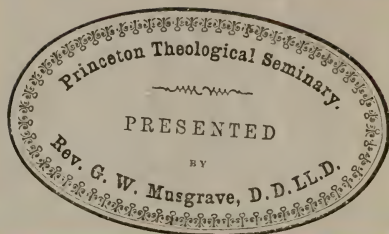


**INFLUENCE
OF
PHYSICAL CAUSES
ON
RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE**



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The influence of physical
causes on religious

G. H. Musgrave













THE
INFLUENCE OF PHYSICAL CAUSES
ON
RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE.

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*Non ignara mali miseris succurrere disco.*  
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INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

THE publishing of so small and imperfect a book on a subject of so great importance, needs to be explained to those who are not aware of its history, nor of the writer's motive. It is the substance of three discourses, somewhat enlarged and modified since they were delivered, which were designed for the benefit of a particular class of hearers, more numerous than is generally supposed, and whose case is too often overlooked. As the preacher had anticipated, while the subject was scarcely intelligible to some, and as unsuited to their taste and condition as a disquisition on colours to the blind, it was heard with the liveliest interest by others, whose wishes and welfare have been mainly consulted in making it public. The writer makes no pretensions to originality or deep

thinking, nor to such an acquaintance with psychology, or physical science, as a thorough and enlightened discussion of the subject requires. He is sensible that it is still as fully open to be handled by a well furnished and competent pen, as it was before the present thoughts were published. But in the absence of what is desirable, those who are interested may derive whatever advantage they can from the sources that are accessible.

So far as the thoughts of others have been approved, and were suited to the purpose of the writer, they have been adopted, often in their own language, and are here acknowledged in general, to supersede the necessity of multiplied marginal references and marks of quotation. The authors of certain well written papers on subjects kindred to this, in the *Literary and Theological Review*, the *Biblical Repertory*, and *Christian Spectator*, will perceive our obligations to them. Doctors George and John Cheyne, Combe, James, Johnson, Burrowes, Rush, Brigham, and Esquirol; Rev. Dr. Alexander, Richard Baxter, and some others, have been consulted; and

it is but candid to confess that to the gleanings from them, the book will be indebted for no small proportion of the interest that it may chance to awaken. Not unfrequently, however, our own conceptions have been presented in the language of another, for the sake of procuring more respect to the sentiments, by giving them higher authority. Should the book be blessed to the relieving of a single case of spiritual despondency, it will so far subserve the purpose for which the writer has yielded, with no little hesitation, to the request that the work should be given to the press.

INFLUENCE OF PHYSICAL CAUSES
ON
RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE.

CHAPTER I.

THE CONNEXION BETWEEN THE MATERIAL AND SPIRITUAL
PARTS IN MAN.

How poor, how rich, how abject, how august,
How complicate, how wonderful is man!—YOUNG.

“I WILL praise Thee,” says David, “for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.” How far the Psalmist understood the full import of his words, or was acquainted with the wonderful mechanism of man to which he alludes, we do not presume to know. It is enough to say, that the terms which he uses, are most appropriate and descriptive, as has been abundantly proved by the researches of physiology. But curious and fearful as is the structure of the material part, there is displayed

far more of the wisdom and greatness of God in the creation and endowments of the soul; and although we are accustomed to speak familiarly of both, as if they were well understood, yet there is scarcely a term which we employ which is not rather a symbol of what we do not know, than an exponent of what we do. The mystery of the Trinity is not more inexplicable, than is the connexion that subsists between the body and the soul of man. The most that we know of either, is derived from the results which flow from such an union. As we infer the being and cooperation of the three persons in the Godhead, from the nature and the benefits of redemption, by which this triune existence is implied, so we become assured that we have a spirit as well as a body, from their acts or motions, which we feel. We know nothing of the substance of which either is composed, nor of the mode in which the two are linked together. The attempts of science to reach and explain these ultimate facts, have not amounted to even an approximation. Whatever has been written concerning the locality of the soul, the time of its entrance into the

body, the mode by which it acts upon or governs it, and the avenue through which it escapes at death, is but little more than speculation and conjecture. Says Dr. Abercrombie, "we talk about matter, and we talk about mind; we speculate concerning materiality and immateriality, until we argue ourselves into a kind of belief that we understand something of the subject. The truth is, that we understand nothing." We really know but little more than a few facts in relation to both, which are discoverable by their respective qualities and attributes; such as that the two are closely united; that what is called the nervous system is the medium of communication between them; so that they exert a strong reciprocal influence upon each other; that when the one is afflicted, it always has the sympathy of the other. They, therefore, have been employed more wisely, who, leaving the former as among the inscrutable things of God, have endeavoured to make a practical improvement of the latter. It is a subject that so intimately blends with all that conduces to the enjoyment and usefulness of life, as well as its continuance, that it

is of the highest importance for all to understand it, and to none is such knowledge more needful than to the official teachers of religion.

It is proposed at this time, to offer a few thoughts on this interesting topic, more with a view to awaken the attention, and invite the pen of others, than to furnish all that is needed. Indeed, such a work as the exigency of the church has long demanded, is not likely to be accomplished by "any one who is not furnished with a suitable education, theological and medical, profoundly and experimentally acquainted with the Scriptures, fond of research, and gifted with good powers of generalization and induction."

For those who wish to pursue the subject in its pathological bearings, or as one of the departments of physiology, there are numerous medical treatises, both domestic and foreign, which are easily accessible. What we have to offer in the following chapters, is little more than the result of some observation, and the few years' experience of a pastor. It is intended to furnish, in a portable form and size, a tract for the benefit of

Christians of an unequal and fluctuating experience, produced by physical causes, though not suspected perhaps by themselves, nor their spiritual advisers.

I. It has already been said, that much that pertains to the nature of the connexion between the flesh and the spirit is a mystery which science has tried in vain to explore. It has proceeded so far as to discover in the human fabric, certain delicate white threads, leading from the brain and spinal marrow to every part of the body. It has also been ascertained, that by means of these nerves, (as they are called from the Latin term *nervus*, a string) sensations are conveyed from each of the organs of sense to the brain; moreover, that these are the channels of communication between the mind and the body, as is proved by the well known fact, that if one of the nerves of the arm or leg be sundered, all power of that limb is lost; if another be cut, sensation is no longer transmitted through the arm to the mind. But how the volitions or conceptions of the mind are conveyed on these delicate material conductors, whether by vibra-

tion, by a nervous fluid, or by neither, or what is their specific substance or construction, by which they are made not only vehicles of thought, but instruments of exquisite pleasure or pain, are among the questions that have been a constant source of hypothesis in past ages, but which neither reason nor revelation has answered. It is quite probable that neither our happiness nor our usefulness would be increased by a knowledge of the essence of mind and matter, and that enough is known from their various phenomena to answer every practical purpose. With that class of them which we are about to consider, the world of course have been more or less familiar ever since the fall subjected man to disease, and made the earthly part a clog, while it gave it such ascendancy over the heavenly. But in regard to those morbid results of this connexion, which are technically called "nervous," it has been frequently said, that, to a great extent, they are a penalty for an abuse of the multiplied blessings of civilized life. Among savage tribes, such affections are scarcely known, and they are very rare among those whose pursuits are ac-

tive, and connected with habitual exposure. Hence it is easily understood why medicine was no more diligently cultivated among the ancients, and how it happened that the first physician of eminence, who has been called the "father of medicine," should have lived within less than five hundred years before Christ. In the early ages of the world, there was comparatively little occasion for a profession that is now so highly honoured, and which is so indispensable to the health and happiness of society. The simplicity of manners which prevailed, plainness of diet, temperance and activity in rural occupations, were productive of a degree of health and vigour which are hardly known at present. How far the great age of man, until shortened by a divine decree, was the result of natural causes, we do not presume to say; but the progress of the healing art has marked, with a good degree of accuracy, in successive ages, the increase of luxury and excessive sensual indulgence.

"Had it not been," says Dr. Cheyne, "for the lewdness, luxury, and intemperate gratification of the passions and appetites which

first ruined and spoiled the constitution of the fathers, whereby they could communicate only a diseased, crazy, and untuneable carcass to their sons, there had never happened so much sickness, pain, and misery, so unhappy lives, and such wretched ends, as we now behold among men.”

That the sacred writings, therefore, should furnish but little instruction on the subject of the present discussion, however important to so large a proportion of modern believers, is easily accounted for. This has fallen rather within the province of that science which has grown out of the changed circumstances of man, especially the great degeneracy in his habits of living. But while we discover in the Bible comparatively few of the elements of many modern theories concerning this union of the soul and body, and the moral results, yet they contain records of the experience and exercises of the religious, and of others, which afford many exemplifications of the fact. Such is supposed by some to have been the distressing affection of Saul, ascribed to an *evil spirit from God*, the successive paroxysms of which were

allayed by the music of the son of Jesse. Stackhouse thinks that it proceeded from deep depression of spirits, or black bile inflamed, and that he was rather hypochondriac than possessed. Agreeable to this bad complexion of body, was the natural temper of his mind.

Another example is quoted in the case of the Psalmist himself, when, in one of his sacred songs, his harp is tuned to strains of the deepest melancholy, and he mournfully sings: *My soul refused to be comforted. I remembered God, and was troubled; I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed: I am so troubled that I cannot speak. Will the Lord cast off for ever? and will he be favourable no more? Is his mercy clean gone for ever? Hath God forgotten to be gracious?* And then he adds, *I said this is my infirmity*; an expression which means, as understood by some, that he suspects the cause of his great depression to be physical, or to proceed from the state of the body.

Another illustration of this connexion, and the influence of the material part over the

spiritual, has been drawn from the language of the Saviour in his gentle rebuke of the lethargy of the disciples in the garden of Gethsemane. That they should have fallen asleep under such circumstances, appeared to themselves to admit of no apology, and they did not attempt it. But on being awaked by their Master, he kindly remarked, *the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak*. The delinquency was to be ascribed, not so much to the state of their heart, as to bodily fatigue; implying, as is commonly understood, a mild reproof, at the same time that it evinces the disposition of Christ to regard it as evidence more of natural infirmity than of guilt. The same injurious influence of the earthly part is recognized by the apostle Paul, in those numerous passages of his writings in which he so graphically describes the conflict between the flesh and the spirit: *I know that in me, that is in my flesh, there dwelleth no good thing. I delight in the law of God after the inner man, but I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind, bringing me, &c.* In another place

he ascribes the inability of the law to justify, not to itself, but to a weakness *through the flesh*. We are aware that the term flesh here is used in a figurative sense, to signify the remainder of natural corruption which still adheres to the man, even after his moral state has become changed by regenerating grace. But the passages are none the less suited to our purpose, inasmuch as they imply that the organs of sense are made the instruments through which the corruption of our nature is developed, and its operation felt upon the spiritual man. In this connexion, it may be observed, that the writings of the fathers contain numerous quotations from the serious minded heathen, that show a striking coincidence with the opinions of Paul on the subject of depravity, and especially the prejudicial influence of the body. Tully's remark is familiar to many—that men are brought into life by nature, as a step-mother, with a frail and infirm body, with a soul prone to divers lusts. And what but this doctrine of physical influence is perverted and caricatured in that motley mixture of Christianity and Persian philosophy contained in the sys-

tem of the Manicheans of the third century of the Christian era, concerning the two principles of good and evil—the former of which is represented as the creator of the soul of man, and the latter of his body.

II. But if what the Scriptures contain on this subject amounts only to hints or implications, rather than positive declarations, our light is abundant when we come to the *testimony of science*. The connexion and influence of which we speak, have been proved and illustrated with great clearness by those who have examined the structure of the human system, its capacities and functions, organic, intellectual, and moral. Indeed it is as fully implied in the abuses of this truth, as it is taught in its legitimate uses. Thus it has been made to furnish the basis of materialism under the milder, and, as understood and taught by many, the innocent forms of cranioscopy, craniology,* phrenology, &c., as well as of that grosser system which makes the soul of man a mere chymical combination, which contends that it is not a spiritual substance, distinct from his body, but that the

principle within him which thinks is material; and that reasoning and reflection are functions of organized matter; which gravely tells him that he grows like a vegetable, or accretes like a crystal; or is attracted and repulsed like a particle of iron exposed to magnetic influence; that his brain secretes thought, as his liver secretes bile; that believing and disbelieving are acts of the soul, as is tasting of the body, and one is as destitute of any moral character as the other; and therefore that it is as absurd to suppose a man blamable for being an atheist as for being afflicted with an attack of the gout. That such sentiments as these are as directly at variance with sound science as they are with revealed religion, it is gratuitous to assert. In admitting, as we have done, that this inexplicable union of the body and soul may involve many truths which have not yet been discovered, we do not concede that it warrants any such atheistic corollaries as this. It would be easy to show, that although commended by names of some notoriety, yet such a materialism is "a logical absurdity, and a total misconception of the first

principles of philosophical inquiry.” But as it is our purpose in this disquisition to keep within the province of Christian casuistry, we think it better, in passing, rather to hint at than quote, the numerous illustrations of the present head, which are furnished by physiology. Yet all may safely be granted to the influence of the flesh upon the spirit, which truth requires, without affording the smallest grounds for those shocking conclusions.

