

distended stomach on the diaphragm, and irritation reflected from the stomach through the pneumogastric nerves to the heart. Sometimes this irritation affects the lungs, when dyspnoea and cough are produced. The tongue, large and flabby, is deeply indented by the teeth, while the muscular structures of the throat, like those of the stomach, are so relaxed, that the part is often a source of constant trouble. There is a general sluggishness of the whole man. The tendency to sleep after meals is, in some cases, irresistible. The mind participates in the torpor of the body, and yet, like the circulation, is subject to be morbidly excited. It is in this form of dyspepsia that the pains of indecision, depression, and apprehensiveness, are most fully experienced. Such is an outline of the symptoms caused by, or perhaps sometimes only coincident with, impaired gastric peristalsis. Mixed cases, in which the effects of defective secretion are combined with those of impaired movements, are to be met with. But, in general, the affections are distinct.

The distinction between their causes is also well marked. The causes of impaired peristalsis may be summed up as those by which nervous energy in general is impaired. Such causes are, hard study, mental strain, depressing passions, prolonged bodily fatigue—in a word, whatever uses up nerve-force in such a way as to leave an insufficient amount of it for an organ, the action of which, although intermittent, requires a large share.

But, in order to maintain its vigour, the stomach requires absolute rest at regular intervals, and, for this purpose, must be empty. When at rest, the organ hangs motionless and nearly perpendicular in the abdomen. The practice of eating too frequently or at irregular intervals is, therefore, a common cause of dyspepsia from impaired motion.

Tea-drinking is a very common cause of impaired gastric peristalsis. This is mainly due to a specific effect on the nerves, and partly to the practice of taking the infusion as warm as possible, by which the tonicity of the muscular coat of the stomach is lowered.

The proximate cause of defective secretion is congestion and consequent gastritis. A primary

affection of the vaso-motor centres is probably a frequent cause of congestion; but local irritation, such as from strong alcoholic drinks, hard indigestible food, and food taken in excess of the gastric juice secreted is the ordinary cause.

In the treatment of all forms of dyspepsia, attention to diet claims a prominent place. Articles known to be slow of digestion must be avoided, and a lessened amount of food must be taken only at proper times. But, as a rule, absolute strictness in diet is more necessary in dyspepsia from defective secretion than in that from impaired motion; for, as already said, in the latter affection, digestion is sluggish rather than imperfect. One dietetic rule is, however, of the greatest importance in the present case. The principal meal should be taken early in the day, before the nervous system has been exhausted either by mental or by bodily exertion. In some instances, the power of digestion seems to diminish in proportion as the day advances. A distinguished literary lady consulted me who had, by incessant brain-work, fallen into a state of great suffering from gastric oppression and flatulence after meals. At my suggestion, she dined early instead of late in the day. This change was beneficial, but was not effectual in affording relief. I then advised that she should eat meat at breakfast only, and that no writing should be done before the meal. This plan succeeded perfectly.

From its well-known power in causing muscular contraction, strychnia suggests itself as the remedy for impaired gastric peristalsis. It affords the most powerful means we possess of restoring the gastric functions. I may, perhaps, take some credit for having helped to make known its value. So long ago as 1869, I wrote: "Speaking from extensive experience, I know no single medicine of more value. It acts by increasing the tone of the muscular coats of the stomach and intestines. When these coats are relaxed, gases are generated, mainly owing to retardation of the aliment in the cavities. No remedy has in my hands proved so permanently effective as strychnia against this inconvenience." (*Imperfect Digestion*, 1st ed., p. 186.) In 1864, the late Dr.