

Read before the Literary Union
Oct 1891

HOW TO REST,
OR MODES OF RECREATION.

The American people probably pursue their avocations more closely and persistently than those of any other nation. This persistence of the pursuit of business interest, or study, or what ever the main aim in life may be has grown in intensity at even pace with the rapidity of the development of the material resources of our country. To what this increase of nervous tension may lead in the future cannot even be guessed at now. But that it has already done much harm by robbing us of important men through the untimely breaking down of highly endowed nervous systems, is certain.

In this state of things the question of Rest and how to rest effectively becomes an important ques-

Subject-

~~tion~~ for discussion by our people. I am persuaded that many who need rest, and who seek rest, fail to find it for the simple reason that they do not know how. This, of course, does not refer to mere pleasure seeking, or summering for the fun of it.

What is rest? stopping a bit when one is tired of going-getting up and walking for a few moments ~~when~~ when one is tired of sitting or getting out of the carriage and walking by the ~~side of the~~ road side when the cushions have become irksome-shutting up the book a moment when the lines begin to run together. All of ^ethese represent transient forms of rest. Rest from particular things being done, and have respect to wearied members of the body. They do not suggest rest for the whole person. It is rest in the more restricted sense.

What are we to do when the man needs rest, the

ego, the man that dwells within the body, and upon which the body depends for its existence. When the man within is tired the body begins to decline. What is rest for this condition? It includes more than physical and mental rest combined. It means relaxation of nervous tension as the first count and a change of the direction of interest-as the second-and mental and physical exercise as the third count. The man, the ego, does not rest by sitting down, or by an effort to direct the mind into a channel of nothingness. It may be set down as an axiom that any man who is in need of ~~rest~~ this kind of rest is one who is even at work, is active-always on the go both mentally and physically, or has been driven to prolonged effort in a particular direction by force of circumstances. Such persons do not gaze into vacancy. Rest must be obtained by directing the en-

ergies into other than usual channels and in which ~~a~~ invigorating mental and physical exercise will be obtained. This should be disconnected entirely with the question of getting on in the world, or with the business or studies constituting ones life work. If it is not the tension, the nervous strain, is not likely to be relieved.

A principle secret of obtaining rest is the acquirement of the ability to entertain ones self outside the channels of his life work. The person who is incapable of this self entertainment is incapable of resting in the higher sense of that term. Such persons, of whom there are many, are dependent upon those around them for entertainment and are always in a state of excitement ~~or~~ or of lassitude. Any change in their life must be brought about by their friends.

Dr. Hammond of New York has recently written an article upon this subject (North American Review) for August) in which he makes this appear prominently especially with respect to women in fashionable circles, and berates the habit of some of the habitual visitors of eastern watering places most unmercifully. He might have applied this to many men with fully equal force. Many of the watering places ^{have long} ~~had~~ since ceased to be places of rest, and have become places of social excitement instead.

Rest is not the same kind of activity, or inactivity, for different persons. The new direction of activity and interest will be controlled in a large degree by the taste, physical capabilities, and previous training of the person. Some persons, particularly the younger men, can ^{rest} ~~not~~ effectively at

home. When one gets out in the morning and forgets himself in his enjoyment of the landscape and is impelled to pleasureable physical exercise he is rested whether he is in his own door yard or in the Rocky Mountains. I have long noticed that those hard workers who rest effectively at home ^{love a} run in the morning, either on foot, on horseback, in the carriage or they contrive odds and ends of employment in which they become sufficiently interested to displace their more arduous duties from their mind for the time. This is the best form of self entertainment. Other ~~who~~ essay this kind of rest find it ineffectual. Their life pursuits have become too intense to be dropped at will in this manner. While walking, riding, or while at work problems in their life work have possession of thier mind. They are

preoccupied. For these persons, days, and perhaps weeks, or even months together are necessary to enable them to drop business and enter upon recreation. These persons when once recovered relapse so persistently that they must ever after continue to rest at frequent intervals.

