

birds, and others, take their food during the night. Those animals which are nocturnal feeders are diurnal sleepers, while those which are crepuscular, sleep partly in the night and partly in the day; but in all, the complete period of these functions is twenty-four hours. Man, in like manner, in all nations and ages, takes his principal rest once in twenty-four hours; and the regularity of this practice seems most suitable to his health, though the duration of the time allotted to repose is extremely different in different cases. So far as we can judge, this period is of a length beneficial to the human frame, independently of the effect of external agents. In the voyages recently made into high northern latitudes, where the sun did not rise for three months, the crews of the ships were made to adhere, with the utmost punctuality, to the habit of retiring to rest at nine, and rising a quarter before six; and they enjoyed, under circumstances apparently the most trying, a state of salubrity quite remarkable. This shows, that according to the common constitution of such men, the cycle of twenty-four hours is very commodious, though not imposed on them by external circumstances.

The hours of food and repose are capable of such wide modifications in animals, and above all in man, by the influence of external stimulants and internal emotions, that it is not easy to distinguish what portion of the tendency to such alternations depends on original constitution. Yet no one can doubt that the inclination to food and sleep is periodical, or can maintain, with any plausibility, that the period may be lengthened or shortened without limit. We may be tolerably certain that a constantly recurring period of forty-eight hours would be too long for one day of employment and one period of sleep, with our present faculties; and all, whose bodies and minds are tolerably active, will probably agree that, independently of habit, a perpetual alternation of eight hours up and four in bed would employ the