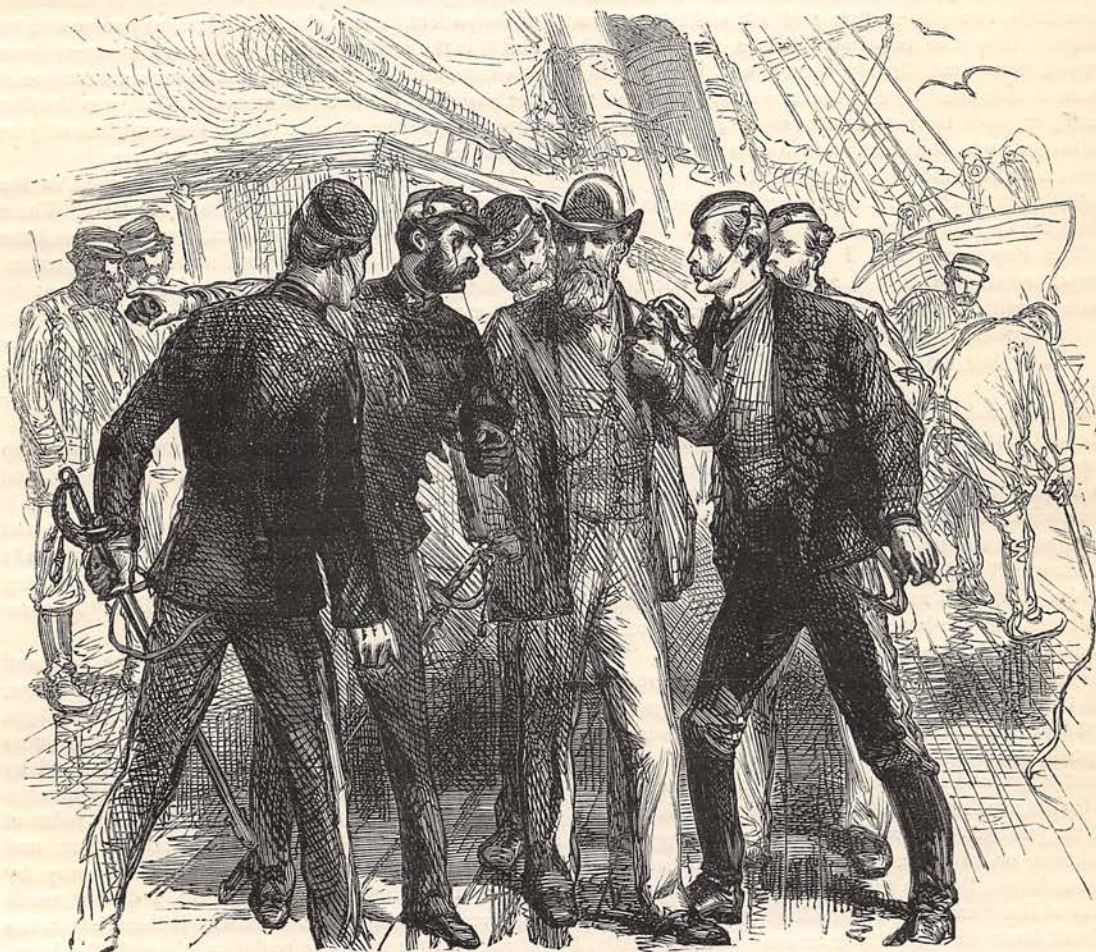


## A CURE FOR SEA-SICKNESS.

BY A NAVY SURGEON.

**A**LTHOUGH this is properly speaking a medical subject, still, in these days when everybody travels, it is one which cannot fail to have an interest for all, and the hints herein given for the amelioration of sea-sickness, will have more chance of being seen by the general public than in a purely professional sheet.

mencement of each new commission, but, strange to say, every time the ship enters upon a new sea. Thus after cruising for some time in the Indian Ocean, in which he was "sea-fast" even to hurricane-point, being homeward bound, he was sick for some hours among the big waves that roll around the Cape, although it only blew half a gale at the time. He



"INSTANTLY SURROUNDED BY A BEVY OF EXCITED SOLDIERS" (p. 462).

