

Pessimism a Disease.

For some cause or other pessimism appears to be in an especial degree characteristic of our own time, and our own stage of development. The causes are varied and complex. Some of us have too little to do, and find the lap of luxury monotonous and tiresome, which it undoubtedly is. Some of us have too much work and are devoured with bitterness and envy of softer lives. Many are troubled with physical or spiritual liver complaint all their days, and never suspect it. An invincible note of sadness runs through modern life. We have failed to inherit the wholesome hardihood of our ancestors, and like wittens we seek out the sunny corner of the window sill, and mew pitifully because the sun is not shining at the moment, or because the cushion is absent, or we are afraid that the saucer of milk will not be warmed for our next meal.

It is probable that the philosophical attitudes which we call optimism and pessimism, are generally less the result of mental conviction than of individual temperament. There is in life an enormous amount of pain—an enormous amount of pleasure. But the pronounced pessimist huddles himself in his gray cloak and shuts his eyes to the crimson and purple and golden glories of earth. It is characteristic of the spiritually color blind that, not content with seeing nothing but drab and mud color, they sorrowfully contend that there are no other hues to be seen. It may be that they cannot help themselves. It is just possible that each soul comes into the world with its own individual color, and, in the principle that like attracts like, it draws to itself only the tint of which it was formed. Thus the golden soul would revel in sunshine; the dark spirit "builds its nest with the birds of night," the rose colored being discovers that life is a triumph; the gray one that it is a pilgrimage; the magenta soul is grieved to see that no one takes a fancy to him. He

"Is born in blight
Victim of perpetual slight."

It is said that the faces which Gainsborough painted differ notably in character and expression from those which fill the walls of a modern picture gallery. The new type is as beautiful, more deeply intellectual, certainly more sad. There is a growing sense of the significance of pain. The spread of unorthodoxy may be responsible for some of it, but much more may be attributed to the decay of what George Eliot called "other-worldiness"—that facile optimism which held this world as a vale of tears to be compensated for by an eternity of pleasures in the next. More and more the conception that "I myself am heaven and hell," with all that it implies, is coming to be a fixed and abiding mode of belief. There is also to be considered the unhealthy intensity of our intellectual life. We are "sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought." It would seem that given a temperament sensitive to pain, and set in a modern environment, there is no escape from misery. Such a person, if he is sympathetic, has all the woes of the world to feed his morbid passion on. If he is self centered there is no safety valve of philanthropy; he leads a life of brooding wretchedness. The expression of such a life, full of stored-up bitterness, is given in the following poem by Amy Levy:

EPITAPH

ON A COMMONPLACE PERSON WHO DIED IN BED.

"This is the end of him, here he lies;
The dust in his throat, the worm in his eyes,
The mould in his mouth, the turf on his breast;

This is the end of him, this is the best.
He will never lie on his couch awake,
Wide-eyed, tearless, till dim daybreak;
Never again will he smile and smile,
When his heart is breaking all the while;

He will never stretch out his hands in vain,
Groping and groping—never again;
Never ask for bread, get a stone instead,

Never pretend that the stone is bread;
Never sway and sway 'twixt the false and the true,
Weighing and noting the long hours through;
Never ache and ache with the choked-up sighs;

This is the end of him—here he lies."

This dominant sense of a besetting personal pain raises the inevitable question, What help is there? By what philosophy, what direction of will, is a soul smitten with this modern disease of pessimism to shake off the paralysis, and get back into touch with the normal and saner aspect of things? It is easy to say that pessimism is rooted in self-absorption. Constant inward gazing upon the bare self

can only beget a sense of emptiness and vanity, and the happiness of fruition can only be attained by entering into some form of sympathetic union with the universal life. But how do these undoubted truths meet the case of those who have not the gift of sympathy? The ways by which the individual mixes with the universal are love, friendship, religion, the passion of art, the passion of humanity. If these avenues are irretrievably closed, what then? Has any amount of preaching ever rescued the self-centered from the misery that continually befalls the self-centered?

