

Perversion of the Laws of Health.

Continued from 1st page.
 and independence—a goal reached only by a favored few compared with the multitude who daily drop down wayworn and exhausted.
 But the deadliest blow to the cause of health was struck by the anti-natural fanaticism of the Middle Ages, the world-hating infatuation of the maniacs who depreciated every secular blessing as a curse in disguise, and despised their own bodies as they despised nature, life, and earth. The disciples of the world-renouncing messiah actually welcomed disease as a sign of divine favor, they gloried in decrepitude and deformity, and promoted the work of degeneration with a persevering zeal never exceeded by the enlightened benefactors of the human race. For a period of fifteen hundred years the ecclesiastic history of Europe is the history of a systematic war against the interests of the human body; the "mortification of the flesh" was enjoined as a cardinal duty of a true believer; health-giving recreations were suppressed, while health-destroying vices were encouraged by the example of the clergy; domestic hygiene was utterly neglected, and the founders of some twenty-four different monastic orders vied in the invention of new penances and systematic outrages upon the health of the poor convent-slaves. Their diet was confined to the coarsest and often most loathsome food; they were subjected to weekly bleedings, to profitless hardships and deprivations; their sleep was broken night after night; fasting was carried to a length which often avenged itself in permanent insanity; and their only compensation for a daily repetition of health-destroying afflictions was the permission to indulge in spiritual vagaries and spirituous poisons; the same bigots who grudged their followers a night of unbroken rest or a mouthful of digestible food indulged them in quantities of alcoholic beverages that would have staggered the conscience of a modern beer-swiller.
 The bodily health of a community was held so utterly below the attention of a Christian magistrate that every large city became a hotbed of contagious diseases; the pestilence of the Black Death ravaged Europe from end to end—nay, instead of trying to remove the cause of the evil, the wretched victims were advised to seek relief in prayer and self-torture, and a philosopher uttering a word of protest against such illusions would have risked to have his tongue torn out by the roots and his body consigned to the flames of the stake.
 Mankind has never wholly recovered from that reign of insanity. Indifference to many of the plain-

est health-laws of nature is still the reproach of our so-called civilization. Our moralists rant about the golden streets of the New Jerusalem, but find no time to expurgate the slums of their own cities; our missionary societies spend millions to acquaint the natives of distant islands with the ceremony of baptism, but refuse to contribute a penny to the establishment of free public baths for the benefit of their poor neighbors, whose children are scourged or caged like wild beasts for trying to mitigate the martyrdom of the midsummer season by a bath in the waters of the next river. Temperance, indeed, is preached in the name of the miracle-monger who turned water into alcohol; but millions of toilers who seek to drown their misery in the Lethe of intoxication are deprived of every healthier pastime; the magistrates of our wealthy cities rage with penal ordinances against the abettors of public amusements on the day when nine-tenths of our laborers find their only leisure for recreation. Poor factory children who would spend the holidays in the paradise of the green hills are lured into the baited trap of a Sabbath-school and bribed to memorize the stale twaddle of Hebrew ghost-stories or the records of fictitious genealogies; but the offer to enlarge the educational sphere of our public schools by the introduction of a health primer would be scornfully rejected as an attempt to divert the attention of the pupils from more important topics.—
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