

THE TECHNIQUE OF REST.

BY ANNA C. BRACKETT.

OUR muscular strength is the means through which we act, but that by which we act is a something behind the former which we call nerve force. Distilled by the mysterious alchemy of life from the food we eat, from the sunshine and the air, it is the life we live. It spans, as it *is*, the impassable gulf between matter and spirit which forms the despair of the psychologist. It is the perpetual miracle which all common things are—the more common, the more miraculous. An aristocratic product of life, it is life itself, for when it is exhausted, the organization ceases to be. We are then not to be surprised that it yields slowly to attacks upon it, succumbing only to long siege, for it is the very force of all forces. Neither ought we to be surprised that to recover from a real attack of what is called “nervous prostration” there should be demanded by cheated Nature a time which always seems to the sufferer unreasonably long, if indeed it be not interminable. But he has not kept his books balanced with the minute care which Nature always employs in the management of her accounts. He has hoped, if he has thought about it at all, that she was at least as careless, or as weakly indulgent as he, and that some few things might be overlooked or happily forgotten. But Nature’s ways of doing business are not his ways, as he has found out to his cost. Her ways are not the curving and yielding lines of benevolence and charity, but the rigid and straight ones of truth and justice, and it is better that the punishment for the repeatedly broken law should be sometimes terribly swift and hopelessly fatal in a particular instance than for one jot or one tittle to pass from the law.

With those who have offended against it in the constant mad chase after pleasure, or in the equally mad struggle to win and hold a coveted place in what is called society, I have nothing to do. They must be left to settle their accounts as best they can. But to most earnest people life is hard and fast, and growing continually harder and faster, and to many it is becoming more and more a burning question how they shall meet, like men and women, the demands of each

day without falling under the condemnation of that law. It would be comparatively easy for the society followers, if they had any desire so to do, to settle their problem by following Carlyle’s plan, and reducing their denominators. He makes it very clear to all those who have passed beyond the stage of childhood, and consequently do comprehend the nature of a fraction—an impossible thing for a child to do, because it lies in the region of relativity—that our wishes and desires stand to our abilities, either pecuniary or mental, in the same relation as the denominator of a fraction to its numerator, and that the value of the fraction of each one of us expresses in terms easily written down the total amount of our solid happiness or contentment. In this view it follows that there are always two possible ways of increasing the amount of the latter—and this is no doubt the main object toward which are directed most of the efforts of most men—namely, to increase our numerator by increasing our possessions, or to diminish our denominator by decreasing the total amount of our desires. The first of these ways is the only one generally perceived by the majority of people, and the one to which they bend all their efforts, but it is often the impossible way, while the other path lies always open to most people, with absolutely sure result. Since that result—that alteration in the value of the fraction—is what we are many of us after, it may be surprising that the always available and sure method is not more generally selected. But, as has been said, to many of us there is no liberty of choice left open. Forced by the demand of the working world to which we belong, we have already reduced our denominator to a surprisingly low figure. We find a positive pleasure, as we walk in the city, in seeing shops loaded with innumerable things that we do *not* want, and would not have even if we could. Even in the matter of books the number which we care to own grows smaller day by day instead of larger. We have learned the great lesson that it is easier to climb at once to the high hills, and drink from the springs which run there, than to accept the diluted stuff which is delivered to us

in conduits often not of the cleanest. This lesson, once acquired, frees one from many perplexities, and confers a not inconsiderable amount of liberty, besides giving us a feeling of buoyant health which the dwellers in the lowlands, who depend upon aqueducts, and are subject to all the inconveniences resulting from negligent or incompetent contractors and engineers, never can know. With regard to society, too, the number of houses into which we do not desire to enter is infinitely larger than that of those to which we aspire. And it confers almost a feeling of royalty to see so many people around us who do not hesitate at any sacrifice or any effort to obtain an introduction into certain circles of society to which no entreaties of our best-meaning friends would be able to drag us for a single evening. We have had so much to do all our lives that we have learned the value of time, and we are blessedly thankful for it, for nobody who has not lived a life of constant labor can possibly know the exquisite delight of a whole half-hour in which one has at last the right to do what she pleases. The fifty years of Europe hold more conscious throbbing life than a cycle of Cathay, and even if we had the liberty of choosing, we would take the fifty years.

