

MODERN LITERARY PESSIMISM FROM A MEDICAL  
STANDPOINT.

By CHARLES GREENE CUMSTON, M.D.,  
Boston, Mass.

During the last few years much has been written on literary pessimism considered medically. Men of letters, philosophers and physicians have contributed extensively to this interesting psychophysiological problem. The larger number of writers who have studied the neuropathic influence on intellectual dynamism have considered that genius is a neurosis but lately more precision has been sought for and essays have been made to give a name to this neurosis. Starting from the fact that the characteristic point of the modern intellectual condition is pessimism in its different forms, and on account of its nature, neurasthenia has been considered the nervous affliction possessed by modern authors. In other words, the intellectual pessimist is considered a neurasthenic, and he is a pessimist because he is a neurasthenic.

Such an opinion appears at least to be more or less exaggerated and there is no reason why a writer should necessarily be neurotic in order to be a litterateur. "The pessimist," says James Sully, "is a man who exaggerates the dark and bad sides of life, who is always ready to see that the good we have on this earth is spoilt by numerous dark aspects and who always points out that progress is always followed by more misery than happiness." This pessimism is quite as old as humanity and we find it expressed with varying intensity by the writers of all nations. Speaking only of modern writers we may mention the pessimism that Schopenhauer and his followers, Hartmann and Bahnsen, have formed into a speculative system; it is that of Goethe, Byron, Leopardi and Foscolo. It is this system that found such a favorable soil for its growth at the beginning of the nineteenth century in France. It was at this time that René, Adolphe, Obermann and

Alfred de Vigny appeared upon the scene. At the present time this pessimism has become more extended and has invaded the various arts, but more particularly literature, and in the latter it has reached a most extraordinary degree of intensity among poets, philosophers, dramatic authors, and litterateurs generally. The country in which this literary pessimism has reached its greatest development is certainly France, although other nations have their pessimistic writers among whom may be mentioned Walt Whitman, in our own country, d'Annunzio in Italy, Maeterlinck in Belgium, Tourguenieff, Tolstoï and Dostoiewski in Russia, Ruskin, Swinburne, Burne Jones and W. Morris in England, Strindberg in Sweden, and Ibsen, Brandès, Björnson and Garborg in Norway. Many others could be added to this list but the foregoing names will, we think, suffice.

Without referring to those writers whose works are sadness itself, who have systematically shut themselves off from the outer world and listen in their proper souls only to the plaintive callings of beings and things which are no more, it may be said that all writers cultivate the little gray flower of melancholy in the garden of their souls, which they dissimulate with more or less care but whose sad perfume they are unable to exclude.

It is not at all astonishing that the ordinary man cares little for the author, for the simple reason that he does not understand him. Each represents a different type, living and thinking in an entirely different manner. The individual who is called a litterateur is a particular type of man who cuts out of the common life one quite apart from others, quite after his own fashion, and one of which he is the undisputed master. He has his needs, his desires, his pleasures and also his sufferings which are unknown to the ordinary man: nevertheless, each of them starts from the same point; they are two individuals belonging to the same species of which they possess the typical characteristics. They are born similar, with the same organs destined to accomplish the same functions, with the same brain occupied by the same intelligence, possessed of the same faculties which are dormant but which only need to be awakened.

Now, while one, the ordinary man, grows up without nourishing his thought and follows life automatically without trying to free himself from this common law of heredity of which he is unconscious and which obliges him to act and feel like all individuals of his species, without demanding from his intelligence more than is necessary for the satisfaction of his social needs or from his

personality more than is necessary for him to adapt himself in the best possible manner to the surroundings which for him are always new, the artist, on the contrary, endeavors with all his might to rid himself of this terrible law of heredity whose aim is to make him similar to other people. Finding that his mind is insufficiently endowed with representations of ideas which heredity has placed there, he endeavors to acquire new ones. He seizes upon that part of personality which is possessed by each individual, and develops it to its highest degree. Instead of obeying, he wishes to command, his great aim is to create.

