

## MENTAL AND SOCIAL INFLUENCES.

Cheerfulness is greatly promotive of health, while sadness and melancholy are often precursors of disease, and are always detrimental to health. The influence of the mind over the physical conditions of the body is very great. **An individual in good health may become diseased, and even die, through the sole influence of his own perverted imagination.** In fact, it is often the case that individuals who are but slightly ailing dwell upon their ailments, imagining themselves in a worse condition than they really are, and give way to their morbid feelings, until they finally induce the very conditions in which they imagine themselves to be, thus, by mental influence alone, bringing themselves to the brink of the grave.

Again, many individuals who have been most seriously ill, have recovered from their illness when apparently beyond the reach of assistance. When inquiry is made concerning the cause of their recovery, it is found that they had great hope and cheerfulness, and an indomitable will that would not yield to discouragements, but which kept them ever hopeful and cheerful, which state of mind soon induced in their systems a change for the better, which, after a time, resulted in their entire recovery.

**Cheerful companionship promotes health;** while the society of persons who are fretful or desponding is liable to induce the same conditions in others and thereby bring them into a state in which they will be easily susceptible to the influences of disease. For this reason, **a person who would have health should seek the society of cheerful companions, and should also be cheerful himself,** without worrying and fretting over that which he cannot avoid, or concerning which he knows nothing. He should ever feel that if he faithfully performs all his duties, it will be safe for him to trust both himself and the consequences of his deeds with Him who sees the end from the beginning. He should also have an aim in life, a something to accomplish. Without this, he will have nothing to induce him to put forth effort and develop the full powers of his being.

A person who passes listlessly through life, with no object to accomplish, and with no feeling of sympathy and love for his fellows, can never become fully developed; the brain and nerve tissues will not be properly matured because not sufficiently exercised, and the individual will be liable to pass finally into a state of semi-idiocy or of disease. Therefore, **to be healthy, be cheerful, hopeful, sociable, energetic; aim high, and try to accomplish something. Make life a success.**

## MORAL INFLUENCES.

There can be no doubt but that moral influences do many times affect the physical health of human beings. Inasmuch as health consists in the proper performance of all the organic functions— this is the definition given by all physiologists— it follows that if the human body possesses organs whose special function it is to manifest moral action, and if those organs are allowed to lie dormant, or if they become perverted in their actions, then perfect health cannot exist. That man has such a set of organs, is evident from the fact that all men, in every age and clime, have had, and still have, standards or rules by which to measure morality or moral character. There never yet has been a nation that did not have some law by which to judge right from wrong, neither has there ever been an intelligent human being that did not feel a consciousness that there was a difference between right and wrong. Why do men feel thus? There can be but one answer; viz., because they have organs whose special function it is to manifest this very feeling of conscientiousness. An additional proof is to be found in the fact that all men are worshiping beings. They instinctively acknowledge that there is a Supreme Being to whom they owe allegiance, upon whom they are dependent for the various blessings they enjoy, and whom they are in duty bound to respect. It is true that all men are not agreed as to who or what this Supreme Being is, yet that all classes and races of men do have this feeling is evident from the fact that they all have some form of religious worship, through the ceremonies of which they endeavor to make external manifestation of their religious sentiments.

There is still another fact which teaches us that man has organs whose special function it is to manifest moral character. It is that all men are naturally hopeful. And although the present may be dark and gloomy and perilous, yet all find consolation in hope of a better future. Conscientiousness, veneration, and hope, are moral attributes, and it is the proper manifestation of these that constitutes man a moral being, and the improper manifestation of them that constitutes immorality.

The fact that the proper exercise of man's moral organs promotes health, while their perverted action promotes disease, has led to the introduction of this subject in this connection.

Man's moral nature is his highest nature, and when this is appealed to, we have appealed to the highest motives by which he can be actuated. These moral organs control, to a very great extent, all the other organs of the body. When these act rightly, there is very great probability that all the others will act rightly also; but **if the moral organs become perverted in their actions, there is greater liability of other organs be coming perverted also.**

That **the moral organs do control the other brain organs to a very great extent**, is shown by the fact that when these organs prompt a person to action, he will pass through and endure tenfold more suffering and privation in endeavoring to accomplish an object than he will when actuated by any other incentive. It matters not whether the action of the moral organs is normal or perverted. They influence the other organs of the brain just as powerfully in the one case as in the other. It was this controlling power which moral organs exert over the other organs when acting in accordance with moral law that enabled the martyrs to subdue and control all feelings of self and family interest, and to rejoice, and even sing, while being consumed at the stake. It is the same moral influence that causes the missionary to sacrifice love of home, friends, worldly honors, emoluments, and pleasures, that he may accomplish that which his moral organs make him feel it to be his duty to do.

That these organs, when perverted, exercise an equally powerful influence over the other organs is seen in the fact that, in obedience to perverted moral organs, the heathen mother casts her off spring to the crocodiles, forgetful of all the tender sympathies and pity of a mother; the Hindu devotee, forgetful of all self-interest, casts himself beneath the wheels of Juggernaut; and the wife, forgetful of all life's charms and duties, throws herself upon the funeral pyre, to consume with the body of her dead husband; while those who are more enlightened have been led by the same perverted organs to cut themselves with knives, to do penance, and to inflict, or cause to be inflicted, upon themselves all manner of bodily suffering; while those still more enlightened, and who had previously occupied respectable and responsible positions in society, have been led, by perverted moral organs, into the wildest fanaticisms and to perform actions that could not be looked upon by enlightened beings otherwise than with the greatest disgust, and which no other influence than a perverted sense of moral duty could have induced them to perform. We have shown, in the preceding pages, that health was affected to a very great degree by our physical habits, and as we now see that the moral organs are capable of controlling the other organs to that extent that life itself is often yielded rather than violate supposed moral obligation, it becomes evident that **if we can bring our moral organs to bear on all our actions in life, we shall be far more successful in overcoming pernicious habits, or in restraining ourselves from hurtful indulgences, than we could otherwise be. Therefore, if we would have health, we must have moral organs that act just as their Creator intended they should.** Without this, we can no more have perfect health than we can if our liver or kidneys act in a manner different from that which the Creator intended.

