

hot-bed has got lower than it ought to be, and if so, more fresh manure must, if possible, be added all round outside to husband what heat you still have and to create more.

Peas, of course, we go on sowing at intervals according to our requirements, the state of the ground, and the room we have at our disposal. Cauliflowers can be planted out in well-dressed ground and, perhaps, a trench may be by the end of the month prepared for your celery plants. Let it be about a foot deep, and afterwards fork in a good supply of rotten manure in the usual way. It may be that at

some future time we shall have more to say about our celery, which with so many of us utterly failed last year. Alas! would that celery had been the only failure.

From the wall-fruit remove all the useless little buds and shoots which seem inclined to grow out perpendicularly from the wall. But we see so much to do around us that for the moment our hands hang down. Patient industry is, however, all that we can give, and each day now in the ripening and heaven-like summer seems to bring its own reward for all the pains that we bestow upon our crowded little acre.

ON CHEERFULNESS AS A MEDICINE.

BY A FAMILY DOCTOR.



HE power of the mind and will over the body, either for good or for harm, is very remarkable, and no physician nowadays, when treating any case, whether acute or chronic, thinks of dispensing with the truly curative agent called *hope*. A medical man seldom troubles himself to consider in what particular way, or through what particular channel, either hope or fear acts upon his patient; he only knows that it does act, and he is as careful to give the one as to avoid the other.

The impression conveyed to the mind from external influence, no doubt, acts upon the heart and other internal organs, through the medium of the nervous system. Joy is thus a stimulant to the animal economy, while grief and fear are, on the other hand, depressants. As an example of the effect of the latter, we may mention the well-known fact, that sudden grief or bad news of any kind will often entirely destroy the appetite, which only the moment before was everything that could have been desired. In a case of this kind there would be such a shock to the nerves as would cause a loss of power to circulate the usual amount of vital force, a lowering of their temperature, in fact, and consequent lessening of tone both in stomach and heart. But leaving physiological reasoning for a moment on one side, we have all heard the very old saying, that "imagination can either kill or cure." We have all heard it, and to a certain extent we all believe it; but the worst of it is that scarcely any of us believe it half enough. If we did so, we would take good care not to forget it when sick or ailing, and it would be then that we should reap real benefits from its truth. Let psychologists explain it as they like, it is a curious fact that a person, being well, may fancy himself ill, and become ill; or, being ill, he may fancy himself getting well, and become well. I will tell you one or two of the experiences of

an intimate friend of mine, with regard to imagination. He is captain of a gallant merchant ship. When quite a boy he had to make a journey, several times a year, of some two or three hundred miles in a steamboat, going and returning from school. During the whole of the first trip he was down with sea-sickness, and no doubt suffered severely, and he was no better on any subsequent voyage; but the strangest part of the matter is this—he used to get "sea-sick" before going on board, simply with the thoughts of it. Even when some distance from the vessel, the sudden ringing of the steamer's bell turned him instantly ill. When school-days were over, and it became his lot to be a sailor in earnest, he joined a ship that was going on a very long voyage. He was kindly treated by the captain, and not only due time, but, in my opinion, too much time, was allowed him to recover from *mal de mer*, as the French call it. For no less than fourteen days he lay in hammock, and during all that time nothing at all in the shape of food crossed his lips, and he drank only water. On the afternoon of the fourteenth, however, the captain forced him to get up, dress, drink a glass of sherry, and come on deck. As the fresh sea-breezes blew around him, hope revived in his heart. He imagined he was better, and positively came down to tea. And that same night, some time after turning in, hunger compelled him to get up again and, although half a gale of wind was blowing at the time, feel his way across the reeling deck to the steward's pantry. No wind or sea that ever moved could make my friend sea-sick after that night. So you see that imagination is really a tool that can cut in two directions.

But, the reader may ask me, can imagination actually relieve distress of feelings?—can it, for instance, destroy the pain of an aching tooth? "Pluck" or moral courage undoubtedly will, and a determination to bear up against any illness has a decided tendency to banish its sting. This, then, is the medicine I bring you for this merry month of May. I bring you *hope*. And I desire you to try my medicine, in a common-sense way, of course; I am not going to ask you to

do impossibilities, but if you take my advice practically to heart, and act thereon, then, just as surely as the green leaves are now on tree and hedgerow, as surely as the birds are singing, and a long summer all before you, whatever be your complaint, it shall be relieved and very likely cured entirely.