One prescription for this malady appeals more or less directly to the idea of harmony with nature. It inculcates self surrender, acceptance of the inevitable, and a strenuous cultivation of the consciousness that only by his attempt to transcend nature, and to live his life on another plane than hers, does man vex and fret himself away. This is the teaching of Wordsworth. Matthew Arnold accurately says of this poet:

"He found us when the age had bound
Our souls in its benumbing round;
He spoke and loosed our heart in tears.
He laid us as we lay at birth
On the cool flowery lap of earth.
Smiles broke from us and we had ease;
The hills were round us, and the breeze

Went o'er the sunlit fields again;
Our foreheads felt the wind and rain,
Our youth returned, for there was shed
On spirits that had long been dead,
Spirits dried up and closely furled,
The freshness of the early world."

But for all its magic the nature-philosophy is no panacea against pessimism. It works good only to those spirits that have a faculty of detachment from self.

A writer in an English magazine says:

"Our splendid literature is invested with melancholy. Tennyson and Browning, indeed, are optimists, but their optimism is grave, not buoyant; they walk by faith, not by sight. Browning twists an assurance for the future out of the failures of the present, while Tennyson, in no less doubtful a strain, bids us 'stretch lame hands of faith' to a dimly felt providence, and 'faintly trust the larger hope.' So, too, with the rest. George Meredith saves himself from pessimism by a strong will and an austere philosophy. Matthew Arnold and A. H. Clough are openly and profoundly despondent; for them the light of the past is quenched, the future is beset with clouds; they are for ever 'wandering between two worlds—one dead, the other powerless to be born.'"

Let us hope that the disease is confined to English literature. There is very little trace of it in American literature. Holmes could not have been a pessimist if he had tried; Whittier was continually rejoicing in hope; Emerson was a confirmed optimist. Neither Bryant nor Longfellow were despondent. Lowell and Curtis were full of life and cheer. Eugene Field and Whitcomb Riley are not in distress. The author of "Uncle Tom's Cabin" was noted for her cheerfulness, and the author of "The Heathen Chinee" was not in the doleful dumps. Not an American writer of renown can be mentioned who makes a practice of sitting in the ashes, accompanied by a strong will, and an austere philosophy. There is a great deal of never-say-die about people who are built on the American plan.

ETHELWYN WETHERALD.

It would be good for us to think no grace or blessing truly ours till we are aware that God has blessed some one else with it through us.

Royal Commission Work Anticipated.

The Dominion Government has already spent, probably, over \$20,000 of the people's money in connection with the Royal Commission, and it has been devoting a large part of its time and investigations in trying to ascertain whether public opinion favors prohibition or not, and whether the people consider it practicable. Meantime the Provincial Governments of Manitoba, Prince Edward Island and Ontario have given all the electors an opportunity of expressing their opinions in a most tangible way. The result is that the entire country is now in possession of the undoubted fact that at least two-thirds of the people believe in prohibition, believe it desirable and practical and believe in the enactment of a prohibition liquor law. No matter what may be the findings of the Royal Commission on these points, the whole country now knows what are the well understood wishes of the people. It looks as though the Royal Commission would do quite as well to abbreviate and hasten their report and save themselves further trouble and the country any further expense.

The woman who desires an unwrinkled countenance must learn not to scowl and make faces. Some women do this incessantly. Then they must cultivate cheerfulness, passivity and royal good-nature. Here lies the greatest secret of all.

Moderation and Health.

"What harm is there is a glass of liquor?" is very often heard, and the answer always expected is, probably, "None, if it stops at that." The more scientific men study the question carefully, however, the more do they become convinced that even the single "harmless glass" is by no means so harmless as has generally been imagined. It may not intoxicate a man so that his brain becomes unsteady and he loses his ordinary self control, but still it does him more harm than good.

One observant American physician has recommended this test, that actual enquirers after truth may do well to try. The result may be somewhat surprising. He says: "Take a mouthful of pretty strong whiskey or other spirituous liquors and hold it in the mouth five minutes or more without swallowing. Then spit it out and examine the coatings of the mouth and you will find how much inflamed and irritated they are and how the fine nerves in them have become narcotised. Take in the mouth several different tasting substances and you will not distinguish between their tastes. If instead of spitting the liquid out you turn it into the stomach and let it remain there permanently, as moderate drinkers do, the effects are still more serious and permanent. The coatings of the stomach are more delicate and sensitive than those of the mouth. They are more irritated and inflamed and narcotised by even a single glass. Whoever indulges in even one or two glasses a day is, therefore, all the time irritating and injuring those delicate coatings which were never designed by nature for the use of either alcoholics or tobacco, and thus many derangements and diseases are brought on, when it is not expected that drinking had anything to do with them."

