

## "IT IS MERELY MY LIVER."

BY A FAMILY DOCTOR.



ERVE you right." This is a most painful verdict to have to listen to. It throws one back from all human sympathy; lands one entirely on his own resources, for the time being, perhaps the poorest landing-stage that could be imagined. "Serve you right, you have sinned and now you are suffering for it." And this, too, just as you were stating your symptoms in the hope of receiving pity and advice. No, the liver is an organ which will not bear trifling with.

"You can't do without me," the liver seems to say, "so I mean to be treated fairly, or one of these days I'll go on strike, and then where will you be?"

Now any medical man will tell you that the liver is very often unjustly accused of causing discomfort to its owner. One-half the trifling ailments from which men suffer are put down to slight liver derangement; and indeed when, for instance, a man of business comes to his physician of a morning, looking somewhat pale, somewhat worried, and withal a trifle frightened about himself, and says, with a miserable attempt at a smile, "I feel a bit out of sorts this morning, doctor; I wish you'd take a look at my tongue;" and the doctor replies, "Yes, yes, I see it all: liver a bit out of order; soon put that to rights"—then, I say, the physician has rendered his patient a happy man of business. For the patient says to himself, "H'm! only my liver; well! that's good news anyhow."

Only his liver! But little does our friend know, and little do thousands know, the vast importance of this organ to the animal economy; and it is really more in the hope of preventing disease, of saving lives and livers, than of curing those actually sick, that I write the present paper.

Would you have me treat of all the diseases this organ is subject to, their symptoms and their mode of treatment? Nay then, my readers must endeavour to induce our editor to set me aside an extra Midsummer Number, all to myself, and then I should feel cramped for space. But a terrible array of diseases connected with the liver comes up before my mind's eye as I write, and most of these ailments may be produced from the same causes, and foremost among these is thoughtless and irregular living.

To say, then, nothing of the many different kinds of tumours that may form in the liver, we have, heading the roll of diseases the organ is subject to, *inflammation*, with its racking pains, its sickness and difficulty of breathing, high fever and delirium, and which sometimes, even when most skilfully treated, runs on to abscess, emaciation, utter prostration, and death.

The liver at times gets enlarged; this may lead to consequences of the most serious nature. Fatty degeneration of the liver, causing severe dyspepsia, clay-coloured countenance, constipation and diarrhoea, perhaps even dropsy and death, is another disorder to which free-and-easy living may give rise. Waxy degeneration is still another, and more terrible because, although death is not by any means immediate, the disease, after inflicting months of ill-health and trouble and gloom, leads surely and steadfastly on to the bitter end.

The liver is also subject to many troubles connected with its blood-vessels and its gall-bladder, in which sometimes stones or *calculi* form, as they do in the urinary bladder; and these calculi, small though they may be, often, in their passage along the biliary duct towards the intestine, produce the most intense agony and sickness.

Atrophy of the liver is a wasting away of the organ, and deserves a word or two *en passant*. It is a disease which, in my humble opinion, is more often brought on by excesses of various kinds, coupled probably with worry and anxiety, than by any other cause, which surely proves that it is a dangerous thing for people, when trouble comes upon them, as now and then it does on all, to try to drown their cares by using stimulants. Its first symptoms would be a general feeling of ailing, with headache, thirst, depression of spirits, and feverishness. There is another preliminary symptom which I must not omit to mention—I mean drowsiness. This feeling of drowsiness is present sometimes even in congestion of the liver. It is a symptom which always tells of something wrong, and the merest tyro cannot mistake it, if I describe it as *a feeling of drowsiness without the power to sleep*. But these symptoms may be entirely absent, and the very first sign of the mischief may be jaundice. Of course this latter is always present in the confirmed stage, because the bile is suppressed. With the jaundice there is naturally extreme depression of spirits, great pain, and vomiting of mucus and blood (like coffee grounds); muttering delirium; coma and death soon step in to ease the patient's sufferings, and this may take place in from twenty-four hours to a week. Cure there is none.

I mentioned the word "temperance" above, but let none of my readers suppose that I refer to temperance as regards alcohol in any form only. Temperance to my mind has a far more extended signification. We ought to be temperate in eating as well as in drinking—if so the stomach will not suffer; temperate in speech and language—thus shall the brain come to no evil; temperate in our passions, and our nerves will remain healthy; temperate in all things, for temperance is the key, yea, even the high road to health—health to happiness: happiness of that quiet, calm nature that admits not of flurry or hurry, and seldom of anger; which gives the soul time for contemplation; which



gives long life, and causes the life we have to seem longer, and which opens the door to true religion—the religion of love and hope.

