

THE HOUSEHOLD.

OVER-STUDY OR OVERWORK.

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Of all the follies I see at present in New England—less perhaps in other parts of the country where education is not stimulated as it is here—I know of none greater, or one more often fatal, than the over-stimulus of the intellect at the expense of the body, in our schools and colleges. We weary the brain with overwork at the expense of the bodily frame, and too often of the morals, of the pupil.

Every teacher feels called upon by public opinion to stimulate the intellect of the pupil. The physical well-being of the child is almost universally over-looked. This is gross folly in the case of any pupil, even if there be no hereditary tendency to consumption. But with that tendency the plan is really homicidal.

Many persons will deem me extravagant, if not irreverent, when I lay it down as a proposition, that it is as much a religious duty for the parent to guard over the physical culture of his child as it is to watch for its moral and religious development.

Upon the healthy development of the body hangs the healthy growth of a really religious life. And yet it sometimes seems to me as if teachers, parents and pupils were all alike mad in the pursuit of purely intellectual education. The eating of plenty of good food, and an excellent digestion thereof, plenty of out-of-door exercise, proper seasons for rest, seem wholly, and at times even criminally neglected, compared with the time and attention given in order to attain high rank at school. I write warmly because my experience, I think, sustains me in the propositions.

Some teachers and parents will object to the above, and will think that I object to hard study. Far from it. I believe in hard study for a proper number of hours—with intermission for—what is equally important—earnest, well-directed play. The difficulty is that in most schools and colleges the play is not cultivated as it should be by the teacher. His work, he thinks, is to be devoted to the intellectual growth of his pupil. Attention to the harmonious growth of his body is of minor importance.

In illustration, I cite the following as a case of too common occurrence in my experience as a physician, and I cannot resist the inferences I have been compelled to draw in many similar ones which I have seen:

A young person, male or female, walks into my study for the purpose of consultation in regard to health. I observe great paleness of the face, extreme emaciation and trembling steps, combined with a slight cough, and evidently more or less difficulty of breath. These, if combined with a certain intellectual expression of the face, almost immediately enable me to foreshadow a history somewhat as follows:

Stimulated by ambition to be in the front rank of scholarship, and desiring, owing to poverty or the known wishes of parents, to obtain rapidly an education, the poor, scarcely developed child has been laboring for months, always overworking intellectually, and at times also physically. Perhaps the victim has been carried many miles daily to and from school. Study at school, in the cars, and after return at night, sometimes twelve to fourteen hours has been the daily rule.

Of course, utter prostration is the result. The appetite fails or becomes capricious under severe fatigue and irregularity of meals. Gradually a cough is noticed, and it is thought "a cold has been taken." A rainy day is blamed for the cough which has been nurtured by the very course pursued. The rain was only the signal, so to speak, for that to burst forth which had been already prepared for explosion by previous folly, viz., the grossest intemperance in the use of the privileges of life.

The cough and the educational race continue on together. Finally a failure of strength manifests itself, and then, for the first time, the parents begin to look with concern at the appearance of their child. But neither child nor parent thinks of giving up school. Perhaps it is toward the end of the term. "Only a very few weeks more" and the coveted prize will be gained, and then rest and cure can be attempted. And so the terrible race toward death goes on. Day after day, the pupil rises early and goes to bed late at night, haunted by the idea of an education to be gained. At last, the long-

wished-for goal is reached. The first honors are gained, but they are now of little comfort, for all strength, which has been artificially kept up by the excitement of the race, suddenly leaves the aspirant, and the pupil does nothing afterward. Sinking of all the powers and a rapid downward course ensue, and the physician can only make a diagnosis. All ideas of cure, or even of partial relief, perhaps, have disappeared, and death by quick consumption soon closes all. This is no overdrawn sketch; all physicians must have met many such.

Now the way to prevent such cases as this is for parents and guardians of youth to interfere and stop all such folly, ere it be too late. Let this check be given not only once, but many times if need be, whenever, in fact, this over-excitement is noticed, and this should be done even contrary to the earnest wishes of the pupil, and although he or she be thoroughly disheartened by the restraint. The difficulty is that, usually, no consultation is had with physicians or parents until it is too late, and some parents seem utterly blinded as to their duty in the premises.

