

General Science and Miscellany.

THE FAVORITE POISON OF AMERICA.

We take the following article from a recent number of that excellent periodical, the *Horticulturist*. It is from the pen of Mr. Downing, the talented Editor; who on his late return from a professional tour in Europe, was deeply impressed with the pale and emaciated appearance of his own countrywomen, compared with the rosy cheeks and robust constitutions which he had observed on the other side of the Atlantic. A large portion of the male sex might be included; especially such as have not employment or exercise in the open air. An Old Countryman standing at Boston or New-York, must be painfully struck with the generally unhealthy appearance of the people, and it takes sometime before his eye becomes accustomed to the difference. The phenomenon is to be accounted for in the different habits of living; atmospheric changes in regard to temperature, moisture, &c., and as the writer very correctly insists, in the overheated and ill-ventilated apartments in which females, in particular, spend the greater part of their existence during the winter months. The parching heats of summer render out of door exercise much less agreeable and invigorating than under the cloudier and cooler skies of the British Isles. The reason and will of man, however, when properly exercised in discovering and obeying the general laws of health, will do much in raising him above the disadvantages of natural climate. Draining the swamps, moderation in diet, thorough ventilation in dwellings, and the sustaining of animal heat, by taking wholesome food and exercise in the open air, rather than by the over artificial heating of apartments;—these constitute the essential conditions under which sound health is to be obtained and enjoyed.—With the scientific explanations of the writer, in one or two instances, we do not altogether agree; but considering the immense importance of the subject, as applying

to the health and happiness of the people, throughout the northern section of this immense Continent, and the attractive and convincing manner in which it is treated, we think that we shall be doing a service to our readers, by laying the article before them, without abridgment.

“One of the most complete and salutary reforms ever, perhaps, made in any country, is the temperance reform of the last fifteen years in the United States. Everybody, familiar with our manners and customs fifteen or twenty years ago, very well knows that though our people were never positively intemperate, yet ardent spirits were, at that time, in almost as constant daily use, both in public and private life, as tea and coffee are now; while, at the present moment, they are seldom or never offered as a means of civility or refreshment—at least in the older states. The result of this higher civilization or temperance, as one may please to call it, is that a large amount of vice and crime have disappeared from amidst the laboring classes, while the physical as well as moral condition of those who labor too little to be able to bear intoxicating drinks, is very much improved.

“We have taken this consolatory glance at this great and salutary reform of the habits of a whole country, because we need something to fortify our faith in the possibility of new reforms; for our countrymen have, within the last ten years, discovered a new poison, which is used wholesale, both in public and private, all over the country, till the national health and constitution are absolutely impaired by it.

“A national poison? Do you mean slavery, socialism, abolition, mormonism? Nothing of the sort. ‘Then, perhaps, tobacco, patent medicines, or coffee?’ Worse than these. It is a foe more insidious than these; for, at least, one very well knows what one is about when he takes copious draughts of such things. Whatever his own convictions may be, he knows that some of his fellow-creatures consider them deleterious.

“But the national poison is not thought dangerous. Far from it. On the contrary, it is made almost synonymous with domestic comfort. Old and young, rich and poor, drink it in with avidity, and without shame. The most tender and delicate women and children are fondest of it, and become so accustomed to it, that they gradually abandon the delights of bright sunshine and the pure air of heaven, to take it in large draughts. What matter if their cheeks become as pale as the ghosts of Ossian; if their spirits forsake them, and they become listless and languid! Are they not well housed and comfortable?