

and I started as a bank clerk. But the work never suited my health, and at twenty-two I was in despair over it, when one day a certain Vucina chanced to hear me sing: a sort of musical man of business, who took pupils for the profession, organised concerts and operas, and so forth. He offered to train me as a singer, undertaking to maintain me during my probation, and I binding myself to pay him a large share—the lion's share—of my future earnings. For two years I studied hard privately, for he never allowed any publicity about pupils; but the May before I came to you, an old acquaintance asked me to go with him to Mr. Dayrell-Edwards', and sing at a very small party, and Vucina let me accept that, under my name of Austin only. I stayed to dinner after the party, and received the greatest kindness from Mr. and Mrs. Dayrell-Edwards; they invited me often, and when leaving town for Hazeldene, made me promise to send news of my doings. By this time I had become terribly plagued with weakness of voice, and Vucina took me to a throat doctor, who said I had practised too much; that my voice was of a very fine and peculiar quality, easily overstrained, and must have entire rest, excepting a little gentle practice in the open air, which in some cases was very strengthening to the throat and lungs. Vucina's face fell; but he soon decided my holiday must be devoted to perfecting myself in languages, and having once done some service to Mr. Turner, he counted on getting free instruction for me here. Of course he knew Dearholm was not a suitable climate; but in such a hot summer that could hardly signify, and Vucina, I believe, treated it as kill or cure; he feared his speculation in me was proving a failure, and if so, why, the

sooner I collapsed the better. I was pledged to the strictest secrecy, for he dreaded any rival getting hold of me at the last, also that if my delicacy became known it might lower my value as a singer. Well, it was all fun to me, dodging about the woods, and playing 'boggart,' and hearing opinions unawares. The happiest moment I'd ever known, Eccles, was when you told me all your feelings about my voice. Ah! but I soon found it was doing me no good; I caught chills, I suppose, and Vucina's irregularity about payments depressed me; foolishly, perhaps, I told him how ill and hopeless I felt, and he sent that cruel letter ending the matter. Maybe it was true he had made a disastrous speculation over some concerts, and was out of funds, yet even so, it was heartless to desert me then. Thanks to you, I got to Hazeldene, and stayed until they started for visits after Christmas, when they insisted on giving me the means to take a year's rest—Heaven reward their goodness!—and they would have paid my debt if I'd asked them, only they had done so much, and I felt such a wish to repay you my own self. By the next winter I was earning something at private parties at Torquay, and last May, through Mr. Dayrell-Edwards' help, I made my first public appearance in London. Of course Vucina's abandonment of me cancelled my contract with him—I shall merely refund what he spent for me—and now that I'm well and strong, and my singing a pure delight, why, I hope to go on and prosper."

"Well, I can scarce believe it was human, and nae boggart after a'," Eccles remarked meditatively. "One thing's certain: if health lasts, there's a great name and a grand future for the Voice in the Woods."

## A MOST UNWELCOME GUEST.

BY A FAMILY DOCTOR.



"HAVE a bungalow," I said, "down 'by the sad sea waves' that ripple on the sands of C—. It is one of those portable businesses, you know, to which I can fly for rest occasionally and live *en garçon*, mostly out of doors, with a dog and a rod and a boat. But I have a spare bedroom, and should welcome a literary friend like you. I shan't disturb you. I shall be on the water all day or among the rocks, so you can lie on your back and plan and plot for another story."

"How delightful!" he answered thoughtfully.

"Yes," I added, "it is delightful enough, but you don't seem to jump at it. Let me see, now: to-day is the second of May. Well, in three weeks' time a maternal relation of mine—not by direct descent—comes to visit my wife; she will then have company, and the days of 'auld lang syne' to talk about; so I could slip off, and you could come too. We could travel together."

"No, we shouldn't, *mon ami*," he said quickly.

"And why not, pray?"

He did not answer directly.

"The time would suit me if I didn't expect a visitor."

"Can't you put him off?" I inquired.

"I fear I cannot, much though I should wish to."

I looked at my friend. He certainly was somewhat pale and nervous—a great many work-a-day literary men are. But who could his disagreeable visitor be? Mr. Rubens was far too successful an author to be troubled with thoughts of money. Was it possible he had a skeleton of some kind in his closet, or did the ghost of some restless ancestor haunt his bachelor chambers?

"You look puzzled," he said, "as well you may be; and you are too well-bred to ask who this unwelcome guest of mine is, so I'll tell you. His name is Megrim."

"Whew!" I whistled. "I never suspected that."



Here, now, off with your coat and waistcoat; I'm going to examine your heart."

Out came the stethoscope, and Rubens obeyed me to the letter as meekly as a child might.

There was a slight bit of an anæmic thrill or purr, but otherwise nothing to indicate any disease. And so I told him.

"You have taken a load off my mind," he said. "You took me all unawares, though. Had I dreamt my heart was to be examined, you wouldn't have seen me here to-day. Now I think I can promise to come, but I won't venture to ride in the same carriage."

"For fear of bringing on your sick headache?"

"Yes, we should talk; and assuredly Mr. Megrim would come the next day to see what it was all about."

"You have been troubled with these migraine headaches for some years?"

