## CHAPTER VII.

### HEALTH—HOBBIES.

Up! up! my Friend, and quit your books,
Or surely you'll grow double;
Up! up! my Friend, and clear your looks;
Why all this toil and trouble?

Books! 'tis a dull and endless strife:
Come, hear the woodland linnet,
How sweet his music! on my life,
There's more of wisdom in it.—WORDSWORTH.

Health is a great matter, both to the possessor of it and to others . . . For, does not health mean harmony, the synonym of all that is true, justly ordered, good; is it not, in some sense, the net-total, as shown by experiment, of whatever worth is in us? The healthy man is a most meritorious product of nature, so far as he goes. A healthy body is good; but a soul in right health—it is the thing beyond all others to be prayed for; the blessedest thing the earth receives of Heaven.—T. CARLYLE.

There is no riches above a sound body, and no joy above the joy of the heart.—*Ecclesiasticus.*

Ce n'est pas assez d'avoir des grandes qualites, il faut en avoir l'economie.—LAROCHEFOUCAULD

Infantes sumus, et senes videmur,
Non est vivere, sed valere, vita est.—MARTIAL.

RECREATION is creation: the word implies it. It is a second creation, when toil of body or brain has exhausted the animal or mental spirits. Sleep itself is a recreation, and the sounder the sleep the more is the health recuperated. But there is a recreation of another sort required for brain-workers, and that is active recreation. All vigorous nations are characterized by the vigor of their recreations. Among ourselves, it exhibits itself in out-door sports,—in cricket, lawn-tennis, football, hunting, fowling, grouse-shooting, boat-racing, golf, jack and grayling fishing, —which are carried on even in winter, until the sportsmen are fairly frozen out.



That only can be called exercise which occasions free and full expansion of the lungs. The centre of life is in a great measure seated in the chest. If it be true that the whole mass of blood in the body passes through the heart and lungs twelve times in the hour—there to be vivified and redistributed to the extremities of the system—the importance of full inhalation and exhalation will at once be recognized. These are necessary for the health of body as well as of mind, and for the revivification of the muscles as well as of the brain. Indeed, strength of purpose and power of brain depend in no small degree upon strength of chest, and power of thinking upon the power of the breathing apparatus. The potential principle, the power of will, ing strongly and with decision, usually manifests itself in a solid intelligence, combined with a sustained energy of vital action. Philosophy has been in the wrong not to descend more deeply into the physical system; for there it is that the moral and mental man lies concealed.

"I am convinced," says Dr. Reveillé-Parise, "that age begins and advances through the lungs—that this organ, essentially vascular and permeable, absorbs air, and in a measure digests it and assimilates it to our substance; and that here the deterioration of the human organism begins. If it were possible to bring the sanguification of the blood to its full perfection, I have no doubt that the true means of prolonging human life would thus be found. Future generations will decide the question if it is ever permitted to man to solve such a problem." *

At all events it must be admitted that, in order to secure the full working power of the mind, and to maintain it in its healthy action, the bodily organs must receive their due share of attention. Man must live in accordance with nature, and comfortable with the laws under which his

* Reveillé-Parise, *Physiologie et Hygeine des Hommes livres aux Travau. de L'Esprit*, i. pp. 237, 238

body has been designed and framed; otherwise he will suffer the inevitable penalty of pain and disease. For the law of the body is no more to be set at defiance than the law of gravitation. It is not necessary that one should be constantly thinking of how this or that function is being performed. Self-consciousness of this sort amounts to a disease. But, in order to live according to nature, some reasonable knowledge of the laws of life seems to be necessary in every complete system of education; for our daily happiness as well as our mental vigor entirely depend upon the healthy condition of the bodily frame, which the soul inhabits, and through which the mind works and creates.

"Happiness," says Sydney Smith, "is not impossible without health, but it is very difficult of attainment. I do not mean by health an absence of dangerous complaints, but that the body should be kept in perfect tune, full of vigor and alacrity." * It is the misfortune of the young to be early thrown out of "perfect tune" by the indiscreet efforts of their parents to force their minds into action earlier than nature intended. The result is dissonance, want of harmony, and derangement of function. The nervous system is over excited, while the physical system is neglected. The brain has too much work to do, and the bodily organs too little. The mind may be fed, but the appetite is lost, and society is filled with pale-faced dyspeptics. "Anything is better," says Dr. O. W. Holmes, "than the white-blooded degeneration to which we all tend." The pleasure of the honey scarcely repays for the smart of the sting. As Martial said long ago, "life is only life when blest with health."

