

vourite substance to nestle in and feed upon, accounts for all the phenomena of this loathsome disease; and, perhaps in vaccinating or inoculating against it, we but submit our bodies to the deprivations of a less noxious species of insects, which change our humours so as to render them for ever after unpalatable to the others, that are apt of themselves to fasten upon us. The measles too and the itch are probably accounted for in the same way.

Observations made with the microscope on the expectorated phlegm of those who labour under phtisical and pulmonary complaints, as well as arguments drawn from analogy, induce one to ascribe the wasting of the lungs and liver to a similar cause.

We read of conquering heroes and mighty monarchs, who had the world at their beck, subdued and humbled to the dust by the onset of such puny warriors; whose countless legions have attacked and carried as it were by storm, the citadel of life, sapping and undermining it at every pore. Almighty God, in derision of all that is great, can send forth their myriads, like a formidable host, against whole nations; as he formerly did in Egypt; can make such feeble agents dash to the ground the aspiring pride of states and empires; and use them in his hand as a weighty scourge, and the dreadful instrument of his vengeance on the guilty.

The yellow fever, the plague itself, and a thousand other maladies, to which mankind are exposed may be considered with no small degree of probability, as effects produced by some invisible and almost infinitely multiplied animalcula; that thrive in certain atmospheres, and prey imperceptibly on that aliment, which is most congenial to them.— This hypothesis seems at any rate to explain many singular, and otherwise hitherto unaccounted for peculiarities in such diseases,

In this manner does it happen that mites and maggots in cheese and other substances, worms in the stomach or intestines, and what seems one adhering tissue of a particular species, called the tapeworm, finding their way in their original minute and invisible state into every secret cranny and pore; breed there; and riot and thrive upon that food, which their instinct has taught them to find out; to such a degree, as not only to become visible, but even to frighten us at times with their prodigiously swoln and enormous appearance.

We know that *all nature teems with life*, as the poet Thomson emphatically expresses it. In every liquid, in the smallest drop of the purest water, in the leaf of every plant, in the very center of stones and minerals, animalcula are discovered without number, and of every shape and hue. The atmosphere is full of them. We inhale them at every breath we draw. Though wholesome in general, and conducive, perhaps even necessary to health, yet under certain circumstances they may become of a poisonous and infectious quality; or others such may replace them, should that which expels or destroys some, happen to invite forth and call up others; as may be the case in certain fogs and

vapours arising from stagnated waters; which smite those who breathe in them with agues, *malaria**, and other chronic disorders; and often bring one down in a few hours from the very pinnacle of health and strength to sickness, debility and an untimely grave.

The same may be said of the jail distemper, putrids, and all kinds of diseases arising from impure air, and damps. The blood of patients in such cases appears through the microscope sometimes surcharged with animalcula; which circulating through the veins to every part of the system, infect and vitiate all the humours; and make at last of the whole body one resolvent mass of putrefaction. Indeed, I should be apt to suspect that wherever corruption of any kind takes place, it is the work of animalcula.

This immense profusion of vitality and varied animation, flowing from the creative principle of life itself, seems in the present deteriorated state of things, to have been made the complicated, penetrative and deep searching instrument of death and destruction.

ON AURICULAR CONFESSION.

Non egent, qui sani sunt medico; sed qui male habent.
Lucæ v. 31.

CONFESSION, considered in its true light, and just as the Catholic Church inculcates it; ought certainly to prove a most powerful antidote to vice; and the greatest possible check that can be put upon the sinner. Its utility is acknowledged even by the Church of England, who recommends it on certain occasions, though without enjoining it, to her hearers.

There is, indeed, something in our very nature, which, independent of the scriptural and traditional proofs adduced by Catholics in support of auricular confession, indicates the necessity that some such secure opportunity of disburthening the mind of its guilt, should be afforded to the repenting sinner. A person labouring under mental affliction, trouble and dismay, feels the greatest relief in communicating to his friend his internal sufferings; and his hearing his counsel and consoling speech. What consolation then may not a poor sinner receive from a charitable, well educated and prudent confessor; to whom he lays open his interior, and whose counsel and injunctions clear away all his doubts, and banish his despair! A healing balm is poured upon his mind, so torn and ulcerated by remorse. The very humiliating act itself of sincerely acknowledging his guilt, and doing on his part what he thinks enjoined by Almighty God, confirms his hope that God will also fulfil his promise in pardoning that guilt, for which he repents; and which in future he resolves to avoid: for, without these dispositions, he knows that his confession is sacriligious, and the confessor's absolution of no avail.

Without auricular confessions the system of instruction, to be dispensed by the clergy of the Christian Church, might seem extremely defective. Can we imagine a weekly sermon all that is requisite on the part of a pastor for the proper direction

* *Malaria*, the Italian name of a very dangerous kind of intermittent.

of his flock in the path of christian perfection? Supposing, what may not always be the case, that his discourse is every way to the purpose: that his style is neither too high nor too obscure to be perfectly understood by all present: that the memory of each hearer is capable of retaining, and his judgment of applying to himself whatever suits his own particular case: still every one cannot possibly find his own proper account in all this. For it is absolutely impossible for any one to make a discourse descending so minutely to particulars, as to hit the precise case of each individual. The duties are different of the rich and poor; the married and single; the parent and child; the master and servant; the soldier and citizen; the lawyer, merchant, statesman and husbandman; and the infinite variety of rank and situation in life, of education; habit of body and mind, temper, and character, circumstance, &c. varies in an equal proportion the danger and manner of sinning, to which one is exposed.

Bodily disease manifests itself under a thousand different forms; with each of which the physician should study to make himself thoroughly acquainted that, by knowing its every symptom, he may readily ascertain the quality and degree of the distemper; and, after tracing it back to its real cause, prescribe with more certainty its proper antidote.

But sin, the malady of the soul, a far more subtle evil assumes for the reasons above mentioned, a much more variable aspect; and its symptoms, as well as more multiplied, are often less perceptible. These then must likewise require the minute inspection of the skillful physician; nor can we suppose that Jesus Christ has left his Church without such, to prescribe to each individual singly, and from the most perfect knowledge of the case of the spiritual patient.

The weekly lectures of any medical man on the means of preserving health and of curing disease, however excellent, could not be thought sufficient to supersede the necessity of attending the sick in person, and prescribing for them severally. And even then he is forced to examine the particular nature of each complaint, to hear revealed and minutely detailed to him by the patient every preceding and concomitant circumstance; before he can venture to speak or act with any degree of certainty or confidence upon the subject.

The same precisely, and for similar reasons, should be the mode of treating the spiritually sick; and hence, according to Catholics, the great end and use of auricular confession. Their Church requires that none be employed as confessors, but the most learned, prudent and virtuous of her pastors. If her order is not every where complied with, she cannot well be blamed on that account. Neither were it fair to charge her with all the moral evil arising from the unworthy frequentation, or improper administration of this one of her sacraments; for that were making a crime to her of the fatal consequences of our disobedience to her commands; and accusing her of those very abuses, which she herself so strongly forbids, and so loudly condemns. This sacrament, if frequentated in the manner she enjoins, is certainly a never failing source of instruc-