

THE FORTRESS OF LIFE.—I. THE BUGBEAR COLD.

BY A FAMILY DOCTOR.



"It seems to me," said a friend of mine the other evening, "that from all you say, and from all you write, we are so beset with dangers on every side, with dangers to the health of every kind, that if we were only just to settle down and think about them, we shouldn't any of us be alive for a week.

"It seems to me," he continued, for I had not replied. I was intent at that moment on a fishing exploit. I was endeavouring to fish a "stranger" out of my tea with the spoon, and appeared oblivious to everything else—"It seems to me that man's life might be likened to a kind of fortress, the fortress of life, and that all around

it are enemies of every description, bent on its destruction, trying their best to batter it down, working their hardest to undermine it; that even the food supplied to this fortress is oftentimes poisoned, and that foes float in the air above it, and creep in even in the water which supplies it with the wherewithal to drink and cook. Are we going to fight all these enemies? Is our whole life to be made miserable in a vain attempt to preserve it? Better, surely, to live happy-go-lucky, and look upon our enemies not as enemies, but as bogies and bugbears."

"Bogies and bugbears?" I said, having at last succeeded in landing my "stranger." "Bogies and bugbears? Fortress of life? Oh! yes, I have been listening to all you said. At all events, I have caught the drift of your meaning. Well, then, No! to your questions. We are not to render ourselves wretched in our endeavours to fight the enemies assailing us. Our fighting need not fatigue us, as a sword in the hands of an unskilful soldier does, who but thrusts at the air and parries the sunbeams; but what we do must be done scientifically. We must defend ourselves from, not defy, our foes. We must strengthen the walls of the fortress, its interior must be swept and kept in order; then confidence will lead to contentment, and contentment means happiness.

"As for bugbears," I went on, "we often make them ourselves. We often see them when none exist. The bugbear system of warfare is hardly carried on nowadays, except by savages and the lower animals. The Indians of the far West of America render their faces hideous with paint before they go on the war-path; the savages of some portions of Africa dress in a horribly fantastic way before going to battle, and endeavour while charging, by wild grotesqueness of attitude, and wilder yells, to strike terror into the hearts of their enemies; in other words, to startle them into a

kind of momentary paralysis. The roar of a lion or tiger has the same object in view, so has the hiss of a goose or snake, or the electrifying 'fuss' of a cat when she flies in the face of a dog. Wise men and old soldiers are not easily frightened by bugbears. Now one of the biggest bugbears your fortress of life has to fight against is the bugbear cold."

"I observe, sir, you yourself hardly ever come near a fire, and never sit by one."

"It is because I never feel cold when I am well. But men are differently constituted; there are warm-blooded men and cold-blooded men, but I question if the latter do much good to their constitutions by placing their feet so often on a cosy fender. Can you believe that more colds are caught at the fireside than in walking out of doors, even in the *night air*?—another bugbear, by the way."

"I can," replied my friend; "I can understand that it does not stand to reason to have one half of the body exposed to the heat and the other not."

"True; let old people sit calmly by the fireside as long as they please, *but* let them have high-backed chairs, and a pillow behind them to protect the loins as well. And when they go out, let them wrap up well, unless they can walk fast. Let them, and let every one else for the matter of that, learn to breathe only through the nostrils, and the air they inhale will never give them catarrh, be it the stormiest day in winter.

"Look upon cold, a certain degree of it, as a friend, and you can make it so; treat it as a bugbear, and it will become your constant enemy.

"Cold as a bugbear causes people to shut up every nook and cranny of their bed-rooms at night, so that long before morning they are breathing their own exhaled carbonic acid; no wonder they are heavy-headed, and tired of a morning, and dawdle long over a meagre breakfast, trying in vain to eat.

"Cold as a bugbear makes the healthy man (I'm not talking about invalids) put that unwholesome dash of hot water into his matutinal bath, from which in consequence he emerges enervated instead of braced."

"But would you advise a healthy man to take his bath cold even in winter?"

"Assuredly I would. Most emphatically I would. The temperature of your bath cannot sink below 32°; the air of the dressing-room, if a fireless chamber and the windows are frozen, will be degrees below; thus it is, comparatively speaking, a tepid bath."

"And yet it gives a dreadful shock."

