

upon this subject in a recent issue of the *American Journal of Insanity*. That insanity is becoming yearly more prevalent is more than a probability. One special and almost, if not quite, invariably fatal form of mental disease (general paralysis of the insane) has been becoming more and more common during recent years, and now contributes the largest percentage of any disease to the list of deaths in hospitals for the insane. The causation of the insanities has always been a matter the determination of which is surrounded by difficulties, but there can be no doubt that the vicious modes of life rendered necessary by the advance of civilization must overtax and lead to gradual deterioration of the highest and most easily disturbed faculties. Nervous instability thus acquired is transmitted in an intensified degree to the offspring, perhaps amounting to actual deficiency. The number of inmates in institutions for the feeble-minded is rapidly multiplying. Dr. Channing draws a somewhat gloomy prognosis for humanity. "As the amoeba represents the beginning of life, the earliest form of existence, the idiot represents the end, the final stage before extinction."

Now education of the masses to a proper understanding of their responsibility in this matter would not only be difficult; it would be impossible and impracticable. Men will go on abusing themselves and transmitting a greater or less degree of nervous instability to their offspring. The first principle in treatment—the removal of the cause, is therefore inapplicable. What we must do is to endeavour by judicious means to counteract the evil influence so unfortunately inherited, by placing these unstable, neurasthenic children under the most favorable physical and hygienic conditions. To quote again from Dr. Channing: "One thing after another has led me up to the conviction that there is a basis of physical degeneracy at the bottom of the mental impairment and neurotic tendencies now so frequent. \* \* \* If there

is a physical degeneracy, then our efforts must be directed towards some means of bringing about that physical improvement."

Very great attention is being paid to physical culture in the colleges and various men's associations at the present time. In the past, interest in gymnastics has, however, centred principally in athletics, or in the development of individual strength for competitive sports. This has served as a stepping-stone to a system of true physical education. Swedish and German systems of gymnastics have now a recognized place in many schools. Froebel gives much prominence to the physical development of children in his kindergarten system. But the adoption of a suitable form of gymnastic drill capable of variation to individual requirements is by no means general. The standard of education in every branch is being raised—subjects are being multiplied, and the nervous children of nervous parents are being subjected to a mental strain which even the strongest are not always able to bear. Everything possible is being done to train the youthful mind, while the body as a whole, the healthful condition of which is so essential to perfect mental development, is being sadly neglected. The nervous child should receive very special education. Every possible means should be applied for the betterment of his condition, for the strengthening of his system so that he may be enabled to overcome, in a degree at any rate, the predisposition to neuroses which he has inherited, and may be permitted to engage without such great risk in the more or less trying associations of his future life. Physical training should become a *primary* and all important consideration in our public school system. It should have the undivided attention of a specially educated instructor, should be compulsory in every grade of promotion from the most primary to the most advanced classes, and should be allotted sufficient time to permit of its efficient application.