often consists in letting nature alone.—There is frequently great practical wisdom displayed in doing nothing—in *watching* or *waiting* for the operations of nature. Unfortunately this species of wisdom is the last attainment of the medical practitioner, and it is that which the public never fully appreciate. They cannot conceive that beneficial effects can take place without active means.

We hesitate not to acknowledge that a large amount of the good which we have effected in numerous cases is attributable to the comparative repose of the bowels, induced by the treatment employed, or refraining from disturbing that which exists. The presence of this condition gives a greater degree of vital capital to act upon, and so to direct or influence it as to render it instrumental in the removal of disease, whatever may be its locality.

We will briefly glance at the functions of the digestive organs—explain the nature of their actions—the effects towards the production of which they co-operate, and then we shall have an opportunity of showing in what manner aperients act—how they become so injurious to the powers of life.

The stomach has two obvious endowments—that of secretion and of contractility. On the reception of food its nerves are excited, and their aroused activity is communicated to the millions of capillaries or small arteries with which it is so richly supplied, in consequence of which a greatly increased quantity of blood is drawn to it, furnishing the secretion of the *gastric juice* according to existing temporary necessities. The contractility of the stomach changes the position of the food or its relations to the internal surface of the organ: as it undergoes the process of elaboration, it is carried forward in the direction of the aperture through which, in successive minute quantities, it enters the first of the bowels: and other portions are then brought under the immediate influence of the gastric juice, and after a similar modification in their properties, are transmitted by the action of the stomach in the same direction, and this is repeated until the process of digestion is accomplished.

It is scarcely necessary to remark, that it would be the extreme of recklessness and folly to drug the stomach while thus engaged in the execution of important duties. Let it alone under such circumstances. It has quite enough to do to attend to its own legitimate business—the secretion of gastric juice and the elaboration of food. The swallowing of nauseous draughts of physic, at this time, would clearly be prejudicial. Their action on the stomach would not be in harmony with co-existing operations. They would inevitably disorder them; and, if aperient in their influence, they would carry out of the system the nourishing fluid, resulting from the process of digestion, on which the strength and well being of the powers of life depend.

The food, having undergone the required modifications in the stomach, passes into the first bowel—the duodenum, in the condition of chyme, a pulpy substance, where it is further elaborated by the addition of bile and the pancreatic juice. The precise changes effected in it are not satisfactorily known. The chyle, into which it is converted, is a white opake fluid, possessing several of the constituents and characteristics of the blood. The smaller bowels are exceedingly rich in a peculiar class of vessels designated *lacteals*, the office of which is to absorb the chyle and convey it into the thoracic duct, which transmits it into the left subclavian vein, in order that it may flow through the left side of the heart into the lungs, where, from the action of the inspired air, it becomes arterial blood, on which every part of the animal system depends for its nourishment. It must be distinctly kept in mind, in the attempt to seize the full force of these remarks, that the successive stages of the digestive process have for their object the production of this chyle; and further, that the body has no other source whence it can derive the elements of strength and vigor. The fluid which passes through the thoracic duct keeps up the necessary supply of