

HOW TO PRESERVE EYESIGHT AND HEARING.

BY A FAMILY DOCTOR.



IT is strange, but true, that in this world of ours we never fully appreciate the value of anything we possess until it seems about to slip from our grasp. The friend we love, now far away in a foreign land, we never thought he was such a good-hearted, genial fellow, until that last short week before his departure. We did not dream we should have missed him so, until we had

shaken hands with him on Southampton pier, and had waved him a last adieu. The honest colley that lies on the rug at our feet, and that has been our trusty friend for twelve long years and over, whose loving eyes, though dim with age, are ever dwelling fondly on us, as if himself conscious that he is "wearin' awa'"—we never thought till now that we could have loved him half so well.

No, we never sufficiently appreciate "the gifts the gods do give us," until, like the aged colley, they are "wearin' awa'," and of nothing is this more true than of our eyesight and hearing.

Ask that blind man yonder, who was not always so, what he would give to see once more? That poor deaf girl, who is so pretty, but looks at times so silly, what would she not give only to be as others are?

We all hope to live to grow old—I mean in years, for, as far as age goes, I could give you advice and prescriptions which, if followed and taken, should age you in a month. It is a goodly old age, a green old age, we all aspire to.

"I'm quite sure," I think I hear some lady fair remark, "I for one do not wish to live to grow old and silly, weak and stupid."

Perhaps not, but you would like to live, and live, and live, without any of these concomitant qualifications. And doubtless you will do as other people do, bide God's time, and accept each day as it is granted to you, and be thankful you are as you are. But it is while we are still young and strong, while the pride of manhood is still upon us, that we are the most prodigal of our eyesight and hearing, never thinking or caring to think how very useful the possession of those most precious gifts would be, if spared till age comes creeping on us, if we only preserve them now.

That both eyesight and hearing *can* be to a very large extent so preserved, it is the object of this paper to prove and show.

I could bring you now to the fireside of several old men, one of whom is a nonagenarian, who can both see and hear as well—at least, so they tell me—as when they were twenty.

"I have much to be thankful for," one of them said to me a day or two ago. "I can toddle to church when the weather and the rheumatism will allow me, and I can hear the parson preach; and I can read by the fire in winter, or out in the sunshine in the long days of summer. I don't seem to have grown old at all, only just put into port from stress of weather, and I'm waiting, sir, I'm waiting."

This veteran friend of mine can, I suspect, both see and hear better than the old Scotch widow, who meant to enter the holy bonds once more.

"You marry, mither! Why, you're blin'; you couldna see the peat-stack from the kitchen door."

"I'm no sae blin'," replied the widow; "I could even see a needle if you stuck it in the peat-stack."

The needle was stuck in the peat-stack, and the old lady went to the door to have a look. After a pause—

"I can see the needle weel eneuch," she said, "but *where in a' the warld is the peat-stack?*"

Before saying anything about hearing, I will first give a few hints about sight and its preservation, by which, if my readers will be guided, I can assure them they will be able to see a peat-stack at any reasonable distance, even if they should live till ninety.

The eye, of all organs of the body, is the most delicate and beautiful, the most fearfully and wonderfully made; and if we remember that it is subject to over forty different diseases, any one of which may derange or even destroy it, it is surely only a plain duty to do everything we can to retain the blessing of good sight.

A large number of these diseases are of an inflammatory character, and these can generally be kept at bay by avoiding exposure to cold, or wet, or damp, attention to the general health, and temperate living. Others are dependent upon mal-construction of the organ itself, and for these the skilful optician must be one's physician.

A disease of the eye not by any means uncommon, and which when taken early can usually be cured, is *amaurosis*, or *gutta serena*. There is great weakness, and some obscurity of vision, in the earlier stages; the patient has an uncertain gait, and a strange look about the eyes, from the sluggishness with which the eye contracts in the light. There is also at the same time deterioration of the general health. If this disease comes on from over-work, anxiety of mind, or debility—from whatever cause—perfect rest, tonics, sea-air, and cold bathing become imperative, if total blindness is to be averted.

A form of amaurosis is often produced from over-

exposure of the eyes to the light of a tropical sun, reflected from a light-coloured ground. This is common in Malta and Algeria, and even in Gibraltar, and goggles and glasses of different shades are worn to protect the eyes. A much better protection for the eyes would be to stay in-doors during the middle portion of the day. It is much more pleasant to recline in an orange-grove and sip sherbet than roam the dusty, glaring streets for the craze of sight-seeing.