But after we have cut off the branch roads with which we once made connection, and concluded that for the future we will take up all the rails but two, and run only express trains on those two, leaving the accommodation trains to be looked out for by other roads, we find ourselves in need of some rules, the result of our own experience and that of other economical people, if we would avoid disastrous collisions, and the consequent necessity of large expenditures in the way of damages. Possibly a few conclusions on this subject of rest by those who have been forced to give many years' attention to it may not be out of place for general reading.

I have said that the time is hard and fast. The slang phrase "Give us a rest" in its very slanginess emphasizes the general widely spread consciousness that the step of invention and science is at present really too long for the ability of human faculties inherited from ancestors who lived in easier times. The business man feels this to his cost. With all the advantages which the railroad and the

telegraph offer him for a more rapid carrying on of his business, he is forced by the very close relation of all varieties of trade—one of the unavoidable results of these very advantages—to keep in his mind a great many more particulars than formerly, if he would see his business successful. If he attempts to carry on his affairs in the way in which his father carried them on, he soon finds that his neighbors will not agree to do the same, and he is forced to make a study of statistics which thirty years ago would have seemed to him to have no conceivable bearing on the price of the commodities with which he is dealing. The facts in the case of the simplest kinds of business are set forth with so much clarity and in so fascinating a manner by Mr. David A. Wells in *Recent Economic Changes* that it is useless to do more here than merely refer to them, for a class of readers who in all probability have already read and re-read that most delightful book. To give some little idea, however, of the increase of activity imperatively demanded by modern competition in business, it may not be useless to adduce the fact that in some of the large firms in the city of New York it is found necessary to employ at a high salary a man whose only business during the whole year is to keep the firm thoroughly informed simply as to rates of freight on their line of goods. These rates in the time of our fathers were considered a fixed quantity. Then one was in the region of trade-winds in business, and knew what he had to depend upon. By the inventions since that time we have been moved, without our connivance, into the belt of variable winds, and must learn to shift our sails and to tack about with a velocity and with an unexpectedness which would have killed the respectable merchants of old times, and goes a long way toward killing us. The mind has to change with the sky now in a way unknown to the old Latin poet. In this whirl of business, added to by the increasing demands on all sides, everybody is in danger of overtaxing the amount of nervous force at his disposal, for it must never be forgotten that this is not an infinite quantity, but one which is strictly measured out to each one of us, and, as has been said before, one of which Nature will keep very strict account, though we do not. We may think to cheat her by elixirs and by tonics, by coffee and alco-

hol, but such things are only the spur to the tired horse. They do not and never can add to the force we have at our disposal. The only ways to keep that up are those which God has ordained, of rest and sleep. Still, as I have said, there are many small devices by which we can bring our inventive power to our help, and this inventive power could certainly never be put to better use than in aiding those of us who must work continually, and yet who must not wear out, and cannot die just at present, because we are needed, to conserve all the working energy that we have.

The most unfortunate thing seems to be that it is precisely the persons that are most needed that are likely to be over-tired, because they are those upon whom everybody who has a mission feels himself at liberty to call, and who are apt to be endowed with a dangerous amount of conscientiousness as to their duties. We all know that when the clergyman wants any help in his parish, or when there is any money to be raised, he is forced to summon those who have already more than they ought to do, if he would expect valuable assistance. The real tragedies of life are often to be found where we should perhaps least expect them. They are going on before us in the lives of many a wife and mother in our American cities to-day, who, between her duties to her husband, her children, her church, and the calls of society, which she often must not slight because of her husband's position, present or aspired to, is being killed before our eyes, tortured at the same time by the incompetent domestic service which makes house-keeping and the creation of a comfortable home almost an impossibility. One such woman I saw die in New York only a few years ago at thirty-nine, literally killed by the brave effort to do all her duty; and they are "dying thus around us every day," with brave smiles on their faces. You may see them by hundreds in the streets and at afternoon receptions in any American city if you have been initiated into the band, and know the passwords and the grip. If you do not, you will think that they are brilliant and beautiful women, and involuntarily bow the head before them for their goodness and their womanliness, but you will not know that you are rendering homage to martyrs as truly as if you saw them led into the Coliseum as

playthings for a Numidian lion, and just as truly on account of their religion. If to any one of these women—whom I know all, though I can call only a terribly small proportion of them by name—I may give some little help before it is too late, I shall be very glad. At any rate, they shall know that I do know them and that I will try.