The ordinary man, endowed with a brain already organized by a long heredity, is quite content to allow himself to go on, simply obeying the impulse which put him into motion. As Schopenhauer has very wisely said, "It is a new watch that has been put together and which will repeat the same indications that thousands of other similar watches will give;" he allows it to continue in its functions without studying its mechanism and without endeavoring to make the movement vary or to attempt to improve upon the wheels. His intelligence more especially obeys the law of heredity. It is aware that its function consists in watching over the preservation of the individual to whom it belongs, in keeping him in the road in which his environment has started him, and in facilitating the means of his adaptation to new surroundings; it does nothing else for the simple reason that nothing more is required of it. The intelligence is so intimately related to the physical being that it ends by becoming united with it to such a degree that it would be impossible for one to separate them and to find in the former the necessary materials for the proper working of man's superior faculties. Without wishing to completely assimilate the ordinary man to an animal, who has only a subjective knowledge (that is to say, incapable of the representation of an external object considered in itself and independently of the relationship between the body and the sensations), there may be pointed out, as Schopenhauer has done, a certain resemblance, "a certain air of relationship between them, inasmuch as in each no phenomenon becomes presented under the aspect of a problem, the solution of which solicits them without bringing any profit to either; in both, the conscience hardly ever leaves itself and rarely goes forward or on the road of external objects; both have a perception of things which are found in the universe, but the universe taken in totality escapes them."

On the other hand, the man of letters, by developing his intelligence, by causing it to functionate by itself and for itself, in ask-

ing of it other things than its function of guardian of the species, causes it completely to disregard its hereditary rôle; by attaining a higher point of perfection it allows him to enrich himself with new facilities which in their turn permit him to acquire new perceptions. As has been said by Max Nordau in his excellent work on "Psycho-Physiology of Genius and Talent," the brain of the writer is no longer a music box which can only play those tunes which are engraved on the cylinder but he has the power to play the air he chooses and which he composes. His conscience comes out of itself and by perfecting those of his senses which place him in communication with the external world, by rendering them more refined by a special education, he ends by considerably increasing the range of his knowledge. He experiences sensations, unknown to others, which he translates into images and which he incloses in the most profound recesses of his soul where they remain at the mercy of his evocation.

From what has been said, it is not intended to convey the idea that the ordinary man is deprived of all sense of artistic comprehension, because, as a matter of fact, he represents the type of a normal man. It is only the poorer literary intellect that storms against the average man simply out of spite. The great writers, on the contrary, have much consideration for man in general, because they are fully aware that sooner or later he will end by understanding and liking them.

If, on account of a lack of special reasoning, it is impossible for the ordinary man to clothe artistic conceptions, which are more or less obscurely understood by him, in some conventional form, he has at least the power when he meets with something really beautiful to understand and admire it. This power is an integral part of human nature. It goes without saying that man is not completely absorbed in his purely physiological life, like the animal: as has been pointed out by Lamennais, "the evolution of his superior faculties causes him to have new needs, which are a phase in his development; the laws of his organism, by uniting themselves to the laws of his intelligence, direct him towards one and the same end, namely, perfection."

Man's intelligence develops with his active powers, and as the progress of civilization permits his freeing himself from the cares of his proper preservation he cultivates his thought and familiarizes it with the various artistic conceptions. He is, consequently, quite amenable to the sentiment of the beautiful and in the presence of a certain object he feels a sentiment of pleasure or of

aversion which will make him declare this object beautiful or homely. But in order thus to judge, it is necessary that the object have characteristics of beauty or of homeliness so marked that they force themselves upon him, so to speak. As philosophers would express it, the object must create in the act of the perception an easy and harmonious play of his representative faculties.