The liver is not only the largest and most intricately formed, but it is one of the most important organs of the body, probably next to the heart *the* most important. It is intimately connected with all the other organs of the body; indeed if the liver is out of order, every tissue of our frame suffers, and with these the mind. Its function is to secrete the bile. Now the suppression of this important fluid, or the obstruction to the flow of it towards the intestine, injures the system in two ways—first, if retained in the blood or re-absorbed into the circulation, it becomes a poison, and jaundice is the result; and secondly, when not poured into the intestine the proper chylification (see paper in last month's issue) is prevented, and thus two great evils result.

Having then endeavoured to prove to you, and I trust not altogether unsuccessfully, the importance of this much-belied and much-despised part of our anatomy, I shall say one or two words about some of the *every-day* ailments in connection therewith.

First and commonest on the list is what is usually known as a bilious attack, or in its more mitigated form simply "biliousness." The patient had gone to bed all right as he thought, after probably a hearty supper, if anything probably too much lobster salad (the wine *could* do no harm—oh! dear, no). For the first part of the night his slumbers were heavy, then he had begun to toss about, moan, feel uneasy, have interviews with nightmares of various kinds to suit his fancy. And this was his condition in the morning: a decided disinclination to get up: "let business do as it likes for one day." More or less headache, a tongue like calico and tasting of brass; eyes like boiled onions, nausea at the stomach and an inclination to vomit. Feels if he could vomit he would be all right. Does, and he is not. Tries again and perhaps retching comes on, ending in the ejection of bile and sometimes even blood, which shocks him very much and causes the doctor to be sent for. And the wise man probably enjoins rest in bed, administers a draught, such as the following—of solution of muriate of morphia ten drops, of carbonate of soda ten grains, of dilute hydrocyanic acid four drops, dissolved in a little soda-water. Ice may be used, and a mustard poultice placed on the pit of the stomach, and the following left to be taken at bed-time—only very little food having been taken during the day:—Three grains of extract of hyoscyamus, a quarter of a grain of podophyllin, and five grains of extract of dandelion.

And now I come to mention a complaint of a more dangerous nature. I refer to chronic congestion of the liver. It may be occasioned by high living or by vio-

lent exercise, or by anything that interferes with the due excretion of the bile. Here we shall find a feeling of weight and tightness in the right side, probably pain in the right shoulder, slight or severe nausea, want of appetite, giddiness, and sometimes distressing flatulence. Nervousness, too, in some degree will seldom be absent. There are other signs, patent only to the profession.

On the first symptoms of anything like congestion, the sufferer will do well to obtain the following mixture, and take an eighth part thereof every morning before breakfast:—Of Epsom salts one and a quarter ounce, of Glauber salts half an ounce, of tincture of lavender four drams, of peppermint water ten ounces. Later on, while still using mild aperients, tonics must be added; the following, for instance, is a nice warm tonic aperient, an ounce of which may be taken now and then as occasion requires:—Take two and a half ounces of the compound tincture of gentian, one and a half ounce of the tincture of rhubarb, five drams each of spirits of ether and sal volatile, and add peppermint water to make it up to ten ounces. Remember, however, that while medicines may cure congestion, you must give them fair play, by well regulating the diet and attending to all the rules of health and hygiene.

It is with the earlier symptoms we have to do here, for unfortunately in its advanced stage the disorder is quite incurable. The first thing that may attract the patient's notice will be simply some slight derangement of the functions of the liver. Then there will be pain in the right side, not severe, a dry skin, with a pasty appearance of the face, flatulence, constipation, and difficulty of digestion, loss of flesh, and general discomfort. Now these symptoms may not be considered quite diagnostic, but they are, or ought to be, entirely sufficient to awaken the patient to a sense of impending danger. Let him then, now or never, rouse himself to action; and no good can be done without regulation of diet. This must be nourishing, but plain; and highly spiced or seasoned dishes must be completely given up, as well as spirituous liquors in any shape or form whatever. Violent exercise must not be taken, but exercise in moderation and cheerful society are beneficial. Aperients too will be required, and the sufferer cannot do better than use the mixture of salts, &c., and the podophyllin pill already given in this paper. Here I append a simple electuary, of which a tea-spoonful may be taken now and then, some time before breakfast. It is merely: the extract of dandelion, confection of senna, and cream of tartar, equal parts of each, well mixed. Friction over the seat of the liver with some stimulating ointment or liniment may help to cure. To those who can afford to travel, the mineral wells of various well-known places will do good.

