

THE ROVING INVALID, AND HIS TINY MEDICINE-BOX.

BY A FAMILY DOCTOR.



THERE are a good many readers of CASSELL'S MAGAZINE who, I feel sure, may learn a lesson from the history of my Roving Invalid, as I was wont to call him. In telling it, I have not the slightest desire to be in any way satirical, but this invalid of mine happens to be the type of a class that is peculiarly a growth—if I may use the term—of this, the latter end of the nineteenth century, and which was almost unknown in the begin-

ning of it; for the simple reason that means of travel were not then so well developed, fast steamers and flying trains not having then commenced to revolutionise the kingdom, and, for aught that I know to the contrary, people journeying from Edinburgh to London were still in the habit of making their wills before starting.

It was I myself who first advised my invalid to try change of climate.

It is a not uncommon belief with the public, that when a medical man recommends a long sea-voyage or foreign travel to a patient, he is recommending a last resource, and that he all but despairs of the case. This is not so, I assure you. No physician would advise such means to an end unless he felt quite certain that the ailing one would benefit thereby, and be restored to health—in all probability.

It is the chronically ill who should travel, those who are suffering from some affection of an important internal organ, those who are making but poor progress in their convalescence from some acute ailment, the over-worked, the over-worried, and such as are nervous, or suffer from *ennui*.

My Roving Invalid belonged to the latter class. He was both nervous and "bored," as he called it.

It was on a bleak day in the middle of October that I first broached the subject of a sea-voyage to him. The rain was being driven against the casement window of my study in wild paroxysmal gusts, by a high wind that threatened to tear the tall poplars out by the roots, and roared through the pine-trees with a sound like breakers on a sandy beach.

"You have the time," I said, "and you are not without the means: make up your mind; take a sailing ship—for this will be quieter and easier than a steamer, and there are some splendid clippers adver-

tised to sail soon. You will return to this country a new man, fresh and vigorous, and entirely free from the feeling of boredom that you now complain about."

He looked at me, I thought, with a considerable deal of anxiety, as he replied slowly—

"Do you then consider my case so desperate, doctor? Am I really soon to be booked for another world?"

"No," I said, smiling; "but booked for another climate. I wish you to go to Australia—to become for a time an Antipodean."

He glanced out at the drizzling rain, the driving clouds, and the wet and bending trees.

"I could never do it. The sea would kill me."

"Good-bye now, anyhow," I answered. "I've got to go out."

But I had sown the seed in my invalid's mind, and a week after it bore fruit. It was a lovely day, clear sky, and brightest sunshine.

"I'm going to take your advice, doctor," he said buoyantly, as he entered my room. "My spirits are high already at the thoughts of going. Yes, I'll seek the sunshine. What shall I take with me in the shape of medicine and good advice, doctor?"

He was actually looking animated. The bare prospect of a complete change was doing him good.

"Well," I said, "you will have a ship surgeon to physic you, if you need it, which I doubt. However, fit up a tiny medicine-chest if you choose. Something like the following may be the contents thereof."

Out came my invalid's note-book—

1. A small bottle of aperient pills, to be used only if urgently required. 2. An ounce of chloroform. 3. Quinine pills, each containing a grain and a half. 4. Sweet nitre, two ounces. 5. Tincture of opium, one ounce. 6. Alum powder, an ounce. 7. Sulphate of zinc, an ounce. 8. Tincture of arnica. 9. Some dinner pills of gentian, rhubarb, and ginger. 10. Tincture of iron, an ounce; or pills of reduced iron, one box. 11. Bicarbonate of soda, four ounces. 12. Cough lozenges, four ounces. Add to this a tiny pair of scales and weights, a drop and an ounce measure, some lint and rolled strips of sticking-plaster, a knife and small pair of scissors, and—that is all. As to the doses, consult the ship's doctor.*

"As for advice, wear light clothing; sleep only seven hours a night; have a cold tub every morning; beware of suppers; smoke but little; avoid excess in every shape; read only amusing books; and knock about the deck all day, playing, if possible, all ships' games."

"Games on board ship, doctor?"

"Yes, games on board ship. In all passenger ships, both to Australia and to America, merry, harmless games are played on deck whenever the weather will permit. Even ladies sometimes join in these, and

* The medicines, &c., named above, are all that need be taken by any one travelling abroad, but a small medicine-chest guide or companion should be added.

I know nothing more likely to banish the last dire stress of *mal de mer*, and produce a healthy appetite, than these same games."

"Name a few. I've never been to sea."