There is no rest without free air. No tired man ever becomes rested and reinvigorated except in the most transient way while enclosed within four walls. He may rest his muscles in this way after a hard day's physical labor, but when the man has become tired the case is different. Tired muscles are rested by cessation of muscular strain. Intensity of application which has been continued month after month, perhaps year after year until the whole man has become tired-is in the condition popularly known as nervous exhaustion-is not recovered from

by sitting down to rest. The condition is one of restlessness. His energies are not yet exhausted but his capabilities are failing. Such a man requires activity and mental interests which will, for the time, take him away from his ardent pursuits. He requires a means by which he will be enabled to leave off his acquired mental habit, his study, his business, dismiss it from his mind and to entertain himself in other channels of thought suggested by new scenes and new surroundings.

A partial recognition of this truth has probably been the basis of the organization of many of our health resorts, and this is well, suited. Some of them are suited to many tired persons. But unfortunately they are most generally seized upon by mere pleasure seekers and are given over to social excitements, and thus become anything but health resorts.

as has been forcibly stated by Dr. Hammond in the article to which I have referred. Still persons who do not choose are not compelled to mix with these social affairs. They may walk, ride, bathe, read, go fishing, sail, hammer among the rocks or seek natural history specimens if they choose, and forget that the world of fashion is fluttering in their neighborhood. Nevertheless the presence of this flutter is not best for the tired man or woman. Either will be better alone, or with one or two companions, certainly with not more than five, and away from all other people.

I have a friend, a real estate speculator of more than average success, who when the warm summer comes takes his wife and son to some of the lakes of northern Michigan, loads his tents and other traps

into boats and goes into some wild spot, or from place to place for a month or two, or till he feels that he is ready for work again. This plan is not from any lack of means in his case - he spends profusely in these preparations - but from the fact that he has found this to produce the best results. This ~~summer~~ summer I found a judge from Texas, a victim of nervous prostration his companion said, engaged in a wild hunt for ^{for} specimens of Beaver Cuttings. Day after day he was pushing his little duck boat up the ~~little~~ streams that empty into the lake and scrambling through cedar swamps, gun in hand, with a sack swung over his shoulder for game and specimens. That man will go back to his law books rested.

There are hundred ways of finding rest by land or sea. Rambling through the country on foot, on horse-back, in a light wagon, or on a bicycle, al-

ways with some object in view, if it is only to find certain plants, particular kinds of rocks, certain birds, or learn the character of the soil- no difference what so there is an object to claim the attention. Outing by sea requires less of continuous physical endurance, but most landsmen are less prepared for it in the way of previous experience. But when the art has once been acquired there is a charm about sailing that rarely attaches to modes of land travel.

The camp in the ordinary tent is a popular plan. The great objection to this is that it is too apt to become lazy and objectless. The camping spot may not be changed often enough for interest in the surroundings to be maintained. I have tried the tent and have visited many tentors. Many of these are successes, but I too often find students

or men inclined to literature have with them their books and writing materials . They have not left off their work- I have tried that too- It means failure.

Outings for such purposes require suitable preparations to obtain the best results. Arrangements should be made to prevent undue exposure if bad weather should occur . Suitable clothing for the climate and season should be taken, and the means of conveyance should be well adapted to the object in view and the amount of physical exertion the person is properly capable of . Suitable arrangements should be made for food . This should always be good and wholesome and well prepared, but not necessarily in great variety. My own necessities have caused me to study these points rather closely.

About fifteen years ago I went to Northern

Michigan in a condition of prostration. I started without other object than escape from the summers heat- I simply went north. When I had got far enough north I was like a fish out of water. I was utterly unable to walk any distance and had no conveyance except the public ones which I soon found were not the thing for me. I could see the forest from these and had a longing to be in the wild woods. In my utter ignorance of the region and its requirements it took me six weeks to find means of getting about or to find something to do that would occupy my mind and set my muscles in action. I finally met with some cruising boats that interested me. I talked with the sailors, and found them men much like myself in condition only that they had found the means of doing just what I seemed to have been longing for. I thought I could soon learn to handle the boats

but none such could be had. They were made only upon special order. So I must needs content myself with a very ordinary sail boat for my experiment. This succeeded so well that the next yearsaw me with a decked cruiser and I have enjoyed the hot months in this manner every since.

This year --Object, rambling among the islands of the north coast of Lake Huron and the north channel . . . Photographing, fishing, shooting and &c.

The boat. How constructed-- rig-shelter-bedding special clothing provisions-charts-compass-

Description of trip- photographs- incidents&c