

That the food is received into the stomach, there undergoes a change of its consistence, and is then propelled along the intestines, are obvious facts in the animal economy. But a discovery made in the course of the seventeenth century brought into clearer light the sequel of this series of processes, and its connexion with other functions. In the year 1622, Asellius or Aselli<sup>1</sup> discovered certain minute vessels, termed *lacteals*, which absorb a white liquid (the *chyle*) from the bowels, and pour it into the blood. These vessels had, in fact, been discovered by Eristratus, in the ancient world,<sup>2</sup> in the time of Ptolemy; but Aselli was the first modern who attended to them. He described them in a treatise entitled *De Venis Lacteis, cum figuris elegantissimis*, printed at Milan in 1627, the year after the death of the author. The work is remarkable as the first which exhibits *colored* anatomical figures; the arteries and veins are represented in red, the lacteals in black.

Eustachius,<sup>3</sup> at an earlier period, had described (in the horse) the thoracic duct by which the chyle is poured into the subclavian vein, on the right side of the neck. But this description did not excite so much notice as to prevent its being forgotten, and rediscovered in 1550, after the knowledge of the circulation of the blood had given more importance to such a discovery. Up to this time,<sup>4</sup> it had been supposed that the lacteals carried the chyle to the liver, and that the blood was manufactured there. This opinion had prevailed in all the works of the ancients and moderns; its falsity was discovered by Pecquet, a French physician, and published in 1651, in his *New Anatomical Experiments*; in which are discovered a receptacle of the chyle, unknown till then, and the vessel which conveys it to the subclavian vein. Pecquet himself, and other anatomists, soon connected this discovery with the doctrine, then recently promulgated, of the circulation of the blood. In 1665, these vessels, and the *lymphatics* which are connected with them, were further illustrated by Ruysch in his exhibition of their valves. (*Dilucidatio valvularum in vasis lymphaticis et lacteis.*)

*Sect. 2.—The Consequent Speculations. Hypotheses of Digestion.*

THUS it was shown that aliments taken into the stomach are, by its action, made to produce *chyme*; from the chyme, gradually changed

<sup>1</sup> Mayo, *Physiology*, p. 156.

<sup>2</sup> Cuv. *Hist.* p. 34.

<sup>3</sup> Cuv. *Hist. Sc.* p. 50.

<sup>4</sup> *Ib.* p. 365.