

HEALTHFUL RECREATIONS.

BY A FAMILY DOCTOR.



SOME five or six years ago "bees" were all the rage, especially in quiet country parishes and outlying villages. By the word "bees" I do not mean the busy toiling insects that Dr. Watts, in one of his hymns, has set up for us as the emblems of industry and perseverance. A "bee" is the name given by the Americans — with that happy disregard for the niceties of the English language for which they are becoming renowned — to a

meeting of persons for the purpose of healthful recreation with some good object in view.

We are indebted to the great Republic for many excellent ideas, and thousands of poor old men and women have had, I am sure, ample reason to bless that man or woman—oh! it must have been a woman—from whose fertile brain the notion of a sewing bee was first evolved.

I was at one once, I remember; a relation of mine was there also; it was she who had said I might come. I got my chair away into a remote corner, with a very large cup of tea, and the newspaper. The remote corner in which I had my chair placed was not far from the door—what a clever general I should have made!

As tea circulated freely so tongues became loosed, but what of that? I had often heard the words "tea" and "scandal" associated, but here was plenty of the former without a breath of the latter, nor of any uncharitableness whatever. As for me, myself—the man with the paper—I am convinced that after half an hour I was entirely forgotten, so that my presence had no influence whatever on the bee. Meanwhile, shuttles were clicking, wheels were birr—r—ing, and needles were deftly plied, and the whole meeting was as merry as marriage bells.

Presently, I remember, a discussion arose as to whether the neck of a flannel "singlet," that was being manufactured for old John Morrison, should be "herring-boned" or "feather-stitched," and the garment was held up for inspection. I seized the opportunity and "egressed." I'm not prepared to pass an opinion on the relative merits of herring-boning and feather-stitching, but I caught one glimpse of the

elevated flannel garment just before I went out, and the question uppermost in my mind as I made my way homewards was, "What manner of man is old John Morrison?" for I am willing to be sent to Siberia if that singlet wasn't big enough to hold any five ordinary working men.

But, joking apart, I look upon meetings of this kind as fulfilling, in a great measure, all the conditions necessary to healthful evening recreation. They exhilarate the minds of those who take part in them, and they exercise without fatiguing the body. They ought, therefore, to be patronised far more than they are, and I have only one suggestion to make as to their improvement. It refers to the proper ventilation and the regulation of the temperature of the room in which this work or sewing is to be done. The air in it cannot be too pure; nor should it be too warm; a temperature of sixty degrees or even less is ample for all purposes of comfort, and best suited to the requirements of health.

At some sewing bees the services of some one who can read well are enlisted, by way of lightening the labours of the evening. This is also a very good plan.

Another kind of bee that has lately gone out of fashion, but which was very entertaining and most useful in more ways than one, was the "spelling bee." What fun it used to be, for example, to see and hear even our clergyman in a spelling class, and the parish teacher competing against his own pupils! Did I not once witness little Archie Hill, of the fifth standard, make his own school-master "stand down" amid roars of laughter and rattling cheers? The pedagogue, in a brief but fatal moment of confusion, had clapped two *Is* into the word "saloon."

An equally wholesome and equally interesting recreation for long spring evenings would be a grammatical bee. Argument would run high and time fly very quickly in discussing the relative claims to correctness of even such little sentences as "It is *I*" and "It is *me*."

"The nominative case follows the verb to be," you would say. "Granted," some one would reply, "but the word 'me' is entitled to be considered a nominative in certain sentences." If this be right—and the derivation of the word does not gainsay the theory—then the reply "It's me" to such a question as "Who is there?" would be quite as grammatical as, and sound less affected than, the answer "It is I." However, this is entirely a matter for the Family Parliament and not for the Family Doctor to discuss.

An "accentuation bee" would be another means of obtaining healthful evening recreation. Are the ears of the individual who loves his language not constantly pained by hearing English quantities misjudged, accentuations wrongly placed?

Still another would be a "pronunciation bee." I can fancy the friendly fights that would be waged over

even such a little word as "trait," which so many people think ought to be pronounced as if it were French.

Well, now, it seems to me that the true meaning of the word "recreation" is very well given in most of our dictionaries, viz., "relief or refreshment after toil or labour, amusement, diversion."

