

From a health standpoint, the half-time system, such as is adopted in some parts of England, is worthy of consideration. It consists in sending the children to school for three hours each day, and employing them at other pursuits, such as learning different trades for the rest of the working hours, six in all. "It has been found generally that children so employed make as good progress in study as those who attend school for six hours each day."

Sir Crichton Brown states that "the results of over-pressure in schools may be altogether unnoticed, but may induce so unstable a condition of the nervous system that some trivial ailment may lead to the genesis of so terrible a disease as dementia."

A perfectly healthy man should not be conscious of mental fatigue. He should sleep well and rise in the morning invigorated. Not so with the "neurasthenic." At the end of his day's toil or care he is tired, depressed, dyspeptic, and deficient in energy. When he goes to bed his mind dwells upon his cares. After sleep, which is disturbed by dreams, he awakens, dejected, unrefreshed and filled with dark forebodings. This trouble does not end here, for he transmits it by consanguinity. Levillain says that "if one parent is neurasthenic the affection may be lost or attenuated in the descendants. If both parents are neurasthenic, or one neurasthenic and the other hysterical, and if the series of alliances between neurotic subjects is continued, the gravest nervous disorders are developed and the family comes to an end in utter mental and physical degeneracy and dies out." Herbert Spencer declares that "on old and young the pressure of modern life puts increasing strain," and that "the parents bequeath their damaged constitutions to their children."

If it is true that the mind exercises a powerful influence upon the body in health and in disease; if it is true that the "mental strain," consequent upon the railroad pace at which we are all moving, is the cause of the large increase of nervous diseases which too often result in physical and mental exhaustion, disease of the heart, insanity, suicide, etc.; and if it is true that our "educational system" tends to produce mental and physical disease in the rising generation, particularly in those who are to be the mothers of our future race; I say if these are facts, and I think few who have studied the subject will dispute them, then my subject is a national one, and as custodians of the public health, is it not our duty to study it, and if possible, to point out a remedy?

Our task, I confess, will be a hard one. We cannot eradicate the unceasing wish for better things. If we tell a man that he must not exhaust his brain to amass a fortune, he will not obey us, declaring that he must work to keep up his corner in the social circle. If we tell him that his brain requires as much rest as the muscles of his arm or his leg, that if he draws too heavily upon either, nature will rebel, he will make answer that the competition is so great he cannot afford to rest. If we tell him that the "nervous exhaustion" under which his daughter is laboring has been caused by excessive mental work at school, that the lateral curvature of her spine is consequence of the sad neglect of that muscular exercise which nature demands, coupled with long, continued and careless sitting posture when studying, and that the myopic state of her eyes is the result of overwork of these organs, in a stooping position and in bad light, he will probably make answer that Smith's or Brown's daughters were at the same school and they were not so affected. Ask him if her mother was nervous or near-sighted? It is likely he will answer, troubled a little with both. You will naturally exclaim, what can we do under such circumstances? All I can say is, to persevere, peg away at his brain; place before him illustrations of the mischief that is being done, and like the work of the sanitarian, good will be the ultimate result.