"Well, it may seem to a landsman to be hardly credible, yet a species of lawn-tennis is sometimes played at sea; and cricket also."

"You amaze me!"

"It is as often as not a single-wicket game, and neither bats nor balls are of much value, for the former are often lost, and the latter frequently find their way overboard, and become tid-bits for roving sharks. Sometimes a ball is landed on the bridge, or goes right away forward. This displays the agility of the fielder, and gives the batsman time for a few runs. But if the ship gives a lurch, down go the players, and there is no attempt by any one to conceal the merriment which the mishap gives rise to.

"Quoits and 'bull-board' are two other excellent and healthful games. The latter is sometimes called 'dumps.' A round, flat piece of canvas-covered lead has to be thrown quoit fashion at or on to a sloping board. This is divided into squares, each marked with a numeral. The place where the lead alights, of course, marks the value of the throw.

"Then there are hop, step, and jump; vaulting, racing, and leaping of all kinds; and last, but not least, the tug of war, in which even ladies join. So what with reading, music, and exercise of all sorts, the time on board ship passes away rapidly enough; and you will positively feel sorry when the voyage is drawing near its close."

"The fear of sea-sickness, and of storms and gales, alone makes me nervous now, doctor."

"The sea-sickness need not trouble you long. If you do as I advise, and fight it, you will be well in a few days. After that your appetite will be wonderful; but do not encourage it too much, or a bilious attack may be the result. You must really eat and drink most sparingly, and never miss a day without taking a bath."

My Roving Invalid disappeared; months passed away, and I heard of him no more. I was beginning to think he had been lost at sea, or settled down in the new land for good, when I received a letter with the well-known Colonial marks thereon.

It was from my invalid. Thanks to my advice, he said, which he had followed to the letter, he was a new man. But the weather was getting uncomfortably hot, and he meant soon returning to dear old temperate England.

It was early spring, buds were appearing on the hedgerows, and birds were busy in every bush, when one forenoon a gentleman, whom I hardly recognised, was shown into my study.

It was my rover, nevertheless, though his face was as tanned and brown as the back of my favourite violin. His hands were hard too; I soon found that out.

"I have you to thank," he said, "for my perfect restoration to health."

"Health," I said, somewhat drily, "is sometimes more easily found than kept."

His face fell, as I meant it to.

"What are you going to do now?" I asked, adding before he had time to reply, "I really wish you to remain as strong and healthy as you appear to be at present; but occupation for mind and body is the only thing to prevent a relapse."

"You're a Job's comforter," he replied. "Why, I thought if a man were once well, he would remain so, unless he lived fast, and I do not intend to do that."

"But," I insisted, "there is nothing in the world so fatiguing or depressing to heart and nerves as absolute idleness. A month of the latter at the seaside after a long fatiguing season of hard work really does good. While by the 'sad sea waves,' as romancists call it, one really should do nothing—and do it well. This is the true 'rest cure,' but it is only of service to men of the work-a-day world."

Now I would not have preached at my patient in this way had I not believed it was for his good. I knew his constitution, and knew too that his nervous system would soon get the upper hand, if he did not have occupation to burn off, so to speak, his extra energy.

For believe me, reader, there are people in this world to whom idleness means a speedy demise. Nervous energy, if not expended on wholesome labour, will prey on the body, and like a fever waste it away.

Whether my plain advice to my invalid displeased him or not, I cannot say. This much I do know—he did not take it. But he joined the great army of Roving Invalids, who are for ever flitting to and fro in the world in search of health and happiness, without any very well-defined notion of what they really want, or what would be best for them.

But the sea itself is not more tossed and troubled than are these same Roving Invalids. If they gain an accession of nerve-strength at one place, they lose it at another. They are here to-day, and away to-morrow. Here, there, and everywhere. Choking one month in dust-storms in Algiers, shivering next on the icy hills or river-banks in Norway; at spas in Yorkshire, at spas in Scotland, or the Pyrenees, Nassau, or Bohemia, while occasionally you meet them at the well-laid tables of our inland hydropathic establishments.

My Roving Invalid's sea-gotten health did not last him long doing nothing. He frittered it away, then set out to seek it, and after a year consulted me.

He looked much older, and that spoke volumes. I could only reiterate my former advice, and sum it up in one word—"occupation."

"Your nerves want calming," I added, "and as a rover you will never be well."

I received a note from him some time after, at which I could not help smiling.

"Run down to N——," it said, "and see my Jerseys and Belgian canaries."

I did run down, though Jerseys are not much in my line; but I found my patient calm and healthy. All his restive manner had disappeared. He had found a hobby.