Art, which was created as the beautiful has "Its root in the essential, radical, native powers of the man; he has like the beings themselves, essential conditions necessary for both existence and development." But this art has undergone an evolution, it has changed both in its nature and in its manifestations. Its laws, from being simple as they were primarily, have become most complex and at the present time have reached such a degree of complication that the ordinary man can no longer understand them. He consequently has only the perception for those objects which in themselves provoke the easy play of his representative faculties, but he cannot, as does the artist, exercise his senses and his imagination for the simple pleasure of exercising them. His ideal which faithfully translates his sensations does not vary in its essence. To the same perceptions the same conditions of conscience always correspond. For him, art is a distinct and definite thing from which he invariably feels the different manifestations, very simply it is true, but acting as laws which he is incapable of varying. He cannot, like the man of intellect, combine his faculties in various manners in order to create new combinations of ideas and sentiments which allow him to find within himself the source of new artistic pleasures.

The artistic conceptions of ordinary men are, and always will be, nearly the same because their evolution is slow. They depend more on the species than on the individual. The power possessed by his intelligence to immaterialize at certain times, under the influence of certain conditions, he considers as a sort of distraction, as an over-abundance of mental activity which he undergoes rather than creates, which he does not try to increase or to improve because he does not feel the need of it; he is more inclined to push it aside because, for him, it is a hindrance which delays the realization of his only *raison d'être*, which is adaptation. When he wishes to formulate his sensations, having only a limited field to offer to his superior faculties since his imagination lacks the essential excitant which is an abundance of ideas and images accumulated by perception in the memory, he cannot perform the work of a distinct and clear ideation; when he is desirous of ac-

quiring new ideas he is therefore obliged to have recourse to the artist, because he cannot himself elaborate phenomena and transform them into constituent parts of his proper conscience. From the artist he is obliged to ask for sensations already transformed into sentiments and into states of consciousness, in other words, completed mental representations which he can then assimilate with ease.

But the artist no longer listens to the ordinary man and does not wish to be the interpreter who must explain and make him admire the beautiful. He has become separated from him, he has lost sight of his part as an imitator and he now works on his own account. The ordinary man follows him with difficulty at a distance, collecting with care all which the artist rejects, all the conceptions which the latter disdainfully abandons after having extracted from them all that he has been able.

It should not be upheld that the masses are stupid. If one considers the regiment of artists as the advance guard of the human army marching towards perfection, it may be simply said that the masses are behindhand because they represent the degree of intellectual development that yesterday was possessed by the most intelligent. As Max Nordau has said, in the work already referred to: "The banality of to-day is not only the originality of yesterday, it is the fine flower of this originality, the best and the most precious, that part of it which merits to continue, not only because it was new, but because it was true and good. . . . It is the collection of all the most excellent things that the human mind has produced up to the present time."

It consequently is not in a brain prepared by a neurosis that an artistic temperament should show itself; on the contrary, this should take place in a normal and healthy brain and as Nordau says: "Talent results from an entire unfolding of the intelligence, acquired by the application of the exercise of natural disposition which, in the midst of a given race, is possessed by the majority of healthy and normal individuals." Consequently, it is not hereditary. It can hardly be conceived that particular intellectual activities, even when frequently exercised by a person, can become organized in characteristic functions. The changes brought about in the working of the intelligence by a person who has been artistic, do not have such an effect on the organism that a new function results which is destined to become typical for the entire species.

The peculiarities in the manner of thinking and understanding

existence which characterize an author are purely individual and they are born and die with him without being transmitted. In order that an individual should be artistic it is not necessary that he should possess any predisposition whatsoever or that he should be the son of artists; nevertheless, he must have been educated in artistic surroundings at an early date and under the influence of some cause his intelligence must have been excited and directed towards this bent. He alone, afterwards, must develop his faculties, educate his senses, enrich his mind with new things and create, so to say, in every detail the particular world in which he will live. This work will be all the easier for him should he be born in a more advanced stage of humanity because he will be greatly helped by the numerous documents which have been left him by the preceding generation of artistic minds. In their works he will find the reason and the essence of the new life which he is to enter.

Such is the food which he should give to his intelligence and which will allow him to develop rapidly and it is for this reason that the more progress is made by humanity the earlier will intellectual manifestations appear in man. It is for this reason that the history of modern art records so many individuals who have this collection of qualities, which is called talent, at an age when the artists of ancient times commenced to feel their first emotions of artistic conception.