The amount of work that one can do depends greatly on the balance between his nervous force and his muscular strength, and not so much on the absolute amount of either. With some, the balance is so nicely adjusted that there is very little danger of their ever wearing out. If it were not for the Divine decree that no life can be perfect which does not include death as one of its phases, it would seem as if they might live forever. We must depend upon our muscular strength in great measure for the fresh air and exercise which are needed to keep in health the nervous forces, and therefore when we find the brain largely out-balancing the muscles, we have a dangerous temperament, and one that needs watching and care. This is more likely to be the case, of course, with women in general than with the majority of men. We may, perhaps, leave out of the question entirely the many in whom the muscular strength is very much in the preponderance. We really have to do, in a discussion of this kind, only with those in whom the brain, from its larger size or its greater activity, or both, calls for a disproportionate share of the nourishment furnished to the entire body, every part of which is constantly wearing out and being in constant need of repair. There are light signs of nervous over-work which many do not particularly notice, but which are the vanguard of the danger signals. If all our powers are in perfect equilibrium, we ride in a rattling vehicle and scarcely notice the continual clatter; but if the nerves have been a little more worn out than they have been built up, we can hardly think of anything else, and it seems as if we could not endure to stay in our places till we reach our destination. Some people are more sensitive to light than to sound; with some it is the other way; and the first class in such case will complain of the intolerable glare of the sunshine, and try to get relief by hanging still heavier draperies at their windows, thereby making

the mistake of shutting out one of God's most powerful tonics. Or one may find herself suddenly unwarrantably irritable on insufficient grounds. When this happens, the evil is already far on its way, and demands attention.

There is one stage of weariness when we desire to sit still and see other people work; this is comparatively a mild form, though it testifies, I think, to more danger than those before spoken of. In this state there is no more satisfactory place than a luxurious arm-chair in a theatre. It is delight just to see the orchestra straining themselves over their instruments; and when the real dramatic work begins, it does not seem to matter much whether it be good or bad from any artistic point of view, if only the actors will tear themselves to tatters, while we sit absolutely still, and hardly take the trouble to think. I suppose the relief here comes from the truth lying behind the old proverb that "misery loves company," or possibly it may come from our pleasure in vivid contrasts. But the going to the theatre in America can be only a palliative, not a cure, for the morbid state, for it generally means bad air and late hours, and those who have been or are using up nervous force faster than they are making it must, above all things, have all the sleep that they can get. There is, however, a worse stage of weariness than this. If this goes on unchecked, there will come a time when not only one instinctively avoids effort for one's self, but when he cannot endure seeing any one else making any exertion; when he does not like to ride up hill, because the mere sight of the tightly drawn traces and of the pulling horses, who are probably enjoying the exercise, is painful; when one shuts his eyes that he may not see the regular curves on the top of the seat in front of him in a railroad car, because he cannot help thinking wearily that some one had to decide just at what point of the curve up it was to be changed to a down curve, and exactly how many inches and fractions of an inch long the panels of the space between the windows had to be so that they would fit. At this state he would very much prefer to live in a world of chance than in one regulated in any way, even by Divine reason. He has entered too deeply into the secrets of the world's work and never-ceasing labor, and there seems no escape for him, except per-