Now, if I could convince you that you really are not so bad as you imagine yourself to be, I should be giving you a little ray of hope, shouldn't I? Well, I do not know the state of your case, to be sure; but I know one thing, and that is, that invalids almost invariably take too gloomy a view of the condition of their health, and that doing so retards their cure. On the other hand, that cure generally dates from the very day on which they first begin to take a hopeful view of their case. I feel quite sure that it is hope, or imagination, or fancy that cures one-half, if not more, of all the cases we send to the seaside or abroad. The change is beneficial in one way—it gives the start, the patient feels a little better, and at once plucks up heart of grace, and his courage carries him through.

I think I have done good to patients in this way. On the day on which I was consulted I have written down carefully the symptoms of their complaint, then treated it for, say, a week. At the end of that time the sufferer probably would not, or could not, admit himself better, but a reference to the symptoms detailed a week before would, in almost every case, show a decided improvement; then hope would come in, the spirits would rise, and, hurrah! we had crossed the Rubicon, and could make sure of riding safely into the camp of health.

Now, reader, life, when one has good health, is such a pleasant thing, that the most sickly or weakly ought to do all they can to throw fear and gloom to the winds, and make a fair trial at getting well. The plan of writing down one's symptoms on one day, and comparing it with those of a week or ten days thereafter, is one that I can highly recommend to any invalid; and it should be remembered that, if one is no worse at any particular time, it is almost a sure sign there is some little improvement. Patience should then be cultivated, and gratitude and joy. But over-anxiety for one's health means worry, and worry is one of the depressing passions, and tends to retard the cure. And, indeed, over-anxiety often leads to worse, for it may cause the invalid either to wear out his strength by making tiresome journeys or voyages to health-resorts, or, stopping at home, tax his stomach and burden his body by taking too many medicines. I have always preached simplicity in the matter of drugs.

Well, then, for the sake of hypothesis I must presume that the reader is an invalid, or doesn't enjoy good health, but wishes to be well, and I will give her or him some general instructions for the attainment of health. First, then, bearing in mind that good spirits and good health are almost synonymous, by cultivating courage and a buoyant frame of mind, and a determination not to be cast down, you fix the ladder that is to lead you step by step to freedom from illness on the firmest basis you could choose for it. Next

put yourself on some simple plan of treatment, or, better, let your own physician prescribe for you, and on no account deviate from his orders. He will tell you what organ of your body is ailing, and the medicine that is most likely to be of service to you. I do not bid you despair if it be even your heart, for though it should be, that is no reason you should be cast down, or sad; plenty of people live with diseased hearts to a goodly old age, and do not even then succumb to their great bugbear.

The medicine you take will no doubt do you much good, but it is not half the battle by any means; and you must make strenuous efforts to obey the laws of health as regards what you eat and drink, and how you act. You have to examine yourself carefully, and if you do, I have not the least doubt you will find some error in your way of living, some need for reformation, as most people have. Don't forget that dyspepsia produces about half the ills that human flesh is heir to, and *aggravates the other half*. That will give you some notion of the value of a correct dietetic régime. The digestion is often aided greatly by proper attention to the teeth. These should not only be cleaned in the morning, but after every meal, and if they are inclined to decay, or the gums are spongy, tincture of myrrh should be used as a wash, with a little pure water, or a little plain water just coloured with the permanganate of potash. If the digestion is at all bad, the sleep obtained at night cannot be refreshing, and this is a great drawback to an invalid, and keeps him longer ill than he would otherwise be. He should, therefore, be out in the open air exercising all he can, remembering, however, that the exercise should never be fatiguing, and certainly never of an exciting nature. He must not forget that during healthy sleep the blood has to a great extent left the brain, but anything that excites drives the blood to the head, the brain capillaries get fuller, and are unable to empty themselves properly, and a restless night is the consequence. There is great nerve-connection between brain and stomach, and hence, if the latter be overloaded, or even too empty, or if the contents of it be too acid, sleeplessness or bad dreams will be the result, and the patient will find himself peevish and ill next day. Invalids should avoid every depressing emotion of the mind; fits of anger are peculiarly lowering; they should cultivate a calm and even frame of mind.

Another thing to be guarded against is hurry, either in dressing or in eating. Early hours are to be recommended, and that the action of the skin should be duly maintained is really a *sine quâ non*. The sponge-bath, with a handful of sea-salt in it, should be taken every morning, but a warm or tepid bath of fresh water and soap should be had recourse to twice a week. The headaches of which weakly people often complain are greatly relieved by this system of bathing.

Simple though these rules be, carried out fairly and with regularity they have worked wonders, especially in conjunction with some special tonics, and a light and easy frame of mind.