The late Dr. Sir Andrew Clarke had a very extensive experience of many years in connection with the great London General Hospital. Some thousands of cases thus came under his observation every year. After many years' experience he declared that about 70 cases out of every 100 of diseases that thus came under his care had their origin in drink, and of these fully 30 of each 100 belonged to the "moderate" class, most of whom never suspected that drinking had anything to do with their diseases. In fact, in a great many cases these very victims had been recommended by some bungling physician to take a quantity of some kind of alcoholic stimulants every day as "a tonic," or as "a stimulant," or "to build them up!"

Sir William Gull, M.D., who died in England a couple of years ago, for a long time stood in the very front rank of England's most honored and skillful physicians. His opinion was once sought by a select committee of the House of Lords, as among the most reliable in the country, in regard to the evils and remedies of intemperance. He astonished some of the members by assuring them that many of the unfortunate dying of drink are never drunkards at all, but of that "exemplary" class who always keep within the bounds of moderation. Here are his words—they deserve a careful study: "Alcohol is the most destructive agent we are aware of in this country. I should like to say that a very large number of people in society are dying day by day, poisoned by alcohol, but not supposed to be poisoned by it."

One of the most prominent medical authorities in England to-day, especially on internal diseases, is Sir Henry Thompson, M.D., F.R.S. He is constantly raising his warning voice, too, against the dangers of that very "moderation" which even some Canadian ministers and college professors advocate is more Christ-like and "nicer" than total abstinence. His warnings, too, in the extract given below are against "fermented liquors"—wine and beer—which some really well-meaning Canadians, who ought to know better but don't, are stupidly advocating the more general use of "as a temperance measure." Here is Sir Henry's deliberate judgment: "I have no hesitation in attributing a very large proportion of the most painful maladies which come under my notice, as well as those which every medical man has to treat, to the ordinary and daily use of fermented drink taken in the quantity which is conventionally deemed moderate."

Dr. Norman Kerr is another leading and respected English physician. He has made a special study for years of the effects of drinking on the human system, and his writings have been widely circulated. He also condemns both the mild liquors so many foolishly take with their food, or as "aids to digestion." He says: "Neither beer, wine nor spirits has any claim to be considered a valuable or useful article of diet." Again he has said: "All intoxicating drinks are poisonous. The lightest beers and the finest fermented wines are as truly, though not as strongly, intoxicating, as are the coarsest and cheapest spirituous drinks."

Perhaps the best and most respected of all English scientific authorities to-day on the effects of stimulants

and narcotics on the human system is Sir Benjamin Ward Richardson, M.D., F.R.S. He devoted years to the careful study of the effects of stimulants from a purely scientific standpoint. He began with the "old school" ideas of the benefits of alcohol "in its place as a medicine," but became convinced that it ought to be avoided, both in health and disease. Here is his deliberate conclusion, the result of years of careful inquiry: "Alcohol, when taken in the system, does not aid in digestion. On the contrary, as I have found by experiment, digestion is impeded by it. One of the most important portions of the digestive process, the action of pepsin upon the food, is destroyed by the action of the spirit."

Dr. Frederick R. Lees, of Leeds, now 80 years of age, the oldest and most voluminous of all the English temperance orators, gives also this testimony: "It is false that alcohol promotes digestion." A leading American physician, after some years of careful observation, wrote of the effect of alcohol on digestion much in the same way. He already points out that the gastric juice is given to every man to aid in digestion; that men's digestion is generally good or bad very much in proportion to the healthy supply of gastric juice to the stomach and its proper mixture with food, by thorough mastication, before entering the stomach; that the valuable digestive property of the gastric juice is pepsin, and it is largely precipitated by alcohol. He points out that a single glass of brandy, or strong beer, or porter, such as many take with their food, destroys the pepsin in more than a pint of gastric juice and therefore destroys its value for digesting food.