haps by means of books, into the realm of fairy-land, where there exists no distinction even between right and wrong. It seems thus that the evils which are the outcome of a highly developed civilization bring with them their own cure, for art and literature—especially sculpture in the one, and fiction in the other—offer us help even in this state, so that we are not entirely cast away. The fiends that torment us cannot follow into the enchanted forest of Ardennes and the Dream of the Midsummer Night, or on the windy plains of Troy; while the perfect freedom in Greek statuary, if we will only make ourselves passive, and let ourselves be acted upon by it, will bathe our souls in temporary rest. But it is always only ancient art, I think, that can do this, for the modern artist, strive he never so earnestly, and perhaps for the reason that he does strive earnestly, can never manage to get rid of the "endless toil and endeavor," which is just what we are weary with. If we turn to architecture, we shall find that we must leave to those who have had less of the world's work to do than we the aspiring Gothic cathedrals. And we look at the ruins of the Parthenon with the sad inquiry of a friend of mine: "Why couldn't the Greeks, who were so far-seeing, have known enough to build two Parthenons—one for posterity, and one for adversity? They might have known that something was sure to happen to one of them at least, before the discovery of America and of the telegraph; they might have duplicated the original one, which was for their own use, in some thick olive wood, and put up a sign there saying, 'This is *not* the way to the Parthenon.' Then the Turks might have played with one, and by this time Dr. Schliemann would have discovered the other, and we should have been saved. In its perfect lines we could have really rested. But now it is too late!" And then she goes to the depot and buys a ticket for a six hours' trip, for, she says, "it is such a comfort not to have the fireman come in to ask whether he shall put any more coal on the fire, and the engineer pulls his throttle-valve without looking to see if I signal him; and even if the train runs off the track, it is none of my business, and I am sure that it is not my fault, and nobody will think of blaming me for it." The swinging motion of the car and the rhythm of the sounds put her into a

heavy sleep, and so for another reason than that which she has assigned for her journey she comes back the next day ready to go to work again.

But the question is, what shall people do who are conscious that they are over-drawing their deposits in the bank of nervous supply, and yet must go on working, and continually? Of course every one can easily see that in such a case we must cut off all unnecessary expenditures of nerve force, and that we must deposit the largest possible amount of the same; for, after all, our nerve force, as has been said before, is our life. Without it, and enough of it, we cannot digest our food, nor even keep our hearts beating. Everything that we do and that we think stops when that stops, and if we have not enough to run the whole complex machine in the complex conditions of our modern life, some one of the organs of our bodies will have to suffer, just as some of the poor man's children have to go barefoot if there are not shoes enough to go round. So we must give attention to the food we eat that it shall be of a sort to digest easily, and to furnish the greatest possible amount of nourishment with the least possible amount of work put upon the digestive organs. Remember, we have no force to throw away in any department. Economy of expenditure must be the universal rule if the working condition is to be maintained. Next, as supplying food for the tired brain—perhaps I should have said first—comes sleep; for it is only when we are dreamlessly asleep that the brain is not working, be it never so slowly. Always while we are awake we are thinking about something; that is, we are breaking down and reducing brain cells to the condition of useless matter. Even the slightest fancy that flits through the mind as we lie on the grass and imagine that we are doing nothing, does not fail to reduce our active power, and even if we had been made capable of absolute idleness, all the operations of our bodies which are necessary to the preservation of life, such as the beating of our heart and the muscular movements which carry on respiration, demand for their performance a certain amount of the total nerve force of the body. When we are asleep truly, the outgo is reduced to a minimum, while the repairing forces still remain busily at work during our slumber, and that is the explanation of the

feeling of refreshment which we have after a night of quiet sleep. It is amazing how much even five or ten minutes of unconsciousness will do toward this refreshment—showing how great is the repairing power of sleep. As regularity in eating will prevent and even cure many forms of indigestion, so regularity in sleep will in the first stages of sleeplessness—that torment which is sure to fall upon those who are overtaxing their nerve force—be, perhaps, quite enough to stop the trouble. There is nothing which tends more to become a machine than the human body, if it be not indeed the human mind, and if it is called on every night at the same time to furnish sleep, it may be relied upon to do it with some considerable degree of certainty. So sure is Montaigne of the beneficent effect of regularity that he says it is far wiser not to change the usual diet on any little illness, for, as he justly observes, it is surely not at the time when the body is out of order that it can be tolerant of a change in its accustomed habits.

There is nothing more conducive to the rapid wearing out of any machine than jerks, of whatever kind. The street-car horses would live and be useful much longer if it were not for the necessity under which they must work, of constantly stopping and starting with a jerk. Do not lend your favorite sewing-machine to anybody who cannot run it smoothly and regularly, if you do not want to have every part of it strained and worn. Go to bed, then, regularly at the same time every night if you can; and if sleep does not at once come when you are ready for it, do not toss about, but lie perfectly still, even to the little finger. This will help it to come; and even if it does not come at once, the utter rest which the muscular force is getting by not being called upon for contractions or relaxations will, at any rate, save any extra expenditure of nerve strength. It may be objected that the holding one's self perfectly still when the tendency is to throw one's self about demands no inconsiderable amount of will, and that that must make as much demand upon the brain as movements; but I am not speaking of persons in perfect health; I am speaking of those who are already in an unnatural state, and who are reduced to the necessity of, as it were, fighting fire with fire. If they had not used their will too much, if they

