

WHEN THE HOLIDAY IS OVER.

BY A FAMILY DOCTOR.



IT is not to the sick, but to the presumably sound, that I wish to address a few words of advice this month. The summer and the autumn holiday are past for a season and gone. How wearily some of us longed for the holiday to come! how frequently we counted the days that still intervened betwixt the tiresome work-filled present that was, and the coming time when we should bid adieu for a space to carking care and worry, and the drudgery of office or desk—bid adieu to the stifling heat and ear-splitting din of dusty cities, and seek for fresh air and freedom from all annoyance in the green quiet country, by rivers' banks, or mountain slopes, or by the sea!

We augured nothing but good from the holiday, and in most cases nothing but good has been the result. True it is that some of us were in somewhat of a hurry at starting, the result probably of leaving things undone until almost the last moment. We consequently felt a little unsettled when we arrived at our journey's end. The very vibration of the railway train, combined with the rattling noise, has the effect of tiring both the hearts and nervous systems of people who are either not constitutionally strong, or are for the time being out of health; and they do not get over it for some days.

But the freshness and newness—if I may so call it—of the air soon removed all feeling of fatigue, the change of scene induced forgetfulness of home cares, a load seemed to fall from off our shoulders, a weight was removed from the heart, and a calming of the nerves was the result. There was thus less wear and tear of tissue, the appetite became improved, better blood was supplied to every organ of the body, and it is no exaggeration to say there was positive rejuvenation of the system. And so those among us who did not waste the accession of strength thus gained have returned to town and business, not only able, but anxious to begin the battle of life anew.

For every one of us, then, who has come back from the annual holiday improved in condition, the question of the moment should be, "How best shall I conserve my health and strength?"

This is a question which it would be easy for a medical man to answer if put by any individual inquirer. To give advice which may be taken by all is somewhat more difficult. That, however, is my aim and object in writing this paper.

Well, for a season at all events, the medicine-bottle and the pill-box are put away in the cupboard. If we can steer clear of accidental illnesses, we shall not want any more drugs for some time to come—not even

the often welcome and necessary tonic—not even that aperient pill we used to find so handy occasionally before the holiday. We are going to work, however. All must work in this world, who would know what real happiness means, and small respect indeed have I for that man, or woman either, whose whole life is spent in trying to catch the phantom pleasure. We are going to work, I say, but here is the very first stumbling-block that comes in our way—we are nearly all of us inclined to work intemperately. The game of life is a very exciting one, the guerdon of success in business or in professional pursuits is very tempting, and so we strive to win it, never thinking that in doing so we are wasting our strength and injuring our health. I am convinced that intemperance in labour, be that labour what it may, is, though more slowly, as surely fatal as intemperance in eating or drinking. *And the way to avoid this is never to carry labour to the extreme of fatigue: work is necessary for an individual's well-being, but it should be work and rest alternately.* I have purposely italicised this last sentence; simple and homely enough is the language in which it is couched, yet truer words I never wrote and never spoke. And I feel really in earnest when I add that I pray you will consider them.

The kind of rest that should follow labour will, of course, depend on what that labour was. In any case both mind and body must be carried away from the scene of the day's exertions, and that too as early in the evening as possible. Now I happen to know that thousands on thousands of business or professional men come home from their offices very much jaded indeed, thankful enough when they get home that they are able to eat a good dinner, but they are positively unfit for anything else during the remainder of the evening, unless it be to read in a dreamy kind of fashion, or play a drowsy game of cards—unless they have allowed themselves the indulgence of several glasses of wine with and after dinner. This puts fresh life in them, but it is artificial, and men who indulge in such stimulus—if young or middle-aged—are seldom breakfast-eaters, and consequently they cannot call themselves healthy. No; I wish to see men return from "the drudgery of the desk's dull wood," a little tired, perhaps—that is only natural—but still fresh enough to enjoy themselves healthfully and recreatively during the rest of the evening. In our country, not half enough attention is paid to the hygienic influence of amusement and recreation. We Britishers take our pleasures sadly, foreigners tell us. Yes, we may reply, and two-thirds of us do not take any pleasures at all. When tired of working, we simply stretch ourselves, straighten our backs, and fall to again either the same night or the next morning. They do these things better in France. Oh! mind you, I do not say the French are a whit more healthy as a race, nor longer-lived, than we, but while they live they do live.

"I do not seem to care for amusement or recreation of an evening," some may tell me.

Well, I reply, take amusement as you take physic. There is nothing very inviting nor palatable about the compound tincture of yellow bark, but it is a tonic, and so is amusement. Take the one as you would take the other.

