

blood, out of which is formed everything that constitutes the living organic structure.

When digestion is naturally feeble, or rendered so by sedentary habits or other circumstances this stage of digestion—the conversion of chyme into chyle and its absorption, are proportionately tedious. It is long before the lacteals have drawn from the smaller bowels or intestines the whole of the nutritive matter which they contain. To accomplish this efficiently, it is necessary that the bowels should be left to their uninterrupted operations. The lacteals will be busily occupied in discharging their duties as long as there is anything that they can abstract.

In a majority of instances, where constipation is one of the predominant symptoms, the process of digestion is weak and is imperfectly performed; and if accompanied with indications of gastric and constitutional derangement, such as flatulence—oppression, weight or pain in the stomach—a furred or slightly polished tongue—distressing affections of the head—occasional palpitation of the heart—nervous diseases, such as *tic-doloureux*—spasms or cramps—attacks of numbness, or deadness of the fingers, purgatives, such as are usually employed, are decidedly injurious. The evil under which the patient labors is not an accumulation of matter in the bowels, which the remedies prescribed may remove, *but a derangement of the system generally, its fluids as well as its solids*, conjoined with the more marked disturbance of particular organs, as the liver, the stomach, and the alimentary canal.

Purgatives, under the circumstances stated, act prejudicially in various ways. They disorder the functions of the stomach—irritate the bowels—the urinary bladder—enfeeble the generative system, and exhaust the constitution at large. The public have no just idea of the extensive organic mischief which they frequently produce. We shall in the subsequent pages point out the particular effects arising from their action. In nine cases out of ten it is a misconception, when persons have recourse to purga-

tives, to imagine that the intestines are loaded with their contents, or that the forced removal of these will be followed by that relief or feeling of health which is anticipated. The great object in the majority of these cases, should be to coax nature to the performance of her duties by the mildest and simplest of means, rather than compel her to act by vigorous measures. She becomes obstinate in the ratio of the repetition of the demands made upon her, and in fact in the same proportion becomes unequal to respond to them.

If it be supposed that purgatives act only on the bowels or affect these organs alone, it is an error which cannot be too soon corrected. Purgatives have no such limited influence. Analyzed in a just physiological spirit, their operation will be found to have a direct relation to all parts of the animal economy. The vital conditions of every fibre of the body is modified by them according to the severity of their action and the delicacy of the constitution. In order to render this intelligible, and to bring it within the comprehension of the non-professional reader, we will attempt to explain the nature of the vital changes which take place in the bowels when *unaided* they effect the expulsion of their contents.

It is necessary to understand that all parts of the body are, structurally and by sympathies, united into one comprehensive whole. No organ is independent of others, nor can one act without influencing, though not always in an appreciable degree, the vital conditions of the rest. They constitute a vast circle, having obvious connexions with particular centres, as the brain and the spinal cord, and every movement or change induced in any portion of this circle modifies to some extent the vital relations of the entire circumference.

There is probably no principle in the wide range of physiological science so fruitful as this in its striking and multifarious applications to the well being of life. The thorough apprehension of it opens out a boundless field of inquiry. It throws light on the origin of disease, whatever be its character, and suggests