had not time and time again forced up the unwilling body to the labor from which it shrank, as one forces up a horse to a leap which he instinctively knows to be of doubtful height for his strength, I should have nothing to say to them. But as it is true that we can conquer physical Nature only by her own powers craftily turned against her, using her own force of gravitation to overcome weight in the lever and the pulley, and the substances which she has forged with fire to build our fire-proof buildings, so now we can meet and conquer only by force of will—type of the Divine creative will—through which we have for years and years been forcing up the reluctant bodily forces to do our bidding. And now the vapor will not go back into the casket, the flying horse on which you have made your journeys will not descend because the wooden peg in his neck has become fast, the mill which was so useful to grind your corn will not stop grinding even in the night season. These things are your masters now, not your slaves, and the demon of sleeplessness, more horrible and more fatal than the Old Man of the Sea, is upon you, insisting upon your working without, nay, against your will, just as the screw of the vessel whirls round as the wave lifts it out of the water, and shakes her from stem to stern, uselessly and harmfully, as if driven by some demonic power. The demonic power in you, however, is not demonic, but only a heavenly power perverted, like all other so-called demonic powers, for it is, as I have said, only your own will, type of the Divine will, creative will, by which for years and years you have forced up the reluctant bodily powers to do your bidding.

Do not then complain, nor hesitate to use your will to keep yourself perfectly quiet. Only be devoutly thankful that you have enough at your command to do this; and if after a while this will not do, eat something, which by this time you should have learned always to have within reach. One cracker will often be enough to send you into the region of unconsciousness. The physiological reason for the working of this simple remedy is perfectly plain. But if you are accustomed to lie awake for hours, you had better make a practice of eating regularly before going to bed, preferably something warm. While you are waiting for sleep to come to you, you will certainly be thinking of

something, probably of the very things which you are most tired of considering; and here, too, you must use your will to determine the course of your thought, and if it persistently goes back to the avoided topic, you must just as persistently call it away and set it on another track. What that track shall be matters not much, but it must be of your own *choosing*, and it must be something which involves a little exercise of the memory, a list of incidents which you recall with a little difficulty, say either in your life or in the life of some one else, and which have a certain order in regard to time, or an arbitrary one which you have given them. To repeat poetry which one knows by heart, or to count, is not enough; I think there must always be a little call upon the memory to produce the best result. If you make a mistake in the order of your events, start at the beginning and go over them again, and if you do this over and over, you will often find that you begin to do it sleepily, and then the battle is won. It may do to rehearse an imaginary sermon which you are going to deliver in case you should ever be requested to preach in Trinity Church. You can arrange your heads, and try to secure sub-heads enough under each to occupy the time assigned; but do not get very much interested in the real welfare of the congregation, for if you allow emotion to invade the domain of thought, you have lost the game, and will have to begin all over again. Never allow yourself to plan what you are to *do*. Don't get into the realm of real action, unless it be past action, and, again and again, be sure you make some demand on abstract memory. Lie in such a way as to leave every muscle in a state of relaxation. In other words, lie as if you were dead. You will find it possible to withdraw your will from even the tips of the fingers, if you will make an effort so to do. Put yourself with regard to every muscle as much as possible into the state of a man who is dead drunk. Do not put your hands into any definite position. Let them drop where and how they will. It may be added that the slow swinging of a hammock is certainly provocative of sleep. There seems to be a direct *drowsy-ing* influence on the brain produced by the rhythmical swing, which gradually grows slower, and finally dies out by imperceptible gradations; and I think that any one who has ever had a hammock

slung in his room will have come to the conclusion that the instinct of the human race was right when it fashioned rockers for the baby's cradle.

