

as preventable as typhoid fever or cholera. Though their prevention relates rather to individual hygiene than to what is commonly regarded as the domain of public health. And not a few of the causes of insanity require more than one generation for their removal.

Once, one of the oldest and wisest superintendents of hospitals was asked for a condensed statement of the causes of insanity. He replied: "I should put it all in the one word *"excess."* If we go back further or look deeper we might embody most causes if not all in a *want of self control.* In failure to use the blessings of the higher civilization of the present century with wisdom, discretion, moderation.

Again, says Prof. Hitchcock (in *the Sanitarian*): "Among uncivilized peoples, and among the earlier nations of the world, we have reason to believe there is and has been comparatively little insanity. It is a condition which seems not to originate or flourish in a simple state of society, or where people live according to nature, or with uncultured habits and customs. It seems to be like fruit of the vegetable world: so long as it is wild and but little developed in richness it is simple and without much juice or pulp; but when it becomes cultivated by artificial care, pruning, protection and food, and is full of richness and flavor, then it is infested and injured by parasites and other forms of innumerable animal and vegetable life. So long as man lives in the habits of simple animal nature, so long does he keep this insane condition in its lowest place and power. But when he rises above the common sense gratifications, when his aspirations for something refined and higher take possession of him, then come in a multitude of influences which tend to disturb and destroy this higher part of his being, and man with all his knowledge has not as yet found the power to control this insane condition. Civilization, culture,

morality, religion and refinement, are not incompatible with our highest and most complete state of being hereafter, but as high cultivation in the vegetable world requires more labor, and brings in weeds, worms and adverse agents which are unknown to plants in nature, so does culture of man's higher powers bring in its host of enemies in the form of inordinate self-will, excess, epilepsy, apoplexy and the infinite variety of nervous diseases.

"The Creator has endowed us with passions, powers and possibilities over which we have control. We may gratify our appetites, or indulge our passions to the extent of a reasonable pleasure, so that we may desire again their proper indulgence, or we may so saturate ourselves that indulgence is repulsive; we may reasonably use our powers, or say with another, "Now comes the dark hour his surfeit has made."

"There are none of our powers but we may use to our satiety, disgust and revulsion, be they the tissue of coarse muscle or the rods and cones of the delicate retina. With our physical actions nature has given a sense of weariness, an instinct which says enough, before this disgust and danger appears. But our minds are of such make and capabilities, that overwork and excessive expenditures of nerve force may be almost indefinitely carried on by an indomitable or uneducated or uncontrolled will. The beast, with no wish for more than food and external comfort, ceases nervous expenditure when creature comforts are satisfied; the man with a feverish desire for wealth, a love of knowledge, a yearning for the immortal and infinite, with his physical powers in subjection to the spiritual, makes a slave of the physical part; over-works, exhausts the brain and nerves, and thus he is found by those about him to have lost himself and given the insane condition the supreme sway over him. . . .