In order to be truly healthful, in every sense of the word, recreation must be of a kind to entirely relieve both body and mind from their *status quo* during work or toil. All thoughts must be for a time diverted into an entirely new and pleasantly interesting channel, so as to rest most completely that other portion of the brain, which presides over the thoughtful performance of the duties of the day. The kind of recreation that is chosen must therefore depend, in a great measure, upon the sort of labour that has been performed. What is rest to one man would be labour to another.

Recreation ought to be in every way the converse to labour; if it be not so, it is not rest. From this it may be seen that the individual himself must choose that form of recreation which is best suited for his health.

But the busiest men among us, even those to whom work is really pleasure, should remember that recreation or relaxation is in reality a necessary of health and life itself. To use a plain and homely simile: well-timed, well-chosen recreation is to our bodies and minds, or to these hearts of ours which are beating, beating night and day, what oil is to the bearings of an engine, it saves wear and tear, and makes the long rough road of life seem shorter and smoother to us.

Brain-workers probably need daily recreation more than any other class of individuals. It is a pity that it is the custom with so many of them to sacrifice the precious hours of the night to work that might be done far better and more brilliantly in the morning, or in the forenoon. I do not speak unadvisedly, but from long experience, when I say that the hours between the evening meal—whether it be dinner or supper—and bed-time should be devoted entirely to rest from labour, combined with, if possible, recreation. The sleep thereafter would be far more useful and refreshing, and in seven hours after retiring to rest, the brain would be ready to commence work again with healthier blood in it, and with clearer and therefore more critical perceptions.

The purer and more wholesome the air in which, be they what they may, our recreations are enjoyed the better. Pure air can usually be secured at home in winter and spring evenings. We can manage to have our own rooms well ventilated. From home it is different.

The brain-worker, or the man who has been worried no matter how, will often find mental recreation in the concert-room or the lecture-hall. It cannot often be called healthful recreation however, for the systems of ventilation in nearly all places of public resort are sadly in need of reform. And so from places of amusement, after breathing the vilest of atmospheres and the most obnoxious of gases, we

return home, exhilarated in mind probably, but too often jaded and weary in body. Restless nights are the consequence, and, on the whole, we feel next day that it might have been better had we not indulged in such doubtful recreation.

Fashionable parties and balls cannot be said to combine the elements of healthful recreation. In about a hundred years, more or less, this will doubtless be changed. Fashionable people will then prefer to give five "at homes" for one we give now, but comfort will be studied.

Without doubt the best and most healthful recreation is that which combines exercise in the open air with amusement. It is this combination that makes out-door games so refreshingly recreative. While there are certainly not too many of these that men can indulge in, it is to be regretted there are so few in which women can engage. Lawn tennis is one grand and delightful exception, and as far as very young girls are concerned, I think cricket might well be another.

Women can skate in winter, and row in summer; both exercises are healthful, but both have a *sine quâ non*—water in one form or another.

One of the most healthful and exhilarating recreations I know is archery. For dear health's sake there ought to be an archery club in every parish. But alas! they are few and far between, and so girls must walk while their brothers are at play. Nevertheless walking exercise is very far indeed from being despicable, but before it can be admitted into the category of healthful recreations, it must be of a sort to give pleasure to the person who engages in it. Walking should be always done in pleasant company; *the road should never seem long*, that is the real criterion by which we are to judge of the benefit likely to accrue from it.

Walking should never be done fast enough to make the heart beat rapidly or the breath come short, or the skin to be bathed in perspiration. If walking is to be done for health's sake, it must be really and truly a recreation, therefore I say, if you have a pleasant companion who is willing to undertake walking exercise with you, arrange for, not three or four walks, but thirty or forty, at the same time every day, rain or shine; and, if possible, combine with your strolling some such pleasant study as botany, geology, or some other branch of natural science.

The best form of exercise by far and away is tri-cycling. I have said so months ago, and happily it is suited for both sexes. I have only space to give one fresh hint in connection with it. Do not have a heavy cycle. For the ordinary English roads in summer, a tricycle should not and need not weigh over eighty pounds.

In concluding this short paper, let me say that I consider healthful recreation for body and mind a *sine quâ non* with every one who wishes to have pure wholesome blood, warmth and comfort in living, and the *mens sana* which can dwell nowhere else save *in corpore sano*.

