy, is obedient to the influence of this *nervous principle*. From this it derives its vitality and value.—Through its agency it is distributed to different organs, according to their requirements. Their demand is not a fixed quantity, but varies with every modification in the activity of the functions, which modification is primarily a change in the concentration or direction of nervous power. The successive stages of digestion depend directly on this agent. It is the cause of the motions of the stomach—of the accelerated flow of blood to it to meet its temporary necessities, and of the secretion of gastric juice.—The nervous influence brings into play the organic mechanism in virtue of which these results are produced. It imparts to the muscular fibres of the stomach the power of contraction, and to the numerous capillaries of this organ a greatly excited action, or the tendency thereto, in consequence of which they receive an increased quantity of blood to furnish the necessary supply of gastric juice: the abundance of which secretion is clearly to be traced to the operation of nervous power. The different structures of the body may justly be regarded as built upon the nervous system, as it is found to be blended with every particle of living matter. The scalpel, aided by the microscope, cannot disconnect it from its relations to other organic tissues: and

it is evident, at least to the philosophical understanding, that the exquisite harmony which pervades the animal economy—the variety of actions which fall under notice, each occurring both in degree and time according to the necessities of life, must be under the control of one universal principle, which is clearly nervous agency.

These physiological researches are not simply interesting as speculative matters. To regard them in this point of view is to lose sight altogether of their practical value. It is this property which they eminently possess that alone entitles them to consideration.

The foregoing remarks have prepared us for entering upon the explanation of the vital conditions co-operating in the action of the bowels. This action in its origin is purely *nervous*, and it is on this account, as we shall attempt to show, that purgatives, as a rule, are extremely baneful in their direct and indirect influence. We have previously observed, in touching upon the digestive process, that nature is a great economist of her powers: she does one thing at a time when the effort requires the concentration of her energies. The process of digestion exemplifies the fact. The stomach first labors to reduce the food to a pulpy substance, and to accomplish this it must be steadily kept in view, *that the whole nervous system contributes towards the desired result*. It depends on the liberal supply of nervous power, and this is furnished from remote regions of the body to stimulate the salivary and other glands to increased action; and further, to impart to the stomach an ability equal to the exigency of the occasion. The operations carried on necessitate the concentration of this power, and when the constitution is delicate, or digestion feeble and embarrassed, we have evidence of the demand made upon the nervous system at large, in the changes induced in the conditions of the brain, as illustrated in the disinclination and incapacity of the mind for energetic and consecutive application—in the tendency to repose or quiet. The cause is obvious. The results accomplished by the stomach

\* "Practical Views on Nervous Diseases," 15a. Wm. HEADLAND, 16, Princess Street, London, 1849; "The Nature and Cure of Consumption, Indigestion, Scrofula, and Nervous Affections," 5a. 6d., W. S. Orr & Co., Amen Corner, Paternoster Row, London.