The neurasthenic, like the modern man of letters, is a pessimist. He is sad, finds life bad and men wicked, because instead of sympathizing with him they are indifferent as to his condition. He does not believe in love, friendship or devotion. He thinks only of himself and of his misfortune in being on the earth and living in constant suffering. The neurasthenic thinks often of suicide and he both admires and approves those who kill themselves. But for all this, it is most infrequent that he himself resorts to the taking of his proper life because it is in contradiction with another very important characteristic of his disease which is the fear of physical suffering.

The neurasthenic believes himself sick and considers himself afflicted by every imaginable disease. Continually watching, he studies and observes himself with the utmost detail. In the morning he spends much time before the looking glass examining his color which he never thinks is perfect, and then he inspects his tongue and finds that it is coated. He carefully reviews his entire body and regrets to the bottom of his soul that he cannot inspect

the interior of his economy and limbs in order to ascertain if they are in perfect condition.

At the slightest little ill-turn or the most trifling disturbance in his bodily functions the neurasthenic immediately conceives that he is afflicted with symptoms of some awful disease which will shortly end his days. These patients possess an indefinite medical knowledge and they even buy works on medicine which they read with avidity and endeavor to find in themselves symptoms of those diseases of which they read.

The neurasthenic dotes upon the society of physicians and when he has the good fortune to seize upon one, he tells him in every minute detail all his sensations and then imposes upon the unfortunate doctor an interminable series of questions. He then proceeds to submit a number of most unlikely theories which he defends to the bitter end, using all the subtlety and ingenuity of his mind to twist the truth and to interpret facts according to his own idea. The most general and dominant characteristic of the neurasthenic is the weakness of volition which may even extend as far as a complete annihilation of the will power. He is hesitating, restless and changeable in his desires; commencing several things at once he does not finish any one of them. He seats himself at his table to work and, having an idea which he wishes to express, writes one or two lines and then his thoughts become mixed and are dispersed before the winds of reverie.

It is most difficult, and sometimes impossible, for the neurasthenic to direct his mind towards the end that he wishes, if he does succeed it is at the expense of a fearful effort which fatigues and enervates him. These wretched creatures come under the class which Fénelon describes in his "Letters Spirituelles" as those "who wish and who do not wish, who wish from afar what they should wish, but whose hands fall from languor as soon as they closely observe work."

A most foolish idea will suddenly occupy the mind of the neurasthenic which he in the first place recognizes as being absurd; not having the force to suppress it he allows it to occupy his thoughts until finally it becomes fixed and degenerates into an obsession. This wrecked will power may be divided into three types.

In the first type, the subject is solicited to the action and this solicitation once perceived produces a central work; but this, being deprived of voluntary power, does not end in anything, or if it should, it results in a vague determination or even in a series

of varied and contrary determinations. The causes of this inability to accomplish the end are due either to insufficiency of the excitation or to a weakness of the perception. In this class may be placed those who ask themselves what they will do and who in reality do nothing.

In the second type, we have individuals who have a distinct perception of determination accompanied by an impossibility to control the necessary means for the realization of this determination. In this case the volition of attention is at fault and as an example among writers, we may give Coleridge. Ribot classifies the inability of voluntary attention under two forms. In the first there is an exaggerated intellectual activity with an abnormal production of sensations and ideas, while in the second form there is a progressive diminution of the power of direction and a final impossibility of intellectual effort.

The third type is characterized by a lack of power to realize the desired thing, as well as the impossibility to accomplish an act whose necessity and the means for its execution are known.

The foregoing classification has been taken from Dallemagne's "Pathologie de la Volonté." The pathology of neurasthenia being devoid of interest to the general reader, it is unnecessary to touch upon it in this paper, but it may be said that, according to the authority just mentioned, its cause is entirely a psychical one and is due to a weakening of the impulse or to an atony of the psychomotor center. Now, in order that a given determination be carried out, it is necessary that it possess a real energy; in other words, it must be a true potential source. When the sufficient degree of motor force is not attained, the effort expended remains insufficient and the temptation remains intra-cerebral, so to speak. But as pointed out by Dallemagne, it may happen that the determination, possessing the desired force for its realization under ordinary circumstances, endeavors vainly to overcome localized resistances seated in the psycho-motor center itself and this center may in its turn be weakened and unfit for reaction, because its cells have lost their inherent power.