We know and admit, that the operations of the intellect are closely allied to that soft whitish mass, or viscus, lodged beneath the arched bone of the head, which is called the brain. Thus a blow which depresses a portion of the skull upon the brain, will cause a derangement or suspension of the mind’s operations until such pressure is removed. A man at the battle of Waterloo had a small portion of his skull bone beat in upon the brain, to the depth of half an inch. This caused volition and sensation to cease, and he was nearly in a lifeless state. So soon as the depressed portion of bone was raised from the brain, the man immediately arose, dressed

himself, became perfectly rational, and recovered rapidly.

It is also well ascertained, that the brain is so connected with the digestive organs, that the vigour of its action depends, in a great degree, upon the healthful condition of them. We know that the brain of an adult of ordinary intellect is comparatively large, weighing about three and a half pounds, often a little less. In some persons of uncommon mind, it has been known to be much greater. The brain of Byron, for instance, is said to have weighed four and a half pounds, and that of Baron Cuvier four pounds thirteen ounces and a half. On the other hand, the brain of an idiot does not exceed in size that of a child a year old, or between one and two pounds in weight. It has been proved by measurement, that the heads of great thinkers frequently continue to increase until the subjects are fifty years of age, and long after the other portions of the system have ceased to enlarge. This was true of Bonaparte, whose head, though small in youth, in after life became enormous. The reverse is known to occur in cases of pro-

tracted insanity; not only the brain diminishes, but the skull itself has often sensibly contracted, as is mentioned of Dean Swift, who, in the latter part of his life, sunk into a state of mental imbecility.

It is vain then to deny, that this wonderful part of the body has much to do with the manifestations of mind, though we know of no warrant for the strange conceit of the older physiologists, that there is some central spot in that organ where all the messages of the nerves are ultimately reported, and whence all the orders of the will are issued; or for the figment of Descartes, that the peculiar seat of the mind is the pineal gland. Nor is it incredible, that a different combination of the physical elements of the man, may occasion a corresponding difference in the character and qualities of the mind; that a genius for poetry or mathematics, for painting or music, may be connected with a peculiar arrangement or disposition of some particles in the animal economy; in other words, that the earthen vessel is so constructed in some particulars, which escape the eye of the anatomist, as to form a different mould,

or give a peculiar shape to the mind, according to the sphere of usefulness for which it is designed by its Creator. All this may be true and not conflict with the teachings of revelation. Indeed, for aught we know to the contrary, it is comprehended in what the Psalmist calls the "fearful and wonderful" construction of man. But in what way the power of thought is originated, or how it is affected by the matter in which it seems to be lodged, is perhaps as profound a secret to Gabriel as it is to us; while the facts by which the truth itself is demonstrated, are, many of them, as affecting as they are familiar. Is the body attacked and prostrated by disease, it is sure of the sympathy of its spiritual partner, which is often reduced to the feebleness of infancy by the debility of the former. Its perceptions become obtuse, the memory fails, the power of attention is gone, as we are often painfully admonished by discovering that the conversation and counsels which were given to the sick, their confessions, and promises, and prayers, are all forgotten on their recovery. Perhaps it is not recollected even that we were once at their bed-side and

addressed them. Or, is the mind the object of assault; how soon is it evinced in the derangement of the functions of the body, inability to sleep, the loss of appetite for food, or of power to digest it. Hence dyspepsia, that malady so Protean in its forms, once generally thought to be a disease originating always in the stomach, is now considered by many of the most intelligent of the faculty as primarily a disease of the brain and nervous system, perpetuated by mental excitement, especially in the case of students. Hence it has been observed, that persons who are in the habit of strongly employing their mental faculties shortly after taking food, are more or less subject to this affection. In such a case, the nervous energy required for the process of digestion, instead of being expended upon the stomach, is wasted upon the intellectual organs. Who has not noticed the physical effect of the passions, such as joy, fear, jealousy, grief, and despair? Sophocles, Chilo, Juventius, Talma, and Fouquet, are said to have died of excessive joy. A paroxysm of anger has been known to induce an attack of jaundice.

The teachings of Broussais respecting inflammation of the stomach, made such an impression on the minds of many, we are told, as to have greatly multiplied the cases in Paris at the time; and affections of the heart, either real, imaginary, or both, were produced by the lectures of Corvisart on that organ, who agrees with Testa, another writer on the same subject, that the feelings have great influence in changing the natural action of the heart, and producing disorder. The latter author considered the powerful and irregular operation of the passions as the most frequent cause of organic disease of the heart, which explains why this complaint was so much more common in Italy during seasons of political agitation, and especially in France at the time of the revolution, than at any other period.

A few years since, the hair on one half of the head of a patient in the Pennsylvania Hospital turned white, during a single night, from the effect of fear. The whole head of Marie Antoinette, wife of Louis XVI. of France, became white in one night from the same cause. And Dr. Batchelder, speaking

of the medicinal effect of fear, mentions a case of gout that was effectually expelled by a sudden fright.

At the time that nitrous oxide excited almost universal attention, professor Woodhouse tested the power of the mind upon the body in several persons, who were anxious to breathe the gas. He administered to them ten gallons of atmospherical air, in doses of from four to six quarts. Impressed with the idea that they were inhaling the exhilarating gas, they soon began to exhibit the usual quickness of pulse, vertigo, ringing in the ears, difficulty of breathing, faintness, weakness of the knees, and nausea, which lasted from six to eight hours. Witness, moreover, the physical effects of excited passions in cases of mental derangement. How often has the most athletic and vigorous frame soon become racked and broken under the ravings of insanity, until its vital powers were extinguished.

With these preliminary remarks of a general character, we pass on to the main and more interesting part of our inquiry—the illustrations of this connexion between the

outer and inner man, as furnished by *Christian Experience*.

III. We have already said, that it is a subject which is worthy of the attention of all, whatever their character, moral or religious; but it is more particularly the case of the latter that this investigation contemplates. It is to show the constant and yet often unsuspected actings of the flesh, with its unnumbered infirmities, upon the spirit; and that the devotional exercises of the latter are greatly affected by the physical condition of the former. And if the foregoing observations have been uninteresting, or unintelligible to any, there are those who will understand us now. Here we strike a chord which will vibrate more or less on every changed heart that has been given to the study of its own exercises. No person accustomed to notice his various religious frames, can have failed to perceive that these are closely allied to what is usually denominated his "constitution." Is there such a blending of the juices of the animal economy as to produce what is called a nervous temperament, or that excess of bile

which makes it melancholy? Or is the man gentle or serene, sanguine or timid, cheerful or sad, you will find that these idiosyncrasies will not be merged and lost in the changes wrought by regenerating grace. His religion will not so neutralize and remove the cause of his lowness of spirits, his timidity, or whatever it may be that is peculiar to his nature, as to make him at all times cheerful and self-possessed. The bashful man will be a bashful Christian; and the bold man, constitutionally, will be bold in a state of grace. After all that the Spirit has accomplished in each, it will still be true in all, that the religious character will be tinctured by that of the natural man, as the liquor put into an old cask commonly receives a strong tang from the vessel.

*Quo semel est imbuta recens, servabit odorem
Testa diu.*

The odours of the wine, that first shall stain
The virgin vessel, it shall long retain.—FRANCIS.

In this respect the Spirit's operation on the soul has been happily compared to the work

of a sculptor, who makes a statue of wood, of stone, or of marble, indifferently according to the material put into his hand. So the Spirit in forming the *new man* still retains so much of the *old* as to make it evident what is the *rock from which he was hewn*. Nor is it a less interesting fact, that this gracious influence is so exerted in the various conditions of life, where it is felt, as to qualify the soul for the appropriate duties of its particular station. Does regenerating grace find a man in high life or humble, in Cæsar's household, among the fishermen of Galilee, or the servants of Philemon, it requires no change in his place, but works a change on his heart, and gives new help to discharge his duties better. The same Holy Spirit who makes a Christian master gentle and prudent in commanding, makes a Christian servant faithful and cheerful in obeying; as the astrologers said of Cyrus, that the same stars which made him to be chosen king amongst the armies of men, when he came to be a man, made him to be chosen king among the shepherds' children when he was a child. In rearing the New Testament temple of the

Redeemer on earth, there is the same occasion for various gifts and kinds of service, that there was in the magnificent structure of Solomon. And hence the innocent and useful differences between men, in their fallen state, are preserved and turned to a profitable account in their recovery. See a familiar illustration of this in the original teachers of the gospel, or the twelve apostles. Simon Peter was by natural temperament, ardent, sanguine, precipitate; and this characteristic of the natural man is continually betraying itself after his conversion. You observe it in his conversations with his Master; his bold professions, hasty promises, which opened the way for his sifting by Satan, and his lamentable fall. After the resurrection, see him running with John to visit the sepulchre; and while his timid and cautious companion stoops down at first, and only ventures to look into the place, the intrepid Peter rushes by and plunges into the gloomy abode of the dead, examines the very spot where the sacred dust had rested, and the linen clothes in which it had been wrapped. Both of them regenerated men, and men perhaps of equal

piety; but very unlike before their conversion, and scarcely more alike afterwards.

Look next at Paul, whose lofty bearing, and undaunted courage by nature, was not a whit impaired, but only sanctified by grace, and retained to the end of his life. See Luther and Melancthon, as opposite in their Christian character as they were in their original temperament. "Melancthon," says Cecil, "is like a snail with his couple of horns: he puts out his horns and feels—and feels—and feels. No education could have rendered these two men alike. Their difference began in the womb. Luther dashes in saying his things: Melancthon must go round about." The same divine influence had wrought effectually on the heart of both; yet, like the statue of which we spoke, the image corresponded to the material out of which it had been constructed. That any amount of spiritual influence should ever destroy these physical characteristics and make men of such divers temperaments alike, is to be expected no more, than that it should make them of one stature, or give them the same features or complexion.

It will be recollected how Cæsar recognizes the influence of temperament, when he objected to Cassius, because he was "lean and thought too much." He wished to have around him

"Sleek headed men, and such as sleep o' nights.
Would he were fatter."

But there are other, and in some respects more marked and painful illustrations, in the morbid experience of some Christians, which are at once an effect and a symptom of the state of their health. We speak of such as are familiarly said to look only at the dark side of every object, and are unwilling to engage in any enterprise, from an anticipation of its failure. Whether the happiness of this world or the next be their pursuit, the prospect is cheered by scarcely a ray of hope. Such a tendency to gloom is a *thorn in the flesh*, by which they are often tormented; nor is any class more exposed to the buffetings of this *minister of Satan*, than the teachers of religion. How often do we witness the sad spectacle of those whose manifold bodily infirmities, brought on by sedentary habits, great anxiety, or excessive study

and exhaustion of sensorial power, defraud them of all the consolations of that benignant system of faith which they are enabled to expound so successfully to others. Instead of an open cheerful expression of countenance, we often see a wrinkled, contracted, sinister look, which speaks any thing but in favour of the benign religion of the gospel. Thus, Christianity itself is made to suffer from the physical sufferings of its professors and expounders. The light-minded and thoughtless imbibe a prejudice against it, from observing the care-worn and sorrowful features of some of its advocates. They think it to be a legitimate effect of their principles, and are made to shun the places, and books, and people whose influence appears to be so detrimental to all earthly enjoyment. Unhappily, these outward tokens of disquietude are but too significant of what is passing within. If the face be covered with gloom, it is only an index of the state of such a Christian's heart, when in the retirement of his closet he pours out its exercises, in lamentations, and confessions of sin, and supplications for relief. At one time, he feels that he has grieved the Spirit,

that his best services are only hypocritical forms, and surely *God has forsaken him*. His heart appears like the *nether millstone*, and his bosom *the cage of every unclean bird*. *The arrows of the Almighty are within him, the poison whereof drinketh up his spirit, and the terrors of God do set themselves in array against him*. Again the scene is wholly changed; the turbid current of his thoughts has become clear as crystal. *The rain is over and gone, and the time of the singing of birds is come*. The change in his exercises is like the transition from the terrific tempest to the serene sky, and air, and pleasant sun that follow it. *Or ever he is aware his soul makes him like the chariots of Amminadib*. His doubts are solved, his fears are gone, and his present joys perhaps are in proportion to his previous sadness. He is brought into Christ's *banqueting house*, and the banner over him is love. *He is stayed with flagons and comforted with apples* and restored to the joys of salvation.