Is it any wonder that our "moderates" are always needing something to "aid digestion," and the more such "aids" are used the more urgent need there is. Surely the time has come when intelligent physicians and other intelligent men, who have given ordinary attention to a study of the laws of health, ought to know better than to suppose that any man in health ought to indulge in any kind of alcoholics, even in moderation, or even of the milder kinds. If they contain alcohol and are taken in large enough quantities to produce any stimulating and exhilarating effects at all, they are sure to irritate the coatings of the stomach, injure the gastric juice and derange the digestive organs.

Scientific Progress.

Consumption Infectious.

One of the most important reports ever submitted to the Board of Health of this city is that in relation to tuberculosis. Dr. Biggs refers to the high mortality from this disease—over 6,000 in 1892—as indubitable evidence of the necessity for bringing it under the sanitary surveillance of the department. The argument is unanswerable. If there had been 6,000 deaths in this town from cholera during the same period it would have been regarded as a plague spot, and 1892 would have gone on record in black letters as a year of pestilence. With the same mortality from tuberculosis, and with kindred diseases like bronchitis and pneumonia fatal in a corresponding degree, there is no public alarm, although the prevalence of these scourges points unerringly to their infectious nature. For this popular apathy in the presence of appalling diseases the boards of health and the medical profession are largely responsible. They have neglected to face facts which are in plain sight, and to warn the community that tuberculosis is an infectious disease directly communicable in the sick-room from patient to nurse and friends.

Dr. Biggs raises an alarm signal in his report. He contends that tuberculosis is a contagious disease, and is distinctly preventable; that it is acquired by the direct transmission of the tubercle bacilli from the sick to the well, usually by means of the dried and pulverized sputum floating as dust in the air, and that it can be largely prevented by simple methods of disinfection. These conclusions are accompanied by practical recommendations for securing official surveillance of the disease. One of the measures which he advises is the establishment of a consumptive hospital for exclusive treatment of the disease. Another is the isolation of patients suffering from pulmonary consumption in public hospitals. Other recommendations favor concerted action between physicians and the sanitary authorities, by which bacteriological examinations of sputum can be conducted in private houses and tenements.

When Dr. Koch's conclusions respecting the origin and infectiousness of consumption were announced, a committee of the British Medical Association addressed a circular to the profession inviting opinions respecting the communicability of the disease. Although the theory was then a novel one, there were 261 replies tending to confirm it and giving practical illustrations of the infectious nature of the disease. A large majority of these cases were instances of the communicability of the disease from husband to wife or from wife to husband. In 130 out of 192 cases of this nature those to whom the disease was imparted had no predisposing taint or tendency. One man who contracted consumption from his wife communicated it in turn to a

servant nursing him. Another instance indicated the spread of the disease from a young man to his sister, who took care of him, and then from her to a companion in excellent health.

One of the best-known cases recorded in the medical books is that of a consumptive French dressmaker, who lived in a cottage and plied her trade. She had three apprentices, young women of different families and in robust health. Each in turn remained over night in the cottage a week at a time and shared the dressmaker's bed. The dressmaker died of consumption after a protracted illness. Each of the apprentices contracted the disease from her and died in the course of a few years. The sanitary authorities and the medical profession ought to be brought into the closest possible relations in order that measures for restricting the ravages of consumption may be adopted. It is highly probable that by the enforcement of sanitary regulations providing that consumptive patients shall sleep alone, and that their sick rooms shall be systematically disinfected, a marked reduction in the mortality from tuberculosis can be effected.—[New York Tribune.

* Itemized.

The highest meteorological station in the world is said to be that at Charchani, near Arequipa, which is 16,650 feet above sea level, and is situated just below the permanent snow line. The Harvard College observatory, at Arequipa, is 8,050 feet above the sea, and the new meteorological station is 3,600 feet above the ascent being made by the aid of a mule, in about eight hours. The station is equipped with self-recording aneroids and thermometers. The results of the observations are to be published in the "Annals of the Harvard College Observatory."

Proceeding westward from the Irish coast, the ocean bed deepens very gradually; for the first 230 miles the gradient is but 6 feet to the mile. In the next 20 miles the fall is over 9,000 feet, and so precipitous is the descent that in many places depths of 1,200 to 1,600 fathoms are encountered in very close proximity to the 100-fathom line. With the depth of 1,800 to 2,000 fathoms the sea bed becomes a slightly undulating plain 1,200 miles wide. The greatest depth in the Atlantic is 300 miles or so north of the Island of St. Thomas, where soundings of 3,875 fathoms were obtained, or nearly four miles in depth.—[Nautical Magazine.