To sum up, neurasthenia is a disease of the volition and it is in the centers of ideation that this disorder commences and which afterwards extends through the entire organism. Although it has not the distinct characteristics of other neuroses, it often becomes completely united to a gathering of manifestations of the life of the individual, penetrating his physiological existence to such an extent as to simulate his existence itself; it has, nevertheless, its

proper pathological picture and its own special attributes. It should also be said that neurasthenia, in virtue of the law of relations which unite the moral to the physical functions, reacts upon the entire organism to such an extent that it may impregnate it with true stigmata under which head may be included insomnia, backache, headache, dyspepsia and muscular weakness.

In studying the mental condition of the contemporary pessimistic writer and of the neurasthenic, we have sketched roughly the particular characteristics which distinctly show that each belongs to a different class; these differences should now be considered a little more in detail.

As has already been said, the neurasthenic dislikes life while his existence is one of long suffering and sadness, but he does not reason. The cause of this suffering, which by a sort of auto-suggestion becomes a reality to him, is unknown and when, as is often the case, he writes regarding his disease he is far more inclined to note the symptoms which he experiences than to endeavor to ascertain the cause of his illness. He is unable to say why he is sad.

Now, the modern writer is aware why he is sad and is fully cognizant that the cause resides in his profession. He knows that if he is sad it is because he is obliged to be so on account of the necessities of existence, living as he does in a circle in which everything is in a perpetual contradiction with his ideal. He realizes that the beautiful visions which occupy his soul are only illusions and that these generous and beautiful hopes which he cherished in his youth will never become realized because modern art, by becoming unnatural, is for him a source of sadness. He is condemned to live alone and feeling isolated he suffers, lost in the indifference of the masses who do not understand him.

When the neurasthenic observes himself he simply obeys an imperious need; he feels ill and it is to find the traces of his disease that he studies himself with such care, that he analyzes his sensations and sentiments; if he were able, he would probably dissect his body. If the pessimistic writer examines himself it is not with the object of detecting the symptoms of a disease, as is the case with the neurasthenic. The author analyzes his sensations in order to find new ones, being fully aware that if he wishes to make a name for himself and be enjoyed, not by the masses but by a special class, he must abandon these beautiful visions which enlighten his thoughts. He finds it necessary to describe heretofore unwritten conditions of the soul and to expose unexpected

conflicts of passion and it is for this reason that he sharpens his senses to the point of exasperation and searches greedily in his soul in order to find a new sentiment which he can develop with all the art of his imagination.

These new ideas will be expressed by the author in that particular style already mentioned by Gautier as the "*style ingénieux, compliqué, savant, plein de nuances et de recherches, empruntant à tous les vocabulaires techniques, prenant des couleurs à toutes les palettes, des notes à tous les claviers. . . . ; ce style qui est le dernier mot du verbe, sommé de tout exprimer et poussé à l'extrême outrance. . . . ; ce style qui est l'idiome nécessaire et fatal des peuples et des civilisations où la vie factice a remplacé la vie naturelle et développe chez l'homme des besoins inconnus . . .*" In order to direct his course amidst this chaos of strange sentiments so as not to go too far nor to fall into the absurd and incomprehensible, the writer must employ an enormous amount of labor. It is quite possible for him to be affected by the slightest disturbance of his cerebral mechanism and his will must be possessed of all its vigor so that the determinations may be accomplished without effort and the intellectual faculties perform their task perfectly. There are, no doubt, some writers who go beyond the desired end and who, from wishing to find the rare become unreasonable. These men, certainly, are morbidly inclined and their brains not being sufficiently well balanced have been unable to resist the constant enormous tension and, like the string of a violin which has been kept tense for too long a time, finally break. These men lose their reason and good sense for having wished, like Hamlet, to tamper with insanity.