That such spiritual fluctuations as these, to which so many Christians are subject, are very often produced by physical causes, is as

capable of proof, as it is that an excited pulse and increased heat are symptoms of fever. They are the reflected influence of some bodily malady upon the soul. Thus, how many have discovered that their periods of spiritual depression are always contemporaneous with periodical changes in their physical condition, or with that sort of indisposition which proceeds from gastric derangement or an affection of the liver. How many thousands are daily affected by changes in the atmosphere, scarcely less than was Dr. Francia, Dictator of Paraguay, whose most extravagant outbreaks of passion, and cruel exertions of despotic power generally occurred during his seasons of hypochondria, which were most frequent when the wind was north-east, but which ended with a change to south-west, when he would begin to sing and laugh to himself, and was readily accessible. The cases in which this sort of morbid suffering is exemplified are so numerous, that their *name is Legion*. They find that their state while here “is a conjunction of their soul to a frail distempered body, and so near a conjunction that the actions of the soul

must have great dependence on the body. Its apprehensions of spiritual good are limited by the frailty of the body, and the soul can go no higher than the body will allow." We have known instances in which the seasons of spiritual joy and depression alternated like an intermittent disease, coming and departing at regular intervals. A venerable clergyman still living, who has suffered greatly from nervous affections, long since discovered this to be characteristic of his own, viz: that when the period of gloom and distress did not terminate for two or three weeks, it would in the mean time recur only every other day. But the more common cases are those in which the cloud, when gathered, remains suspended and unmoved for days or weeks, with scarcely a gleam of sunshine. Such a sufferer was the late eminently learned and pious Isaac Milner, Dean of Carlisle, whose extraordinary talents and attainments in science were conceded by all, and whose genuine piety was questioned by none but himself. And yet, while the source of so much light and spiritual instruction to others, he was often an opaque and cheerless

body to himself. "Though I have endeavoured to discharge my duty as well as I could," he writes to Mr. Wilberforce, "yet sadness and melancholy of heart stick close by and increase upon me. I tell nobody, but I am very much sunk indeed, and I wish I could have the relief of weeping as I used to do." Again, in writing to another, a clerical friend, he says, "my views have of late been exceedingly dark and distressing; in a word, Almighty God seems to hide his face. I entrust the secret hardly to any earthly being. I know not what will become of me. There is doubtless a good deal of bodily affection mingled with this, but it is not all so. I bless God, however, that I never lose sight of the cross; and though I should die without seeing any personal interest in the Redeemer's merits—I think, I hope, that I should be found at his feet. I will thank you for a word at your leisure. My door is bolted at the time of my writing this, for I am full of tears." Such spiritual sadness is easily accounted for, when it is understood that Dr. Milner was for upwards of forty years a victim of some of the most distressing complaints

that flesh is heir to. Spasms in his stomach, severe and uninterrupted headaches, oppression of the breath, broken slumbers, disturbed by frightful dreams, were among the diseases which caused his physicians to tell him, many years before his death, that with such a pulse as his, a man's life was not worth one minute.

Another example is furnished by Richard Baxter, in whose practical and devotional writings it is easy to discover the constitutional habits and qualities of the man. No person, not inspired, ever wrote more graphically of heaven and hell, as if he had visited both, and had come back to the earth again to exhort men to seek the one and escape the other. But notwithstanding his preeminent piety, yet during his early years, his mind was greatly troubled with doubts about his own salvation, promoted, says his biographer, by the particular cast of his mind, and the state of his body. And though habitually under the government of religious principles, it is well known, that he had certain besetting infirmities of temper, which are among the most common diagnostics of what were some

of his manifold diseases. The late Dr. Payson was another, whose vibrations of Christian feeling, from the joyous to the sad, the cheerful to the desponding and melancholy, are scarcely less notorious than were his uncommon zeal and ministerial success. The cause is at once explained, when his biographer tells us that his physical conformation was of a very delicate structure, extremely sensitive, and easily excited, so that nervous irritability and consequent depression were an ingredient in his nature. Hence, he adds, we have seen him writing bitter things against himself, for causes which, with a different temperament, would have given him little uneasiness. The case of David Brainerd, the apostolic missionary, is in some respects more marked and instructive on this subject, than even Payson's. But it is easy to make the almost opposite and contradictory details of his diary harmonize with one another, and both with eminent godliness, when the writer of his Memoirs, President Edwards, tells us of his frail health, and of his constitutional proneness to dejection and melancholy. His willing spirit would have

made him a rival of Paul, but under the weakness of his flesh, he sunk before he reached the age of thirty.

Such illustrations need not be multiplied, and yet we cannot forbear to advert, for a moment, before we pass on, to the touching case of one in whose character there is an abiding interest, which affords a guaranty that the repetition, even of that which is familiarly known, will not be tiresome. And perhaps within the range of casuistic research, we could not find a more affecting instance of morbid religious affection, than that of Cowper. How long his mind was shrouded in darkness, and racked with the most fearful forebodings, is as widely known as is his name. In one of his somewhat playful moods, when writing to the Rev. John Newton, "my thoughts," he says, "are clad in a sober livery, for the most part as grave as that of a bishop's servant. They turn, too, upon spiritual subjects; but the tallest fellow, and the loudest among them all, is he who is continually crying out with a loud voice, *actum est de te, periisti*—it is all over, you are lost." But what was the state of his mind for many

years, is no where described in more affecting terms than in the last original poem which he ever wrote, and which he called the Cast-away. It was founded on an incident mentioned in Lord Anson's Voyages, which he had read many years before, though the concluding stanzas show, that the real subject of his muse was not the sufferer mentioned by Anson: for having described the case of the unhappy mariner, his being washed headlong from on board,

“Of friends, of hope, of all bereft;”

his sinking beneath the “whelming brine;” then rising to the surface, struggling among the waves, his crying for help, the efforts made to save him, the mournful sound of his voice heard in every blast by his comrades, as the ship was driven farther and farther from him, till they

“Could catch the sound no more;”

when, overcome at length, and exhausted, he sunk; the poet then adds:

“I therefore purpose not, or dream,
Descanting on his fate,
To give the melancholy theme
A more enduring date;

But misery delights to trace
Its semblance in another's case.

No voice divine the storm allayed,
No light propitious shone;
When snatched from all effectual aid,
We perish'd each alone;
But I beneath a rougher sea,
Am whelmed in deeper gulfs than he."

That the cause of Cowper's spiritual depression was disease, has been abundantly proved to all, unless it be those "who would far sooner tolerate a poet's being a madman than his being a saint." His despondency was produced by physical causes, which could not be removed by reasoning, any more than a headach or a paroxysm of the gout. Like other valetudinarians of a particular class, his nerves were as sensitive to atmospheric changes, as is the mercury of the barometer. He was joyful or sad, as the day was serene or cloudy. "I rise cheerless or distressed," says he to one of his friends, "and brighten as the sun goes on." He had his four seasons of feeling, as the revolving earth described the four grand stages of the sun's progress in the ecliptic. Thus, in an-

other of his letters, he says: "I now see a long winter before me, and am to get through it as I can. I know the ground before I tread upon it: it is hollow; it is agitated; it suffers shocks in every direction; it is like the soil of Calabria—all whirlpool and undulation. But I must reel through it; at least, if I be not swallowed up by the way."

CHAPTER II.

USES OF KNOWLEDGE ON THIS SUBJECT.

I was a stricken deer that left the herd,
Long since. With many an arrow deep infix'd
My panting sides were charged.—COWPER.

THOUGH the character of this discussion as well as its limited scope, have precluded many important remarks which come within the province of the physiologist, yet much that might be written is rendered unnecessary, by a knowledge which many derive from their own experience. It is a subject which, as we have said before, is too little examined and understood. "Many of our young preachers," says Dr. Alexander, in his instructive book on Religious Experience, "when they go forth on their important errand, are poorly

qualified to direct the doubting conscience, or to administer safe consolation to the troubled in spirit. And in modern preaching there is little account made of the various distressing cases of deep affliction under which many serious persons are suffering." To no small proportion of the religious, both teachers and people, it seems to be a profound secret, how much the exercises of a changed heart may be affected by the health or the condition of the body. And is a man unable to judge himself, much less is he qualified to meet the numerous cases that are almost daily presented in an extensive pastoral charge, when unskilled to distinguish with some degree of accuracy, between influences which proceed from the body, and the principles, disposition, and state of the soul. As a part of his furniture for some of the most responsible labours of his calling, he needs a thorough acquaintance with a subject so closely connected with Christian experience. The practical uses of the knowledge of which we come to speak now, cannot be fully enumerated, nor adequately described. As the apostle says of the inspired truth which he

commends to Timothy, we would say, that it is profitable—

1. For *doctrine*.

We mean to say, that here is presented a theory in casuistic divinity which solves innumerable cases of constant occurrence, by which many are often confounded without it. It is admitted that there is a difficulty to be encountered, in turning such doctrine on the subject of our spiritual maladies to a beneficial result, on account of the inability to convince the sufferer of the real cause of his despondency. He seems to lack the capacity of perceiving, or of applying the sort of truth which his case requires, however plainly it may be set before him; for it is rare, as President Edwards observes, in speaking of Brainerd, that melancholy people are sensible of their own disease—and that such things are to be ascribed to it as are undoubtedly its genuine fruits or effects. Otherwise we should be amazed at the perplexity and disconsolateness of some excellent characters, and the readiness with which they refuse to be comforted. Even the acute and discriminating Dr. Rush, so skilful in explaining and relieving the maladies of others, was utterly de-

ceived in relation to his own. His Essay on the Influence of Physical Causes upon the Moral Faculty, evinces mature reflection, and accurate knowledge on this subject; and yet, when, in a state of religious despondency himself, he was assured by his pastor that it was a symptom of disease, he could not believe it. Nor did he become fully convinced that the cause of his spiritual distress was physical, until it had been removed by the improvement of his general health. Indeed it is commonly found, that where mental depression results from impaired health, our attempts to relieve the mind by counsel, tend rather to aggravate its sorrow, so long as the physical cause remains unmitigated.

In the last illness of the commentator Scott, his mind was observed by his friends to be gloomy, during the paroxysm of his fever; nor could his comfort be restored by any counsels of his pious attendants, until the fever had abated. Andrew Fuller also suffered greatly on his deathbed, from a similar cause. So when Dr. Madan once attempted to calm the mind of Cowper, by quotations from the Scriptures, it served only to increase

his sufferings. It was then at the commencement of a slow nervous fever to which he was liable; but after four months skilful treatment by Dr. Cotton, his health was so far improved that the promises of the gospel were apprehended without hesitation, and whatever his friend Madan had said to him long before, revived in all its clearness.

We have known persons, says an aged preacher of the gospel still in the ministry, poor in spirit, hungering and thirsting after righteousness, glorying only in the cross of Christ, and yet gloomily concluding that they have no lot nor part in the matter, and that their heart is not right with God. And why? The reason is to be found in something beyond the preacher's province; and till there is a change in the animal economy, all the succours of religion are in vain.

