

MEDICATED BATHS, AND HOW TO USE THEM.

BY A FAMILY DOCTOR.



NCE fairly and completely imbibed with the truth of any theory, there seems to be nothing that a man will not do in order to impress that truth upon others, and this too with an object which is at times highly laudable. When a surgeon of one of Her Majesty's ships of war stood upon the quarter-deck, and before the panic-stricken crew imbibed a portion of black vomit, to prove that the yellow fever

then raging on board was not infectious nor contagious, and by that act restored confidence and saved the lives of the greater portion of the crew, the man proved himself to be a hero, and a lucky one too. Not so fortunate, however, was the physician who, during the plague in London, inoculated himself with the virus—he died.

A theorist of the right sort, Dr. Graham of the last century must have been. He flourished about a hundred years ago, and was a great believer in the efficacy of earth-baths for the cure of many disorders. He was assuredly most enthusiastic in his belief, and it is, I think, highly amusing to read of him exhibiting himself "buried in earth with only his head, duly powdered, and pig-tail above ground, and beside him also buried his goddess of health, the future Lady Hamilton."

I do not suppose that any of my readers will care to try Dr. Graham's peculiar style of bathing, nor the sand-bath either, which latter is much practised at the Mediterranean watering-places. But to such as contemplate a journey in quest of health to the spas of Germany, I might as well mention that there is a kind of bath in vogue there, highly recommended by physicians for weakly patients with feeble circulations, and such as suffer from languor and nervousness. It is called the *peat-bath*. The peat which forms the principal ingredient of this by no means inviting-looking bath, is specially prepared for the purpose; it has not only been impregnated with the mineral water of the district, but has been thoroughly exposed to the air all the winter, by which means the minerals have become oxidised. The pleasant sensations created by immersion for some little time

in a bath of this kind, and the good that usually results from a course of them, amply repay the patient for the pain and difficulty he may have at first experienced, in making up his mind to adopt so curious a remedy.

The peat-bath is one that might very easily be adopted in our own country, and I have more than once heard well-known German physicians express some little surprise that it has not been so. The bath is made by mixing the peat in water of a temperature of from 80 to 100 degrees, and should be about the consistency of the thickest soup. It is not ordered to be taken every day at the spas, but alternately, day about, with the ordinary bath. I do not pretend to understand the real action or the physiological effect of the peat-bath on the system, but I have every reason to believe that it is of very great value in many chronic disorders, such as gout and rheumatism, and enlargement of the joints, as well as in congestion of the liver, with its many attendant evils. Even bathing the feet and legs in a warm bath of this kind before going to bed, will produce copious and soothing perspiration and induce sleep. Now if I deemed it impossible for any save those who travel abroad to be able to indulge in the peat-bath, I should do wrong even to mention it; but the peat-earth can be imported, properly prepared, from the German watering-places, not perhaps without some little trouble or expense, but what is this compared to the recovery of the blessings of health or the alleviation of disease? On the other hand, I see no reason to doubt that the peat-earths from our own bogs and moors may possess equal efficacy; they are, at all events, worthy of a trial.

At some places or "cures" when it is used as a bath; it is said to be very soothing to the nervous system, and to the skin as well, and in painful neuralgia.

Electrical baths are much used at the sea-side watering-places of even our own country. I do not think they can do much harm, and it is just possible they may do good.

A better bath in my opinion, and one naturally medicated, is the tepid or warm salt-water bath, not taken at home in your own room, but away down by the sea-side in some place likely to suit the constitution, say at Folkestone, Worthing, Brighton, or Eastbourne. The cases most likely to receive permanent benefit from these baths are those of debility of the nervous and muscular systems, debility from over-work and worry, or from *ennui* or excess of any kind, as well as cases of dyspepsia, and chronic rheumatism and gout. At many sea-side places you can get tickets for a course of such baths. Well, about midday you saunter leisurely along the cliff or the beach towards the bathing establishment, perhaps with a book or newspaper in hand, pausing often to look around or out to

sea, or even sitting down at times, the better to enjoy the balmy health-giving breath of the ocean, for all hurry and excitement must be avoided. Arrived at the bath-room, and the operation gone through, you dress leisurely and walk home again, and very likely before you have arrived at your rooms, you will find you have sufficient appetite to enable you to do ample justice to a well-cooked early dinner. There must not be the slightest excess in eating, however, and if you feel inclined to sleep for half an hour afterwards, do so on the couch with some light covering over you. A four or six weeks' course of baths taken thus has often worked wonders, and restored to health and good spirits those who had been ailing, peevish and unhappy, for years.