If the modern man of intellect has been taken for a degenerate, it is simply for the reason that the author has been studied too much and the man himself insufficiently. What he has written has been too easily believed and what has been taken for the intimate thought of the poet was in many instances only a literary exercise and the public have not stopped to ask if he really believed what he wrote and if he was sincere in what he gave as a study of his soul. Many of the famous sayings have been taken literally, when in reality they are merely words or thoughts which have escaped from the imagination of the writer during a moment of intense cerebral excitement and which have pleased their authors on account of their strangeness or by their paradoxal character. It would seem from all appearances that the modern author is not sincere. The new sentiments that he feels obliged to describe are

sought for first in himself, but he soon has made the rounds of his soul and when he has extracted all that it contained, he finds it necessary to seek elsewhere. He consults his imagination, whose activity has become greatly increased by special excitants, and there he finds unheard-of treasures and it is from his imagination that start the greater part of these strange ideas, peculiar sensations and complex conceptions which are to be found in his works. He may, perhaps, by a kind of auto-suggestion, feel at certain times, during moments of psychic activity, these sentiments which he describes, just as does the neurasthenic who really feels the symptoms of the disease whose description he has read. But once this intellectual over-work calmed, when he collects himself, the author hastens to throw off this artificial soul and once more becomes himself, that is to say, a man. It is consequently not the modern writer who is diseased; it is art, in having misunderstood its principal condition which is to contradict neither our intellectual nor our moral logic.

Régis has said that works of art and, in particular, the literature of an epoch are the best testimony as to the state of its soul and that they inspire and reflect at the same time. If this be true, contemporary literature certainly is an exception to the rule because, instead of becoming inspired by the present society, it is on the contrary a part of society, which derives its inspiration from it and takes it as a model. By a part of society is meant a certain public composed of people without occupation who find life stupid and monotonous because they remain outside of it and do not understand the necessities. They seek more refined and violent sensations and it is for them that modern literature unfolds all its false magnificence. It is to distract and amuse this class in their indolence that the poor author uses his energy and exasperates his senses.

This particular public follows what they call the literary movement and seize with great avidity upon each new book as it appears and derive some little satisfaction of a temporary nature from all these false and unhealthy sensations which for an instant awaken their *blasé* senses, and in this artificial world is created an artistic ideal which it endeavors to keep alive. Fortunately, this class only represents a small part of the public and the majority of society is composed of people who work and who have a social end towards which they direct all their activity and energy. These consider reading as a recreation and turn away in disgust from this new art which describes a life which is not theirs.

At the present time literature is undergoing a kind of violent crisis and just as political history has had its rises and declines so it is with the history of literature; at the present time we are at one of these climaxes, but soon the right road will be distinctly seen and followed.

This contemporary artificial and unhealthy literature cannot survive and is bound to disappear; it has already lived too long. Its dangers were pointed out as far back as 1845 by Saint-Marc Girardin in his "Cours de Litterature Dramatique" and during the same epoch Reveillé-Parise made an endeavor to explain it. There is no doubt that the modern drama and novel are productive of much harm to society and are one of the debilitating causes conducive to crime, especially in the female. In a recent address delivered before the New York Medico-Legal Society the writer of this paper expressed himself as follows: "Being avid for emotion, they (women) seek it everywhere and the present education of young women furnishes them with an abundance. Young women go to the theater to see the morbid up-to-date society play and there receive their first lessons in immorality and open their hearts to the soft joys of passion. At the theater they see the amorous intrigues of the soft-voiced tenor and the tender *équipées* of the young leading man. They return home and are seized with a vague desire to love. During the lying scenes of the play, which is not real life, their sentiments become exalted and unnatural. It is at the play-house that women become initiated in all the temptations which beset the human heart, in all the secrets and in all the tricks of passion. There she has revealed to her how one is seduced and how one succumbs to her seducer, how to deceive her husband and other equally profitable lessons.