2. Another profitable use of this subject is, for the promotion of *charity*.

So far as it is understood and practically felt, it will make us pause before we censure those of our brethren whose condition rather claims our condolence and hearty commiseration. We think them morose, hypochondriac, or misanthropic; assail them with raillery and

banter, and anon with reproof for feelings of sadness, which they can no more resist or control, than they can prevent a flushed cheek in fever, or a yellow skin in jaundice. We might as well jeer at Dr. Watts for his pigmy size, at Pope for his deformity, or at Milton for his blindness. And yet there are many in society, even among the intelligent, who are accustomed to treat all such cases of nervous disorder, as only imaginary complaints, which are better managed by ridicule than by sober counsel, whether medical or religious. In order to cure them, they think it necessary only to divert the attention of the sufferer, and convince him that he will be well enough and recover his lost cheerfulness, if he will but cease to brood over his own wretchedness, mix in society, and think of other things beside himself. “Many will say to such an one, ‘Why do you so pore over your case, and thus gratify the devil?’ Whereas it is the very nature of the disease to cause such fixed musing. You might as well say to a man in a fever, ‘Why are you not well? why will you be sick?’ Some, indeed, suppose that the melancholy hug their

disease and are unwilling to give it up. You might as well suppose that a man would be pleased with lying on a bed of thorns." The reason of their utter misapprehension of such cases, is their own happy exemption from all that sort of morbid wretchedness which they treat with so much levity in others, without knowing what they do. To persons of this description, moreover, all our disquisitions on the moral effect of physical causes, are much like a treatise in Tamul or Hindostanee: they have no just conception of our meaning, nor of the utility of what we say. Nor is it among the lighter afflictions of the subjects of nervous affections, that they receive so little charity or sympathy from others whose general intelligence, and especially religious pretensions, would warrant them to expect more courtesy at least, if not greater tenderness. But if our subject is unintelligible to some, it is not so to others; we describe an experience with which they are wofully familiar; and while they are not slow to condemn themselves for their fretfulness, irritability of temper, and many obliquities of feeling and conduct which they so frequently be-

tray, yet their faults, however numerous, will be judged with least severity by those who best understand the cause. With nerves so disordered and unstrung, there is need of far more vigilance and prayer, to even appear cheerful and amiable, than most good men, without very special grace, are able to maintain. "A man may be a good performer, but what can he do with a disordered instrument? The occupant of a house may have good eyes, but how can he see accurately through a soiled window? Let the organ be put in tune, and the glass be made clean, before you call in question the musical skill of the one, or the eyesight of the other." In his excellent counsels on the subject of spiritual depression and melancholy, the Rev. Timothy Rogers, who lived in London near the close of the seventeenth century, enjoins it upon their friends to treat persons thus afflicted with great compassion, and never use harsh language to them when suffering from this cause. This will only serve to fret and perplex them the more, but will never confer any benefit. "From my own experience I can testify," says he, "that the mild and gentle way of dealing with such is the best."

3. Another most important use of this subject, is *for reproof and correction*.

When thoroughly examined and well understood, it exposes and explodes the popular error in relation to those disordered states of the mind that are supposed by many to be produced by religion. Such events are deplorable whenever they occur, and whatever the occasion; but it would certainly be a remarkable exception to the general doctrines of philosophy as well as of religion, if it could be proved that these are the legitimate effect of so pure and benignant a cause. "This one thing I must testify," says Dr. Alexander, "that I never knew the most pungent convictions of sin to terminate in insanity; and as to the affections of love to God and the lively hope of everlasting life producing insanity, it is too absurd for any one to believe it." We readily concede that this belongs to a legion of evils, intellectual and moral as well as physical, which are the natural product of fanaticism and superstition; and this explains the fact, that before the revolution so large a proportion of the insane in France were monks. Indeed, it is difficult to account for many of the effects of enthusiasm in any

other way, than by supposing it to be a species of insanity in which the aberration relates usually to one subject, while in others the judgment is sound. And it is perfectly obvious, that the greatly multiplied cases of this kind of mental disorder at the present time, in different parts of our country, are the offspring of certain epidemical delusions by which we have been sorely afflicted of late, and which have been promoted by nothing so much, as by the notice of others, and especially their attempts to suppress them by coercion. But we are sustained, not by the highest medical authority only, but by a faithful examination of the statistics of insanity, when we assert that the hallucinations of those persons whose mental disorder is imputed to religion, "are the result of pre-existing disease, and only take their form from the accidental habits and feelings of the patients." This has been so fully demonstrated, that scarcely any modern writer of eminence advocates the opposite opinion. From the numerous authors whose testimony is easily accessible, we will quote a paragraph from two or three, who are in

the highest repute. "In regard to what are called the moral causes of insanity," says Dr. Abercrombie, "I suspect there has been a good deal of fallacy arising from considering as a moral cause, that which was really a part of the disease. This, I think, applies in a peculiar manner to the important subject of religion, which by a common but very loose method of speaking, is often mentioned as a cause of insanity. But where there is a constitutional tendency to insanity, or to melancholy, one of its leading modifications, every subject is distorted to which the mind can be directed; and none more frequently or more remarkably, than religious belief. This, however, is the effect, not the cause; and the various forms which it assumes, may be ascribed to the subject being one to which the minds of all men are so naturally directed in one degree or another, and of which no man living can divest himself."

"There is not a tittle of evidence," says Dr. Burrowes in his well known work on insanity, "to substantiate that Christianity, abstractedly, ever made a person insane. Such an accusation is only one of the abor-

tions of infidelity, or of those who lack knowledge.”

Says Dr. John Cheyne, author of a most interesting work on partial derangement of mind in supposed connexion with religion, “We never saw a case of mental derangement, even where it was traceable to a moral cause, in which there was not reason to believe that bodily disease could have been detected before the earliest aberration, had an opportunity of examination been offered. Not only does every deranged state of the intellectual faculties and the natural affections depend upon bodily disease, but derangements of the religious and moral sentiments also.”

And, not to multiply authorities, we will add no more than a paragraph from Dr. Combe, who, in full concurrence with the others, maintains that “when fairly examined, the danger is seen to arise solely from the abuse of religion; and indeed, that the best safeguard is found in a right understanding of its principles and submission to its precepts. For if the best Christian be he, who in meekness, humility, and sincerity,

places his trust in God and seeks to fulfill all his commandments, then he who exhausts his soul in devotion, and at the same time finds no leisure or no inclination for attending to the common duties of his station, and who, so far from arriving at happiness or peace of mind, becomes every day the more estranged from them, and finds himself at last involved in disease and despair, cannot be held as a follower of Christ, but must rather be held as the follower of a phantom assuming the aspect of religion. When insanity attacks the latter, it is obviously not religion that is the cause; it is only the abuse of certain feelings, the regulated activity of which is necessary to the right exercise of religion; and against such abuse, a sense of true religion would have been the most powerful protection."

Within the sphere of our own pastoral labours, there have occurred four cases of this species of mental disorder, three of which were connected with known physical derangement. Two were effectually relieved after a few months, by judicious medical treatment, though one of them was so aggra-

vated that the person attempted suicide, and on one occasion nearly effected it; the third still lingers, the sufferer being a victim of bodily disease. In the fourth there was a constitutional wildness on other subjects than that of religion; and although his temperament was sanguine, his mind habitually cheerful, and his hope of salvation uncommonly firm, yet in a moment of temptation he was overcome, and destroyed himself. Another, whom we have known for twenty years, and esteemed as a man of more than ordinary intellect and piety, has long been subject to periods of religious melancholy, when he suspends his business, loses all interest in society, withdraws to his chamber, and remains for weeks and months, until the cloud of spiritual gloom has passed; he then returns to his secular duties and to the church, as if he had never been otherwise than cheerful and happy in his religion, which is at all times, in sickness or health, his main topic of conversation. No allusion is made to the past, there are no inquiries, and he volunteers to give no information; nor have his friends or physicians ever been able to ex-

plain all the phenomena of this case by any of the known doctrines of psychology, physiology, or religion. That his melancholy is not produced by his religion, would appear from the fact, that at all other times it is the source of his highest enjoyment. But as it regards the cause of these periodical changes in his physical condition which occasion this spiritual occultation, we do not hazard a conjecture.

But this injurious influence on the mind has been ascribed, not so much to religion in general, as to certain forms or sectarian modes in which it has been expounded, and that are supposed to be peculiarly adapted to fill the soul with gloom and despondency. Hence the maxim so long in vogue among the Romanists, "*Spiritus Calvinianus, est spiritus melancholicus,*" (so nearly English that we need not translate it.) Even Esquirol more than hints at Calvinism as in some cases, the cause of religious melancholy; and it is well known that the sentiment wrapped up in this calumnious apothegm, was a popular solution of the unhappy case of Cowper. Thus, a writer in the Encyclo-

pedia Britannica at that time, with great confidence ascribed his mental malady to the theory of justification which he had adopted, his natural disposition fitting him to receive all the horrors, without the consolations of his faith. Babington Macauley also favours the same opinion, by pronouncing the religious teachers of the poet "worthy of incineration." Nor is there any thing, we are constrained to say, in the over cautious, imperfect, and disingenuous, however interesting Memoirs by Haley, that forbids this inference. And yet, it could not but have been known by the author, or rather compiler of that work, that the period of his life during which he enjoyed, together with the unclouded sunshine of reason, the peace and joy of religion, was the interval from 1764 to 1773, when he believed and openly professed every article of his faith, the effect of which was represented as afterward being so calamitous. It was then that his character was exhibited in all its attractiveness, unveiled by any of the mists that had come over it before, and which gathered again toward

the close of his life. He was more cheerful and affectionate in his intercourse, partaking with lively interest in the common concerns of society, and happy in the enjoyment of his religion; and when he became subsequently the victim of his afflictive hallucination, he could not avoid acknowledging that his gloomy persuasion was at variance with every article of his creed, and he was driven to regard himself as an inexplicable exception to his own principles. Religious truth of any kind, had nothing to do as a procuring cause of Cowper's malady. It was as clearly a case of hypochondriasis as are those instances in which the patient has fancied himself a "tea pot or a sack of wool, or has imagined his thinking substance destroyed."

We maintain then, that this unhappy condition, which, without due examination, has been imputed to religion, is an effect produced by physical causes. That a different opinion should have obtained to any extent, is to be ascribed to misapprehension, perhaps in part, but we doubt not that more frequently, it may be traced to another

source, which is thus noticed by Dr. Cheyne. "When a man from having been worldly becomes religious, there is no one against whom prejudice is stronger. No change is less agreeable, not even a change from respectability of conduct to the sort of profligacy which defies public opinion, than that which leads a man, whose previous motives were of a purely secular kind, to make the attainment of the kingdom of God his first object, by which he necessarily rises in the moral scale. That any one formerly on our own level should take, or affect to take higher ground, offends our self-love. It is a constant rebuke, by reminding us of his superiority of principle. Hence, it frequently happens that when a man really turns to God, first he is represented as a hypocrite, then a fool, and last of all, a madman. That his motives and his judgment will be arraigned, every neophyte may expect, as being matter of uniform experience; and that madness is a consequence of divine teaching, is a conclusion which is as old as the days of Portius Festus.

4. Another use of this subject, and the last which we shall mention, is for *consolation*.

And for this grateful ministry, its scope is as wide as the office is benignant. As may be well presumed, this doctrine of physical influences is easily capable of being perverted. Some may mistake the buoyancy of animal spirits for the influences of the Comforter, and others may ascribe the *motions of sins which are by the law*, to the power of bodily disease. But it is not intended by this admission of the effect of physical causes upon the soul, to offer an apology for sin, to furnish a convenient excuse for indolence, sullenness, a cynical temper, or any other culpable dispositions to which a man may be constitutionally prone. All these may be natural, but very criminal nevertheless. The difference is wide between a neglect of prayer and watchfulness occasioned by great fatigue in the performance of other duties, as in the case of the disciples in the garden, and an omission caused by giving way to an inbred laziness. As a question in morals, the point is material whether a man's hastiness of spirit be a

symptom of hepatic disease, or the habitual prompting of a depraved and neglected heart. We are not accountable to God for the difference in our complexion or in the length of our limbs, but he justly makes us responsible for the envy and jealousy and malice of our dispositions.

To what extent, however, these morbid exercises are moral and culpable, is perhaps the most perplexing inquiry which this whole subject suggests. That man is answerable for his conduct so long as "exaggerated irritability stops short of derangement," would seem to be an axiom in morals; and yet what shall we understand by derangement? What is that changed condition of the man, or how far must it go, in order to release him for the time from the claims of the moral law? It has been confidently asserted, that the feelings produced by nervous diseases are not strictly moral, nor are we accountable for them except as we are accountable for inducing that state of physical organization in which they originate.

And admitting this also to be true, those cases will nevertheless continually occur

which it will occasion no little perplexity to decide. Moral qualities, such as pride, envy, jealousy, covetousness, &c., we know are hereditary, as well as those that are intellectual: "Hence we often find," says Dr. Rush, "certain virtues and vices as peculiar to families through all their degrees of consanguinity and duration, as is a peculiarity of voice, complexion, or shape." But however this innate or transmitted tendency to certain kinds of evil may excite commiseration, we regard it not so much as an apology for having yielded to the inclination, as a cogent motive for continual vigilance against it. But notwithstanding the difficulties with which the subject is embarrassed, there is nevertheless, much in this doctrine of physical influences for the comfort of those whose wretched experience often makes it so desirable. It is a relief to find that they were in error concerning the nature of their distressing affection; to discover that what was supposed to be an infusion of Satan, has been caused, perhaps by a mistake in the quality or quantity of their food, or by changes in the atmosphere. They see the

danger of making their feelings the test of their Christian character, so long as their health is impaired. Indeed it is painful to read the diaries of many eminent believers, and see how they suffered from the imaginary belief of the withdrawment of God's favour, manifested, as they supposed, by the variable state of their feelings. The grand difficulty in many of these cases, lies in a deranged condition of the animal part. A highly respectable clergyman, still living in New England, after having preached with much acceptance and success to a congregation for twenty years, was called to another field of labour; the change proving not so happy in all respects as he had anticipated, his health failed, and with it his hope. On entering the pulpit one Sabbath morning, he sat for a while, then arose, and instead of commencing as usual the exercises of the day, he remarked to the people that he had been deceived in relation to his personal religion, was not worthy of the office of a preacher, and could not any longer discharge it. A physician who was present called on him afterwards, and was enabled to convince

him that the cause of his despondency was physical. In the course of two weeks of medical treatment it was removed, his christian hope revived, he resumed his labours as a preacher, and has continued to perform them ever since with comfort to himself and usefulness to others.