A very intelligent and eminent lady teacher, when I spoke to her of this class of cases, replied, "I fully believe you are right. In my experience of girls who have been under my care, I have been led to believe that this over-excitement for study is really one of the primary symptoms of consumption, and that it should be considered such by physicians. I have now in mind at least two girls who, without any extra mental qualities, and very feeble frames, were constantly studying and rarely exercising. They were often absent from school from weakness. Still they could not give up reading, and pleaded earnestly to be allowed to study, 'as it was their only pleasure.' I urged the parents to take them from school, and to compel or induce them to take more care of their health. I felt that they would eventually break down if they continued in the course they were then pursuing. My advice was not followed, and they died of consumption; and was not this over-intellectual excitement really the first symptom?"

Such a course should be avoided in all cases, but the rule is especially imperative in a pupil having hereditary tendencies to consumption. A proper, reasonable, temperately conducted, well-ventilated school should be selected. No overwork of mind or body should be permitted. If the health fail at all, absolute removal from school is required; travel or anything else should be undertaken that will interest and keep the pupil from books and out of doors, and let the education, so-called, take care of itself.

Again, overwork not only in study, but in any direction where the person is confined in a close atmosphere, or even on a farm with poor food and other deprivations of comfort, may produce similar results to those caused by over-study. A young merchant, a conscientious clerk, or another under a hard master, especially if working chiefly below the level of the street, as many now do, will be liable to suffer.

In connection with, and legitimately connected with it, is overwork in amusements. Our youths of both sexes, especially the girls, ruin their bodily and mental health by attending closely at school during the day, and staying at parties until late at night. In like manner many young women, having "finished their education," often spend every night, till early morning, in dancing and revel, and thus are often preparing for themselves serious disease; consumption, not infrequently. They rise late in the forenoon, with little appetite, and either pass the day in listless inaction, or if compelled to work, drag themselves unwillingly to labor. This course is pursued several times during the week. Under it the face grows pale, the strength lessens, and they are then all prepared for a cough to commence on the most trivial exposure, which would have had no deleterious influence upon a more rugged frame, which had been temperately and wisely regulated previously.

If in addition to the evils of these employments and wild amusements, individuals neglect digestion, eat irregularly of a weak, poor fare, they will gradually be liable to lose appetite, flesh and strength. If a cough sets in under such circumstances, there is danger of its becoming chronic, although the patient may be able to perform his usual duties up to the moment of consulting a physician.

To avoid this result, it behooves parents and guardians to see to it—

1st. That there shall be no overwork or overplay.

2d. That the spot for work shall be healthily situated.

3d. That regular and sufficient food be taken.

4th. The first moment that any failure of the powers is noticed, some physician should be consulted, whose aim should be not simply to give remedies, but to remove the patients from any pernicious influence under which they may be suffering.—*Youth's Companion*.

FEATHER PILLOWS.

It is of moment to remember, that in the cleansing of the feathers which are used to fill pillows and bolsters, the utmost care ought to be taken never to put the feathers back in the tick until they are thoroughly dried. If only a little moisture attach to the feathers they decompose; they give out ammoniacal and sulphuretted compounds, and they become in this manner not only offensive to the sense of smell, but sometimes an insidious source of danger to health.

A few years ago I went with my family to a well-known seaside place, where during the season we were obliged to take what we could get in the way of house accommodation. I was myself located in a small bedroom, which was scrupulously clean and comfortable, and, as bedrooms go, well ventilated. The first night after going to bed I awoke in early morning with the most oppressive of headaches, with a sense of nausea, and with coldness of the body. The thought that these unpleasant symptoms arose from smallness of the room and close air led me to open the window. I was soon somewhat relieved, but could sleep no more that morning, so I dressed, took a walk, and after a few hours felt fairly well, and as wanting nothing more than a few hours of extra sleep. The next night I took the precaution to set the window open, but again in early morning I woke as before, and even in worse condition. I now canvassed all possible causes for the phenomena. Had I contracted some contagious disease? Was this bedroom recently tenanted by a person suffering from a contagious malady? Had I taken some kind of food or drink which had disagreed with me? The answer to each of these queries was entirely negative. All I could get at was that I had a sense of an odor of a very peculiar kind, which came and went, and which seemed to have some connection with the temporary derangement.

