

SEASONABLE ADVICE FOR THE SPRING MONTHS.

BY A FAMILY DOCTOR.



IN this article the intelligent reader will no doubt observe some advice repeated, that has already been given in previous papers. I own to it. Yet I have the old-fashioned excuse to advance,

that a good story cannot be too often told. I have more, for there are doubtless some who, from neglect of the commonest laws of hygiene, have allowed themselves to fall into a poor state of body, an enfeebled state of health. Now is the season of all seasons for such as these to renew their worship at the shrine of Hygeia. This paper might as well be in the November Number of the *MAGAZINE*, the words of advice I shall speak might as well have been spoken in June, but for one reason—viz., that invalids and the delicate have a better chance of restoring their constitutions by judicious hygienic measures *now*—with the long spring and summer days before them—than at any other season of the year.

I will now endeavour to tell you not only what to do, but what to avoid in the spring months.

1. *Damp Houses.*—Until we get our cities of health in this country, or better still, transform the cities we now dwell in into cities of health, we shall suffer, and that greatly too, from the evils that are generated from the dampness of our walls. Unfortunately those evils are neither few nor of little moment. Not only will a damp house cause coughs and colds, and inflammations, with rheums of all sorts, but even if these, by the extra strength of constitution of the inmates, can be avoided, a lengthened residence within wet walls never fails to depress the nervous system, and positively to shorten life.

In winter and spring our houses, especially if badly built, are seldom free from damp. If exposed to long-continued rains, accompanied by high winds, brick being of a porous nature, the damp must beat through even the best of houses, let the foundations be ever so scientifically laid. But, alas! how very few best houses are there in this land of liberty. The dwellings of our poorer tradespeople and artisans are beautifully designed—to kill.

The only true protection we can have against damp walls lies in judicious heating from within. Coals are no doubt expensive, but if coals can save a doctor's bill, and mayhap save a life, they are not so very dear after all. Damp alone is bad enough, but when not only the walls themselves are wetted, but even the

paint upon the paper, the emanations therefrom are unhealthy in the extreme. There are two things I wish you to remember in connection with damp. Don't wait until the walls are soaked before you build your fires; make war on the weather; and don't forget that those bed-rooms which are exposed to the prevailing winds need warming most.

2. *Ventilation.*—There is no proper system of ventilation in the houses of Englishmen, any more than there is in the wigwams of the Hottentot; but we have just one advantage over that savage—we have windows that, as a rule, will open and admit the pure air. The value of pure air in our dwelling-houses can hardly be over-rated. Now the morning air is the best, or that of the day; bed-room windows ought, then, to be opened generously wide at nine o'clock a.m., or much earlier in summer, and closed a good hour before nightfall. I myself have my bed-room window wide open all the year round, and to this I attribute the fact that I have hardly ever known a cold. I do not, it is true, care to cultivate the acquaintance of damp cold air at night; but I have the advantage of breathing plenty of oxygen, instead of deadly carbonic acid.

3. *Winds.*—There are winds to be courted and winds to be avoided by the delicate in spring, yet I do not advise exposure to *high* winds, from whichever "air" they blow. Generally speaking, however, if a wind has any "westerly in it," as a sailor would say, it is beneficial, because that wind comes over the sea, and brings you ozone on its wings—ozone to breathe and get well upon. Besides, it is usually a warm wind, coming as it does from sunnier climes than ours. Westerly and south-westerly winds are especially serviceable to the consumptive patient, although they at times aggravate bronchitis and catarrhal complaints. Avoid easterly winds, and every wind with easterly in it. Death rides on the winds from the east, just as life does on those from the west.

4. *Draughts.*—I have only two remarks to make under this heading:—First, no invalid or delicate person ought to sit in a draught. Secondly, *nobody else should.*

5. *Wet Feet.*—Having the feet wet, or even damp and cold, is very injurious to the health. An invalid ought to wear strong boots out of doors, but no goloshes. As soon as he comes in he ought to change these for a lighter pair. Stockings or socks should be of the warmest wool, and thick; and it is essential to health that they be changed once in three days at least. Bathing the feet with warm water before going to bed is very soothing; this alone, with a glass of wine negus and a *biscuit*, and a little extra covering on the bed, will generally succeed in counteracting any ill effect produced by an east wind during the day.

6. *Clothing.*—The clothing of such as are delicate should be at all times dry and warm; but more care is needed in the spring months to avoid damp and

cold. Flannel is not to be left off, by any means, simply because the sun shines. Even during summer a flannel of a thinner texture should be worn, for after the warmest days the nights may close in chilly enough.

As to outer clothing, you must dress according to the weather, and after studying the wind a bit, and having a glance at the clouds, and your little friend the thermometer, use your own judgment, taking care to err on the right rather than on the wrong side. An umbrella is an excellent companion for a walk abroad, but mackintoshes are to be forsworn if you wish to be well.