So far therefore, as it may be shown to the spiritually depressed that their gloominess is a symptom of disease, they may be consoled by the assurance, that such distress of their soul is perfectly consistent with its regenerate state and its safety. Let them resort then to such remedies as the exigencies of the case demand, and wait for relief to be afforded through the proper channel.

The same consideration, moreover, may often minister substantial consolation in the case of departed friends, whose exercises have appeared more or less ambiguous, as flesh and heart were failing under the power of disease.

It is an important observation of Pearson, in his life of Mr. Hay, of Leeds, that good men may be unreasonably depressed, and bad men elevated, under the near prospect

of death, from the mere operation of natural causes. The Saviour's declaration makes it fearfully certain that the judgment day will reveal many disappointments of some rejected, who died in the confident hope of salvation; of others received, who left this world in darkness and despair. How difficult as well as delicate then, is the task of those who undertake to compile the memoirs of the pious from their diaries, or the records of their secret experience! How great their need of judgment, sound discretion, and especially of that knowledge of mental disorders and morbid influences, which many of such writers have evidently lacked! Indeed we are by no means convinced that there is not virtually a breach of trust in exposing the records of Christian experience, perhaps meant to be secret, to the inspection of the public. Such relations, moreover, while they have not benefitted the pious, have been subjects of merriment to the profane.

That the deeply interesting biography of Payson would have been more valuable by some omissions, will hardly be questioned by those who regard the portions to which

we refer, as indicative rather of the state of his health than of the condition of his soul. And so of the amiable poet of Olney, who, through the whole period of his gloomy aberrations, kept a journal of his feelings, which was published after his decease, in spite of the earnest expostulations of his more judicious friends. It was regarded by them as a heartless violation of the secrets of the sepulchre, as a throwing open of the closet of the anatomist to the gaze of the vulgar, and a yielding to the prying of a prurient curiosity, under a pretence of correcting certain false notions of religion.

How few of us would be willing to submit it to the most discreet friend that might survive us, to draw our religious character from what we might write from day to day of our religious exercises, under a full conviction at the time we penned it, of its truth! We say then, in conclusion, that while this doctrine is never to be used as an excuse for wilful delinquency in any, it may afford effective consolation to the afflicted believer when bowed down with infirmities of soul which he cannot overcome. If rightly under-

stood it will tend not only to minister relief, but will make us more watchful against sin in all its forms, and especially against that to which we have a constitutional bias. Are we naturally passionate and excitable; are we envious, proud, covetous, or jealous, it will cause us to pray and watch against these besetting sins with peculiar vigilance; while our numerous failures in this and every other duty, will make us feel our absolute dependence on the Spirit both for grace to enjoy our religion, and strength to obey its precepts. Above all, it will commend to our hearts that great Redeemer who *hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows*. We shall look away from our desperate moral defilement, to that blood *which cleanseth from all sin*; from our weakness to his strength; from our sins to his perfect righteousness. It is but a little while, and he *that shall come will come and will not tarry*. The day of our emancipation is fast approaching, when the *earthly house of this tabernacle* will be exchanged for a *building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens*. The spirit

shall no more be impeded by the disorders of the flesh, but this *vile body shall be fashioned like unto Christ's glorious body*; and then, as Cowper triumphantly sings, in one of his intervals of christian hope,

When that happy era begins,
And arrayed in his beauties we shine,
Nor grieve any more by our sins,
The bosom on which we recline,

Then, then, never more shall the fears,
The trials, temptations and woes,
Which sadden this valley of tears,
Intrude on our blissful repose.

Then the stroke that from sin and from pain,
Shall set us eternally free,
Will but strengthen and rivet the chain
That binds us, dear Saviour, to thee.

CHAPTER III.

COUNSELS.

'Tis hard, in such a strife of rules, to choose
The best.

ARMSTRONG.

HAVING examined the nature of physical causes, their influence upon religious experience, and the uses of knowledge, we come now to the most important department of our subject, viz: *the counsels which such cases of suffering require.*

And here we would repeat the remark, that as we are not writing for medical men, neither do we affect the medical knowledge which is required to do it justice in all its bearings. The most which has been proposed and attempted, is to offer the results of some experience and observation in prosecuting the ministry, rather than the fruits of scientific research. Without much of the

latter, it has appeared to the writer, that there is ample scope for some profitable suggestions, by which the unhappy condition of many may be reached and relieved.

The more conversant we become with the varied cases of spiritual disquietude, occurring in our churches, the more occasion we see for all the aid which may be furnished by the counsels and experience of others. That this should have been made no more frequently the subject of discussion by the pen or the pulpit, is to be ascribed, not to its intrinsic barrenness, nor its want of importance, as is evident from the prominence given it in the older English writers, but the demand for treatises on subjects like that of our present discussion is small, and for the most part restricted to those whose cases are portrayed, and very often to a smaller number even than they. Sometimes there is such an utter prostration of all energy, intellectual and moral, in the afflicted themselves, that it is extremely difficult to arrest their attention even by instructions, which, if heeded, would relieve their spirits and restore them to cheerfulness.

“In perusing the memoirs of those who have devoted themselves to God,” says Dr. Cheyne, “nothing has appeared to us more remarkable than their ignorance of, or inattention to, many of those things which affect their spiritual enjoyment; and especially that physical causes should be so continually overlooked by those who must be fully aware of the influence which the body exercises over the mind, and the mind over the body, in all men, but particularly in Christians.” They are habitually desponding and unhappy; not appearing to know how much the pleasurable emotions of the soul are dependent on the state of the health.

Non est vivere, sed valere, vita.

Existence is not life, but to be well.

To those, then, who are perplexed about their spiritual state, and are often fearful and sad, we would say,

1. *Endeavour, so far as possible, to ascertain the true cause of your doubts and spiritual troubles.*

This is Baxter’s prescription. “If you should mistake in the cause,” says he, “it

would much frustrate the most excellent means for cure. The very same doubts and complaints may come from several causes in several persons, and therefore admit not of the same way of cure. Sometimes the cause begins in the body, and thence proceedeth to the mind; sometimes it begins in the mind, and thence distempereth the body. Again, it proceedeth from worldly crosses, or scruples upon points of religious doctrine, decays of inward grace, or, as it was with David, from the deep wounds of some scandalous sin. Which of these is your own case, you must be careful to find out, and apply the means for cure accordingly. And if, upon close and careful examination, it prove like Achan's fraud, to be some latent sin, then relief can only come (as it infallibly will come,) by putting it away. If the cause be found in the state of your health, then acquit your soul from all that part of your disquietness which proceeds from this source; remembering in all your self-examinations, self-judgings, and reflections on your heart, that it is not directly to be charged with those sorrows that come from your spleen, save only re-

motely, as all other diseases are the fruits of sin, as a lethargic dullness is the deserved fruit of sin; but he that should charge it immediately on his soul, would wrong himself, and he that would attempt the cure, must do it on the body.”

It is admitted that such counsel as this is attended with more or less danger; that it may encourage presumption in some, and thus lead them to heal the hurt of their spirit too slightly and hastily, by resolving it into a cause over which they have no control, and for which they are not accountable. It is hoped, however, that the subject has been sufficiently guarded against this perversion, by what has been said in the preceding chapter. Unhappily, however, as has also been intimated before, many of those who need such instructions, are too dejected and inert to be aroused to make any serious and persevering inquiry after the source of their despondency. “To reason with a man against the views which arise from melancholy,” says Dr. Alexander, “is commonly as inefficacious as reasoning against bodily pain. I have long made this a criterion, to ascertain whether the dejection

experienced was owing to a physical cause ; for in that case, argument, though demonstrative, had no effect.” Very many are predisposed to take it for granted that their gloom proceeds from a culpable cause, whatever it may be ; that the more they should investigate the painful subject, the more they would discover to convince them that they were deceiving themselves, and that they had never been spiritually changed. But let no professor of religion in his senses ever be tempted to dispose of his own case in this precipitate and summary way. To give indulgence to such a lethargic ease, while in doubt about his salvation, is evidence of a sort of hallucination, which, instead of impairing his responsibility, greatly increases both his danger and his guilt. Let the inquiry into his own personal state, then, be pursued diligently, until he come to a satisfactory conclusion ; let him persevere under a persuasion of the ineffable importance of the duty, as involving all that is desirable or fearful in the disclosures of eternity.

2. Our second counsel to those who are

thus afflicted, is to *avail themselves of judicious medical advice.*

We refer in this direction more particularly to those whose state of doubting and darkness has been long continued. As in the case of Dr. Rush, the cause may exist in a morbid condition of the body, without being even suspected by themselves. To those whose trouble proceeds from this source, says Baxter again, “expect not that rational or spiritual remedies should suffice for your cure, any more than that a good sermon or comfortable words should cure the falling sickness, or palsy, or a broken head; for your melancholy fears are as really a bodily disease as the other, only because these work on the spirits and fantasy, on which words of advice do also work to a certain extent; therefore such words, and Scripture and reason may somewhat resist it, and may palliate and allay some of the effects at the present, but as soon as time hath worn off the force and effects of these reasons, the distemper presently returns.”

As the cause therefore is in the animal part, it must be reached, if at all, by reme-

dies which it comes more within the province of the medical than the spiritual counsellor to prescribe. But let it not be forgotten that not every physician, how skilful soever, and learned, and successful in his general practice, is qualified to instruct the description of patients whom these remarks contemplate. Such, however, has been the change of late years in the character of diseases, and especially so great has been the increase of those by which the mind and spiritual affections are disturbed, that cases of this sort are better understood, and the number of competent advisers among the faculty is much greater than it was formerly. It is an interesting fact, which is not generally known, that a large proportion of our more serious ailments fall within the category to which we now refer.

Near the close of the seventeenth century, Sydenham estimated fevers to constitute, at that time, two-thirds of the diseases of mankind. About seventy years afterwards, Dr. Cheyne made nervous disorders about one-third of the complaints of the higher class in England. At the beginning of the nineteenth

century, Trotter supposed them to constitute full two-thirds of all those which afflict civilized society. And a later writer still expresses the opinion that even Trotter's estimate falls below the truth.

We do not pretend to decide as to the comparative accuracy of these computations. It is enough to say, that the lowest is sufficiently great to appal, and also to show, that no department of the healing art claims more earnestly the attention of physicians than this. If the connexion between the mind and body be so intimate as has been shown, the reasonableness of this resort for medical advice would be obvious, even if its practical value had not been tested by common experience. How often have we known a morbid condition of the mind or spirits to be as speedily and as effectually removed by the operation of a drug as a pain in the head. That peevishness, impatience, and irritability which make one intolerable to himself as well as to others, we see daily relieved by the same simple agency as by the power of magic; and hence "our domestic happiness often depends on the state of the biliary and di-

gestive organs; and the little disturbances of conjugal life, may sometimes be more efficaciously cured by the physician than by the moralist; for a sermon or homily misapplied will never act so directly as a sharp medicine.”

A physician in this city was recently invited to visit a lady enjoying apparent health, living in affluence, and surrounded with every thing which wealth and elevated condition, and affectionate friends could confer to render her happy; yet in the midst of it all, she felt indescribably wretched, and sent for her medical adviser to explain the cause. It was a case of plethoric tendency, which called for depletion. A moderate bleeding afforded relief, and in a very few days she was restored to her former cheerfulness.

