

sist upon ignoring, as they are so opposed to the conclusions of their experiments and observations. But the testimony in favor of these long spontaneous fasts is as trustworthy as any in favor of the other class, and certainly deserves attention, especially as it shows us a little farther into an every-day occurrence, that is, the power of abstract thinking, or very strong emotion, to arrest more or less the animal functions. It is the most common observation, that thought is incompatible with violent muscular exertion. Who ever heard of a mathematician trying to solve a problem in the hunting field? If he were found there at all, it would be to escape from thought. When thought is both very prolonged and very intense, and confined to one object, it may induce a kind of trance, in which there is an entire cessation of all other vital action; but long short of this, there can be no doubt that the over-active brain monopolizes the vital energy, and paralyzes to a greater or less extent the other portions of the nervous system, and cuts off the supply of cerebral stimulus required for the nutrition of the body. That is, which enables the capillary vessels to exercise their elective affinities as to what they shall absorb, and what they shall reject.

Nutrition then, or the continual action and reaction of the external chemical world upon the living world, which clothes the spirit of man, depends upon two factors, the one the nature of the materials presented to the body to be incorporated into it, to increase its bulk by growth, or to repair its decay, and the other the reception given by the body to these substances presented by the hand of external nature. The character of this reception depends, among other modifying circumstances, upon the state of the mind, and the whole doctrine of the fitness of aliments for their proposed end, must begin by assuming that end to be known. Hence the grand difficulty of laying down laws upon the subject, for the ends of life are so dissimilar in different men. The scale runs from the sensualist, whose avowed end is corpo-

real enjoyment, to the ascetic, whose object is bodily mortification. And it is the duty of a physician to appreciate all these varieties, and to administer advice not according to his preconceived notions of the proper ends of life, but the most healthful or least injurious method of securing them. If we were practising in the millennial times, we might tell men to avoid all excess, of eating, drinking, loving, hating, sleeping, waking, working, talking, &c.; perhaps when such advice can be followed, it will not be needed; certainly to talk so to men as they are now, would be in many cases simply an impertinence or an affront.—What would become of a popular preacher if he could not fill a large church with his voice for an hour together, or a popular alderman, if we forbade him to taste turtle? In short, we must make the best of our materials, accommodating our rigging to the state of our vessel, and sometimes too thankful if we can secure a jurymast to save our ship from impending wreck. After these preliminary remarks, let us consider how our bodies are built up from day to day, and of what materials the structures consist.

“According to Quetelet, a full grown man weighs on an average 154 lbs., and if we subtract the great quantity of water which runs through all parts of our body, keeping them supple and pliant, some 38 lbs.; 14 lbs. of this comes from the bones, and 24 lbs. from all the remaining parts. The former contains about 66 per cent., the latter 3 per cent. of earthy constituents which are left behind after combustion. Man consists therefore, in more than a third part, of inorganic substances which are necessary to his existence, and which he must receive therefore with his food. He must, in fact, as the evil spirit says in Faust, ‘feed upon dust.’”*

It is to supply this dust for the stony skeleton of the fabric, that birds instinctively swallow sand and gravel, and not to assist the comminution of their food merely. Chossat found that birds de-

* Schleiden, op. cit.