"How can it be reasonable to believe that the young girl remains indifferent before burning scenes of tenderness and of amorous despair? On the contrary, her imagination and desires become exalted to such a point that she no longer has any repose and her sleep becomes disturbed with more than suggestive dreams.

"On the other hand, we have the up-to-date novel which all well bred young women devour, sometimes openly, sometimes in the secrecy of their boudoirs. In order to be in the social train the young woman of to-day reads without shame all forms of immorality, presented with art in some cases and in others with a crudity which is heartrending, and follows the scenes of debauch described with the utmost care and detail by the author.

Saturated with this unhealthy literature, the sensual passions of woman can only be increased and rendered dangerous."

Authors will very soon become tired of writing in the exaggerated fashion of the present time and they will cease to search for unhealthy sensations. The ordinary man will then be attracted towards art and will love the author whom he will bless as a great dispenser of pure joys, because then he will understand his divine words. In their writings he will discover his own sentiments, desires and emotions, but greatly transformed and embellished. All this indicates that the future of literature will be less dark than has been declared, for the word degeneration has been pronounced too soon.

Although the human race has undergone a great evolution and by its development civilization has multiplied the obligations and difficulties of existence, creating new and imperious needs, the energy of man has also developed with equal strides. His activity, having become greater, has allowed him to realize these new needs and as new obstacles rise up before him, he finds means to overcome them. As the struggle for life becomes sharper and more intense, he finds new arms for the combat. One should recognize however, that this large output of energy, which naturally causes an exaggeration of the functional activity, will finally end by using up both the vigor and the natural health of man and produce a lowering of the vital tonus of the nation.

Man is a being of ascending evolution and although it would appear that he is marching towards perfection, he will never be able to attain it, because long before he reaches the desired goal he will become worn out. The normal constitution of the organism soon becomes quite insufficient to assure the superiority and to facilitate the means of existence; in other words, there is disproportion between the exercise of the various functions of the body and those of the mind. As civilization advances selection changes its form; it is no longer as in the beginning of the human race, a natural selection much to the profit of physical force, but is now a kind of artificial selection, which is advantageous to the intelligence alone. The most vigorous no longer triumph, it is the most intelligent who succeed.

Since man becomes weakened by an exaggerated cerebral work and by giving up physical labor, the dangers which may accrue cannot be too plainly pointed out. Art is a sacred thing and although it may not be the highest function of life, it is at least one of its purest joys. It is controlled by certain laws which, should it

break them, would result in rendering it unnatural. Art should not be dependent upon the capriciousness of a single individual, because it belongs to entire humanity. It should always be in contact with life and from life alone, it should produce its nature and its shape.

The author has a great and noble mission to fulfil. He should not think only of himself and become isolated from others; he should not forget that he is a man, and like the Latin poet, nothing that is human should be unknown to him. He should turn towards the ordinary man, who is his brother and who follows with difficulty the road of the author, and should unfold before him the serene splendors of the ideal and by thus conducting his soul to the source of the beautiful, he will purify and improve man in general, because eternal beauty is also eternal goodness.

Contemporary pessimistic literature should not be allowed to continue, because it is quite capable of seriously injuring the vitality of the nation. The education of children should be closely watched because it is during their early years of study that their imaginations can become distorted and they will form a false idea of art if they remain for too long a time in contact with the beautiful dreams of humanity.

Besides strengthening their physical attainments by a proper physical education they should be taught the true character of art and they should be cognizant with the laws by which it is governed. It is especially essential to warn them of the modern literature which is so dangerous for young people and forewarn them of this mysterious attraction which it exercises over certain minds by the charm and delicacy of certain new sensations. They should be taught that art in general, in spite of its usefulness, is not absolutely necessary for man and that although it made its appearance with the beginning of the human race, its utility for the preservation of man is only indirect.

Literature and art are not the single end of life but are on the contrary a luxury and a distraction which should give a temporary repose to man in his hard social labor. It was not intended that man should hush to sleep his activity in the delights of reverery. He has duties to fulfil towards society and before admiring the beauty of things he should admire their usefulness.

871 Beacon Street.