Dryden, whose mind, notwithstanding its capacity for elevated and brilliant conceptions was sometimes turbid and dull, well knew the utility of medical expedients as auxiliary to thought. “When I have a grand design before me,” says he, “I ever take physic and let blood; for when you would have pure swiftness of thought and fiery

flights of fancy, you must have a care of the pensive part, and for this, get help from the apothecary." Descartes, the philosopher, went farther still, and asserted that if any means can be found to render men wiser and more ingenious than they have been hitherto, such a method must be sought from the assistance of medicine: and Plutarch, speaking of the reaction of the mind upon the body as the cause of those injuries which it requires medicine to repair, very playfully observes, that "should the body sue the mind before a court of judicature for damages, it would be found that the mind had proved to be a ruinous tenant to its landlord."

None, we trust, will infer from what has thus been said of medical assistance, that we approve of that habitual tampering with drugs which is so common with the nervous valetudinarian, by which he only makes his malady the worse.

Exuperat magis, ægrescitque medendo.

The disease is aggravated by the means used to cure it.

But it is to discourage all this private empiricism, by directing the sufferer away from

these experiments upon himself, to the well taught physician, that more competent counsellor, who has been designated by Providence.

3. Another important auxiliary to the desponding Christian, *is suitable society*—habitual intercourse with others, and especially the devout, who possess a happier temperament.

——— Whatever cheerful and serene

Supports the mind, supports the body too.

The influence of sympathy, its operation for both evil and good, is familiarly known. “We are all,” says Locke, “a kind of chameleon, who take a moral tinge from the objects which surround us.” The manifestation of fear or of confidence and self-possession in a time of danger, inspires a corresponding emotion in those who behold it. The story of Cæsar and the affrighted mariners, will occur as a striking illustration; and how we all assimilate in character as well as in manners to those with whom we associate, is a fact of daily observation. Hence the salutary effect of a cheerful, sanguine

Christian, upon those who are prone to melancholy. *As iron sharpeneth iron, so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend.* His society is exhilarating, like the wine prescribed by Solomon to *those that be of heavy hearts.* An interview with those of their own morbid tendencies may be advantageous sometimes, by correcting the usual mistake of such believers, that their case is peculiar, or has certain unfavourable characteristics, by which it is placed without the reach of the ordinary means of relief. A comparison of exercises and sentiments, is often productive of good in showing that their condition is not so singular as they had imagined. From the prevailing lack of sympathy with which such sufferers meet, many prefer to hide their sorrows in their own bosom, to the risk of opening their heart to those who could poorly appreciate an experience so foreign to their own. Thus the late Captain Benjamin Wickes, of Philadelphia, concealed his long and oppressive melancholy for nearly twenty years, until it was discovered by that devoted servant of Christ, Mr. Joseph Eastburn, whose affectionate

conversation and judicious counsels, were the means of affording immediate relief.

How far the distressing symptoms of Cowper's malady were mitigated by the delightful society of the Unwins, is easily inferred from his memoirs; nor are any of us so imperturbable in our spiritual temperament, as not to be more or less lifted up or depressed by the joy or sadness of those Christian friends with whom we mingle. And hence one of four cardinal rules which the eminent casuist already quoted, has given to melancholy Christians, is to "keep company with the more cheerful sort of the godly; converse with men of the strongest faith, that have much of the heavenly mirth of believers, which faith doth fetch from the blood of Christ and from the promises of his word, and who can speak experimentally of the joy of the Holy Ghost, and these will be a great help to the reviving of your spirit and changing your melancholy habit, so far as without a physician it may be expected." On the other hand, decline, so far as practicable, the society of the gloomy and disconsolate. Their sorrowful spirit, like an evil distemper, is

contagious, and your influence upon each other will be reciprocally prejudicial.

Oderunt hilarem tristes, tristemque jocos.

The grave dislike the cheerful, and the merry hate the grave.

Some physiologists contend that laughter, as one of the greatest aids to digestion, is highly conducive to health, and therefore Hufeland, physician to the king of Prussia, commends the wisdom of the ancients, who maintained a jester that was always present at their meals, "whose quips and cranks would keep the table in a roar."

Solomon's opinion of the beneficial effect of cheerfulness is easily inferred, not only from the manner in which he commends it, but the frequency. "A merry heart," says he, "doeth good like a medicine, but a broken spirit drieth the bones." Or, as it is better rendered perhaps, in the old translation, "A joyful heart causeth good health; but a sorrowful mind drieth the bones."

4. A fourth counsel, of incalculable value to those who would enjoy spiritual comfort, is *to be temperate*.

We refer not merely to the total disuse of alcoholic drinks and intoxicating drugs, which will be presumed, of course, but to that habitual control over every appetite which will keep us within the limits that are prescribed by both reason and health.

Learn temperance, friends; and hear without disdain
The choice of water. Thus the Coan sage*
Opin'd, and thus the learned of every school.

It does not properly fall within the scope of the writer to furnish such details, as would be expected in a dietetical treatise, and which would come with more authority from an experienced physician. Burton, in his most extraordinary work called the *Anatomy of Melancholy*, has given a curious disquisition on the intrinsic qualities of different kinds of food, and of their comparative tendency to nurture certain pleasant or painful affections of the mind, as well as animal propensities; but like many of the opinions of this eccentric writer, it is to be received with some material abatements. Dr. Rush, however, asserts that the effects of diet upon the moral faculty are more certain, though less

* Hippocrates.

attended to, than the effects of climate ; that the quality, as well as the quantity of the aliment, has its influence ; and that pride, cruelty, and sensuality, are as much the natural consequences of luxurious living, as are apoplexies and palsies. Fulness of bread, we are told, was one of the predisposing causes of the vices of the cities of the plain. He concurs too, with Dr. Paris and other eminent medical writers, both foreign and domestic, in reprobating the too free use of animal food by persons of sedentary habits, which not only predisposes to inflammatory diseases, but has a sensible influence on the morals. Dr. McNish, of Glasgow, quotes with approbation another opinion of Hufeland, that “infants who are accustomed to eat much animal food become robust, but at the same time passionate, violent, and brutal.” Moreover, the efficacy of a vegetable diet upon the passions, was verified in the practice of Dr. Arbuthnot, who assures us that he cured several patients of irascible tempers, by nothing but the prescription of a simple vegetable regimen. Some devout persons, like Payson, have erred on the side

of excessive abstinence; which his biographer pronounces to have been the great mistake of his life. To what extremes others have been carried under the influence of superstition, to mortify the body for the sins of the soul, is familiar to all who are conversant with the history of Asceticism; but the more common and dangerous error by far, is the opposite, or that of indulging the appetite too freely. Thus Dr. Combe reasserts with special approbation, the published opinion of a distinguished American physician, that intemperate eating is almost a universal fault; that it is begun in the cradle, and continued till we go down to the grave; that it is far more common than intemperance in drinking; and the aggregate of mischief that it does, is greater.

Plures crapula, quam gladius.

Gluttony kills more than the sword.

“For every reeling drunkard that disgraces our country, it contains one hundred persons who eat to excess and suffer by the practice.” Baglivi, a celebrated Roman physician, mentions that in Italy an unusually

large proportion of the sick recovered during Lent, in consequence of the lower diet which is then observed as part of the religious duties of the season.

Let the whole subject of dietetic economy then, be carefully regarded by those who are subject to spiritual and nervous depression; and while the conflicting opinions of the faculty on the subject of diet or regimen, will abundantly show how "doctors disagree;" yet they are, nevertheless, replete with suggestions of the highest practical value. It need hardly be remarked, that independent of the influence on the animal spirits and health, yet as prescribed by Christian morality, the appetites should be kept under habitual control. The spiritual man should learn, with the apostle Paul, to keep his body under. He should live in that elevated state of communion with God, that he will not be tempted to descend from the higher and purer enjoyments of his religion, to seek happiness in the gratifications of the epicurean and sensualist. But how far it is lawful to indulge a healthful appetite at his table from day to day, is a question of morals

which cannot be settled for a christian by any of the rules of medical science or physiology. *Put a knife to thy throat*, says Solomon, *if thou be a man given to appetite*. Restrain thyself as if excess or repletion were death. But what may be received as at once the fruit of experience and the dictate of science, has been expressed in the measures of a writer not less gifted with poetic genius than with medical knowledge;

———— beyond the sense
Of light refection, at the genial board
Indulge not often, nor protract the feast
To dull satiety.

Dr. Holland's three rules are: 1. "Not to eat so much nor so long, as to cause a sense of uneasy repletion. 2. The rate of eating always to be so slow as to allow thorough mastication. 3. Use no urgent exercise, either of body or mind, immediately after a full meal. Rules," he remarks, "whose simplicity and familiarity may lessen their seeming value, yet in practice they will be found to include, directly or indirectly, a great proportion of the cases that come before the faculty for treatment." To these, however,

he virtually adds a fourth, in a subsequent paragraph, in which he earnestly dehort from the pernicious habit of directing the attention after eating to the region of the stomach, as tending greatly to disturb the process of digestion.

It is said, in the Life of President Edwards, that although of an infirm constitution and indifferent health, yet he was able to spend thirteen hours daily in his study. This surprising power of endurance is explained in the succeeding paragraph, in which we read that he carefully observed the effects of different sorts of food, and selected those which best fitted him for mental labour. Having also ascertained the quantity of food which, while it sustained his bodily strength left his mind most sprightly and active, he scrupulously confined himself within the prescribed limits. But not to dwell in details that are so accessible in elaborate treatises on this very subject, and that are deservedly held in the highest repute, we will only add, that the substance of what we have designed to say in the preceding remarks, is comprehended

in an old Latin distich, by whom composed we do not recollect ;

Si tibi deficiant medici, medici tibi fiant
Hæc tria: mens hilaris, requies, moderata diæta,

which one has paraphrased in the following clumsy couplet:

Employ three physicians; first Doctor Diet,
Then Doctor Merryman, with Doctor Quiet.

5. Another counsel to be heeded with special care by the desponding, *is to be habitually occupied.*

We refer not to bodily exercise merely, which is so essential to vigorous health, and to a lively flow of the animal spirits, but we speak of occupation for the mind, in connexion with some useful employment, to save it from those morbid actings by which it is made the prey to its own energies. Whoever has noticed the amazing power of the thoughts in disturbing the functions of the body, will accord with the poet, that

'Tis the great art of life to manage well
The restless mind.

This is none the less true in relation to

religious men than to others. "There are many," says Cecil, "who sit at home, nursing themselves over a fire, and then trace up the natural effects of solitude, and want of air and exercise, into spiritual desertion. But this is to confound nature and grace, and to make a sort of mystery of that which is readily connected with a natural cause." Now and then we find one who appears to be happy in a sort of quietism, or cloistered piety, which rather shuns than seeks communion with what is without. How it will be in the world to come, we do not pretend to say; but it has never been found in this, that they are the happiest in religion who withdraw from all active occupation, and spend their whole time in devout contemplations. No man, it has been said, is ever more religious for having his mind constantly occupied with religion. This may seem a paradox, but those who know how little necessary connexion there is between theological studies and spirituality of mind, and how much a professional familiarity with such subjects tends to deteriorate their influence, will readily subscribe to the truth of the asser-

tion. Although the truly pious man can have but one dominant motive, the glory of God, yet the active powers of the mind will find useful and pleasant exercise in a thousand different ways of promoting it. To be engaged in doing good then, is alike needful to the happiness of the spiritual man and to his health.

Under a former head, we quoted one of four rules for the relief of melancholy Christians, and here we add another from the same author, viz: "to avoid idleness and want of employment; which, as it is a life not pleasing to God, so it is the opportunity for melancholy thoughts to be working, and the chiefest season for Satan to tempt us." It has often been observed in relation to clergymen who have been laborious and useful, that they ill endure a change to leisure from the occupation of a pastoral charge; but that in their *sine titulo* condition, they are apt to become either nervous and low-spirited, or turn to doing harm.

We were struck with a remark of Dr. Green, many years ago, on his retirement from Princeton, "that he did not know whe-

ther hereafter he should do much good; but he was resolved, if possible, to avoid doing mischief, which was more than was apt to be true of many of his brethren in similar circumstances.”

To brood over our spiritual maladies, watching from day to day our changing frames, will no more help to attain a better spiritual condition, than the fingering of his pulse, or examining the tongue by the victim of dyspepsia will conduce to his more healthful digestion. In either case, the less he thinks of himself the better; and the only effectual expedient for diverting his thoughts will be found in some pleasant and useful occupation. Such was the relief which Cowper derived from his labour in translating Homer; and to find an antidote to his distressing melancholy was supposed to be Dr. Johnson’s main inducement for proposing, towards the close of his life, to publish a translation of Thuanus.

