

CHAP. X.
OF THE PASSIONS.

THE passions have great influence both in the cause and cure of diseases. How the mind affects the body will in all probability ever remain a secret. It is sufficient for us to know, that there is established a reciprocal influence between the mental and corporeal parts, and that whatever injures the one disorders the other.

OF ANGER.

The passion of *anger*, ruffles the mind, distorts the countenance, hurries on the circulation of the blood, and disorders the whole vital and animal functions. It often occasions fevers, and other acute diseases; and sometimes even sudden death. This passion is peculiarly hurtful to the delicate, and those of weak nerves. I have known such persons frequently lose their lives by a violent fit of anger, and would advise them to guard against the excess of this passion with the utmost care.

It is not indeed always in our power to prevent being angry; but we may surely avoid harbouring resentment in our breast. Resentment preys upon the mind, and occasions the most obstinate chronic disorders, which gradually waste the constitution. Nothing shews true greatness of mind more than to forgive injuries; it promotes the peace of society, and greatly conduces to our own ease, health and felicity.

Such as value health should avoid violent gusts of anger, as they would be the most deadly poison. Neither ought they to indulge resentment, but to endeavour at all times to keep their minds calm and serene. Nothing tends so much to the health of the body, as a constant tranquility of the mind.

OF FEAR.

The influence of *fear*, both in occasioning and aggravating diseases, is very great. No man ought to be blamed for a decent concern about life; but too great a desire to preserve it is often the cause of losing it. Fear and anxiety, by depressing the spirits, not only dispose us to diseases, but often render those diseases fatal which an undaunted mind would overcome.

Sudden fear has generally violent effects. Epileptic fits, and other convulsive disorders, are often occasioned by it. Hence the danger of that practice, so common among young people, of frightening one another. Many have lost their lives, and others have been rendered miserable, by frolics of this kind. It is dangerous to tamper with the human passions. The mind may easily be thrown into such disorders as never again to act with regularity.

But the gradual effects of fear prove most hurtful. The constant dread of some future evil, by dwelling upon the mind, often occasions the very evil itself. Hence it comes to pass, that so many die of those very diseases of which they long had a dread, or which had

been impressed on their minds by some accident, or foolish prediction. This, for example, is often the case with women in child-bed. Many of those who die in that situation are impressed with the notion of their death a long time before it happens; and there is reason to believe that this impression is often the cause of it.

The methods taken to impress the minds of women with the apprehensions of the great *pain* and *peril* of child-birth are very hurtful. Few women die in labour, though many lose their lives after it; which may be thus accounted for. A woman after delivery, finding herself weak and exhausted, immediately apprehends she is in danger; but this fear seldom fails to obstruct the necessary evacuations, upon which her recovery depends. Thus the sex often fall a sacrifice to their own imaginations, when there would be no danger, did they apprehend none.

It seldom happens that two or three women in a great town die in child-bed, but their death is followed by many others. Every woman of their acquaintance who is with child dreads the same fate, and the disease becomes epidemical by the mere force of imagination. This should induce pregnant women to despise fear, and by all means to avoid those tattling gossips who are continually buzzing in their ears the misfortunes of others. Every thing that may in the least alarm a pregnant or child-bed woman, ought with the greatest care to be guarded against.

Many women have lost their lives in child-bed by the old superstitious custom, still kept up in most parts of Britain, of tolling the parish bell for every person who dies. People who think themselves in danger are very inquisitive; and if they come to know that the bell tolls for one who died in the same situation with themselves, what must be the consequence? At any rate they are apt to suppose that this is the case, and it will often be found a very difficult matter to persuade them to the contrary.

But this custom is not pernicious to child-bed women only. It is hurtful in many other cases. When low fevers, in which it is difficult to support the patient's spirits, prevail, what must be the effect of a funeral peal sounding five or six times a day in his ears? No doubt his imagination may suggest that others died of the same disease under which he labours. This apprehension will have a greater tendency to depress his spirits, than all the cordials of which medicine can boast will have to raise them.

If this useless piece of ceremony cannot be abolished, we ought to keep the sick as much from hearing it as possible, and from every other thing that may tend to alarm them. So far however is this from being generally attended to, that many make it their business to visit the sick, on purpose to whisper dismal stories in their ears. Such may pass for sympathizing friends, but they ought rather to be considered as enemies. All who wish well to the sick ought to keep such persons at the greatest distance from them.