In many cases, such as those of general debility or chronic rheumatism, the salt-water bath may be used with considerable advantage in one's own room, without going from home or to the seaside. Bay salt is sold very cheaply by all grocers, and it is easily used. If the patient feels strong enough to use a cold bath before breakfast, he can add the salt to the water on the previous evening, in the proportion of a quarter of a pound to two gallons; it will be quite dissolved before morning. It is used as a sponge bath, and it would be as well if the body were first lathered over with warm water and some mild non-perfumed soap; plenty of rubbing with coarse towels after the bath aids the good effects of it. If, however, the cold bath is not advisable, the salt may be added to tepid water and the body well sponged therewith. I happen to know that many of my readers would use the bath every morning except for two reasons. First, they feel too delicate to use a cold bath; and, secondly, they they have not the convenience to obtain a tepid one. Well, if a person gets up to begin the duties of the day at—we will say—seven o'clock, and the water in the kitchen boiler is hardly hot, the latter difficulty would be an insurmountable one—so far, at least, as morning is concerned; but, on the other hand, few are so strangely positioned as to be unable to get a bath at some other period of the day. Let the time it is taken be about three hours after a meal, and safety is insured. In almost every town of any importance there are public baths, and I would like to see them more frequented than they are. The drawback is that they are too expensive for constant use; I trust before long to see bath-rooms established on the co-operative principle. They could be got up so cheaply, they might be salt water or fresh, cold, tepid, or hot, according to taste; or the tepid soap bath might be used, followed by the cold sponge, or the tepid bath followed by a cold shower. Bay salt is cheap, soap is cheap, and bathers could use their own towels. In the heating of the water, some would tell me, the expense would lie. Probably, but I must be pardoned for saying that it ought to do nothing of the kind. I grant you that it costs money to heat some thirty gallons of water, but who would want thirty gallons for a morning tub? No: a bucketful of water, tepid or warm, is all that is needed, and that ought not to cost more than the fraction of a penny.

If cheap baths were to be established in the various cities and towns of the United Kingdom, they would, I doubt not, be duly appreciated by the public; and they would, I feel fully convinced, exert an influence for good on the national health.

While taking a course of baths in one's own room for the restoration of health and the bracing up of the system, in whatever way such baths may be medicated, it will be always as well to attend to the state of the digestive organs, and the general state of the constitution. Attention ought to be paid to the general principles of hygiene as regards diet, air, and exercise. A suitable aperient should be taken occasionally, a pill that will not weaken the system too much. This a patient can generally choose for himself. A tonic should likewise be taken; if it is to improve the digestion, it ought to be composed of some of the vegetable bitters, as gentian, calumba, chamomile, or quassia, in combination with a mineral acid, either hydrochloric, nitric, or phosphoric. This any chemist can prepare. If a muscular tonic is needed, small doses of the tincture of nux vomica (from five to ten drops) three times a day, in a little water, will often do a great deal of good. If the nerves need toning, then we have an excellent remedy in the superphosphate of iron, or in iron in combination with quinine.

Delicate ladies and children often derive a large amount of benefit from the use of the iron bath, or steel bath, as it is often called. I do not imagine for a single moment that the iron is absorbed into the blood; it is more likely that it acts by stimulating and bracing the nerves of the skin. Be this as it may, the steel bath undoubtedly increases the appetite and strengthens the system. The sulphate of iron may be used in the proportion of a quarter of an ounce to two gallons of water, tepid or cold, as a morning sponge bath.

After using this bath, or indeed any medicated morning bath, and well rubbing the body with the roughened towel, the patient should dress at once, not necessarily in a hurried manner, only he should keep moving and neither sit nor lie down again. Let him get out of doors soon thereafter, and have a breath or two of the fresh air and a turn up and down the garden before breakfast; but a walk of any length in the morning on an empty stomach is to be deprecated, except in the case of the young and robust, and even they ought, before going out after the bath, to eat a morsel of biscuit or swallow half a glass of pure milk.