“Were I asked,” says a well known writer, “upon what circumstance the prevention of low spirits chiefly depended, I should borrow the ancient orator’s mode of en-

forcing the leading principle of his art, and reply—*employment, employment, employment*. This is the grand panacea for the *tædium vitæ*, and all the train of fancied evils which prove so much more insupportable than real ones. It is a medicine that may be presented in a thousand forms, all equally efficacious.”

We remember the case of a fellow student in our theological course whose mind was so disquieted with fears about his spiritual condition, that it became a serious question whether he should not renounce the hope of entering the ministry; but upon a statement of his case to one of his teachers, he was advised to discontinue his examinations of himself for a season, take it for granted, if he pleased, that his state was as bad as he feared, but to turn his attention to the case of others, pray more for them, and resolve to do all in his power for their salvation. This counsel was received, and was followed with the happiest results. His mind was gradually relieved, his spirits became buoyant and cheerful, and after finishing his studies, he entered the sacred profession with a joyful

hope of his calling and salvation, which continued to the end of his life. We would say, then, to every troubled believer, copy his example. Let not an elevated condition in life, and wealth, if you have them, tempt you to be idle. If not required to toil for your daily bread, yet let a regard for your happiness and health, and the monitions of conscience, make you as industrious as if you were. Consider your affluence and leisure as talents, by means of which you have the enviable opportunity of promoting the welfare of others, gratuitously, in a thousand modes, which are forbidden to others. Go join yourself to the most active benefactors of society; enter their ranks, or plant yourself in the van. Take your full share in the labours of the Sunday school or Bible class teacher, the distribution of tracts, the visiting of the poor and sick, and afflicted. Deny yourself many gratifications of ease, and pleasure, and advantage for the sake of redeeming the time and the means of doing more good. Aim directly, like Harlan Page, at the single object of saving men's souls; and whether your success shall correspond to your wishes or

not, you shall enjoy the reflex advantage of your benevolence. In watering others, you shall be watered yourself.

We are aware of the difficulty, of complying with this counsel, in many cases, and none are more peculiarly trying than those of clergymen, who, from declining health, advancing age, or some untoward events, have been dislodged from posts of active usefulness, and have now nothing to do which is suited to their character, capacity, and circumstances. Such, it is well known, is often the unhappy condition of some of the most useful, as well as respectable and venerable ministers of the church; and it is one of the ominous signs of the times, that their number seems to be increasing. From the emoluments of their calling, few derive more than the means for a very frugal maintenance of their family, and therefore, when by reason of age and multiplied infirmities, *the grasshopper has become a burden*, they find superadded to all their afflictions the trials of poverty. We will not enlarge; but for ourselves, we are constrained to say, that we feel it to be a material defect in our eccle-

siastical economy, that their condition and claims are not more particularly and tenderly regarded; that in view of the resources and benevolence of the church, something has not been projected at least, if not carried into effect, by which such an important *casus omissus* should have been provided for, some feasible plan by which their remaining strength, their stores of learning and experience, may be turned to a profitable account, and these Mnasons of the ministry made happy and useful during the remnant of their pilgrimage.

Lastly: Let the depressed and desponding *look habitually to Christ.*

A counsel, the most important, as it is the most comprehensive of all that have been offered. Look to Him continually for his ascension gift, the Comforter, to purify from sin, to help in overcoming *the world, the flesh, and the devil.* *Without me ye can do nothing,* says the Saviour; *and through Christ strengthening me,* says his great apostle, *I can do all things.* And while you pray habitually for yourself, seek an interest in the prayers of others. It is believed

that the restoration of the Rev. Mr. Rogers, already referred to in a former chapter, was in answer to the special prayers of his pious friends and brethren in the ministry, many of whom were most earnest and importunate in their intercessions, till at length his mind was completely relieved. He has left a monument of his deliverance from his awful thralldom, in a book well worthy of the perusal of those who suffer under spiritual distress, from physical, or any other causes. But the prevailing temptation of Christians of this temperament is to look to themselves, to watch their own fluctuating frames, canvass their motives and conduct, as if they expected to find the living among the dead. As if the Israelite in the wilderness, bitten of the fiery serpent, had depended for his recovery upon his former temperance, or the strength of his constitution, and not upon looking to the brazen image. Such reviews of the past and searchings of heart, are not only proper, but they are exceedingly important in many respects, but not for spiritual comfort, in distress, nor for aid to arrive at assurance. To look back, as one observes, is more than

we can sustain without going back. Indeed the better the Christian, the more spiritually minded and holy, the more does he usually discover to cause sorrow, and the keenest self-reproach, whenever he takes a retrospect of his past life and experience. For many years, we are told, that even Baxter was in great perplexity about himself, for reasons which have been a common occasion of doubting among serious inquirers in every age of the church: It was because he could not trace so distinctly the workings of the Spirit on his heart, as they were described in some practical writers to whom he was directed for instruction, and he could not ascertain the time of his conversion. Because he felt great hardness of heart; supposed himself to be religious from early education rather than conviction of the Spirit; to be influenced more by fear than by love; and because his grief and humiliation on account of sin were not greater. But he was afterwards satisfied that these were not sufficient nor scriptural grounds for doubting his personal interest in the salvation of Christ. Upon which Orme, his accomplished biographer, remarks, that

persons who are agitated with perplexities similar to those of Baxter, are frequently directed to means little calculated to afford relief. It is very questionable whether any individual will ever obtain comfort by making himself, or the evidences of personal religion, the object of chief attention. All hope to the guilty creature is exterior to himself. In the human character, even under Christian influence, sufficient reason for condemnation, and therefore for fear, will always be found. It is not thinking of the disease, nor of the mode in which the remedy operates, nor of the description given of these things by others, but using the remedy itself that will effect the cure. The gospel is the heavenly appointed balsam for all the wounds of sin, and Jesus is the great Physician; it is to him, and to his testimony, therefore, as the revelation of pardon and healing, that the soul must be directed in all the stages of its spiritual career. When the glory of his character and work is seen, darkness of mind will be dissipated, the power of sin will be broken, genuine contrition will be felt, and joy and hope will fill the mind. It is from the Sa-

viour and his sacrifice that all proper excitement in religion must proceed; and the attempt to produce that excitement by the workings of the mind on itself, must inevitably fail. Self-examination to discover the power of truth and the progress of principle in us, is highly important; but when employed with a view to obtain comfort under a sense of guilt, it never can succeed. Nothing but renewed application to the cross can produce the latter effect.

These sentiments are so important that they cannot be repeated too often, nor be too deeply impressed upon all, and especially upon every inquirer after an assurance of hope. They describe the only way by which the perplexed believer, even when released from the embarrassment of physical influences, can obtain a solid and permanent peace. It is by looking to Christ, not as holy in ourselves, but in order to be made holy; not as the "whole," whose distempers have been cured already, but as the "sick" who must be cured by him alone or perish. We must go to him, feeling that we owe him ten thousand times more than we can pay; but that all he

requires of us is to accept a discharge, and be happy in the enjoyment of this unmerited grace. In other words, we are only to exalt our glorious Redeemer to his true position as both the author and finisher of our faith, the alpha and omega in our salvation, and our peace is secured. Those very views of ourselves, our self-reproach and feeling of ill desert, which have caused so much disquiet, then become the evidences of that spiritual change which is the beginning of everlasting life. We repeat, then, the monition, in the midst of distracting cares and temptations, which so much hinder the exercise of this faith, let us not forget the promised help of the Holy Spirit. Let us watch against the common sin of the desponding, who undervalue his aid, and practically question its reality, when we are taught, not only that *he helpeth our infirmities*, but that *he maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered*.

To know that we are Christians does not imply that we are free from sin, but that we are united to Christ. Our peace, and joy, and hope, the fruits of this union, need not

be destroyed by our imperfections, however great, while we cling to Him as our righteousness. "If we see ourselves bad enough for Christ," says Thomas Adam, "he sees us good enough." His people are safe, notwithstanding their doubts and fears, not because of any inherent power in them to hold on to the end, but because of the grace which reigns in their calling and redemption, in view of which he has said, he will never leave them nor forsake them.

The soul on his bosom that leans for repose,
Is safe from the assaults of its bitterest foes:
That soul, tho' all hell should its vengeance awake,
He'll never, no never, no never forsake.

It is certainly among the deep mysteries of Providence, that some of the most eminent saints who have ever lived, should have been afflicted with despondency and gloom; and yet, as pious Rutherford remarks, "as nights and shadows are good for flowers, and moonlight and dews better than a continued sun, so is Christ's absence of special use, and it hath some nourishing virtue in it, and giveth sap to humility, and furnisheth a fair field for faith."

It has also been suggested, by way of explanation, that these sufferings are designed to enhance the joys of heaven by contrast; that these light afflictions which are but for a moment, will tend to *work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory*. "Two sorts of people," said Dr. Watts, "will be disappointed when they get to heaven: the melancholy Christian to find himself there, and the censorious Christian to find others there." But what can be deep or mysterious in Providence, or hard for us to believe, when we have once received that amazing doctrine of grace, the great central truth of revelation, that *God so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life?*

APPENDIX.

THE cases, by which the subject of this little volume is exemplified, are so numerous and accessible, that it would be easy to adduce them to almost any extent. It is thought that the purposes of the book would be promoted by an appendix, containing the selection of a few.

In reading the experience of others, when sketched by a skilful hand, the afflicted often find instruction made more attractive and intelligible, than in treatises, however elaborate, that are, in their form, more abstract and didactic.

The following is from a well written essay on Religious Melancholy, by the Rev. M. B. Hope, M. D., whose knowledge of medicine and physiology, superadded to his theological acquisitions, and deep Christian experience, affords peculiar qualifications for speaking

with authority on such topics as we have discussed. It is given for the purpose of exhibiting a sample of cases of great difficulty as well as interest, where there is a manifest disorder of the religious views and affections, and often great mental distress, while yet, they are not commonly regarded as cases of disease at all. It is the instance of a young lady, who had been long and intimately known to the writer, who was "of a temperament highly nervous and sanguine, and embarked very young, with all her ardour, in the gay pleasures of fashionable life. A single season convinced her fully of their emptiness and folly. She was soon after brought under the influence of pungent preaching, and convinced of sin. The struggle was sharp and long; but the result was, that she gave herself, with all her heart, to a course of rigid religious duties. Above all, she seemed to live in an atmosphere of prayer. Her faith in the truth and promises of God, was without the shadow of a cloud. And yet she had not the pure enjoyment which she supposed to be the necessary fruit of real piety. She did not, therefore,

look upon herself, as a child of God; and her consequent anxiety wore upon her spirit, and secretly undermined her health. At length, one day, as she rose from prayer, the thought struck her like a thunder-bolt, ‘what if there is no God after all.’ She repelled the thought with horror, and went her way. But the shock had struck from her hand, ‘the shield of faith,’ and all her efforts were unable to grasp it again. From henceforth she found herself exposed to a constant shower of darts, fiery and poisoned, and she could not resist them. They stuck fast in her vitals, and drank up her spirits. The poison thus injected into the heart of her religious experience soon spread, and blighted the whole. She never knew a moment’s peace, when her thoughts were upon her once favourite, and still engrossing subject. She called herself an infidel, and applied to herself the dreadful threatenings and doom of the unbeliever. And yet it was evident she was not, in any sense, an unbeliever. She was one of the most devout and consistent persons we ever knew. She was conscientious even to scrupulosity. She was a most devoted and faith-

ful Sunday school teacher, and God blessed her labours to the conversion of nearly all her scholars. She rejoiced to hear of persons becoming Christians, and would often say, with despair in her tones, how she envied them. When any of her acquaintances died without giving good evidence of piety she became excited, and as she expressed it, was ready to scream aloud. She gave every possible evidence that she had not, in reality, a shadow of a doubt about the truth of revelation. And yet no one ever dreamed that her difficulties were connected with disease of any sort; for her mind was remarkably clear, and active. The advice of pious friends and ministers, therefore, based upon the supposition that her case was one of spiritual darkness, or satanic temptation, was to persevere in prayer—to struggle on more earnestly, and God would give her light after he had tried her faith and patience and love. But the more she prayed and struggled, the worse she grew. She would come from her closet, exhausted with the fearful conflict, and looking ready to sink into utter despair. The Sabbath was always the worst day of

the week; and the labour and exhaustion of teaching aggravated her symptoms.