On the third night I went to bed once more, but rather more restless and alert than before; and an hour or two after I had been in bed I woke with a singular dream. I was a boy again, and I was reading the story, so I dreamt, of Philip Quarles, who, like Robinson Crusoe, was lost on a desolate island, and who could not sleep on a pillow stuffed with the feathers of certain birds which he had killed, and the feathers of which he had used for a pillow. The dream led me to examine the pillow on which my own head reclined. It was a soft, large downy cushion, with a fine white case and a perfectly clean tick; but when I turned my face for a moment on the pillow and inhaled through it, I detected the most distinct sulphur ammoniacal odor, which was so sickening I had no difficulty in discovering mine enemy. The bolster I found to be the same. I put both away, made a temporary pillow out of a railway rug, went to sleep again, and woke in the morning quite well. It turned out that the pillow and bolster had been recently made up with imperfectly dried feathers, and some of these were undergoing decomposition.

This experience of mine is a good illustration detected, as it happened, on the spot. It is by no means singular. Little children are often made sleepless, dreamful, and restless in their cots from a similar cause.—*Dr. Richardson, in Good Words*.

GOOD HEALTH.

"The common ingredients of health and long life are Great temperance, open air, easy labor, little care."

How few of us appreciate good health when we have it! how many are seeking for it in vain! It is often easy to keep, but hard to find! It is a blessing without which all others fail to be fully enjoyed and yet perhaps the least appreciated of any that the most of us possess.

A quaint old preacher, when called upon to ask a blessing at a well-filled table, which was surrounded by a happy company, responded in this wise: "Whereas, some have appetite and no food, while others have

food and no appetite, we thank thee, Lord, that we have both."

That man surely appreciated the blessing of good health, and we venture to say had been careful to obey the laws of health during all his life.

As we look about among our friends and acquaintances, how small is the number of those who enjoy perfect or even moderate health! how few but have some chronic trouble to suffer from and fight against continually! True, many inherit diseases from which, doubtless, there is no escape, but by far the large majority have brought their troubles by overwork.

Children in school often study too hard, too closely, because they and their parents are anxious for the prizes, which must be striven for at all hazards, and so we see the attenuated forms of pale, hollow eyed boys and girls, with little appetite and less vigor, who surely could not utter the old man's thanks. Students in college or in law-schools, or pursuing art in any of its departments, as a rule, take little exercise, but give their entire strength to the brain, and when attacked with brain fever have no strength of body to resist the progress of the disease.

Girls in factories, or sewing in large establishments, are constantly overtaxed, and the recreation which they crave and which they need to break in upon the monotony of their incessant, unvarying labor, is nevertheless enjoyed at the expense of health, and their muscles, and sometimes their brains, scarcely know what rest is. The employers, and not the hard-worked, poorly-paid employees, are surely to blame for a great amount of ill-health, and we hope that soon eight hours of well-paid labor, done by rested and cheerful working-women, will convince manufacturers that not only in a moral, but in a money point of view, such labor pays.

Business men are overworked constantly, and even the young men now-a-days can scarcely take their thoughts from the ledger, and the schemes of money-making and money-getting somehow, by foul means if not by fair ones, are revolved in their mind until many men, so far as pertains to all social and Christian living, have become merely machines, and work on with impaired health, and live out but half their days.

All these we have mentioned, it may be, have achieved the results they sought. The children have won the prizes; the students have taken the honors of their classes; the artists have received the plaudits and the medals from appreciative patrons; the factory girls have, with tired bodies and dizzy heads, whirled all night in the mazes of the dance; business men have made fortunes and young men have often found place and position and received incomes at thirty which their fathers would have considered large at sixty; they have won what they sought, but alas! with the winning they have lost their health, which was of more value to each one of them than all the prizes and all the medals that were ever struck. Dr. Holland very sensibly says that if we have any prizes to give it would be well to give them to those young students of delicate organization and the power of easy acquisition, who restrain their ambition to excel in scholarship, and build up for themselves a body fit to give their minds a comfortable dwelling-place and forcible and facile service. These would be prizes worth securing, and they would point to the highest form of manhood as their aim and end.

Is it not true that nearly all vigorous mental or religious work is accomplished at the expense of health? Editors, ministers, lawyers, teachers, authors, physicians, politicians, financiers, missionaries, and those whose business it is to labor and arouse enthusiasm for them and their work—all who are in earnest in either of these departments, and more which might be named, seem to be accomplishing their task most acceptably about in proportion as their health gives way.

If this is true, that exclusive mental labor is unhealthful, and yet necessary, parents must see to it that more time is spent by their children during all the years of their education in physical development and healthful recreation, that they may be the better prepared to endure the wear and tear of brain work to which many of them are destined—then, unafflicted by mental or physical dyspepsia or any saddening disease, the majority of even the brain-workers may be able even in middle life and in old age to utter the thanks of the quaint old preacher.—*Standard*.