

HEALTH PAPERS

(By Dr. J. P. HASTINGS, DUN. DIN)

I.—The Influence of the Mind.

What is life? Untold generations have asked themselves this question. The present age, despite its amazing advances in the realms of science, has failed to answer it. For biologists of the future it will probably continue to be the great stumbling block. At present it is a secret known only to God. We do know, however, that we are alive. But, I would ask, how many of us have endeavored to live according to those rules which are conducive to perfect health? Life without health is a living death. Do not forget there are many degrees of health. Why be content to drag along indifferently in the mire, when you might easily soar proudly aloft? If you would conjecture a person free from disease your mind immediately reverts to the rollicking, vigorous schoolboy. He carries with him a perpetual atmosphere of health and happiness. His light, care-free heart sends his blood coursing rapidly round the circulatory track. No care has he for the morrow. 'Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof.' In that line lies the true philosophy of life. The typical schoolboy is unconsciously a witness to its truth. If I were to devote the remainder of these articles to the full consideration of the influence of worry, anxiety, and anger on the health of the individual, I would have an abundance of material on which to work. I contend that if you would have perfect health you must commence by attending to the welfare of the Soul or Mind.

Fright has often caused death by stopping the heart's action. Great anxiety has in a few hours prematurely aged a man in the prime of life; his features have shrunk and his hair turned grey. A fit of anger has only too often led to death from heart failure; and profound emotion may cause jaundice, apoplexy, and even insanity. So great is the power of the mind over the body that one may imagine he is suffering from disease whereas in reality he is quite free from it. Under this category come many cases of paralysis, blindness, and convulsions. In fact nearly all diseases have been simulated in this manner. But these are only extreme examples. We must not forget there are many intermediate stages. Because your emotions have not produced in you any of the marked changes I have mentioned, you must not conclude they have no injurious effect on you. That at least temporarily they deprived you of peace and happiness you must admit. Now happiness is the most precious possession a man can have. If he possess this blessing, then he has on earth a foretaste of paradise. That fit of rage or the depressing thought which worried you, has deprived you of this priceless possession. The discontented wealthy man is infinitely poorer than the happy beggar. Why, then, harbor in your mind those thoughts which do you so much harm? No one can compel you to entertain gloomy or evil thoughts. You are the gardener of your own mind. 'As you sow so shall you reap.' Shall your crop be all weeds, or weeds mixed with oats, or shall it be all profit and no waste? Just as you will it to be so shall it be. Your thoughts are the seeds; your mind is the soil; your life is the crop. Let us all, then, be prudent gardeners. The result mostly concerns ourselves. But we also owe a duty to those who live with us; to those who come in daily contact with us. We carry with us an atmosphere peculiar to ourselves. The radiant, happy man—how I love him! He is a sun that is never clouded. His friends are ever glad to see him. All icy barriers of enmity melt in the sunshine of his presence. For him the wheels of life run smoothly. In the sick room what a power for good he is! His very presence is a hopeful stimulus to the patient. His kindly interest, his words of cheery encouragement are more potent for good than most men dream of. The physician who lacks this power, who is deficient in this curative influence, is wanting in one of the most important parts of his outfit. It is something which no university confers with its degrees, which no hospital experience supplies. It is the influence of a happy soul on a troubled brother.

Sickness seldom visits the happy man. He has no time for it. His thoughts are those of health. Should he harbor disease thoughts, should he dwell on his temporary indisposition, his happiness would forsake him. His calm and peaceful communion with the good in nature is immediately destroyed. Where harmony prevailed discord now holds sway; happiness is gone; sunshine has given place to the darkness of night; chilly blow the winds; all things good and bright are frozen in his presence. To the sick he is a foretaste

of death. He is on earth an angel of sorrow. Too well he plays his part. Other souls who would have been bright and happy are blighted by his dire infection. Broadcast he sows the seeds of sorrow. The harvest, which inevitably follows, is disease and death. When the despondent man falls ill he fears the worst; he expects the worst; he would be disappointed if he did not realise his expectations. Sickness visits him much more frequently than it did in his happy days. It is his perpetual guest. Forever it is knocking at his door.

We have now clearly seen that despondent or angry thoughts injure our bodies through their effect on the mind. Now I ask: 'Would you take into your stomach in large doses any known poison, such as strychnine or arsenic?' Only on one condition would you voluntarily do so—only if you contemplated committing suicide. Now gloomy, angry, or fear thoughts are to the mind just as deadly as strychnine is to the body. So if you are determined to commit mental suicide go on in your old way; put no check on your passions; forget you are thereby making yourself miserable, and shortening your life; drive out the warm sunshine of happiness, in gloomy triumph let the coldness of eternal night settle down upon your whole being. If you would be healthy you must begin by excluding all contrary thoughts. Hence in commencing these series of articles I have given first place to the influence of the mind over the body. You must not dwell on your pains and aches; consult your doctor. It is his business to meditate for you; his advice will speedily set to right your doubts and fears. You know it would be impossible for a man to be virtuous if he continually allowed immoral thoughts to remain on his mind. In the same way no one can be healthy who allows diseased thoughts to find a place in his brain.

In order to preserve our health, besides the mental factor, there are many other rules to observe. These we will consider in subsequent articles. In conclusion I would say, if you desire health you must think health, talk health, and act health. Thus you will reduce considerably the number of occasions on which you will be obliged to seek medical advice.

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