We have already referred to the damage done to life and health in the case of boys, and still more so in the case of

* Sydney Smith, *Memoirs and Letters*, i. p. 126.



girls, and therefore need not again refer to the profanity of cramming. Without entering into physiological details, it may, nevertheless, be averred that the naturally stronger physical constitution of boys at the age of puberty enables them to face an amount of brain-work, for which the tenderer constitution of girls at that period altogether unfits them.

Overwork has unfortunately become one of the vices of our age, especially in cities. In business, in learning, in law, in politics, in literature, the pace is sometimes tremendous, and the tear and wear of life becomes excessive. The strain of excitement bears heavily on the delicate part of our system. Nature is ever fighting a battle against decay through the tissues. These are wasted by labor of body and mind, and repaired by food, sleep, and rest. But the waste is often greater than the enfeebled digestion can repair; and though the exhaustion may be artificially excited by stimulants, it can only be effectually remedied by relaxation and exercise, to enable the delicate brain cells and the equally delicate stomach to recover their healthy action.

The activity of the mind, without pressing it by overwork, is doubtless as pleasurable as that of the body; but the pleasure, to be thoroughly enjoyed, must be followed by repose. Man loves life; it is his instinct to love it so long as pleasure accompanies the healthy action of mind and body. "And what thinkest thou," said Socrates to Aristodemus, "of this continual love of life, this dread of dissolution which takes possession of us from the moment that we are conscious of existence." "I think of it," he answered, "as the means employed by the same great and wise artist, deliberately determined to preserve what he has made." These words are as true now as when they were spoken more than two thousand years ago. The ancient Greeks, amongst their various wisdom, had an almost worshipful

reverence for the body as being the habitation of the soul. They gave their body recreation as well as their mind.

Socrates was one of the wisest of men. He wrote no books; he only discoursed to his friends and pupils as he walked; and all that we know of him has come down to us through the recollections of his disciples and admirers. According to one of the traditions which survives respecting Socrates, he is said, for variety of recreation, to have ridden a wooden horse. When not in the humor for physical exercise, he played upon the lyre, which tuned and tempered his mind. Plato, like his master, was a great believer in recreation, and excelled in all the Grecian exercises; while Aristotle, in his fourth Ethic, held that play and diversion were no less necessary for healthy life than rest and refreshment. The ancient Greeks adopted the most rational methods for educating and developing the whole nature of man. They regarded physical education as the basis of moral and mental education: they sought to train the bodily powers and develop the muscular energies at the same time that they cultivated the mind by discipline and study. A sound mind in a sound body, was one of their current maxims.

In order that the mind should act with vigor and alacrity when required, it is needful that it should have frequent intervals of recreation and rest. It is only thus that its healthfulness can be retained. The bow cannot be always bent, otherwise its elasticity will be irretrievably injured. One of the early fathers has put on record a traditionary story of the Apostle John, which teaches the lesson in a simple yet forcible manner. A hunter passing his dwelling one day, saw the beloved disciple seated at his door caressing a little bird in his hand with the delight of a child. The hunter was surprised at so devout a man thus wasting his time. Observing his astonishment, the apostle said to the hunter, "Why do you not keep your bow always bent?'



—"Because it would soon lose its strength if it were always strung," was the reply. "Well," rejoined the apostle, "it would be the same with my mind: if I gave it no relaxation, it would, in like manner, soon lose its force."

Thus, idleness is not all idleness. In the case of the brain-worker, it is his only remedy for sleepless nights, excited nerves, fluttering heart, irritability of temper, and difficulty of digestion. There is no prescription more effectual in such cases than rest—perfect rest. But there are minds which will not rest, and cannot muster the moral courage to be idle. Yet the gospel of leisure and recreation is but the correlation of the gospel of work; and the one is as necessary for the highest happiness and well being of man as the other.

Some have wisely mingled relaxation and physical exercise with study. Ælian relates of Agesilaus, that on being found by a friend riding upon a stick for the amusement of his son, he bade his visitor not speak of it to any one until he was a father himself. Henry IV. of France was a great lover of his "little platoon of children" at home, and delighted in their gambols and caprices. One day, when trotting round the room on his hands and knees, with the Dauphin on his back, and the other children urging him on to gallop in imitation of a horse, an ambassador suddenly entered, and surprised the royal family in the midst of their play. Henry, without rising, asked "Have *you* children, M. l'Ambassadeur."—"Yes, sire."—"In that case I proceed with the sport."

