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EDITORIAL

## THE WHITE PLAGUE A “STIMULUS.”

By DANIEL DE LEON

**A**CCORDING to the Hamilton, Ont., *Herald* of April 15, one of the speakers at the opening of a tuberculosis exhibition in Leicester, England, “had much to say in praise of consumption as an intellectual stimulus.” According to the *Herald*, the speaker afore referred to said among other things: “Some of the finest of Chopin’s music was the result of this disease; Robert Louis Stevenson wrote his finest works under its influence; and the generous, steady optimism of John Stuart Mill has been attributed to the same disease.”

One should expect that such an introductory passage in an editorial article could only be the excuse for and the prelude of a severe lecture read to the cruel and certainly shallow speaker at the opening of the Leicester tuberculosis exhibition. Not so. To the list of eminent consumptives the *Herald* adds the names of Keats, Raphael and Jane Austen. And closes with these words:

“It is not improbable that their powers of imagination were stimulated by the disease which was preying on their physical frames. And there is some small amount of comfort in the thought that even the dread scourge of tuberculosis has its compensating advantage, however small.”

We have been taught by our pious, Christian bourgeois that poverty and misery and wretchedness “make the man,” and are a stimulus upon his manhood. We are now to be made to believe that, like Pomeranian ducks, which are made diseased in order to serve as “delicatessen,” the tortures of the white plague—a disease mainly of poverty, misery and wretchedness—are a mighty stimulus to, instead of what they certainly are, a mighty drag upon, genius.

Oh, the olden heathens, whose ideal was “Mens Sana in Corpore Sano”—A

Healthy Mind in a Healthy Body—had they lived in these our Christian days, how much wiser they would be!

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