In bed, have no more clothing than is actually necessary. Here a cotton night-dress is the proper thing, and not a flannel; and sheets next the skin, not blankets, unless indeed you are rheumatic, when blankets may be permitted; but remember that those which are actually in contact with the skin are to be changed at least once a fortnight, and fresh clean ones substituted.

7. Pure Air and Water.—Always endeavour to breathe the purest of air, and drink the purest of water. It is from the air we breathe and the water we drink that most diseases spring.

8. Early Rising.—I do not advise any one to get up shortly after midnight, and I do not forget that the delicate need a little more rest and sleep than others, but I sincerely believe that the cultivation of the habit of early rising is highly conducive to longevity. Avoid late hours, and excitement of all kinds for at least an hour before going to bed.

9. Exercise.—Activity is life, inactivity the beginning of death. Exercise causes the wheel of life to move more merrily round. Exercise develops, and at the same time causes to be better nourished, the most important and vital organ in the body—namely, the heart—and through that tends to put into better working order every other organ, as well as every nerve and every nerve-centre.

Exercise, to do any real good, must not be taken hurriedly, and it must never—with delicate people, at all events—reach the boundaries of fatigue. It is less likely to do so if taken with some definite object in view. That exercise which amuses is undoubtedly the best, because more of it may be taken without danger of fatigue, and because the mind is exhilarated, and care for a time cast to the winds.

I need hardly tell you that exercise, like the bath, should not be taken on a full stomach, and that a quarter of an hour at least should intervene between exercise and the act of sitting down to a meal. Long walks for an invalid before breakfast are not at all suitable. I consider walking exercise, and out-door games and amusements, better suited for the spring time than the passive movements of the body obtained from riding in a carriage or Bath chair, as the danger from cold is so much the less. Individuals much emaciated, or suffering from phthisis, heart complaint, or asthma, had better take their walking exercise along level ground. The best time for exercise in spring is the forenoon. Next to easterly winds, the invalid in spring time is to beware of—

10. Night Air.—Extending one's walk till the shades of evening fall, and mayhap the moon's broad disc glimmers over the sea ripples, or lights up the church tower, may be very pleasant and romantic, but it is just at this time that the temperature of the sky begins to be lowered, and down comes, not only dew, but many an evil vapour, which hitherto had hung harmlessly enough in the clouds above. Be warned!

11. Hurry is a thing to be avoided by an invalid at all times. Do everything leisurely, even to dressing of a morning, and you will not repent it.

12. Cleanliness and the Bath.—If I should live to write 500 papers for this MAGAZINE, it is highly probable that in every tenth one of them I may take the opportunity of reminding the reader how necessary to the enjoyment of perfect health is the daily ablution of the body; if he should think the subject stale, and make up his mind to skip it, I shall not be angry, provided he does not at the same time skip his morning bath. There is one thing, however, which, in connection with the subject, I think I have omitted to mention—I mean the benefits of soap in the bath, whether tepid or cold. This greatly aids in getting rid of the secretions, and in rendering the skin soft and pliant. The soap ought to be a mild one.

Now it is just in spring time any one, if he has not already done so, ought to commence the morning bath. Cold winter has fled away back to the Sea of Ancient Ice, and there are no longer any shivery lumps of the more modern article afloat in the tub, and the weather is getting daily more mild. But, behold! I am merciful, and I cannot forget that you are delicate, so I shall allow you to commence at first with water only a little under tepid, and to daily reduce the temperature two degrees; but, if you will still be advised by me, have a basin of still colder water beside your tub, and finish off with a spongy or two of that. You will soon come to appreciate the benefits of the bath, and when winter comes again, you will jump boldly into the coldest tub, even if you have to whistle, "Rule, Britannia," to screw up your courage to jumping point. One word in conclusion on—