Boileau was a great skittle player. This was also a favorite game of Luther's, who not only played skittles, but played the guitar and the flute, turned articles in wood, and devoted a portion of his time to the society of women and children. His favorite distich was,—

"Wer nicht liebt Weir, Weiber,und Gesang,
Der bleibt ein Narr sein Lebenlang."

Calvin, although no great lover of amusements, used to play with his children at Geneva on Sundays in public, to show that he considered the observance of the seventh day as well as of saints' days to be no longer binding upon Christian men. Yet, after all, the seventh day of rest is a thing to be remembered and preserved as the only legal relief from the turmoils of daily week-day work.

As the late Lord Beaconsfield said:—"I am perfectly free to admit that there is a difference between theChristian Sunday and the Jewish Sabbath, and I cannot agree with those who would extend the observance of the Christian Sunday the rules and regulatious of the Jewish Sabbath. If there be any who desire to do it, they would utterly fail to accomplish that purpose. Of all divine institutions I maintain the most divine is that which secures a day of rest for man. . . . It is the religous principle which, to a certain extent, is admitted by all—at least by all classes that have influence and numbers in this country; it is that principle we must take care should not be discarded if we wish to maintain that day of rest which I hold to be the most valuable blessing ever conceded to man. It is the corner-stone of all civilization, and it would be very difficult to estimate what might be the deleterious effects, even upon the health of the people, if there were no cessation from that constant toil and brain-work which must ever characterize a country like this, so advanced in its pursuits and civilization."

Not long ago the Bishop of Sodor and Man, after a confirmation, engaged in a game of cricket with the school-boys. He was delighted to know that the game was to be played. He joined the young fellows at the wickets, and said: "I'll make the best long-stop among you, for I have got my apron." He himself afterwards said of the event: "That impression never passed away from the minds of these boys. They felt that they had amongst them a man speaking on the highest and holiest subjects—leading them up to all that confirmation was intended to lead them to—but still remembering that their bodies required healthful recreation." Therefore he went out, and for the rest of the afternoon he played cricket with the boys on whose heads he had solemnly placed his hands in confirmation. From that time the bishop was never named in the parish without some profitable thoughts arising in the minds of the young people.



Celsus advised the man who would continue in health to have a diversity of callings or studies— now to study or work, and to be intent—then again to hawk or hunt, swim, run, ride, or exercise himself. It was a rule which Loyola imposed upon his followers, that after two hours of work, the mind should always be unbent by some recreation. The power of keeping the mind occupied with something external to our studies or pursuits is highly to be valued. Cæsar wrote: "Under my tent, in the fiercest struggles of war, I have always found time to think of many other things." This thinking of many other things is perhaps the secret of strength.

There is a sort of idleness which may be called a waste of existence, and there is another sort which may be called an enjoyment of existence. Leisure is always valuable to those who can find change of occupation in the spare time at their disposal. Men accustomed to the desk and the study are so averse to spend idle hours, and yet are so little inclined to active exercise, that they often seek for relaxation in mere change of study. They rest from brain-work of one kind to enter upon another. D'Aguesseau, the great Chancellor of France, said that change of study was his only relaxation. Geometry and algebra have been among the most consoling recreations of the learned. When Sir Matthew Hale felt exhausted by his excessive

labors on the bench, he refreshed himself by working out a few algebraical problems. Fénelon, when a student, took refuge from divinity in geometry, although he was seriously warned against its "bewitchments" and "diabolical attractions" by his Jesuit teachers. In like manner, Professor Simson, when he found himself perplexed and wearied by clerical controversies, retired for peace and shelter to the certain science of mathematical truth, "where," said he, "I always find myself refreshed with rest." Molyneux, the Irish barrister, was led by domestic sorrow to seek consolation in the study of mathematics. "This," he says, "was my grand *pacificum:* such was the opiate that lulled my troubled thoughts to sleep."