“The only treatment which was successful, in this case, would by many have been rejected with horror. She was advised to give up the struggle which she had maintained so unequally, and which would only have resulted in disastrous consequences—to think as little as possible on the subject—to spend less time in devotional exercises, and allow her mind to gather its scattered strength by relaxation. The form of prayer advised was short and audible, and such as took for granted what she had been struggling to convince herself of. Incessant pains were taken to present the character of God in a simple, affectionate, parental light, when any thing led to the subject. The simplicity of faith, and the certainty of salvation, were occasionally flashed across her mind, when it was in a suitable frame. The only two evidences of piety which her state of mind rendered available, were kept prominent as the basis of new feelings and hopes, viz: her love to the people of God, and the pain she felt in the absence of divine favour, and the longing

for its return. These were untouched by the dismal monster that had preyed upon her hopes.

“By a judicious perseverance in a course like this, accompanied with well directed hygienic measures, suitable recreation, exercise, and diet, for improving her general health, and especially the tone of her nervous system, the mental energies began to react, and new views of truth and new hopes sprung up in her mind.”

Another case, furnished by the same, and adduced for the sake of showing the efficacy of judicious medical treatment, is that of “a lady, whose state of mind had baffled every attempt made by her judicious husband, to bring her relief. She was a woman of great refinement and strength of mind, eminently pious, and devoted to her interesting young family, whose education she conducted herself. While conferring every accomplishment upon her children, she was mainly anxious for their spiritual welfare. When we saw her, she was intensely excited, and had slept little for several nights. She said

she had lost all interest in the instruction of her children, and had become utterly regardless of their personal appearance and her own. Her whole thoughts and feelings were engrossed about their salvation, her anxiety for which had become insupportably agonizing. When instructing, or dressing, or leading them out for their accustomed exercise, she was incessantly distracted with the thought, what good will all this do, while they are still impenitent! Though her flushed face and flashing restless eye, indicated strong physical excitement, yet her mind was so clear on every subject, and all her views so rational, that we attributed the whole difficulty to excessive and protracted anxiety, for an object of peculiar interest to a pious mother—the salvation of her children. We made repeated attempts to reason with her on the error and evils of her present state of mind. She admitted fully the justice of our reasoning, and concurred in the truth of all our positions, but we found that this was of no avail. Her excitement continued, and with it her distress, and all her difficulties. It appeared like a case of pure religious ex-

citement, and was so looked upon by all her family. They did not deem her deranged, but it was evident she soon would be, unless relieved. Finding reasoning of no avail, and the excitement still increasing, we became convinced on minute examination, that the whole difficulty originated, not in religious views or feelings at all, but in a morbid increase of arterial action, arising from some physical cause. One-twelfth of a grain of tartar emetic, five or six times a day, gave perfect relief, and restored both her views and feelings to the healthy standard."

Another case, for which we are indebted to a correspondent, will show the effect of disease in misguiding the conscience. It is that of a young man of fervent piety, who is at this time preparing for the ministry; but in such a state, as to be wholly unable to pursue his studies. For several years he has felt himself urged and almost coerced, as he says, to make various vows to God, promising to spend so many hours a day in devotional exercises, and to keep days of fasting and prayer on various accounts. These

vows have become so burdensome, as to interfere with his duty as well as with his peace. He has forgotten some of the reasons for these vows, and now he feels himself solemnly bound by his vow, but knows not what to do to fulfil it; and some of the occasions on which days of fasting were vowed to be kept, have passed, and his vow not fulfilled. He is kept awake a great part of the night, and is incapable of study. "I endeavoured," says my informant, "to show him, in what cases vows were not binding, and flattered myself that I had relieved his mind, but in a few days he came back, and I went over the whole again; but all to little purpose. And by this it may be commonly known, that the disease is physical, when the clearest reasoning and admitted conclusions produce no effect."

"Some time since," says the same correspondent, "I was consulted respecting the case of a young man, who had vowed that he would never taste butter—but as this entered into so many kinds of food, he was kept in continual perplexity. This, how-

ever, seems to have been merely a device of Satan.”

“There is now a pious and useful pastor in the interior of Pennsylvania, who, when pursuing his theological studies, resolved or vowed, against so many kinds of food, because they were gratifying to his palate, that he actually was suffering for want of nutritive food.”

The error of hastily ascribing religious melancholy to the direct agency or influence of religion, is exposed in the account given of a patient in the Pennsylvania Hospital in 1842, by Dr. Kirkbride, physician to the institution.

“A young man of very moderate mental capacity, little education, and accustomed to a laborious occupation, from too much confinement at his business, finds his health failing, and gives up his employment for a few months to recruit. At the end of that time, although not well, he is able to return to work, but then discovers that the changes in the times make it impossible for him to find

any thing to do. His means being exhausted, his body weak, without his customary exercise, his mind gradually becomes in a morbid state, when some excitement from Miller's prophecy occurring in his neighbourhood, he immediately attempts to study the subject, and to ascertain its truth from close reading of the Bible—an investigation utterly unsuited for his capacity under any circumstances—and the difficulties he encounters at the very threshold, lead to a violent attack of mania. The disease was attributed to 'Miller's prophecy,' or to 'religious excitement,' but neither of these causes would give a proper idea of the origin of the case. Before being excited on that subject, the patient's mind was ready to be overturned by any abstruse or exciting matter that might be presented to it. Without his loss of employment this would not have occurred, and without the enfeebled health which accompanied it, his attempted investigation might have been harmless."

In the fourth chapter of Dr. Alexander's Thoughts on Religious Experience, will be

found, among many wise counsels to persons subject to spiritual depression, some very striking examples, interspersed with judicious remarks. The importance of special watchfulness and prayer against the invasion of melancholy in the decline of life, especially when the tendency is constitutional, may be inferred from the cases of two persons who were overwhelmed with this malady at last, though as far from it in early life as any that the writer ever knew.

“The first was a man of extraordinary talents, and eloquence; bold and decisive in his temper, and fond of company and good cheer. When about fifty-five or six years of age, without any external cause to produce the effect, his spirits began to sink, and feelings of melancholy to seize upon him. He avoided company, but I had frequent occasion to see him, and sometimes he could be engaged in conversation, when he could speak as judiciously as before; but he soon reverted to his dark melancholy mood. On one occasion he mentioned his case to me, and observed with emphasis, that he had no power whatever to resist the disease, and

said he, with despair in his countenance, ‘I shall soon be utterly overwhelmed.’ And so it turned out, for the disease advanced until it ended in the worst form of *mania*, and soon terminated his life. The other was the case of a gentleman who had held office in the American army, in the revolutionary war. About the same age, or a little later, he lost his cheerfulness, which had never been interrupted before, and by degrees, sunk into a most deplorable state of melancholy, which as in the former case, soon ended in death. In this case, the first thing which I noticed, was, a morbid sensibility of the moral sense, which filled him with remorse, for acts, which had little or no moral turpitude attached to them.”

“The late excellent and venerable James Hall, D. D. of North Carolina, was of a melancholy temperament; and, after finishing his education at Princeton, he fell into a gloomy dejection, which interrupted his studies and labours for more than a year. After his restoration, he laboured successfully and comfortably in the ministry for

many years, even to old age; but at last was overtaken again, and entirely overwhelmed by this terrible malady. Of all men, that I ever saw, he had the tenderest sympathy with persons labouring under religious despondency. When on a journey, I have known him to travel miles out of his way to converse with a sufferer of this kind; and his manner was most tender and affectionate in speaking to such."

The mistake of imputing to satanic agency what is dependent on bodily disease, is exhibited by Dr. Cheyne in the case of the wife of the Rev. John Newton, who was unable to leave the house for nearly two years before she died, in 1790. In the beginning of October, she was confined to her bed, and was soon after deprived of all locomotive power. In this state, distress arose in her mind, which applied to the whole system of truth, and she said, "If there be a Saviour," "If there be a God;" and in this condition continued for a fortnight, when there is reason to believe that her doubts were removed. Mr. Newton accounted for his wife's tem-

porary unbelief, by referring it to the influence of Satan. "Mrs. Newton's, however, was a case of palsy—depending, as was supposed, upon a disease of the brain, by which her faith, the foundation of her religion, was disturbed, while her affections were uninjured."

It is well known that Bunyan was grievously harassed at times with what he believed to be satanic temptations to the worst species of evil; and that Luther also supposed himself, on one occasion at least, to have been assaulted by the devil. But with regard to certain phenomena which it is common to refer to his influence, such as "unbidden and repulsive thoughts and feelings, and false perceptions, both voices and visions," says the Essay already quoted, "that they *may* be produced by mere morbid physical agency, is unquestionable; because they are frequent accompaniments of pure disease, and yield with the disease to medical treatment. Those, therefore, who are called to counsel persons thus afflicted, should never lose sight of the inquiry whether such may

not be the actual origin of what otherwise might be treated as temptations of the devil. That Satan may have the power of injecting his malicious or blasphemous suggestions immediately into the mind, we have not intended at all to controvert. But we are disposed to adopt the principle of Dr. Cheyne; that 'if an appeal to Him who conquered Satan and who will aid all who come to him in faith, fails to relieve those who are thus afflicted, they may rest assured, that disease and not the devil is the enemy with which they have to contend,' and they must seek relief accordingly.

"And if we are pressed beyond this point, with the hypothesis that while disease may be the proximate cause of these distressing and horrible calamities, yet Satan may be the agent who employs this instrumentality to harass the Christian, we should be inclined to fall back upon the ground thus quaintly maintained by Richard Baxter: 'if it were as some fancy, a possession of the devil, it is possible that physic might cast him out. For if you cure the melancholy, (black bile,) his bed is taken away, and the advantage

gone by which he worketh; cure the choler (bile) and the choleric operations of the devil will cease: it is by means and humours in us, that he worketh.' ”

Repeated allusions have been made in the preceding work to the subject of *temperaments*, by which are meant “the differences that are observed between men, and which are dependent upon the relative predominance of each of their organic systems.”

A certain French writer, has designated these predominances by the term *idiosyncrasies*, which “depend constantly on the manner, altogether inexplicable, in which our organs of relation are affected by their modifiers.” It would be easy to adduce from the records of Pathological Physiology, many curious and instructive examples.

“Some persons, it is well known, cannot digest certain aliments, unless they are taken at fixed hours, or prepared in a peculiar manner; we see some who never drink when they are in health; others, who can digest only in a certain posture.” The writer was lately informed of a lady, now living in the state of New York, who has enjoyed compa-

rative health and bodily comfort, with habitual cheerfulness, for more than five and twenty years, while lying on her back. Her appetite is good, her food causes no uneasiness, her digestive organs appear to be in a healthful condition, and she seems to be perfectly well so long as she remains in her recumbent posture. But on attempting to stand or even to sit erect, she is involuntarily seized with vomiting, which nothing has been able to arrest, until she returns to her former position. Broussais mentions a lady, in whom the odour of a linseed poultice produced the most violent suffocation, and if she could not escape from it, she was attacked with a stinging erysipelas in the face. A Prussian captain, whom he saw in Paris, in 1815, could not bear the sight of a cat, a thimble, or an old woman, without being convulsed and making shocking grimaces. The surviving friends of the late Dr. Blatchford, of Lansingburgh, New York, will remember his instinctive and invincible aversion to the cat. Many persons have a dread of a particular animal, as of a mouse, a spider or a toad; some faint at the sight of a rose, the odour of which is so delightful to

most. Such are the phenomena that are designated by the term *idiosyncrasy*; and which we have represented as among the physical causes, by which the moral as well as intellectual part in man is more or less affected.

As reference has been made in the foregoing tract to certain writers on the subject, or on others akin to it, the names of a few are appended for the guidance of any who may have the leisure and inclination to read them.

In addition to those already named or quoted, we would mention Pritchard, Pinel, Prout; Voison on the Moral and Physical Causes of Mental Maladies; Tissot on the Health of Men of Letters; Hitchcock's Lectures on Diet, Regimen, and Employment; Shepard's Sincere Convert, and Robe on Religious Melancholy. Most of these writers, of course, view the subject, of which they treat, as philosophers, or men of science. But those who have access to the older English divines, will find that questions of casuistry, spiritual troubles, evidences of grace, &c., are discussed with great ability, and are made far more prominent and important in them

than they are in the theological writers of times more modern. The writings on this subject, of the Rev. Timothy Rogers, to whom we have repeatedly referred, are peculiarly instructive to persons labouring under spiritual distress, as having been dictated by his own experience. The substance of his discourse on "Trouble of Mind, and the Disease of Melancholy," is given in Dr. Alexander's book already mentioned, which we would commend to the attention of those who have not access to the original work, which is owned in this country but by few. There are numerous treatises, both medical and religious, on the subject, which are more or less valuable; but "a clear, thorough, and scientific exposition of what are popularly termed cases of religious melancholy, and in a form suited to general use, and adapted to throw light upon their true character and method of treatment, would be an invaluable addition to our literature."

THE END.

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