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PREFACE.

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The next very important thing that man has to attend to is his health.

In some other respects, progress has been made during the last hundred years, and several considerable obstacles to the acquisition of a stable happiness have been removed or diminished.

In the best parts of the best countries, so much knowledge is now freely offered to all the young as suffices to place within their reach all existing knowledge. We may say with confidence that the time is not distant when, in the United States, no child will live farther than four miles from a school-house, kept open four months in the year, and when there will be the beginning of a self-sustaining public library in every town and village of a thousand inhabitants. This great business of making knowledge universally accessible is well in hand; it has gone so far that it must go on till the work is complete.

In this country, too, if nowhere else, there is so near an approach to perfect freedom of thinking, that scarcely any one, whose conduct is good, suffers inconvenience from professing any extreme or eccentricity of mere opinion. I constantly meet, in New England villages, men who differ as widely as possible from their neighbors on the most dividing of all subjects; but if they are good citizens and good neighbors, I have never observed that they were the less esteemed on that account. Their peculiarities of opinion become as familiar as the color of their hair, or the shape of

their every-day hat, and as inoffensive. This is a grand triumph of good sense and good nature; or, as Matthew Arnold would say, of the metropolitan over the provincial spirit. It is also recent. It was not the case fifty years ago. It was not the case twenty years ago.

The steam-engine, and the wondrous machinery which the steam-engine moves, have so cheapened manufactured articles, that a mechanic, in a village, may have so sufficient a share of the comforts, conveniences, and decencies of life, that it is sometimes hard to say what real advantage his rich neighbor has over him. The rich man used to have one truly enviable advantage over others: his family was safer, in case of his sudden death. But a mechanic, who has his home paid for, his life insured, and a year's subsistence accumulated, is as secure in this respect as, perhaps, the nature of human affairs admits. Now, an American workingman, anywhere out of a few largest cities, can easily have all these safeguards around his family by the time he is forty; and few persons can be rich before they are forty.

We may say, perhaps, speaking generally, that, in the United States, there are no formidable obstacles to the attainment of substantial welfare, except such as exist in the nature of things and in ourselves.

But in the midst of so many triumphs of man over material and immaterial things, man himself seems to dwindle and grow pale. Not here only, but in all the countries that have lately become rich enough to buy great quantities of the popular means of self-destruction, and in which women cease to labor as soon as their husbands and parents acquire a little property, and in which children sit in

school and out of school from five to nine hours a day, and in which immense numbers of people breathe impure air twenty-two hours out of every twenty-four. In the regions of the United States otherwise most highly favored, nearly every woman, under forty, is sick or sickly; and hardly any young man has attained a proper growth, and measures the proper size around the chest. As to the young girls and school-children, if, in a school or party of two hundred, you can pick out thirty well-developed, well-proportioned, robust, ruddy children, you will do better than I have sometimes been able to do.

This begins to alarm and puzzle all but the least reflective persons. People begin to wonder why every creature, whether of native or foreign origin, should flourish in America, except man.

Not that there is anything mysterious with regard to the immediate causes of this obvious decline in the health and robustness of the race. Miss Nightingale tells us that more than half of all the sickness in the world comes of breathing bad air. She speaks feelingly of the time, not long passed, when the winds of heaven played freely through every house, from Windsor Castle to the laborer's cottage, and when every lady put forth muscular effort in the polishing of surfaces. That was the time when bread was an article of diet, and the Devil had not invented hot biscuit. The agreeable means of self-destruction, now so cheap and universal, were unknown, or very costly; and the great mass of the people subsisted, necessarily, upon the plain fare which affords abundant nourishment, without overtasking the digestive powers. Terrible epidemics, against which the

medical science of the time vainly contended, swept off weakly persons, shortened the average duration of life, and raised the standard of health.

But now we can all pervert and poison ourselves if we will, and yet not incur much danger of prompt extinction. Indeed, it is hard for the most careful and resolute person to avoid being a party to the universal violation of natural law. Children, of course, are quite helpless. How could I help, at eight years of age, being confined six hours a day in a school, where the word "ventilation" was only known as an object of spelling? How could I help, on Sunday, being entombed in a Sunday-school room, eight or nine feet high, crowded with children, all breathing their utmost? I hated it. I loathed it. I protested against it. I played truant from it. But I was thirteen years old before I could escape that detested basement, where I was poisoned with pernicious air, and where well-intentioned Ignorance made virtue disgusting, contemptible, and ridiculous, by turns.

As all our virtues support one another, so all the vices of modern life are allies. Smoking and drinking are effects, as well as causes. We waste our vital force; we make larger demands upon ourselves than the nature of the human constitution warrants, and then we crave the momentary, delusive, pernicious aid which tobacco and alcohol afford. I suppose the use of these things will increase or decrease, as man degenerates or improves.

This subject, I repeat, is the next great matter upon which we have to throw ourselves. The republication of these essays is only to be justified on the ground that every little helps.

I think, too, that the next new sensation enjoyed by the self-indulgent, self-destroying inhabitants of the wealthy nations will be the practice of virtue. I mean, of course, the real thing, now nearly forgotten, the beginning of which is self-control, and which leads people to be temperate and pure, and enables them to go contrary to custom and fashion, without being eccentric or violent about it. That kind of virtue, I mean, which enables us to accept hard duties, and perform them with cheerful steadfastness; which enables us to make the most of our own lives, and to rear glorious offspring, superior to ourselves.

It is surprising what a new interest is given to life by denying ourselves one vicious indulgence. What luxury so luxurious as just self-denial! Who has ever seen any happy people that were not voluntarily carrying a heavy burden? Human nature is so formed to endure and to deny itself, that those mistaken souls who forsake the world, and create for themselves artificial woes, and impose upon themselves unnecessary tasks, and deny themselves rational and beneficial pleasures, are a thousand times happier than those self-indulgent and aimless men, whom we see every afternoon, gazing listlessly out of club-windows, wondering why it is so long to six o'clock.