Lord Brougham amused himself in his old age by the same study, varied by optics, light, and natural theology. He relates that Lord Cottenham, who had been a successful student of mathematics in his early years, reverted to them for relaxation when filling the highest legal office;* while it is well known that the late Sir Frederick Pollock, while Chief Baron of the Exchequer, found relief from his graver labors on the bench by recreation in mathematics and geometry. Sir Isaac Newton, when exhausted by severe study, relaxed himself by dabbling in ancient chronology and the mysteries of the Apocalypse; while Mendelssohn, the German scholar, when he felt fatigued by overwork, gave his mind rest by going to the window and counting the tiles on the roof of his neighbor's house. Spinoza's relaxation consisted in change of study, in conversation with friends, and in an occasional pipe. He sometimes

* "As late as 1838," says Lord Brougham, "when I was engaged in preparing my *Analytical Review of the Principia*, I found that, by an accidental coincidence, Lord Cottenham was amusing his leisure with the Calculus; and I am sure that he could have furnished as correct and more elegant analytical demonstrations of the Newtonian theorems than I had the fortune to obtain in composing that work."—Lord Brougham, *Philosophers of the Time of George III.* (edition 1855), pp. 388, 389.



amused himself by watching spiders fight, when he would laugh till the tears rolled down his cheeks. Johnson says, no man is a hypocrite in his pleasures; yet Spinoza was a most kindly man and by no means cruel.

Literature, however, has always furnished the largest amount of sedentary amusement for busy brain-workers. Often a book soothes the mind better than the most potent anodyne. The writing of a book, be it good or bad, does the same. Vattel varied his studies on the *Laws of Nations* by writing a *Discourse on Love*, as well as occasional poetry. Frederick the Great, ambitious of literary as well as martial reputation, wrote verses; and Voltaire declares that he could not correct them without laughter. Voltaire's amusement was private theatricals and marionettes. The philosopher of Ferny is said to have been skilful in pulling the strings and managing a puppet show. He built a theatre at La Chatelaine, near Geneva (now used as a hayloft), for which he wrote plays, and acted as stage-manager.

Volta, the electrician, was also a writer of verses: and Mr. Gleig says of Warren Hastings, that: "A copy of verses was as natural an operation as his morning's meal." Lord Stratford de Redcliffe, when Mr. Stratford Canning, wrote verses which commanded the praise of even so great a poet as Lord Byron. His verses on Buonaparte "were worth," said Lord Byron, "a thousand odes of anybody's." "I was aware," he added, "that he was a man of talent, but did not suspect him of possessing all the family talents in such perfection." Lord Tenderden, after the lapse of thirty years, following the example of Lords Grenville and Holland, returned to the composition of Latin metres; though he confessed that "it might be said that a Chief-Justice and a Peer might employ his leisure hours better than in writing nonsense verses about flowers." * James Watt, the inventor

* Sir Edgerton Brydges, *Autobiography*, i. pp. 417–424, where several specimens of his lordship's verse-making are given.

of the condensing steam-engine, and Thomas Telford, the builder of the bridge over the Menai Straits, wrote poetry while they were young men. Watt, in his old age, was a great devourer of novels, over which he and his aged wife had many a hearty cry. Sir Charles Napier was not satisfied with being the victor of Meanee; but when he retired from the office of Commander-in-Chief in India, feeling it impossible to be idle, he occupied his leisure hours in composing a romance entitled *William the Conqueror*. This was afterwards published; and, like the verses of the above cited judges, ambassadors, politicians, electricians, and engineers. it is now regarded as a curiosity of literature.

Great has been the consolation which literature has afforded to statesmen wearied of the turmoil and bitterness of party strife. Though the door of politics may for a time be closed to them, that of literature stands always open. In his saddest moments, translation roused the flagging spirits of Addison. When Pitt, on one occasion, retired from office, he reverted, with much relish, to the study of the Greek and Latin classics; while Fox forgot the annoyances of party polemics in the company of Euripides and Herodotus. Canning and Wellesley, when thrown out of office, occupied themselves with translating the odes and satires of Horace. Lord Redesdale did the same thing when laid up by an accident which he met with in the hunting-field.

Among the other ministerial authors were Lord Normanby, who wrote the novel entitled *No;* Earl Russell, who produced a tragedy (*Don Carlos*) and a novel (*The Nun of Arronea*), both very inferior productions. Lord Palmerston had the credit of producing several excellent *jeu d'esprit* in the *New Whig Guide* while Lord Liverpool was minister. Lord Brougham was an indefatigable author, producing not only works on optics, history, biography, and



general literature, but being also a large contributor to the *Edinburgh Review*. Even when he was canvassing Liverpool in 1812, and while in the midst of the severest struggles in law and politics, Lord Brougham was minutely superintending Leigh Hunt's translation of the *Ode to Pyrrha*, and suggesting fresh delicacies for his version of *Acme and Septimius*. Lord Derby and Mr. Gladstone have evinced their abiding attachment to ancient literature. The English *Iliad* of Lord Derby will be read with delight when his brilliant and elegant speeches have been forgotten; and the Homeric *Studies* of Mr. Gladstone will be remembered with pride long after his subtle brain has ceased to perplex the principles and divide the parties of the political world.

