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Dyspepsia or Indigestion

We have frequently mentioned that there was no organ in the body w.ch demands so much attention in practice as the stomach. If not primarily, it is secondarily affected in every internal disorder, and in many external ones. When the stomach is primarily affected with imbecillity, it occasions Indigestion, w.ch disorder is called by the Nosologists Dyspepsia. This disorder is not too well understood by practitioners and there are few writers but what treated it in a confused & undetermined manner. Some call it chronic weakness & thereby confound it with the weakness & imbecillity of other organs; others call it by the more indefinite term of Nervous disorder, thereby confounding it with Hypochondriasis.

The complaint is a very distressing one, and frequently exercises the patients & the Physician; for it is almost always accompanied with peevishness, doubts, fears, wandering thoughts & ridiculous fancies. Its symptoms are want of appetite, a squeamishness, sometimes a vomiting, sudden & transient distensions of the stomach, eructations of various kinds, heart burn, pains in the region of the stomach, a costiveness, & most commonly a despondency of mind.

We mean to treat of the imbecillity of the Stomach producing

Ind.

Indigestion, or Dyspepsia, and not when the same symptoms depend on a tumor, ulcer, or schirrus of the degestive organ: nor do we mean to treat of that Indigestion wch accompanies the gout, or that wch follows from an obstruction of the menses in females. These are secondary & sympathetic cases, and take their origin from that sympathy which the stomach has with every part of the system. The stomach being (as Hippocrates says) like that great fountain of waters, the ocean, wch not only receives from all, but communicates to all: for wch reason the sympathetic affections of the stomach are of prime importance in the practice of physic. If Digestion be well performed, the chyle is proper be the food ever so various; the blood formed from that chyle is natural; the secretions & excretions will (provided there be no lesion of the body) be regular; health, strength, activity & chearfulness will ensue. But if digestion languish, the contrary of all this will happen be the food whatever it may, and unless the injured faculties of the stomach be soon restored to their pristine & natural state, an Indigestion, or the D. called Dyspepsia be the consequence.

We mentioned, when treating on the physiology of the Stomach, that it had two offices; the one receiving & digesting our food and the other communicating fresh life & vigor to the remotest parts of the system. This twofold office of the stomach should be constantly kept in mind, when treating of

the languishment, or imbecillity of that organ.

Altho' the imbecillity of y.e stomach may be justly considered as the proximate cause of dyspepsia, yet we ought to take into the account also, the various possible states of that singular fluid w.c is secreted by the stomach called the succus gastricus, w.c fluid is, as we have already s.d the principal agent in digestion. The peculiar quality of this dissolving, or digesting fluid may be variously changed, or its quantity may be diminished: and the change in the quality, or quantity of this fluid may occasion a considerable difference in the proce.ss of digestion. But they its inertia, its vitiated quality, as well as its deficiency in quantity, may probably arise from the imbecillity in the fibres of the stomach w.c prepares & secrets it.

The causes w.c produce this imbecillity, or loss of tone in the muscular fibres of the stomach, may be reduced to two heads - The 1.st is of those, w.c act directly & immediately upon the stomach itself. The 2.d such things as act upon the whole body, or particular parts of it, but, in consequence of which, the stomach is chiefly, or almost only affected, on account of its being y.e origin of motion & center of affections

Of the 1.st

of the first ~~sec~~ kind, are, according to Dr. Cullen, "certain fe-
-datives, or narcotic substances taken into the stomach, such
as Tea, coffee, Tobacco, ardent spirits, opium & bitters, ~~pulmo~~
Many suppose that the debilitating effects of Thea is ~~merely~~ wholly owing
to the warm water; but this is a mistake. Tea is a narcotic
and like all narcotics exhilirates first & then relaxes. Perhaps
there is no herb that tends to correct the debilitating effects of
warm water so much as Tea. The same may be said of
Coffee. Both of them have the effect of preventing sleep.
The chewing Tobacco occasions an expence of a fluid necessary
to digestion. It has the common effect of narcotics, that of
debilitating those organs to which it is immediately ap-
-plied: it first stimulates them & then weakens the tone of
the system, & diminishes the force of the nervous power.
altho opium, is not only a sedative, but a soporific in a
high degree in its effects, yet it is like ardent spirits a
powerfull stimulant, or rather an exhilarant, raising the
spirits more powerfully than champaign. The Turks, who
are prohibited by their religion from drinking wine, use
in its' stead clear opium. Some Turks will eat ℥ij of opium
in 24 hours; but it destroys first the tone of ye stomach &
then the whole frame, bringing on disorders & appearances
like what follows from a long course of drunkenness.
The use of opium may ∴ be considered as ~~the~~ one of the most power-
-full causes of Dyspepsia.

