

being of the child, or in unduly feeding the emotional nature. The rashness of the individual in yielding altogether to the ruling of the passions, and wasting his life and energies in a bacchanalia of the appetites which will surely drift the person into insanity. Of late years drugs, such as alcohol, morphine, cocaine and the like, have repeatedly caused insanity in persons otherwise mentally sound. Lastly comes misfortune as a cause. Sunstroke and accidents causing injury to the head, besides some contagious diseases which alter the consistence of the blood, may lead to mental aberration. Starvation and fright may be classed with these other misfortunes as unexpected. We can provide against them. We need not be rash. It is our own fault if we are ignorant.

In conclusion, one is forced, in all candour, to admit that in the past ecclesiasticism has, in numberless ways, abused the authority with which, from a very early time, it has found itself invested by virtue of the place which it has assumed in the uncertain field of tradition. This post of almost absolute authority is not due to the strength of ecclesiasticism so much as to the mental weakness of a species who, in the grey dawn of their understanding, had the same reverence for the fantastic, and the same respect for tyranny which one notices in the undeveloped child of to-day. The species must not be regarded then as the victim of ecclesiasticism; but, on the contrary, ecclesiasticism, with all its discrepancies, as the uncouth idol of the species, which it has voluntarily raised up to worship for want of anything else. Religion was originally the effect of a certain bent of mind in the species, and it would not be fair, therefore, to look upon religion as the cause of the mental infirmities of the species from which they do not seem able to shake themselves free.

I have already pointed out how, in the name of religion, the emotions of the sensitive child, and especially girls, are often utterly debauched, and the young woman as seriously injured and deteriorated by the detestable proceeding, as if she had been deflowered of her virginity. But I suppose the sacerdotal mind lacks the discrimination to perceive that there are certain exquisite forms of mental pollution quite as untoward, and with results far graver than the abrupt assumption of a perfectly natural physical function at the time approved by nature.

The earlier forms of religion encouraged practices most injurious to the health; and I might specially mention fasting and vigil keeping. The writer has under his charge at the present time an obstinate case of melancholia which, though there is a history of taint in the family, was certainly facilitated and hurried on by the weakening of the system which followed prolonged periods of fasting and nights spent in prayer.

I have been able in the above remarks to touch only here and there, and with a very light hand, upon the outer border merely, of a system of abuses which are, I am afraid, woven into the very fabric of our life as a race; and my thoughts have been confined to the class of cases where forethought and closer care would put off, for a time at least, and perhaps forever, what must be regarded as the greatest catastrophe which can overtake a human life.