A custom has long prevailed among physicians of prognosticating, as they call it, the patient's fate, or foretelling the issue of the disease. Vanity no doubt introduced this practice, and still supports

it, in spite of common sense, and the safety of mankind. I have known a physician barbarous enough to boast, that he pronounced *moresentences* than all his Majesty's judges. Would to God that such sentences were not often equally fatal! It may indeed be alleged, that the doctor does not declare his opinion before the patient. So much the worse. A sensible patient had better hear what the doctor says, than learn it from the disconsolate looks, the watery eyes, and the broken whispers of those about him. It seldom happens, when the doctor gives an unfavourable opinion, that it can be concealed from the patient. The very embarrassment which the friends and attendants shew in disguising what he has said, is generally sufficient to discover the truth.

We do not see what right any man has to announce the death of another, especially if such a declaration has a chance to kill him. Mankind are indeed very fond of prying into future events, and seldom fail to solicit the physician for his opinion. A doubtful answer, however, or one that may tend rather to encourage the hopes of the sick, is surely the most proper. This conduct could neither hurt the patient nor the physician. Nothing tends more to destroy the credit of physic than those bold prognosticators, who, by the bye, are generally the most ignorant of the faculty. The mistakes which daily happen in this way are so many standing proofs of human vanity and the weakness of science.

We readily admit, that there are cases where the physician ought to give intimation of the patient's danger to some of his near connexions; though even this ought always to be done with the greatest caution: but it never can be necessary in any case that the whole town and country should know, immediately after the doctor has made his first visit, *that he has no hopes of his patient's recovery*. Persons whose impertinent curiosity leads them to question the physician, with regard to the fate of his patient, certainly deserves no other than an evasive answer.

The vanity of foretelling the fate of the sick is not peculiar to the faculty. Others follow their example, and those who think themselves wiser than their neighbours often do much hurt in this way. Humanity surely calls upon every one to comfort the sick, and not to add to their affliction by alarming their fears. A friend, or even a physician may often do more good by a mild and sympathizing behaviour than by medicine, and should never neglect to administer that greatest of all cordials, HOPE.

OF GRIEF.

Grief is the most destructive of all the passions. Its effects are permanent; and when it sinks deep into the mind, it generally proves fatal. Anger and fear, being of a more violent nature, seldom last long; but grief often changes into a fixed melancholy, which preys upon the spirits, and wastes the constitution. This passion ought not to be indulged. It may generally be conquered at the beginning; but when it has gained strength, all attempts to remove it are vain.

No person can prevent misfortunes in life; but it shews true great-

ness of mind to bear them with serenity. Many persons make a merit of indulging grief, and, when misfortunes happen, they obstinately refuse all consolation, till the mind, overwhelmed with melancholy sinks under the load. Such conduct is not only destructive to health but inconsistent with reason, religion, and common sense.

Change of ideas is as necessary for health as change of posture. When the mind dwells long upon one subject, especially of a disagreeable nature, it hurts the whole functions of the body. Hence grief indulged spoils the digestion and destroys the appetite; by which means the spirits are depressed, the nerves relaxed, the bowels inflated with wind, and the humours, for want of fresh supplies of chyle, vitiated. Thus many an excellent constitution has been ruined by a family misfortune, or any thing that occasions excessive grief.

It is utterly impossible that any person of a dejected mind should enjoy health. Life may indeed be dragged out for a few years; but whoever would live to a good old age, must be good humoured and cheerful. This indeed is not altogether in our own power; yet our temper of mind, as well as our actions, depend greatly upon ourselves. We can either associate with cheerful or melancholy companions, mingle in the amusements and offices of life, or sit still and brood over our calamities as we choose; these and many such things are certainly in our power, and from these the mind generally takes its cast.

The variety of scenes which present themselves to the senses were certainly designed to prevent our attention from being too long fixed upon any one object. Nature abounds with variety, and the mind, unless fixed down by habit, delights in contemplating new objects. This at once points out the method of relieving the mind in distress. Turn the attention frequently to new objects. Examine them for some time. When the mind begins to recoil, shift the scene. By this means a constant succession of new ideas may be kept up, till the disagreeable ones entirely disappear. Thus travelling, the study of any art or science, reading or writing, on such subjects as deeply engage the attention, will sooner expel grief than the most sprightly amusements.

It has already been observed, that the body cannot be healthy unless it be exercised: neither can the mind. Indolence nourishes grief. When the mind has nothing else to think of but calamities, no wonder that it dwells there. Few people who pursue business with attention are hurt by grief. Instead therefore of abstracting ourselves from the world or business when misfortunes happen, we ought to engage in it with more than usual attention, to discharge with double diligence the functions of our station, and to mix with friends of a cheerful and social temper.

Innocent amusements are by no means to be neglected. These by leading the mind insensibly to the contemplation of agreeable objects, help to dispel the gloom which misfortunes cast over it: They make time seem less tedious, and have many other happy effects.