Some statesmen have been ready enough to leave the distressing turmoil of politics. To Sir Robert Walpole's honor, it is recorded that he retired after more than twenty years of power with a temper not soured, with a heart not hardened, with simple tastes and frank manners, and with a capacity for friendship and literature. Carteret, after a hard fight for power, was driven from office, and from that time he relinquished all ambitious hopes, and retired to the consolation of his books. "I met Lord Melbourne," writes Mr. Leslie, the artist, "at Lord Holland's, a day or two after he ceased to be prime minister; he was as joyous as ever, and only took part in the conversation respecting the changes in the royal household (which were not then completed) so as to make everybody laugh." Lord Althorpe's loss of office in 1832 was anything but a calamity. He went through it with cheerfulness. The day after his resignation he went to a florist's, and chose and bought a number of flowers, carrying five great packages back with him in his carriage. He spent the evening in determining where these should be planted in his gardens at Althorpe, and wrote out the necessary directions for the gardener

and drew out the plans for their arrangement. This did not look like bearing calamity with bitterness. Indeed the change of pursuit, from politics to gardening, was brimful of pleasure to Lord Althorpe. He not only occupied himself with gardening, but spent a portion of his time in the study of natural theology.

"I have a fine library of books," said a sage, "and an excellent garden, which I cultivate with my own hands to my great delight—an occupation which needs no excuse, for surely there can be no purer pleasure, morally or materially, than to see the earth bearing beautiful blossoms from seed of your own setting." Even men of abundant competence find the greatest pleasure in enjoying the fruits of their own work. The rustic chair of one's own construction, the flowers and fruits of one's own growing, the vegetable frame of one's own carpentry, are among the most pleasing of all things. They have the aroma of industry about them, which is always relished as the fruits of painstaking.

When Dioclesian was petitioned to resume the Imperial Purple, which he had resigned, he replied to the messengers: "You would not have asked such a thing of me if you saw the fine melons I have now ripening, and the plantations about my villa that I have made." Horace and Virgil were both fond of gardening and country life. The first wish of Virgil was to be a good philosopher, and the second to be a good husbandman. Cato spoke of planting as one of the greatest pleasures of old age. The enjoyment of a country life is the nearest neighbor—at least, next in kindred—to philosophy, in its usefulness, its innocent pleasure, its antiquity, and its dignity.

Lord Bacon, in his *Essays*, revelled in the beauty and pleasures of gardening. "God Almightie," he said, "first Planted a Garden. And indeed it is the Purest of Humane pleasures. It is the Greatest Refreshment to the Spirit of



Man; without which, Buildings and Pallaces are but Grosse Handy-works: and a Man shall ever see that when Ages grow to Civility and Elegancie, Men come to Build Stately, sooner than to Garden Finely: as if Gardening were the Greater Perfection." In his essay *Of gardens*, he proceeds to show that he was himself intimately acquainted with the flowers, shrubs, and hedges that should adorn a beautiful garden, and he gives their names for every month of the year. "You may have," he says, "*ver perpetuum* as the place affords. The Breath of Flowers is farre Sweeter in the Aire (where it comes and goes, like the warbling of Music) than in the hand, therefore nothing is more fit for that delight than to know what be the Flowers and Plants that do best perfume the Aire."

Planting was the hobby of Shenstone, who devoted a great part of his life to the adornment of the Leasowes, until his possessions there became the envy and admiration of all who visited them. Horticulture was a passion with Evelyn and Temple. Evelyn decorated with beauty the grounds of Sayes Court, near Greenwich, and when Peter the Great of Russia lived there, one of his greatest amusements was to be rushed through one of Evelyn's holly hedges in a wheelbarrow, very much to the destruction of the beautiful gardens.

Gardening was one of the solitary pleasures of Pope, who applied himself to the improvement of his toy domain at Twickenham. He adorned it with trees, lawns, a tunnel, and a grotto, and altered and trimmed it to perfection, like one of his own poems. Cowper also indulged in the pleasant art of gardening. With his own hands he built a greenhouse, wherein to grow his tropical plants and flowers, and he varied his occupation with an occasional game at battledore and shuttlecock with the ladies. Gardening was one of the last pleasures that the great engineer George Stephenson indulged in. He was troubled by the cucumbers, which