

able? Are not their lives virtuous, and their affairs prosperous? Alas, yes! But they are not the less guilty of poisoning themselves daily, though perhaps unconscious of it all the time.

"The national poison that we allude to, is nothing less than the vitiated air of *close stoves*, and the unventilated apartments which accompany them!

"*'STOVES'*—exclaim a thousand readers in the same breath—'stoves poisonous? Nonsense! They are perfectly healthy, as well as the most economical, convenient, labor-saving, useful and indispensable things in the world. Besides, are they not real Yankee inventions? In what country but this is there such an endless variety of stoves—cooking stoves, hall stoves, parlor stoves, airtight stoves, cylinders, salamanders, etc.? Why, it is absolutely the national invention—this stove—the most useful result of universal Yankee ingenuity."

"We grant it all, good friends and readers; but must also have our opinion—our calmly considered and carefully matured opinion—which is nothing more nor less than this, that stoves—as now used—are the national curse; the secret poisoners of that blessed air, bestowed by kind Providence as an elixir of life,—giving us new vigor and fresh energy at every inspiration; and we, ungrateful beings, as if the pure breath of heaven were not fit for us, we reject it, and breathe instead—what?—the air which passes over a surface of hot iron, and becomes loaded with all the vapor of arsenic and sulphur, which that metal, highly heated, constantly gives off!

"If in the heart of large cities—where there is a large population crowded together, with scanty means of subsistence—one saw a few persons driven by necessity into warming their small apartments by little close stoves of iron, liable to be heated red-hot, and thereby to absolutely destroy the purity of the air, one would not be so much astonished at the result, because it is so difficult to preserve the poorest class from suffering, in some way or other, in great cities. But it is by no means only in the houses of those who have slender means of subsistence that this is the case. It is safe to say that nine-tenths of all the houses in the northern states, whether belonging to rich or poor, are entirely unventilated, and heated at the present moment by close stoves!

It is absolutely a matter of *preference* on the part of thousands, with whom the trifling difference between one mode of heating and another is of no account. Even in the midst of the country, where there is still wood in abundance, the farmer will sell that wood and buy coal, so

that he may have a little *demon*—alias a black, cheerless, close stove—in the place of that genuine hospitable, wholesome *friend* and comforter, an open wood fire-place.

"And in order not to leave one unconverted soul in the wilderness, the stove inventors have lately brought out "a new article," for forest countries, where coal is not to be had either for love or barter—an "air-tight stove for burning wood." The seductive, convenient, monstrous thing! "It consumes one-fifth of the fuel which was needed by the open chimney—is so neat and clean, makes no dust, and gives no trouble" All quite true, dear considerate housewife—all quite true; but that very stove causes your husband to pay twice its savings to the family doctor before two winters are past, and gives you thrice as much trouble in nursing the sick in your family as you formerly spent in taking care of the fire in your chimney corner,—besides depriving you of the most delightful of all household occupations.

"Our countrymen generally have a vast deal of national pride, and national sensitiveness, and we honor them for it. It is the warp and woof, out of which the stuff of national improvement is woven. When a nation becomes quite indifferent as to what it has done, or can do, then there is nothing left but for its prophets to utter lamentations over it.

"Now there is a curious but indisputable fact, (somebody *must* say it,) touching our present condition and appearance, as a nation of men, women and children, in which we Americans compare most unfavorably with the people of Europe, and especially with those of northern Europe—England and France, for example. It is neither in religion or morality, law or liberty. In these great essentials every American feels that his country is the birthplace of a larger number of robust and healthy souls than any other. But in the bodily condition, the *signs of physical health*, and all that constitutes the outward aspect of the men and women of the United States, our countrymen, and especially countrywomen, compare most unfavorably with all but the absolutely starving classes on the other side of the Atlantic. So completely is this the fact, that though we are unconscious of it at home, the first thing (especially of late years) which strikes an American, returning from abroad, is the pale and sickly countenances of his friends, acquaintances, and almost every one he meets in the streets of large towns,—every other man looking as if he had lately recovered from a fit of illness. The men look so pale, and the women so delicate, that his eye, accustomed to the higher