Many persons, when overwhelmed with grief, betake themselves

seldom fails to end in the ruin of fortune, character, and constitution.

OF LOVE.

LOVE is perhaps the strongest of all the passions; at least, when it becomes violent, it is less subject to the controul either of the understanding or will than any of the rest. Fear, anger, and several other passions, are necessary for the preservation of the individual, but love is necessary for the continuation of the species itself: it was therefore proper that this passion should be deeply rooted in the human breast.

Though love be a strong passion, it is seldom so rapid in its progress as several of the others. Few persons fall desperately in love all at once. We would therefore advise every one, before he tampers with his passion, to consider well the propriety of his being able to obtain the object of his wishes. When that is not likely, he should avoid every occasion of increasing it. He ought immediately to flee the company of the beloved object; to apply his mind attentively to business or study; to take every kind of amusement; and, above all, to endeavour, if possible, to find another object which may engage his affections, and which it may be in his power to obtain.

Some men make love for amusement, others from mere vanity, or on purpose to shew their consequence with the fair. Hence the too credulous fair are often betrayed into a situation which is truly deplorable. And the conduct of parents with regard to the disposal of their children in marriage is often very blameable. An advantageous match is the constant aim of parents; while their children often suffer a real martyrdom betwixt their inclinations and duty. The first thing which parents ought to consult in disposing of their children in marriage, is certainly their inclinations. Were due regard always paid to these, there would be fewer unhappy couples, and parents would not have so often cause to repent the severity of their conduct, after a ruined constitution, a lost character, or a distracted mind, have shewn them their mistake.

OF RELIGIOUS MELANCHOLY.

Many persons of a religious turn of mind behave as if they thought it a crime to be cheerful. They imagine the whole of religion consists in certain mortifications, or denying themselves the smallest indulgence, even of the most innocent amusements. A perpetual gloom hangs over their countenances, while the deepest melancholy preys upon their minds. At length, the fairest prospects vanish, every thing puts on a dismal appearance, and those very objects which ought to give delight, afford nothing but disgust. Life itself becomes a burden, and the unhappy wretch, persuaded that no evil can equal what he feels, often puts an end to his miserable existence.

It is a great pity that ever religion should be so far perverted, as to become the cause of those very evils which it was designed to cure. Nothing can be better calculated than *True Religion* to raise and support the mind of its votaries under every affliction that can befall them. It teaches men that even the sufferings of this life are prepa-

ratory to the happiness of the next; and that all who persist in a course of virtue shall at length arrive at complete felicity.

Those whose business it is to recommend religion to others, should beware of dwelling too much on gloomy subjects. That peace and tranquillity of mind which true religion is calculated to inspire, is a more powerful argument in its favour than all the terrors that can be uttered. Terror may indeed deter men from outward acts of wickedness, but can never inspire them with that love of God, and real goodness of heart, in which alone true religion consists.

To conclude; the best way to counteract the violence of any passion, is to keep the mind closely engaged in some useful pursuit.

CHAP. XI.

Of the COMMON EVACUATIONS

THE principal evacuations from the human body are those by *stool, urine, and insensible perspiration*. None of these can be long obstructed without impairing the health. When that which ought to be thrown out of the body is too long retained, it not only occasions a *plethora*, or too great fulness of the vessels, but acquires qualities which are hurtful to the health, as acrimony, putrescence, &c.

OF THE EVACUATIONS BY STOOL.

Few things conduce more to health than keeping the body regular. When the *feces* lie too long in the bowels, they vitiate the humours; and when they are too soon discharged, the body is not sufficiently nourished. A medium is therefore to be desired, which can only be obtained by regularity in diet, sleep, and exercise. Whenever the body is not regular, there is reason to suspect a fault in one or other of these.

Persons who eat and drink at irregular hours, and who eat various kinds of food, and drink of several different liquors at every meal, have no reason to expect either that their digestion will be good, or their discharges regular. Irregularity in eating and drinking disturbs every part of the animal œconomy, and never fails to occasion disease. Either too much or too little food will have this effect. The former indeed generally occasions looseness, and the latter costiveness; but both have a tendency to hurt the health.

It would be difficult to ascertain the exact number of stools which may be consistent with health, as these differ in the different periods of life, in different constitutions, and even in the same constitution under a different regimen of diet, exercise, &c. It is however generally allowed, that one stool a day is sufficient for an adult, and that less is hurtful. But this like most general rules, admits of many exceptions. I have known persons in perfect health who did not go to stool above once a week; and some persons have told me that they did not go to stool above once a month. Such a degree of costiveness however is not safe; though the person who labours