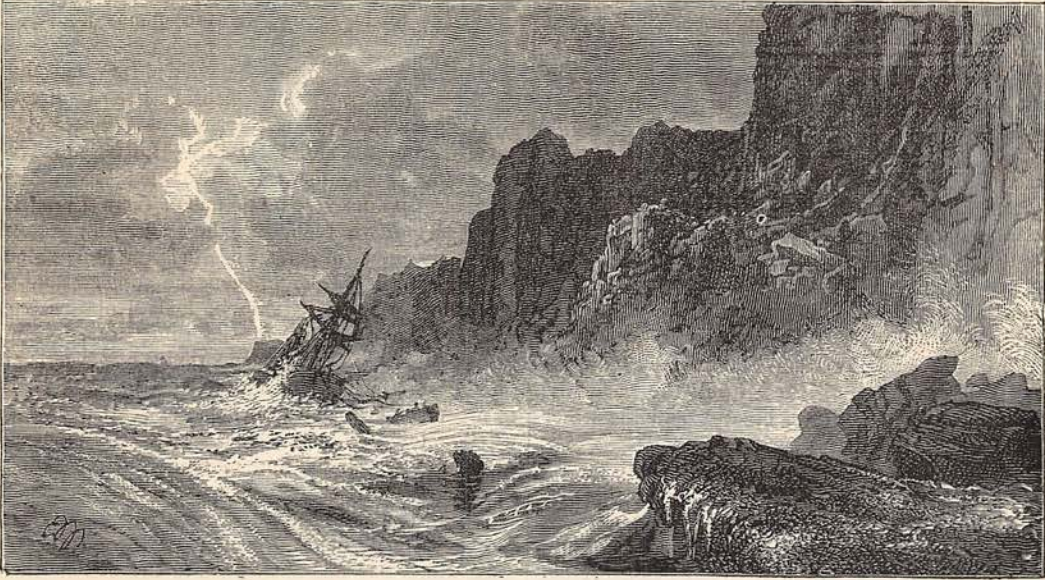
13. Medicines for Spring.—If you are suffering from any real organic disease, by all means let your own medical adviser prescribe for you. But if your health is merely rather low in the scale, then, along with good wholesome food, you will find tonics, and *occasional* aperients, of use. Iron is a most excellent tonic, either in the shape of the sulphate, the carbonate, or the phosphate of that metal, or the acid iron drops. If you are neither stout nor plethoric, nothing does more good, in conjunction with iron, than cod-liver oil. It is hardly so easy to take, however, but one soon comes to like it. Another valuable tonic is quinine, in doses of from half a grain up to one grain and a half, thrice a day, in a little sherry or cordial.

A mixture of sulphur, cream of tartar, and treacle, to which I add a little glycerine, is cooling and good; or you may try the following:—Mix from one to two teaspoonfuls of powdered Glauber salts in half or three-

fourths of a tumblerful of spring-water, add thereto fifteen grains of the bicarbonate of potash, and when it is dissolved, a large table-spoonful of pure limejuice (not the cordial), and drink during effervescence, about

half an hour before breakfast. The last medicine I shall mention demands a whole line to itself, and capital letters too—

SPRING SUNSHINE.



HOW GREAT STORMS ARISE.

BY RICHARD A. PROCTOR, B.A., F.R.A.S.

THE cyclone which swept on October 31st last over the eastern parts of British India, appears to have wrought greater destruction to life, if not to property, than any storm on record. Indeed, on this occasion the hurricane, heretofore surpassed in sudden destructiveness by the earthquake (though far more destructive in the long run), has shown itself more terrible than the fiercest earthquake shock. The powers of the air and water have asserted their supremacy as agents of destruction over the earth's vulcanian energies—that is, over the powers of the earth and fire. It has been asserted that more than 100,000 persons perished during the Great Sicilian earthquake of 1693, and nearly twice as many during the first of the two earthquakes which assailed Antioch in 526 and 612. But during the cyclone of October 31st no less than 215,000 persons perished. The three large islands—Sundeeep, Hattiah, and Dakhan Shabazpore—at the mouth of the Megna (the river formed by the confluence of the Ganges and the Brahmapootra) were entirely submerged by the great wave which the wind raised in that wide river. The mainland districts of Backergunge on the west, Neakolly on the north, and Chittagong on the east of the archipelago, at the mouth of the Megna, were submerged to a distance of five or six miles from the usual shore-line. The catastrophe was rendered specially disastrous by the hour at which it occurred. Up to eleven in the after-

noon there were no signs of danger; but before midnight a wave had swept over the islands to a depth of twenty feet in some places, surprising the unfortunate inhabitants in their beds. It is said that scarcely any escaped who failed to reach some strong tree. The wind seems to have rushed northwards over Chittagong and Sundeeep, driving a great sea-wave into the river Megna. It was not, however, while the hurricane was thus heaping up the waters of the Megna that the most destructive effects were produced, but soon after, when the pressure of the air being reduced, a great wave rushed southwards from the Megna over Dakhan Shabazpore and Hattiah.

Last October and November seem, indeed, to have been remarkable for the number, as well as the severity, of their hurricanes. A hurricane of great severity swept over Central America on October 3rd and 4th. The town of Managua, on the west of Lake Nicaragua, was inundated, and 400 houses were blown down. The hurricane then passed eastward over Lake Nicaragua and descended over Blewfield, on Mosquito Gulf, overturning upwards of 300 houses in that town. It was probably the same hurricane which was encountered at the same date by the mail steamer *Costa Rica*, about 300 miles to the south-east, near Parita, on the Gulf of Panama, where the sea ran mountains high, and the wind, shifting all round the compass, blew so strongly that the hurricane-deck of the *Costa Rica* was blown clear away, and the maintopmast carried off.