I have been for nearly twelve years at sea, and have seen and treated sea-sickness in all its different phases and degrees. One sees a great deal of this sort of suffering in the Navy, but more in emigration ships, especially in the noble steamers of the P. and O. Company, by which so many delicately reared ladies travel every day. Every one indeed, with a few happy exceptions, who goes "down to the sea in ships" suffers from *mal de mer* more or less at first. It is the penalty which old Neptune inflicts on all those who invade his dominions.

There are some who never get quite over it—one old officer I know, who not only gets sick at the com-

hardened up, however, even before the sea went down, and only succumbed to the malady a week farther north, in a cat's-paw squall with no sea on. He was ill again while the vessel was in the doldrums on the line, and again among the chopping seas of the English Channel. Women suffer more than men, being of a more nervous temperament, and children often have a happy immunity from sea-sickness. I once took charge of a P. and O. steamer, outward bound, in lieu of the ship's surgeon, who had met with an accident shortly after we got under weigh—the truth is, it was his first voyage, and old Nep had as usual presented his little bill. I was going forward on

the main-deck in the afternoon, when I heard a voice say, "Oh! here he is at last," and I was instantly surrounded by a bevy of excited soldiers (officers).

"For Heaven's sake, doctor," cried one, "go to cabin so-and-so and see my poor wife."

"And my little sister is there too," said another—"dreadfully ill, I know."

"My wife is there too, doctor," exclaimed a third, "and I know she is going to die—stewardess said so."

"The stewardess is in a wicked mood then," thought I, as I hurried away to the cabin indicated. It contained four beds, two placed fore and aft and two athwart ships. Into the two lower berths the ladies who owned them had already turned, and both lay in a state of collapse. One of the remaining two was too busily engaged to speak or take notice; the other, poor little soul, was standing, pale and scared, with one hand clutching the edge of her berth.

"Oh, doctor!" she cried imploringly, how ever, *ever* shall I get up on to that dreadful shelf?"

The stewardess and I got them both on their respective shelves at last, after which I proceeded to make inquiries at each what she would take, sparkling hock, Moselle, or simple soda and B.

Mrs. A. only wanted her "dear Charlie" to come to her.

Mrs. B. asked, *would* I do her the favour to open the port, and cast her out into "the raging element." I said I should have been happy, but a sea might come in and wet the other ladies; but if she would walk on deck with me, I would ask the captain to rig the plank; upon which she smiled faintly, and said, "A tiny drop of Moselle."

Mrs. C. wished to know if "the sailor men weren't lowering the life-boats," and how long it would be "before the ship went down with all hands."

I gave them a stimulating draught all round, and left them to go to another cabin. I didn't get much rest that night, I can tell you. The same scene was repeated in all the ladies' cabins, the same illness and prostration, and the same silly requests and questions.

Before speaking about the treatment of this malady, let me just say one word about the *pathology* of sea-sickness, or, to speak more plainly, the *reason why*. Sea-sickness, then, is caused primarily by the disturbance of the circulation of the blood through the brain. We all know what garotting means—not practically, I trust—garotting is caused by the sudden check of the flow of blood to the brain, by the compression of one or more of the large arteries that ascend in the neck. The brain being temporarily deprived of blood, insensibility follows, and sickness, and general illness on recovery. Now, sea-sickness is caused, in the first place, by the unequal circulation of the blood through the capillaries, or hair-like vessels of the brain, owing to the jerky motion of the ship. It is primarily, in fact, a state of semi-garotting of the capillaries, and sympathetic retching and vomiting is bound to follow. All experience seems to bear me out in my ideas of the pathology of sea-sickness. One example: some sailors, myself for one, never feel the slightest feeling of illness, even in a hurricane, unless the ship is struck in rapid

succession by one or two cross seas; then the impulse to be momentarily sick is quite sudden. Again, by whirling rapidly round in one direction, for some little time, you produce capillary garotting, by the uncertain jerkiness of your evolutions, and excite even on shore a qualminess resembling the first approach of *mal de mer*. Motion continued in one direction will not produce "capillary garotting," as in the upward flight of a balloon. Motion induced by a swinging rope *will*, in people not used to it.