A mildly alkaline bath for morning use is often to be recommended to people who are of the lithic or gouty diathesis, or subject to attacks of chronic rheumatism. It may be composed of two ounces of carbonate of soda mixed in three gallons of tepid water; this bath has a softening influence on the skin and is also very cleansing. It might be used alternately with a saline bath.

I have before recommended those people who are wise enough to appreciate the benefits derivable from the constant use of the bath, to invest in a small thermometer, to enable them to regulate the temperature of

the water. What is called the cold bath ranges from freezing point or a little over up to 65 deg., over that and up to 80 deg. would be a cool or temperate bath, 85 deg. would be tepid, 95 deg. warm, and about 100 deg. a hot bath.

I may here mention, parenthetically, that peat-water has been tried as a bath—temperature about 85 deg.; it is simply the brown stagnant water of our moors and mosses.

Of the *pine balsam* bath I cannot speak from personal observation, but I have it on very good authority that it is very soothing and beneficial in cases of chronic rheumatism, as well as in cases of excitable nervousness. The balsam is distilled from the tender green leaves of the pines, and the distillation is added to the warm bath, the quantity being increased daily. I do not need methinks to apologise for mentioning either of these baths, knowing from experience that long-suffering invalids are always glad to hear of anything that is even likely to do good, if they are at the same time assured that the remedy recommended cannot do harm.

People with tender skins often suffer, especially during the warm months of summer, with irritating rashes on the skin, akin to the prickly heat of tropical countries; the shoulders and arms are very commonly the seat of the annoyance. The *starch-bath* will be very soothing in such cases: to a couple of pailfuls of tepid water add about two ounces of powdered starch, previously well mixed with boiling water. The skin should be dried with a soft towel, and during the time the irritation continues, care should be taken to avoid all excess in eating or drinking, to wear the lightest of clothing consistent with warmth and comfort, to avoid exercise in the heat of the day, or anything likely to bring out perspiration, such as the drinking of hot

tea or coffee; an occasional matutinal aperient will also do good.

The mustard foot-bath is supposed to be something that everybody knows all about, but why is it not more commonly used then? A bucketful of hot water is all that you want for a foot-bath, and into this is thrown a couple of ounces of the best mustard. It is then ready, and it is to be hoped that the patient who has taken it is also ready to jump into bed immediately after it. It is useful in cases of incipient colds, or headache, or sleeplessness from congestion of the head, or generally when one does not feel particularly well and would like a good night's rest. But let me warn you against the habit of taking what is called a "nightcap," after the mustard foot-bath, if you would not have the former counteract the effects of the latter.

When the skin is hot, and the patient fevered and weak, sponging the face, arms, legs, or chest with water in which vinegar has been mixed in the proportion of—vinegar, one part—water, five, is often extremely refreshing and grateful to the feelings. Bathing the hands, arms, and face alone will do good in many cases. People need not be afraid of this simple bath. I may add that toilet vinegar is better than that in common use.

As a morning tonic bath for children or weakly people generally, the *oak-bark* bath may be tried, with hopes of good results. The very name of this bath is a recommendation in itself. If you wish to try it, prepare the decoction the night before, so that you may add it to the bath in the morning. Add then a pound of bruised oak-bark to a quart of cold water and boil for half an hour. Supposing that your morning tub contains two gallons of tepid water, this quantity of decoction will do for two baths.

IN THE GLASS.



THE village of Slapton was as quiet a village as can be. There were few houses in it; and the congregation that gathered every Sunday at the parish church came chiefly from the farms that were scattered broad-cast over the surrounding country. The vicar was the Rev.

Herbert Gardner, and he was the happy father of some half a dozen children, the eldest of whom, Mattie, was a charming girl of twenty. There was

little society in the village, and Mattie's chief ideas of the world at large were drawn from the occasional visits she made to a relative who lived in the neighbouring county town. Still, though she was homely and unsophisticated, there was none of that affected simplicity you so often see in girls. She was a frank, fearless, outspoken girl, full of life and spirits, and never so happy as when rambling about the old Vicarage garden, picking basketfuls of roses for some sick boy or girl, and carrying with them sunshine into some darkened home. And in such works of real love and charity the last few years of her life had been mainly spent. Her father called her "his curate"—and as the living was a small one, she was the only curate he had. Mattie had been free as yet from "heart disease," though a neighbouring squire's son had made several awkward attempts at love-making; and though Mattie quite recognised the compliment he paid her, she never for a moment regarded him in any other light than as a friend, and remained herself