"A shock electric in a great measure. Stop the shorter time in the tub; one or two dips in the plunge-bath, a spongeful or two over limbs and shoulders in the shallow, that is enough. Your rough towels are ready, the very exercise you get while rubbing down is worth half an hour's dumb-belling, and sends a glow through every part of the frame."

"And then a cup of tea?"

"No, don't. If you require to coddle yourself over a cup of tea before you are fit for breakfast, depend upon it you are far from well as regards digestion, or you have slept ill, or you have eaten too hearty a supper, or *something*.

"Cold as a bugbear causes people to over-crowd their beds with woollen stuffs, blankets, and such-like. The bed-clothing, even for old people, should be light though warm. There is nothing better than eider-down, when you can get it. The night-dresses of old people should be comfortable, and especially should they be warm between the shoulders; that is the place which cold likes, as a foe, to assail, just about three in the morning, when the morsel of fire has got low or gone out. Let them beware of it!

"Cold as a bugbear plays much mischief in the nursery. Thousands of children in this country are coddled to death, and many actually stifled in bed. They call it being overlaid; it is being smothered. That is the right name for it."

"But children must be kept warm?"

"Bless their innocence! yes. The bed as soft as down, the clothes as soft as soft can be, but smooth withal, without any tendency to rumple up, or cover mouth or face. This is warmth, this is comfort. The room too should be *moderately* warm; no more, I pray you; and the air ought to be as pure and sweet as the odour of roses. Is it so in most nurseries? Nay, for your bugbear cold steps in and seals doors and windows. No wonder that when baby wakes up it is peevish and fretful.

"Your bugbear cold is the best friend the tailor has, for even young men wear double the weight of clothes on a winter's day that they ought to. They sweat themselves in consequence, so cold the foe steps in and ends many a life. Top-coats, in my opinion, should never be worn, except while riding by rail, or

driving, or when standing about in a draught; *then* they cannot be too thick and cosy. If worn at all when walking, they should be very thin. Very light waterproofs should be worn when walking in winter—worn over the arm, I mean, and never put on the back except when it is raining. But the warmer the socks the better, and the shoes ought to be moderately strong and thick, for many an ailment is caught from standing about on damp cold ground.

"Damp is much more to be dreaded than cold, but even this should not be made a bugbear of; I would rather have damp inner clothing than a damp coat; the under-clothing, indeed, of every one who perspires freely and easily is seldom, if ever, free from damp. When I was newly married, sir, the little woman who owns me, used to air my handkerchiefs, my newspaper, and my table-napkin. She knows better now. But preserve me and you and every one from sleeping in a damp bed!

"The bugbear cold does much harm to many a man on a winter's day, by frightening him to take refuge against it in various stimulants. It cannot be too widely known that these never did and never can keep up the animal heat. There may be times when, if judiciously administered, and in moderate quantity, a vinous stimulant does good."

"Example, sir?"

"If one is cold and wet even to the extent of a rigour, or if one has fallen into the water, or *after*, not *during*, great fatigue; but in ordinary cases the imbibition of a stimulant on a cold day causes but a momentary glow, and even that is a false one: some excitement of brain, to be followed soon by nervous reaction, by depression, and chilling of the blood.

"In defending the fortress of life, then, it is wise not to make a bugbear of cold, far better to treat it as a friend than a foe."

TO THE NEW YEAR.



NEW YEAR, what hast thou that is new—
 What themes and schemes to mark thy reign;
 What great event, what social bent;
 What pleasures new, and what new pain?

What crazes new, what new resorts;
 What whims to prove æsthetes *au fait*;
 What book, what song to please the throng;
 What crowning scandal of the day?

What new device for killing time;
 And what for one another's killing;
 What new surprise in cant, in crime;
 What last new trick to turn a shilling?

And what new march on virtue's side—
 Against the meanness, mockery, sinning;

What rise in that slow, silent tide
 Where hope and faith are surely winning?

What knowledge new to bless the race,
 To solace suffering, stem decay;
 What new good cheer which year by year
 May gladder make each New Year's Day?

What beauty new, what grace evolved
 From virtue's everlasting laws;
 What purer thrills, what nobler wills;
 What firmer bands with fairer cause?

What sign, New Year, of Love's new sway,
 What farther step, what clearer view
 To prove old things shall pass away,
 That all things are becoming new?

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