

gastric juice, which is clear and colourless, with little taste, or smell, or sensible qualities. On this fluid depends the important office of digestion. It has the power of coagulating substances in the stomach, of preventing the contents of the stomach from passing into a state of fermentation or putrefaction, and of dissolving the whole into one homogeneous mass. When the stomach is first filled with food, it appears to remain there for a short period without undergoing any change; gradually, however, successive portions of the food, as they come into contact with the gastric fluid, are dissolved; till at length, in a shorter or longer period, the whole is collected into a thin greyish paste, called chyme. In the upper or left division of the stomach it would appear, from some recent observations, that the food is freed from its superabundant moisture, which drains off by some undiscovered means to the blood-vessels, and from thence to the kidneys. The chyme then, as it is gradually formed, moves to the other extremity of the stomach, called the pylorus, where it passes out to enter the intestinal canal. It would appear, also, that the pylorus, or lower mouth of the stomach, has a sensitive power, whereby it freely permits the digested chyme to pass out, but refuses exit to the undigested matter. The chyme having passed into the first part of the intestines, or duodenum, is then mixed with the bile from the gall-bladder, and with the pancreatic juice. Both these substances, especially the bile, seem essential for the conversion of the chyme into proper alimentary matter, but their peculiar action has not yet been satisfactorily explained. That the liver and bile ducts are of the utmost importance, however, cannot be doubted, from their magnitude, and the care by which they are supplied with numerous vessels, and from their being universally present in a great proportion of animals. The chyme having passed through the duodenum, and having been mixed with the bile and pancreatic juice, now changes its appearance and properties, and becomes the chyle, or nutritious matter destined to support the various parts of the system with nourishment. The digested mass is gradually passed along the course of the small intestines, urged forward by what is called their *peristaltic* motion, which is effected by a successive contraction of their fibrous coats. Here the minute mouths of the lacteal