In diagnosing any disease, the opinion or sensations of the patient himself should always have some weight, and it is the feeling of nine out of ten sufferers from sea-sickness, that the symptoms always commence in the head. If the liver, or stomach itself, was the first organ to give the alarm, either of them might easily be accredited with being the principal sufferer.

Is there any change, then, it may be asked, in the brains of old sailors who are called "sea-fast?" There may be; the constant use of healthy exercise, and the ozonic breath of ocean, do wonders to tone the nerves, and increase the propelling power of heart and vessels. Who can tell the change that has taken place in the brain of the opium-eater, who can drink with impunity ten times the amount of laudanum which would stretch either you or me dead at his feet? Nature is very accommodating.

The only effects of any unusual motion of the ship upon a "sea-fast" sailor are to make him drowsy, and one never sleeps more soundly than when the ship is tearing along, with the wind whistling 'twixt mast and shroud, and the waves swilling up against the vessel's side, provided always you turn in with the comforting assurance that the vessel, like yourself, is "snug for the night."

In people not much accustomed to the sea, and even in some sailors on first commencing a voyage, there will be for some days, or even weeks, a slight bilious attack, with a little nausea and squeamishness in the morning, before breakfast. This is caused by a small portion of bile which has regurgitated into the stomach over-night; and some men make a point of swallowing a tumblerful of luke-warm water, and washing out the stomach (in the most natural way, by tickling the fauces with a feather); I do not much approve of this, however. But why is there bile in the stomach? because the circulation through the intestinal veins is rendered more sluggish by the motion of the ship on the brain, just as it is in any sort of brain illness. With regard to the bile which comes to be vomited after severe and some-time-continued retching, this is caused by the compressive action of the diaphragm and abdominal muscles upon the liver. One medical writer attributes this bilious vomiting to the "tickling and pounding" which the liver gets—he forgets that both the liver and brain are as much protected from slight concussions as if they were suspended like hammocks—and he comes to this conclusion by watching the water in the basins and decanters while he lay "on his back *crossways*" (no wonder he was sick) "to the ship. As we rolled, the water rolled too." Why, a less experienced "sailor"

than he, ought to have known that the water in the basin did not move at all; it merely appeared to move, while the ship with the basin moved about it. Water keeps its level, as even a cockroach coming to drink knows. No doubt the disturbance in the circulation is communicated even to the capillaries of the whole nervous system, and hence that extreme lassitude, depression, and weariness which at times make life itself feel a burden to the unhappy sufferer.

From the pathology we deduce the—

*Treatment of Sea-sickness.*—This resolves itself into two classes—namely, (1) that for short voyages, and (2) that for long.

To ask for a *specific* against sea-sickness is like asking for a royal road to learning. Every one must serve his apprenticeship ere he becomes “sea-fast.”

1.—The empty stomach theory will not, to use a nautical expression, bear a brace of shakes. Everything which tends to strengthen the system, and increase the circulation in power and volume, will tend to avert sea-sickness, and reduce it to a minimum when it does come. Therefore beware of going on board with an empty stomach: it is merely opening the door for the enemy to come in. *In mediis tutissimus ibis*, therefore, do not over-eat, and let what you do eat be solid and wholesome—no soup or beer; and beef-steak or underdone mutton in preference to fish or entrées. Brandy—a moderate allowance—is best; but if there is anything that agrees better with you on shore, take that instead, and dine about twenty minutes before coming on board. A further nip of brandy when the vessel is leaving the pier may do good.