So much directly for sleep. But one way of help outside of this is to make yourself as much as possible a creature of habit as to your every-day life. Some regular routine—the most that you can secure under your circumstances—will prove of great assistance, in that it will relieve you of the necessity of constant decisions as to what you are to do, and when. It will put you somewhat in the position of an irresponsible person, or, at any rate, of a person who is responsible only for the carrying out of the orders of another. Allow yourself, then, to fall into as many habits as you can. We do most easily that which we have a habit of doing, from the physiological reason that, as is said by Professor H. C. Wood, in the *Century* for March, 1890, if a nerve cell has once acted, it has a tendency to act again in a similar manner. He was speaking of fatigued cavalymen falling asleep on the road. I quote his words: "There was no upper brain memory of the past, no consciousness of the present, in that automatic mass of man and horse which, though sleeping, walked forward by virtue of the recollection that lay in the lower nerve centres. Memory is, then, entirely apart from consciousness. It is a function of nervous matter to be impressed with its own actions. If the action has been sufficiently repeated, the memory of it becomes stamped upon the little cell, and that stamp remains and dominates that cell. As a result of the influence exerted upon the cell, there has been formed, so to speak, a mould of that influence, by virtue of which, when the stimulant again comes, the cell reacts as it formerly had done. It is this fact which makes the training of children possible, and it is this that makes the responsibility of training children so terrible. Fixed habits are but the expression of organic form in nerve cells." A consideration of these well-known facts will show that it is possible to save a great deal of nervous energy by filling our lives with habits. It is stated on good authority that all great actors make use of this fact to render it possible for them to exist and to represent night after night the most exhausting human passions. They reduce much of their work to habit, and thereby

save strength. It is the necessity under which most of us labor of making the constant decisions demanded by the complex conditions of modern city life that does as much as anything to wear us out.

You have necessarily a great many details to arrange, a great many things to care for, and very little time to do this in. They are things of no value in themselves, they are trifles, and yet it is upon the proper care of these trifles that often the whole comfort of a household depends. Do not try to carry these in your memory. Keep always with you—I am speaking of sensible women, and I take it for granted that all such have attainable pockets—a little memorandum-book, dated on each page for the days of the year. If anything is to be done at a certain time, put it down when you think of it, on its proper page. You will soon form a habit of looking at your book every morning, and you will find there, already set down for you, what you would otherwise have to think of for the day. If you are going to buy things in different shops, arrange from this before you go out the most convenient order in which to visit them, and then follow it as mechanically as if you were a little child, and had been sent out on errands for some one else. I have met with people who objected to this plan of writing down things to be done, seeming to have a feeling that to do so would imply some mental incapacity on their part. Many persons seem to think that the memory is a very high faculty of the mind, and mournfully presage a failure of their powers because they can no longer remember insignificant dates, names, and facts. But this abstract memory, which has for its office to recall quite unconnected and meaningless things, is really one of the lowest faculties that we have, and one in which we are excelled by many animals—the horse, for example. There is no disgrace in not being able to remember names and dates, or the numbers of the houses of our friends. In fact, we ought to feel ourselves glad that our minds are capable of higher and more fruitful contents. But, at any rate with those for whom I am writing, the question is not how they shall invest unlimited millions, but how they shall make the best disposition of the very limited means at their command, while there seems to be only constant increase in the daily and never-ceasing demands. Do not try to remem-

ber at all things which you want to remember only for one day. To do this is simply to cultivate what is known in pedagogics as the "carrying memory," the memory of the railroad conductor for the faces of the passengers on his train, and that cultivated by the crammers who fit our boys and girls for examinations. Except to assure the conductor that he has collected all his fares, except to enable the children to boast of having "passed the examination"—that is, of having walked across a bridge which leads nowhere in particular—there is nothing gained by such a memory. But worse than this, there is no habit which is surer to destroy all capacity for any continuous and useful thinking. To have the mind habitually full of the petty details of every day is, as many a mother of a family sorrowfully knows, to become absolutely unable to read anything but the daily paper, and to see herself compelled to much the same life as that of the tread-mill horse; to feel herself shut out from all the broad and life-giving currents of thought, to find herself at last unable to interest or even to amuse those whom she longs to serve, and to see herself growing old before her time. For nothing cuts the wrinkles of age so quickly and surely as the holding of the mind on the petty trifles of every day; nothing keeps man or woman young and fresh like broad and deep mental activity. Use, then, your little memorandum-book—it must be little, so that you can have it with you always—to keep safe for you the things which you have to do for every day, and save your mind to do what the Creator intended it to do—to grow and develop continually. After all, the life is more than meat, and surely we are bound for another country than that in which we now are. This we are apt too often practically to forget, though we may acknowledge it regularly on Sundays.