It will probably be claimed that, inasmuch as there is so great a diversity of opinion as to what is right and what is wrong, as manifested by the devotees of the various systems of religion in all ages, any attempt to bring in the moral organs to control and direct our physical habits must necessarily result in producing results equally as disastrous as those that have been produced in the religious world. This, we admit, would be apt to be the case unless the moral organs act normally, so as to exert just that influence over the other organs that the Creator intended they should exert. But, while we admit this, we claim that if they are allowed to exert just that degree and quality of influence over the other organs which the Creator

intended, the consequences cannot be other than salutary. It only remains, now, for us to decide as to the normal actions of the moral organs, and then for us to strive to bring them into that condition where they shall at all times act properly.

**There exists a universal agreement among all men that there is a Supreme Being to whom man is indebted for life and all its blessings, and who is worthy of our highest love and adoration, and whom we are in duty bound to respect and obey.** This feeling is the natural or instinctive action of the moral organs of every human being, hence the universal agreement to this proposition. This is the first step. But in taking the after steps, men are not agreed. They do not agree as to who the Supreme Being is, nor in regard to what he requires. This is because man, having to learn all he ever knows, has been educated wrongly; and this being the case, who shall decide these matters? Human reason is too short to do this, it can only be done by a revelation from the Being to whom our respect, love, and allegiance are due.

The fact that man has organs of reflection, or is a thinking being who has to learn all that he ever knows, and the additional fact that he is a moral being who feels that he owes allegiance to a Supreme Being, makes it imperative that the Supreme Being should reveal both himself and his will to man; otherwise, man's existence becomes at once a libel on the Being that created him. Such a revelation man has in the Bible. This book has been given him that he may know just how to develop moral character. Its precepts contain a statement of just the actions our moral organs ought to perform. **The constant tenor of its teachings is that we ought to venerate, love, and obey the Creator of all things above all other beings or things, and that we ought to pay the same regard to the rights of others that we do to our own.** In addition to this, they lay a ground-work of faith upon which we may build our hope of a future existence.

**When we properly educate our moral organs by the teachings of the revelation that has been given for their guidance, we will find that, when exercising their functions properly, they will prevent us from transgressing the laws of our being;** for a moral sense of the right or wrong involved in the doing or leaving undone of an action is the very strongest influence that can be brought to bear upon an individual's mind.

Inasmuch, then, as moral principles are so intimately connected and interwoven with the principles on which life and health are based, it behooves all who would prolong their lives and health to a good old age, to become acquainted with every moral principle contained in God's revealed will, and to let those principles guide and direct in the formation of every habit, and the performance of every action, of life. In other words, in all that you do, whether you eat, or whether you drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. If you do this, you will certainly escape most of the ills to which flesh is heir; for as **it is not to the glory of God for us to be sick, and weak, and suffering**, it cannot be to his glory for us to do any of those things which will tend to bring us into such a condition.

We conclude, then, that inasmuch as moral influences, when allowed to have their proper bearing, are capable of exerting so powerful an influence over the physical well-being of our bodies, and inasmuch as true morality is nothing more nor less than pure and undefined Christianity, therefore, **the first and most important step which a person seeking to place himself in the best possible condition of health can, and should, take, is to become a humble, confiding child of God— a Christian, but not a sectarian.**

#### EXTERNAL RELATIONS.

**The health of individuals is often seriously affected by their material surroundings.** All miasmatic emanations from damp or wet places, all exhalations from cemeteries, all noxious gases rising from decaying animal or vegetable substances, or from animal excrements, are detrimental to health; hence the objects or substances from whence these arise may be sources of disease.

A person who is of a naturally cheerful disposition may be thrown into a state of gloom and disquietude that will eventually result in sickness, and even death, simply by unpleasant surroundings. In fact, this has often been the case with persons who have been reared in pleasant homes, surrounded by bright flowers

and shady trees, with picturesque scenery, where everything the eye beheld served to elevate the mind and inspire the soul. When they came to change localities and settle on some monotonous prairie, or in some gloomy forest home, their minds became depressed, and disease soon followed. On the other hand, individuals living amidst disagreeable surroundings, and who have thus become sick, often recover health by simply changing their surroundings, so that everything shall be more agreeable to the external senses. Therefore, let all who would be healthy, and who would have their families healthy also, surround themselves with that which is beautiful and pleasant, make everything the eye shall rest upon as agreeable as possible, and carefully avoid locating the family residence near any marsh, frog pond, or pool of stagnant water. Never allow stable or barnyard litter to accumulate where the effluvia emanating therefrom shall be wafted to your door by every breeze. See that no swill barrel, filthy pig-pen, or privy, shall send forth its disgusting and poisonous odors where they will be inhaled by any of your family. Plant here and there shrubs, trees, and flowers, to relieve the monotony of the scenery and greet the eye with their rich foliage and enlivening colors, begetting in the mind cheering, noble, and elevating thoughts. Provide a comfortable house that shall be warm in winter, and cool as possible in summer, as your residence. Keep the fences in repair and in order, so that whatever the eye beholds shall beget within the mind a feeling of contentment, and you will have done much to keep disease from your household.

*The Hygienic Family Physician: A Complete Guide for the Preservation of Health, and the Treatment of the Sick without Medicine, pg. 44-55 by M. G. Kellogg*