I heard a young man say, the other day, that smoking had been the bane of his life, but that after abstaining for seven months, during which he made no progress in overcoming the desire to smoke, he had come to the conclusion that he was past cure, and must needs go on, as long as he lived. He *was* going on, when he made the remark, smoking a pipe half as big and twice as yellow as

himself. It was a great pity. That daily longing to smoke, with the daily triumphant struggle against it, was enough of itself to make his life both respectable and interesting. During those seven months, he was a man. He could claim fellowship with all the noble millions of our race, who have waged a secret warfare with Desire, all the days of their lives. If he had kept on, if he had not lapsed under the domination of his tyrant, he would probably have ascertained what there was in his way of life which kept alive in him the craving for stimulation. In all probability, he would have conquered the desire at last.

And such a victory is usually followed by others similar. The cigar and the bottle are often replaced by something not sensual. The brain, freed from the dulling, lowering influence, regains a portion of its natural vivacity; and that vivacity frequently finds worthy objects upon which to expend itself.

New York, September, 1868.

SMOKING.

DOES IT PAY TO SMOKE?

BY AN OLD SMOKER.

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I have sometimes thought that there are people whom it does pay to smoke: those hod-carriers on the other side of the street, for example. It cannot be a very pleasant thing to be a hod-carrier at this season of the year, when a man who

means to be at work at seven A.M. must wake an hour before the first streak of dawn. There is an aged sire over there, who lives in Vandewater Street, which is two miles and a quarter from the building he is now assisting to erect. He must be astir by half past five, in order to begin his breakfast at six; and at half past six he is in the car, with his dinner-kettle in his hand, on his way up town. About the time when the more active and industrious readers of this magazine begin to think it is nearly time to get up, this father of a family makes his first ascent of the ladder with a load of mortar on his shoulder. At twelve, the first stroke of the bell of St. George's Church (it is New York where these interesting events occur) sets him at liberty, and he goes in quest of his kettle. On very cold days, the dinner-kettle is wrapped in its proprietor's overcoat to keep the cold dinner from freezing stiff. But we will imagine a milder day, when the group of hod-carriers take their kettles to some sunny, sheltered spot about the building, where they sit upon soft, commodious boards, and enjoy their repast of cold meat and bread. The homely meal being concluded, our venerable friend takes out his short black pipe for his noontide smoke. How he enjoys it! How it seems to rest him! It is a kind of conscious sleep, ending, perhaps, in a brief unconscious sleep, from which he wakes refreshed for another five hours of the heavy hod.

Who could wish to deny a poor man a luxury so cheap, and so dear? It does not cost him more than ten cents a week; but so long as he has his pipe, he has a sort of refuge to which he can fly from trouble. Especially consoling to him is it in the evening, when he is in his own crowded and most

uninviting room. The smoke that is supposed to "poison the air" of some apartments seems to correct the foulness of this; and the smoker appears to be a benefactor to all its inmates, as well as to those who pass its door.

Besides, this single luxury of smoke, at a cost of one cent and three sevenths per diem, is the full equivalent of all the luxuries which wealth can buy! None but a smoker, or one who has been a smoker, can realize this truth; but it is a truth. That short black pipe does actually place the hod-carrier, so far as mere luxury goes, on a par with Commodore Vanderbilt or the Prince of Wales. Tokay, champagne, turtle, game, and all the other luxurious commodities are not, taken altogether, so much to those who can daily enjoy them, as poor Paddy's pipe is to him. Indeed, the few rich people with whose habits I chance to be acquainted seldom touch such things, and never touch them except to please others. They all appear to go upon the system of the late Lord Palmerston, who used to say to his new butler, "Provide for my guests whatever the season affords; but for *me* there must be always a leg of mutton and an apple-pie." Let the Prince of Wales (or any other smoker) be taken to a banqueting-hall, the tables of which should be spread with all the dainties which persons of wealth are erroneously supposed to be continually consuming, but over the door let there be written the terrible words, "No smoking." Then show him an adjoining room, with a table exhibiting Lord Palmerston's leg of mutton and apple-pie, plus a bundle of cigars. If any one doubts which of these two feasts the Prince of Wales would

choose, we tell that doubting individual he has never been a smoker.

Now the short pipe of the hod-carrier is just as good to him as the regalias could be that cost two hundred dollars a thousand in Havana, and sixty cents each in New York. If you were to give him one of those regalias, he would prefer to cut it up and smoke it in his pipe, and then he would not find it as good as the tobacco he usually smokes. The poor laborer's pipe, therefore, is a potent equalizer. To the enjoyment of pleasures purely luxurious there is a limit which is soon reached; and I maintain that a poor man gets as much of this *kind* of pleasure out of his pipe as a prince or a railroad king can extract from all the costly wines and viands of the table.

If there is a man in the world who ought to smoke, that ancient hod-carrier is the man. A stronger case for smoking cannot be selected from ordinary life. Does it pay him? After an attentive and sympathetic consideration of his case, I am compelled reluctantly to conclude that it does not.

The very fact that it tends to make him contented with his lot is a point against his pipe. It is a shame to him to be contented. To a young man the carrying of the hod is no dishonor, for it is fit that young men should bear burdens and perform lowly tasks. But the hod is not for gray hairs. Whenever, in this free and spacious America, we see a man past fifty carrying heavy loads upon his shoulders, or performing any hired labor that requires little skill or thought, we know that there must have been some great defect or waste in that man's life. The first dollar that George Law ever earned, after leaving his father's house,