Over-work and poring too long over books and papers, especially in the dusk or by gas-light, will, in process of time, weaken the strongest eyes in the world.

This is more especially to be avoided if you are at all near-sighted. A healthy, well-formed eye ought to be able to discern an object or line the 600th of an inch in diameter at a distance of six inches, and we should call a person near-sighted who could not read the ordinary small type at a distance of twelve inches.

Long or far-sightedness is one of the earliest symptoms of advancing old age when it is not the result of poverty of blood, in which case it may be corrected by iron tonics and quinine; everything that tends to strengthen the body and nerves generally keeps it at bay.

Many people complain of fatigue in the eyes, or weakness of sight; they cannot read or write for any length of time without the page becoming indistinct and the letters running into each other. These are symptoms which can be removed by attention to the general health, rest, tonics, and frequently (three or four times a day) bathing the forehead and eyes with cold water. But never neglect them. Cold bathing to the whole body every day, making a habit of it, in fact, is a grand conservation of sight. For this purpose, if the person can bear it, the shower-bath is the best. But in taking a plunge-bath, always dash a little water in the face first, then spring boldly in; don't take the water a toe at a time.

When your eyes are at all weak, never work or read in the twilight, and never go out in very bright sunshine, especially if the ground is covered with snow. Out in Greenland, after shooting for five or six hours on the ice, we used always to come on board as hungry as hawks, but blind as moles. We were all right while on the snow, but the steward had to lead us to the table, and assist us in eating. In about two hours we came round again. This snow-blindness is caused in a great measure by extreme contraction of the pupil. Cold water to the eyes and a few whiffs of chloroform tend to dispel it.

Colour-blindness is rather a strange affection, and any one so afflicted should never attempt to learn to be an artist, a signalman, or a sailor. However, I am convinced that this affection is often more apparent than real. I mean that it is not so much that the man does not know the difference in the colours, as that he forgets to name them aright. I first discovered this about three years ago, when serving in H.M.S. *Pembroke* at Sheerness. I was examining boys for entry, when one unusually fine lad turned out to be colour-

blind. I was sorry he should be lost to the service, and I kept him on board for a night till I should think. That same evening I found out that he had already served in a collier that plied between London and South Shields. This was enough for me, and next morning I had him up again. Eyes perfect and right at any range.

"Look here, my boy," I said, placing the colour-table before him. "You used to steer that old coal-tub of yours at times, didn't you—at night too?"

"I did, sir," was the answer.

"Well now, what colour of a light does a vessel carry on the port side?"

"Green, sir," was the reply.

(For the benefit of the lady reader, I should say here that the port light of a ship is *red*.)

"Point to the colour," was the next order.

He pointed at once to *red*. It was a confusion of terms, not a confounding of colours. I passed the lad, and kept him about the dispensary till he could tell any colour and even shade as well as I could myself.

Surely it is unnecessary for me here to raise my voice against that silly and most pernicious habit that some young ladies have of dilating the pupil with belladonna, or solution of atropine, before going to a party or ball. That it is done, and pretty frequently too, I have had ample means of ascertaining. A more certain way of spoiling the eyesight could hardly be devised; let those who doubt me try it for one season, and *see*, as the blind man said.

Regular living, temperance, a sufficient amount of both bodily and mental exertion, early hours, and *the bath*, are the chief preservatives to the eyesight.

In a recent article in this Magazine I warned my readers of the dangers of the golosh and the india-rubber macintosh; here I feel it my duty to warn them against a popular error with regard to eyesight. I refer to what are called conservative spectacles or "preserves."

Conservative spectacles should only be worn under good surgical advice. White light is the natural stimulus to a healthy eye. When I see a man with good sight wearing preserves, I feel inclined to ask him why he doesn't go upon crutches to preserve his legs.