But depend upon it, if you once make up your mind to endeavour to spend the evenings of the long winter and spring that are before us in a rationally pleasant manner, you have only to consider a little and look around you, and you will find plenty of ways and means of doing so. The old adage, "Laugh and grow fat," should not be taken in too literal a sense, but there is a good deal of truth in it, for all that.

Well now, if on our return from the holiday, being impressed with the truth that rest and recreation must alternate with work if we wish to be healthy, we lay out for ourselves some plan of securing these desirable advantages, we have gone a good way towards securing the retention of the strength we have just acquired.

Is reform in diet needed? Ten to one it is. I am not offering the reader a bet, I am simply stating a fact and do not dread contradiction when I say that nine out of every ten adults in this country do not eat judiciously. Why, it may seem almost rude in me to say so, but it is true nevertheless, we nearly all eat too much dinner. If any one asked me the question, "How much too much?" I should say, "About three times too much. Three times too much for comfort in living, three times too much for health's sake, for necessity's sake, and for securing even a chance of a moderately long life."

There is Mr. Robinson's case. Mr. Robinson, I need hardly say, is in this instance a mythical individual, but I don't think you will have far to go to find his counterpart in real life. Mr. Robinson is something in the City. He has to catch a train every morning, and always does, though he sometimes misses his bath in order to do so. He hurries through his breakfast—he never is much of a performer at this meal, and I do not wonder at it. He enters the train somewhat heated, somewhat excited, the heart beating faster than it ought. Towards noon he feels the edge of his appetite, and blunts it with a biscuit and a glass of wine. He has a "snack" for luncheon, probably a sandwich or two composed of cheap tough meat and new bread, and a glass of wine. He could eat more heartily now, but he has no time, and besides he does not want to spoil his appetite for dinner.

When he does get home for *the* meal of the day perhaps his digestion needs a "spur," and gets it; then follows a dinner of many courses—soup, fish, entrées, joints, &c. &c. Well, if Mr. Robinson were a savage and only needed to eat once a day, he would get on very well. But after such a meal is it any wonder that he is fit for little or no exertion? He has more "spurs," however, and probably knocks billiard-balls about in a smoke-filled hot room before retiring for the night. That he does not sleep the healthful happy sleep of the strictly temperate is not to be marvelled at.

Robinson's diet needs reform in many ways. If he could begin by getting up a trifle earlier; if he always had plenty of time for the sponge-bath preceded by the warm soap-and-water wash; if he ate his breakfast more leisurely; if the toast were crisp, the bread not new, the tea good and well made, and the meat or eggs inviting and palatable; if he took no wine between meals; if he had a more serious luncheon and a less serious dinner; if he studied not to eat dishes that were incompatible with each other; and finally, if he reduced his diet in quantity quite one-half, then I assure you that Mr. Robinson would be altogether a different man in six weeks' time. He would have harder muscles, more "wind," more endurance, and more health and happiness.

We should try to retain our accession of health and strength by adopting some plan for daily exercise in the open air. Let it be exercise of as exhilarating a character as possible, exercise in which both mind and body can take a part to the benefit of both.

The morning tub is a delightful nerve tonic. Begin it now at once, and take it every morning without fail all the winter through. I do not advise you to do as I myself do, namely, take it even when I have to smash the ice on it, but take it as cold as you can bear it. It is a wonderful preventive of colds and illnesses of all sorts.

I need hardly remind you of the benefit of pure air, for have you not just returned from breathing the purest of pure air? Keep up the habit of being always out of doors when you conveniently can.

Remember that nearly all the water in this country, no matter where you live, needs to be both boiled and filtered before it is fit to drink. Boiling softens it and renders organic impurities inert, while filtering renders it still more wholesome.

In our endeavours to retain the blessing of health and strength we ought not to forget judicious clothing. Cold weather is coming on; it will be no longer safe to wear summer clothes. Luckily, owing to the superior quality of underclothing now-a-days, one may be quite fashionably dressed without running any risk of catching cold.

We ought, however, to beware of wearing too many warm things, and thus making hot-house plants of ourselves.

It is a good thing to bear in mind that people rarely catch a chill or cold unless during the time they are fatigued and tired, nor infection of any kind so long as the bodily health is up to par. Temperate living has a wonderful effect in preventing illnesses of every kind, and insuring a long-continued and healthful existence.

There are few of my readers too young, and none perhaps too old, to study each his own health and the peculiarities of his own constitution. The study will well repay any one who chooses to engage in it. There is no time like the present for reform. Reforms in life and mode of living, made calmly and considerably, while one is enjoying health and strength, are worth a thousand times more than any number of sick-bed good intentions.