So far so good. You have gone on board with a firm and tonic pulse. Keep your heart up—don't be nervous. I've known people be sea-sick from imagination before they had put a foot on board the steamer.

Suppose, now, you are going across Channel. Well, having embarked, if you can remain on deck, do so. Sit, or better still, lie, but have your face or your feet forward, and have a book to read. If you feel you can't remain on deck, then below with you at once, and turn in. Always choose a berth in which, when you lie down—this is medical phraseology—the long axis of your principal bloodvessels shall be parallel with the ship's greatest length, which means, always sleep fore and aft. Lie on your back, and place the pillow under your neck, so that the head shall hang partly over it.

There are only two medicines which I have ever seen do good in short voyages—namely, laudanum and hydrate of chloral. If you choose the first, take twenty-five or thirty drops in a table-spoonful of dry sherry a few minutes before you dine—on shore. If the latter is preferred—and I must say that it very often acts like a charm when taken as here advised—have the following prescription made up before you go on board.—Lieblich's double-crystallised chloral hydrate, 20 grs. for a lady, or 25 grs. for a gentleman; tincture of ginger and tincture of orange-peel, of each half a dram; water, one ounce and a half. Take the bottle to your berth, and after you have composed yourself, take the first third of the draught about ten minutes

before the vessel starts. Then, when she has started, and the horrible noise which merchant-sailors make when getting away from a pier has subsided, turn your face gently to the “wall,” count sixty, to make sure you are composed, and swallow the remainder.

2.—For a long voyage, go into training at least three weeks before your vessel sails. Drink very little stimulant, so that the stomach shall be in its very best working order; take plenty of exercise, plenty of food, and an iron tonic of some sort to pull you well together. While on the voyage, abjure the use of all narcotics, do with as little spirits and beer as possible, or better still, with none at all, more especially as you will soon be coming into warm weather.

I am quite alive to the benefits derivable from purgatives taken a day or two before embarking. The motion of the ship, affecting the brain, always produces more or less inactivity of the intestinal circulation. The purgative used must be one which will unload the portal veins without causing much irritation of the stomach. When asked to recommend one, I always say, “Take a claret-glassful of German Pullna-water an hour before breakfast on the morning you start.” This medicine only operates once, and is in every way beneficial. Take a bottle or two in your cabin portmanteau, to use occasionally after you have been at sea for a few days.

The great secret of getting over sea-sickness in two or three days is to set yourself determinedly to conquer. Believe me, bogey Neptune is an awful bully. Resist him, and he will flee from you. Never give in, then, for a single day; get up betimes in the morning, and, before leaving your berth, make the steward bring you a cup of strong coffee, and a bit of dry ship's biscuit, then turn out and have a *cold salt-water bath*—this is an essential part of my treatment. Next take a turn on deck before breakfast, and have a sniff of the “caller” sea-breeze. Now go down to breakfast orderly and determined, and not only to that meal, but every meal, and instead of putting yourself on slops and low diet, and making an invalid old woman of yourself, make this your rule: Eat whatever you fancy, and as much as you care for. Go about your avocations—reading, &c.—all day as you would on shore. Above all, take lots of exercise; let your motto be *tramp, tramp, tramp*. If you act thus, you will be astonished how soon you will get well and hungry, while others are lying on their backs on the saloon sofas, nursing Nep, and getting daily weaker. When thirsty in hot weather, ask the steward for ice, and the doctor for sherbet, but avoid spirits like poison. Iced beer is allowable in moderation.

Ladies make, as a rule, the worst of patients; they won't do as they are told, and so succumb to the malady; and the roughest old sea-dog of a doctor couldn't drill a lady on deck, and threaten her with a ducking if she didn't remain there.

These suggestions are all practical, and when carried properly out, I never saw them fail. If they are unsuccessful, reader, there is only one other means to certainly prevent sea-sickness—next time you think of going to sea, stop at home.