Another cause of D.

2. The large & frequent drinking of warm water, or of warm watery liquids.
3d. Frequent surfeit, or immoderate filling repletion of the stomach. *
4th. Frequent vomiting, whether spontaneously, or excited by art.
5th. Very frequent spitting, or rejection of the salva.

One of the Kings of Spain happened to have a stinking breath, to remedy which his Physicians ~~composed~~ contrived a fragrant composition, made with Gum Mastic, wax, ambergrease &c. wch his Majesty was directed to chew constantly in order to correct this unfortunate defect in his breath. His courtiers, either out of compliment to their Sovereign, or what is more probable from the vanity of imitating their superiors, fell very generally into the custom of chewing this, or a similar composition. And it was observed that they who followed the fashion with most ardor, lost their appetites, grew pale & thin & became in a short time dyspeptic, and this merely from the constant rejection of the salva, solicited by this irritating composition.. And we find among us, that chewing Tobacco has the same effect. It paralizes the Stomach

* But above all night suppers. Sleep is a general suspension of most of the functions. Sound sleep & a crowded stomach, are incompatible with the safety of the human frame

Those

Those causes w.ch act upon the whole body, or upon particular parts & functions of it, are

1st. an indolent & sedentary life

2d. Vexation of mind, and disorderly passions of any kind.

3d. Intense study, or close application to business, long continued.

4th. Excessive devotion at the shrine of Bacchus or Venus. as to intoxication, or drunkenness it partly belongs to this head, and partly to the former, for it acts immediately on y.e stomach, as well as upon y.e whole body. — and

5th. lastly, the being much exposed to moist & cold air when without exercise.

Dr. Cullen thinks, that though the Dyspepsia as proceeding from the last set of causes, may be considered as a symptomatic affection only, yet, as the affection of y.e stomach is generally the first, always the chief, and often the only effect w.ch these causes produce or discover, he thinks the affection of y.e stomach may be considered as y.e Disease to be attended to in practice; and the more properly so, as, in many cases, the general debility is only to be cured by restoring the tone of the stomach, and by remedies first applied to this organ. (p 48)

For the cure of this disease we form wth Dr. Cullen three indications - 1st a preservative - 2^d a palliative - and 3^d a curative.

The 1st is to avoid, or remove the remote causes just enumerated. The 2^d is, to remove those symptoms wch especially contribute to aggravate & continue the disease, and
The 3^d is, to restore the lost tone of the stomach; that is, to correct or remove the proximate cause of the D. wch we s^d was an imbecility, or loss of tone in the muscular fibres of that organ (see VI C. LIV. p. 48).

The 1st among the causes wch act upon the whole body, or upon particular parts & functions of it, is an indolent & sedentary life. Man was intended by his maker to exercise his body & his mind moderate labor is kindly imposed by providence upon us as the best mode of preserving our health, our innocence & our happyness. The exercise of the mind by contemplation, or by the study of some science is nearly as serviceable to the health of ye body as the muscular exercise of it. a life of indolence is therefore contrary to nature, and she therefore punishes the delinquent by a loss of health. Even vegetables will not grow so well if they are not exercised by the winds. A sedentary life, i. e a life of sitting still produces a train of Disorders: The stomach is weakened; the respiration is slow, interrupted and imperfect; a languor of the circulation follows, a diminished animal heat, & a still further disinclination for bodily motion supervenes; the chyle is crude & imperfect, from the want of energy in ye stomach, it is protruded slowly forward, for the peristaltic motion of the intestines is languid & irregular; a load of

coarse

coarse faeces are slowly crowded through the long tract of the Intestines, whence obstinate costiveness arises, wc. aggra-vates the original disorder, produces an irregular and vitiated secretion of bile, yr. wc. few things derange the di-gestive faculties more.

That ye. 2d. head viz vexation of mind, & disorderly passions, des-troy digestion no one can doubt. If a man on his way home to his dinner with a keen appetite should be informed of some ~~very~~ disaster, ~~closely affecting~~ counteracting his interest, or affections, immediately his appetite vanishes, sometimes a nausea & even fainting succeeds. And when he retires to bed "sleep from his pillow flies,"

All night he tosses, nor the balmy power
In any posture finds; till the grey morn
Lifts her pale lustre on the paler wretch.' Thom. Sp. 1045.