Sir Henry Thompson, of London, is the authority for the statement that "no dead body is ever placed in the soil without polluting the earth, the air and the water above and about it." If this be so, and Sir Henry is backed in his opinion by many eminent authorities, then each graveyard is a constant source and menace of disease to the community in which it is situated. There is no doubt that the germs which develop into diphtheria, fevers, smallpox and cholera are preserved alive in the present process of burial, and many cases are known to the medical profession of grave diggers, who, in opening graves, have been seized with the disease which has caused the death of the long interred beings.

All's Going Well!

Francis Willard is encouraged. Is there not a world of truth in this? She says: "The temperance cause started out well-high alone, but mighty forces have joined us in the long march. We are now in the midst of the Waterloo battle, and in the providence of God the temperance army will not have to fight that out all by itself. For science has come up with its glittering contingent, political economy deploys its legions, the woman question brings an army upon the field, and the stout ranks of labor stretch away as far as the eye can reach. As in the old Waterloo against Napoleon, so now against the Napoleon of the liquor traffic, no force is adequate except the 'allied forces.'"

Friends are but the wider home circle. They are the parents, brothers, children of the inner nature by the soul's elections—perhaps the true rudiments on earth of the home circle will gather round it in eternity.

Facts About Spiders.

A spider's web is a curious and beautiful thing. The spinning organs are tiny tubes, and the threads are a white, sticky liquid, which hardens at once as it is forced out. When a spider begins to make a thread it presses the end of its tubes against some object, to which the liquid sticks; then it moves away and the thread is formed—just as you form a rope when you pull molasses candy. Different kinds of spiders make different kinds of webs.

The gossamer, or spider silk, is useful to the owner in various ways. It may be a rope to swing by when the spider wishes to drop from a great height without hurting itself. One can build a "flying bridge" of it, and another can almost "fly"—that is, be so buoyed up in the air and wafted along by the breeze that it seems to fly. Astronomers have found it useful, too, for it takes the place of a wire in some of their most delicate observations, where even the finest wire would be too coarse.

The cross-spider is so called on account of the white cross on its body. The name has nothing to do with its disposition. There is a spider that spins a web under water, but this is for a nest and not for a net in which to

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catch other insects, as are most spiders' webs. The nest is made on the principle of a diving-bell, and in order to get air for its home the spider carries down a bubble at a time and sets it free beneath the bell. Other spiders live in holes in the ground and make clever little trap-doors over their nests.

The sting of the tarantula (a name derived from Taranto, a town of southern Italy), the most venomous of spiders, was popularly supposed to produce a disease called "tarantism," which could be cured only by music or dancing, and the dance which cured it was called the "tarantella." You can see the peasant dance the tarantella now, but without waiting for spider-bites,—[St. Nicholas.

Judge Not.—A Dream.

Up a long hillside to the wooded top straggled an orchard of gnarled, uncared-for trees. I often wandered there when the summer sun grew hazy in the sleepy day, and sometimes slept and dreamed.

So once it happened in a vision came a white-robed form, a patriarch with beard of white untrimmed, with long and snow-white hair.

"Oh, patriarch," I said, "whence came you, and for what?" Turning slowly, with right hand raised, he pointed. And I looked before me up the valley where burned a red flame in the western sky.

I said: "Is it hell?" He said: "What is hell?" I said: "A place of torment." He asked: "Who goes there?" I said: "The wicked go there."

He smiled and asked: "Who judges them?"

I said: "God." He was silent and stood looking at me. I grew abashed that he still looked at me, and so I said again: "God judges."

He came nearer when I was upon the grass and sat beside me, smiling strangely.

He said: "Does man judge the righteousness of God's judgment?" I said, trembling: "Some men pretend."

He said: "Do you judge their judgments?" I said: "It is not denied."

He said: "In judging the judgment of man, who judges the judgment of God, do you judge man alone?"

I trembled and looked off up the valley, and the red flame burned redder than before. I turned over upon my right side and my eyes opened and I saw the setting sun deep in a sea of fire-red clouds, and I knew my judgment was wrong.—[Walter M. Hazel-tine.