It is not the work but the worry which kills. There is no tonic for the body like regular work of the mind, though this is unfortunately not often appreciated or not allowed by the physicians to whom anxious mothers take their growing daughters. There is nothing so sure to steady the nerves of the fretful and excitable child as regular school work in the hands of a real teacher. Many a child who is celebrated for dangerous fits of temper at home becomes entirely trans-

formed under the influence of such a school, till her nearest relatives would not recognize her if they should ever take the time and the trouble to visit the school-room. I do not mean a school-room full of competitive examinations, of "marks," and of irrelevant inducements to make the child commit to memory a mass of unrelated and undigested facts; I mean one where, without any inducement but the natural desire for knowledge, which is all-sufficient with any American child if it be rightly directed, you find steady and well-ordered labor, without haste, though not without rest, and honest, thorough, and pleasurable work. We may learn a lesson from this fact—for it is no theory—of the effect of regular work on our tired nerves, and wise shall we be if we apply it. Even the most consistent homœopathic physician could not object to this kind of tonic, though he would tell you, and truly, that tonics are worse than of no use for overworked nerves.

In every way you must put yourself in the condition to be rested, for, after all, you are in higher hands than your own, and pretty much all you can do is to furnish occasions for anything that deserves the name of real rest. You cannot get at it simply by your will; it cannot be taken by force any more than the kingdom of heaven. The way to it lies not through the path of the overruling of law, but in conformity to it, just as the way to the abolition of the curse of slavery in this country lay. All you can do is to put yourself in the position of rest, and then wait. Take, then, voluntarily all the quietness that is possible for you. If there is anything which you have been accustomed to do standing, and which you can do sitting, make yourself sit down to it. Many people waste more energy in dressing, for instance, than would suffice, properly expended, to learn stenography or the use of the type-writer. But to find out just where in the manifold and oft-repeated process of putting off and putting on clothes, wasted energy in walking and in standing can be saved, requires thought and invention. Most people will be surprised to find how much can be saved. For those who are honestly and necessarily trying to make their "little economies," to use a French expression, equal their necessary nervous expenditures, the old rule may be good, though it would not do

for the world in general—"Never stand when you can sit, and never sit when you can lie down." Avoid all unobjectified motion. I mean, if you are waiting for a street car, do not describe arabesques with the end of your umbrella in the mud or dust of the sidewalk. Do not play with your shopping bag; let your watch chain obey the impulse of gravitation without interference from you; sit perfectly still at the table, and let your knife and your napkin-ring rest too. It would seem that I am unnecessarily repeating only the rules of good-breeding, but it will do no harm to repeat them when they coincide, as here, with the laws of desired health.

By this time you ought to feel a sympathy with even inanimate things, and want to let them lie still. You ought to want to go and help the poor little mullein fallen behind in the great mullein procession that every summer climbs the rocky hill-side, and which has succeeded only in poking its head through the bars of the fence till it is all twisted with the effort—you ought to want to help even the little mullein to get through, and to relieve it from what must be a horrible ache in its woolly neck. The general rule is, make no motion which has not a definite aim and object; and those who will follow this rule, and check themselves every time that they find themselves breaking it, will be surprised to discover not only how many these motions are, but also what a reflex influence toward quietness will be exerted on the mind.

The great master Balzac, than whom no one, not even Shakespeare, has more deeply studied human nature, says of one of his most celebrated characters, one of his masterly misers, "This man used to pause in the middle of what he was saying and remain silent while a carriage was passing, so as not to force his voice." We who need to hoard our nervous energy may learn even from the old miser. Do not, when you are resting, so much as take the pains to place your hands in any particular position. Let them fall where they will, and lie there undisturbed. Even such little things as these will help to put you into the condition of passivity, and that is exactly what you need. It is by a long series of just such trifling activities that you have become to Nature the debtor who has arrears to make up, and she does not object at all to the instalment plan, though she will exact her full pay, even