That loss of sleep will destroy appetite & the faculty of Digestion is too well known in the annals of misery, to require fresh in-stances to be adduced as proof —

As to 3d. Head, viz Intense study, & very closest & long continued application to business, its effects are nearly similar to those arising from an indolent & sedentary life: only in the first there is commonly a bloated habit, and the faculties are ren-dered dull & stupid; but in intense study, the body is com-monly emaciated, and the sensibility is morbidly encreased, and the mind seems as if it chafed out the body, but the sto-is the organ principally impaired. a thin emaciated habit: a delicate an irritable body, & a dyspeptic stomach compose the heavy tax which men of deep study & keen intellects pay for their eminence —

as to the 5th & last head of causes — viz excessive devotion to the shrine of Venus & Bacchus, few of you will doubt that a life of raking & debauchery ~~will~~ produces head-achs w^c arise from indigestion and w^c if repeated destroys the stomach first, then impairs the strength & finally destroys the mind.

Among the most destructive consequences of a rakish life is the Venereal Disease; I do not mean the disease itself this seldom destroys young men, but I mean the mischief attending the cure of it; the taking of mercury under every circumstance of disadvantage. Mercury is a very powerfull medicine, & requires the utmost attention to warmth & other circumstances in its' administration. But young men frequently take it, when from fear of discovery, they are led to eat, & expose themselves as usual in order to keep their D. secret from their family & friends. When a person, who, perhaps has scarcely attained his full growth, takes mercury, under these unfavourable circumstances, it dissolves the crasis of his blood, weakens of course the solids, & brings on an hectic habit of body. The patient finds himself more susceptable of cold, especially in the evening, his skin is at that time dry & contracted, and remains so untill morning, when a profuse and weakening sweat breaks out. At length an hectical frequency of the pulse comes on at times, & at length it continues the whole day; the muscular strength is diminished; & the digestive powers are ruined —. In this stage of the D, and from these

causes

the blood-vessels seem to contract & receive the chyle with difficulty; ~~into them~~; so that when the chyle flows into them, it distends them ~~beyond~~ their disposition to dilate, and thereby gives a stimulus to the arterial sys-tem, wc. is particularly discernible in the hectic flush & glow of the cheeks & heat in the palms of the hands. These slighter symptoms go off when the process of Di-gestion is finished & the chyle passed through the Lungs. In this case, the several parts of the body are not nourished & the arteries continuing to act strongly, the whole system becomes gradually weaker & weaker till a confirmed hectic comes on & sinks the patient with-out any evident ulceration of the Lungs. In this case the Mesenteric glands seem first affected, and then all the rest of the glandular lymphatic system in succession. In the latter stages of this calamity there is an evident acrimony in yc. system. The peculiar nature of this acrimony, & the different irritability of diffr. patients, give rise, it is probable to the variety we observe in hectic fevers. —— Now, this train of tragical symptoms does not flow from the poison of the venereal D. but from the unhappy circumstances attending the cure of it. Thousands fall a sacrifice to it in large cities. ——

From what has been s.d there appears to be three distinct indications of cure in Dyspepsia; The 1.st is to avoid, or remove the causes we have enumerated. But this is a very difficult thing: for this is 9 times in 10 a disorder of the rich & luxurious; and it is not very easy to make such persons break in upon established habits of indulgence, or to renounce the pursuit of pleasure. Such patients generally give their physician much trouble, but then there is one thing to encourage him, they are generally able to pay for it.

One of the most troublesome symptoms in deranged state of the digestive organs, is an high degree of acidity in y.e Stomach. It is necessary, here, to attend to the cause of this troublesome acidity. We have s.d when speaking of Digestion, that fermentation never took place in an healthy stomach, that the food never ~~stuck~~ remained long enough in an healthy stomach to go through the acetous fermentation; and that it only took place in a disordered one, in w.c the food remained so long without being digested, that it turned sour as it would have done in the same degree of heat in a vessel out of the stomach.+ We can easily destroy this acidity by neutralizing it with Lime-water, or Magnesia; but the next portion of food taken in turns sour in the same manner, and from the same cause, and it cannot be essentially remedied till you expedite the process of digestion by restoring the debilitated

+ A toast in the pitcher water & suffered to stand near the fire, will in 6, or 8 hours be as sour as vinegar. Coddington.

debilitated stomach to its' original vigour. —

We ought to commence by emptying the stomach of the imperfectly digested matters by an Emetic. An Emetic is beneficial in some cases besides emtying the stomach of crudities, for it agitates the system & determines to the surface of the body, for in dyspeptic cases the perspi-ration is never regular, owing to that strict sympathy subsisting between the stomach & the skin.

