

## OVER-STUDY IN YOUNG LADIES' SCHOOLS AND CONVENTS.

By JAMES PERRIGO, M.D., M.R.C.S., ENG.,

PROFESSOR OF MEDICAL JURISPRUDENCE, UNIVERSITY OF  
BISHOP'S COLLEGE.

Neurasthenia and Womb-diseases, by Dr. Goodell, of Philadelphia, touches a subject that seems to have been apparently neglected by most observers. It will do good service, as it brings prominently before us the evil results of forcing learning into the heads of young girls regardless of all consequences. Every practitioner, no doubt, has met with a number of cases of disordered and difficult menstruation, attended with more or less anemia and neuralgia, the histories of which could be traced to over-study and too close confinement at school. Education in the nineteenth century apparently is not based upon Worcester's definition. He defines education as "that series of instruction and discipline which is intended to enlighten the understanding, correct the temper, and form the manners and habits of youth, and fit them for usefulness in their future stations." As the process is carried out in our schools and convents, it appears rather to consist of intellectual cramming, to get through as much work as possible in a given time, to force girls to learn accomplishments for which they have no inclination in a good many instances, to keep them tightly-laced, and give them a half-hour dead-march walk through the quiet streets of the town. Nothing human can change the requirements of nature, and, as Lord Bacon says, "she is often hidden, sometimes overcome, seldom extinguished." A persistence in the present manner in guiding the studies of our young girls will rapidly (if it has not already partially done so) give us a generation of sickly looking females. In visiting the New England States, and some of their large cities, we were rather surprised at seeing so many sickly looking females, all more or less shewing the appearance of anemia or chlorosis. In conversation with the medical men, they, one and all, stated that it originated from their system of forced education at boarding-schools, and they added that competitive examinations helped to increase the evil results.

In Canada, taking Montreal as an example, we have drifted considerably in the same direc-

tion, and the profession here should give warning. There is no use in denying the fact, as it has been amply proved in practice, a great many girls begin their invalid career at the age of puberty, from no other cause than that no allowance is made for the new strain upon the nervous system. Their studies are not only continued, but, at that age, additions to them are made, when they should be lightened or followed less vigorously. What is the result? Backache, flushing of the face with headache, loss of appetite, menstruation, which has been partially established, checked, and more or less hysteria. To give an example, we will detail the following case, which was under our care two years ago. Miss H., *æt.* sixteen, with puberty fairly established, as she had been menstruating regularly for some time, began to complain of headache and a sense of lassitude. This was when the session of her school was about three months advanced. It was easy to see over-work was the cause. She was at the head of her class, but had a strong competitor in another young lady who was always very close to her. The parents had a natural pride in the ability and success of their child, and they allowed no obstacle to be in the way of her keeping the first place in her class. Outdoor exercise and amusements in their opinion wasted precious time. They ridiculed the opinion when given to them that it was over-studying, and the anxiety connected with it, of keeping her place, and absolutely refused to give their daughter a rest from work. They stated they were of strong constitutions themselves, and that their daughter possessed the same, and that she was doing no more than what they did in their young days. To convince the mother of the difference of her studies in her youthful days and those of her daughter, the two were compared. Those of the mother consisted of the three R's., and the daughter had to plod through advanced arithmetic, algebra, Euclid, moral philosophy, literature, ancient and modern history, and French. In addition to this she was forced, an hour every day, to drum on the piano, much against her own inclination as she was not fond of music. Outdoor exercise consisted in the walk to and from school. Notwithstanding all this they peremptorily refused the much needed rest, and asked for a tonic, stating they thought that quite