to the uttermost farthing. Shut your eyes whenever you can, and keep them shut. This will not only rest the nerves of the eye, but will remove from your perception many objects which otherwise, if you saw them, you would at least idly wonder about, or which very probably might start a train of thought. It is not necessary for you to see everything in the room where you happen to be. In fact, it is quite desirable that you should not. I venture to hazard the inquiry whether one reason why near-sighted eyes have the reputation of lasting longer than others may not be that they are not used so much. Their owner knows that there are many things which he cannot see distinctly, and hence does not make the effort to see them, and his eyes thus get more rest than if they were normal. But, at any rate, that we have eyelids is a pretty sure indication that we were intended to make use of them to rest the eyes. Take, then, all the voluntary rest which you can get, and for every muscle of the body, not forgetting the little ones of the fingers and the eyes. For those people who are the busiest there is no loss but rather a gain of time in this. The following from one of our best-known physicians describes one way of taking voluntary rest: "How do I do it? I retire to my study, and having darkened the room, I light a cigar, sit down, and perform the operation. How to describe it I don't know, but it is a condition as nearly like sleep as sleep is like death. It consists in doing absolutely nothing. I close my eyes, and try to stop all action of the brain. I think of nothing. It only takes a little practice to be able to absolutely stifle the brain. In that delightful condition I remain at least ten minutes, perhaps twenty. That is the condition most favorable to digestion, and it is that which accounts for the habit animals have of sleeping after eating. I would much rather miss a large fee than that ten minutes every day."

The Arab proverb says, "Hurry is the devil," and this is certainly true in the amount of nervous energy which it takes out of one. But that we may avoid getting into a hurry, one of the chief requisites is that everything belonging to us should be in perfect order. Everything that we own should at all times have its own place, and, unless in use, be always in that place. If we are not of those to whom

such order is a necessity and an æsthetic pleasure, then, if we would preserve all the nervous energy possible, we must cultivate the habit as one of our most precious possessions. One reason why there is rest in heaven is undoubtedly because its first law is order. The amount of time and of worry that is saved by having all things in place is simply incalculable. And like the habit of keeping still, it exerts a powerful reflex influence on the mind, a fact which is seldom appreciated by school-teachers, if one may judge by the condition in which we are sure to find the desks of the children if we open them at an unexpected time.

For those who are tired, and who have the courage and the perseverance which are necessary to lift themselves out of the trouble in which their wills have placed them, it may be added that it will often be quite as necessary for them to avoid pleasure as annoyance. For a concert may make as much demand upon the nervous strength as a piece of work, in the call which it gives to the emotions.

But—and this is often the most important thing to be said—there is nothing which will give a chance for rest to over-tired nerves so surely as a simple religious faith in the overruling, wise, and tender Providence which has us in its keeping. It is in chafing against the conditions of our lives that we tire ourselves immeasurably. It is in being anxious about things which we cannot help that we often do the most of our spending. A simple faith in God which practically and every moment, and not only theoretically and on Sundays, rests on the knowledge that He cares for us at least as much as we care for those who are the dearest to us, will do much to give the tired nerves the feeling of the bird in its nest. Do not spend what strength you have, like the clematis, in climbing on yourself, but lay hold on things that are eternal, and the peace of them will pass into your soul like a healing balm. Put yourself in the great everlasting currents, and then you can rest on your oars, and let those currents bear you on their strength.

NO ANSWER.

BY ELIZABETH STODDARD.

YOU tell me not, green multitude of leaves,
Mingling and whirling with the wilful breeze,
Nor you, bright grasses, trembling blade to blade,
What meaneth June, to hap us every year.

The spirit of the flowers is watching now,
As winking in the sun they suck the dew,
The thickets parley with the splendid fields—
What meaneth June, to hap us every year?

Up where the brook laps round the shining flags,
And tinkles foam bells past the weedy shore,
And where the willow swings above the trout—
What meaneth June, to hap us every year?

The clouds hold knowledge in their snowy peaks,
They hide it in their moving fleecy folds,
They share it with the sunset's golden isles—
What meaneth June, to hap us every year?

Fulness and sweetness, and the power of life,
Must I in ignorance remain alone,
And yield the quest of speech for certain proof?
What meaneth June, to hap us every year?

Sweetness and beauty, and the power of life,
Is it creation's anthem—parts for all?
Is this the knowledge—will you answer me?
What meaneth June, to hap us every year?