Now for a word or two on hearing; and some of my readers, at all events, will be happy to learn that ninety per cent. of all cases of deafness and defective hearing can be cured or greatly mitigated. It would be quite impossible in so short a paper, and without the aid of diagrams, to give you any adequate description of the anatomy of so delicate and intricate an organisation as the ear. It will, however, suffice for my purpose if you consider it as simply a tube passing down through the temporal bone, and opening into the pharynx, or back portion of the throat; situated in the centre of this tube, is the mechanism of the ear proper, consisting of a thin vibratile membrane or partition called the drum, which divides it from the external ear, that portion of the tube into which you can insert your finger, a small and delicate chain of curiously-shaped and curiously-positioned bones, many minute muscles, and a

beautiful arrangement of nerves which convey the impression of sound to the brain. I only want you to remember that there is the external portion of the tube that secretes the wax; that this is separated by a delicate partition from the ear proper; and that this again communicates with the lower portion of the tube opening on to the back of the throat. If you close your mouth and hold your nose, and attempt to blow through your ears, you will hear a crackling sound, which is the air passing up into the ear; it cannot get through for the partition or drum, except in cases where this drum is perforated by disease. Now, the whole of this internal ear, and the tube (the Eustachian) communicating between it and the throat, are lined with mucous membrane, the same as the cheeks. This membrane, in a state of health, secretes merely sufficient mucus to keep it moist; when inflamed from cold or disease, it secretes matter; and if the lower tube is filled up or closed, you cannot expect to be otherwise than deaf—unless, indeed, you are sanguine that you could elicit music from a trumpet with one end of it corked.

Now, inflammation of any one portion of this mucous membrane, which lines the whole of the internal parts of the body, as the skin covers the outer, is very apt to spread to the adjoining portions. You can easily understand, then, how it is that deafness so often follows inflammation of the throat or tonsils; either the swollen tonsils press upon the end of the Eustachian tubes and close them, or the tubes themselves (one or both) become inflamed, and air cannot get to the drum. *Cold* is the cause of more than four-fifths of all cases of deafness. *Dyspepsia* is another great cause, and the abuse of *mercurials* a third.

You know, then, what to avoid in order to prevent

deafness; but if it should be your misfortune to become deaf from any cause, or even defective in hearing, let me earnestly and seriously pray you, as you value your happiness, to steer clear of aural quacks. If I can induce even one poor suffering being to take this advice, this paper will not have been written in vain.

Ear-drops *never did* and *never could* cure any other sort of deafness except that caused by an accumulation of wax in the outer passage; but the danger of pouring anything into the ear, without a previous examination (which a quack cannot make) to find out whether the drum of the ear is entire or not, is highly dangerous: abscess, inflammation of the brain, and death itself has often been the consequence.

Avoid quacks, then, and on the very first sign or symptom of defect in hearing, consult a qualified practitioner. Deafness is very insidious, and I cannot do better, I believe, than close this article with one or two words of advice to those who have a predisposition to this sad disease.

Never rush suddenly out of a heated room into the cold air, nor *vice versa*; and guard against catarrh in every way.

Wear a night-cap at night, and wadding or lamb's-wool in the ears when the weather is inclement; never sluice the head with cold water, or have the hair cut too short on a very cold day.

Pay strict attention to diet, so as to avoid dyspepsia. Avoid malt liquors, salted provisions, pastry, and too much fat, which injure the mucous membrane of the throat.

Make it a habit to retire early to rest—this is a most essential matter; and, finally, *never despair!*

ON HER MARRIAGE.

FAIR as the sunlight on some placid lake,
Cinctured by mountains whose high tops o'ertake
The blustering winds, and shut out all their strife,
Which else had lashed its water into life,
A life of turmoil and o'erspreading foam,
Where but for them no beam had found a home
On which to image in a path so bright
The golden glories of that orb of light.

Thus do I trust thy future course may be
Like that calm lake; while, thee encircling, he—
He thy long-loved one—from all worldly ills
May shield thy bosom like the lofty hills
Whose verdant tops with deeper tint are seen
Impinged upon the wave in brightest sheen;
Preserved unruffled by whose fostering care,
No storms can vex or winds disturb them there.

F. W. L.

LITTLE ACCIDENTS, AND HOW TO DEAL WITH THEM.

IN TWO PARTS.—PART THE SECOND.

SWALLOWING COINS.—If the coin is swallowed, there is seldom any danger. The best thing to do is to take a light aperient, and in all probability it will pass away all right. If it enters the windpipe, medical aid should immediately be sought, and the only thing that could be done would be to seize the individual by the legs, and hold him upside down, and strike him violently on the back, when it may be coughed up.

Crochet Needles, &c., in the Flesh.—If possible, take the sufferer to a surgeon. With proper instruments he can take it out without much pain. If this is not possible, make certain which side the hook is; then put an ivory bodkin, or any similar article, down the wound till it touches the hook, and draw both out together.

Swallowing Pieces of Broken Glass, Pins, &c.—By no means take a purgative. Rather partake freely of