Another troublesome symptom aggravating the D. and otherwise in itself urgent is Costiveness, w.c complaint requires to be immediately removed. There is so much connection (says Cullen) between the several portions of the alimentary canal, with respect to the peristaltic motion, that, if accelerated or retarded in any one part, the other parts of it are commonly affected in the same manner. Thus as the brisker action of the ~~Intestines~~ Stomach must accelerate the action of the Intestines, so the slower action of the intestines must in some measure retard that of the Stomach. It is, ∴, of con-sequence to the proper action of the stomach, that the peristal-tic motion of y.e Intestines, determining their contents down-wards, be regularly continued, and that all costiveness or in-terruption of that determination be avoided. This may be done by various means of exciting the action of the Intestines; but it is to be observed here, that, as every considerable evacuation of the intestines weakens their action, it is apt to induce cos-

-tiveness

costiveness when the coaeuation is over; so these purga-
-tives w.c produce a large evacuation, are unfit for
correcting the habit of costiveness. This, ∴ should be
attempted by medicines, w.c do no more yn solicit the
Intestines to a more ready discharge of their present contents,
without either hurrying their action, or encreasing the ex-
-cretions made into their cavity, either of which effects
might produce a purging. (MCLIII.)

The other Indication of cure is to restore the tone of
the stomach, the loss of which we consider as the prox-
-imate cause of the Disorder, or at least the chief
part of it.

The means of satisfying this indication arrange themselves
under two heads. One is, by those means w.c operate directly
and chiefly on the stomach itself; and the other is, of those
means w.c operating upon the whole system, have their tonic
effects thereby communicated to the stomach

The tonics w.c are applied immediately to the stomach in
order to strengthen it are those under the general denomination
of bitters, astringents, aromatics & chalybeates.

Dr. Cullen says that bitters & astringents combined, are more effectual yn taken singly, and he supposes that such a combination actually takes place in that celebrated vegetable the Peruvian Bark, wch ∴ proves a powerful tonic, both with respect to ye Stomach, & to the whole system. But there is, it is probable, something peculiar & specific in this drug wch is beyond the mere effect of bitter & astringency; for we cannot imitate it by a mixture of bitters & astringents. (Mugs see also) There are some people with whom the Bark disagrees. Its long continued use, has been known to destroy the tone of the stomach; and this may indeed be said of bitters of all kinds. especially if they are infused in ardent spirits. Another inconvenience is it leads to dram drinking & finally to downright intoxication, wch ruins not the body merely but the mind also — The stomach constantly excited by aromatic & bitter stimulants, gets worn out by an immoderate & unnatural exertion. And it has been observed that those persons who have used powerfull bitters without spirits, whether for the gout as in the Portland Powder, or for a dyspeptic stomach, have generally been attacked by apoplexy, asthma, or dropsy wch prove fatal.

Cullen tells us that chalybeates, may be employed in considerable quantities, with safety: and that they have been employed in the form of Mineral Waters with success. Now we have several chalybeate springs in this country equal to any of those in Europe, particularly those of Saratoga vs. Sce. I have visited them & analyzed the Water — see Morse Geography

The remedies w.c strengthen the stomach by being applied to the whole body are exercise, and application of cold. Now, all these will be found in a ride to the springs of Saratoga. For when you have tried the common rotine of remedies & find them fail; or when your patient cannot easily be brought off from the irregularities & excesses w.c first caused & keep up the Disorder, or when from it's long standing you begin to be tired of your patient, and your patient of you, the best advice you could give him is to drink the waters of Saratoga on the spot. The journey with the change of scenery, of air & the variety of objects would be beneficial; and a very good preparative to drinking these exhilerating waters. And as I have visited these Springs & analized the waters, some account of them would not, I presume be unacceptable to you, seeing you who practice in the country may be applied to for your judgements & advice respecting their use & efficacy. — See Morse's Geog. under N. York

Dyspepsia

Balnea, Vina, Venus consumunt corpora nostra
Sed Vitam faciunt Balnea, Vina, Venus. § Martial

Wine Women, warmth against our lives combine;
"But what is life without warmth, women, wine?" –