"Yes, for ten at least. They are *migraine* now; I should like them to *migrate*; and the very feebleness of that joke of mine makes me believe I have an attack coming on now."

"Well," I said, "there are three, if not four, different kinds of megrim, and there may be a sort of megrim formed by the amalgamation of two of these. Tell me how yours behaves, and I may be able to advise you how to steer clear of so unwelcome a guest."

"I believe," said my friend, "you have hit the nail on the head, to begin with. I do believe my megrim is a mixed one, or that sometimes it begins in one style, then flies off at a tangent into another. Well, you know I do a deal of night work, and have now and then a deal of worry. So this work, combined with this worry, brings on two premonitory symptoms: slight acidity of the digestive organs and a confined condition of the system. Medicine now may drive off the attack for a time, but this is only running away from the enemy; sooner or later he gains on me; I am driven to bay, and have to fight him the best way I can, or simply succumb and suffer as meekly as I may. The culmination is the sick headache. This is terrible while it lasts. It usually comes on in the morning, though I dare say it has been settling around all night, for I awake with a confused idea that I have been dreaming; not downright nightmarish dreams, but disagreeable ones, for all that, and they have left me aching all over, and with a pain on one side of the head—the right. I am not going to get up that day, you may be sure. I don't care to open my eyes or lift my head from the pillow. I may have engagements of the greatest importance, but I must let them slide for once. Breakfast, even in bed, is out of the question. If I could only sleep again! But that too is usually impossible, so great is the pain. I may gently move the head or softly arrange the pillow, but all is delusory, all in vain. The movement only exaggerates the symptoms. By-and-by, lying in bed itself seems intolerable. If I get up I stagger about and the pain increases, so I am glad to lie down again, but this same attempt to overcome my illness has brought on sickness. Then I am at the worst.

The retching causes the perspiration to pour from brow and chest, ay, even my very hair becomes draggled. I need not tell you, because you must know what I suffer. Bile? Yes, I bring up bile. It regurgitates from somewhere, as you doctors, with your partiality for verbs that are not pretty, like to express it. Somehow I think that the vomiting, although it causes me to feel as bad as if sea-sick, eases me. The intervals between retching become longer; at last I doze and dream, and finally, perhaps, I sleep, and awaken cold and weak, but well. I may get up now, but I have to walk as if my head were simply fastened to my body with a slip of india-rubber. I finally collapse on the sofa, grateful, but weary, and next day I am about again—that is, mind you, if Mr. Megrim hasn't brought any of his relations. If he has, he himself may go away, but they stop for days. My headache then becomes intermittent, and of that sort I think you term *Hemicrania*."

Leaving Mr. Rubens' case on one side for a few minutes, let me say a few words about the ordinary causes of this disagreeable visitor—megrim.

To begin with, there are undoubted proofs that megrim is in many cases hereditary, and that although they may commence very early in life, its attacks seldom come upon one after the middle period, or age of forty-five in women. But the fact of megrim being constitutional or hereditary is no reason why we should not attempt to ward off attacks, or take means, wherever possible, to prevent their coming on at all. A person suffering from periodical attacks of the complaint is by no means to be regarded as suffering from actual disease.

To be sure, it is sometimes connected with certain disorders of the heart, else I should not have troubled to apply my stethoscope to the chest of my friend mentioned above. All who suffer, therefore, from megrim, should consult a medical man, and have the heart examined, if only for the sake of enabling them to be more easy in mind.

The periodic nature of megrim causes it to be a very unpleasant ailment for anyone to be subject to. It may be said to be an enemy hovering continually on the flank of the army of life, making ever and anon another desperate attack, but usually retiring baffled after a time. Young girls under twenty are often subject to megrim, though it generally passes away in about a day, or after one good night's rest. During the interval the person is generally in his or her usual health, and just after an attack, even better.

As in Mr. Rubens' case, the megrim is, as a rule, threatened beforehand, the stomach and system get out of order for a day or two, and these symptoms may be caused by the ailment itself, although we must not forget that they *may cause it*. Certain articles of diet or drink are almost sure to induce a "fit of megrim," as it is sometimes called.

Well, it stands to common sense that these latter should be most rigidly abstained from, however tempting such viands are to the senses. Pork, pastry, veal, salmon, and even mutton may have to be avoided. Hot sauces, onions, and pickles should be



used with suspicion, and as to drinkables, tea-drinking, if the tea be strong, may do harm by lowering the nervous system, and vinous stimulants by sending the blood to the head.

The bilious form of megrim is caused by anything that interferes with the functions of the liver.

But apart from all bodily causes, the condition of the mind has to be taken into account when searching for the causes of megrim. *Any* kind of worry, *all* kinds of mental strain or over-work, and most kinds of excitement are liable to induce it. Why, we need hardly ask; for such causes mean depression of the nervous system, and the powers of life generally.

I have little inclination to dwell on the symptoms of megrim or sick headache. Unfortunately for thousands, they are far too well known. Besides, the case of Mr. Rubens is somewhat typical. But the pain is at times far more distressing than any that he ever suffered. Just as birds and other animals get away into a quiet dark corner when ill, so do sufferers from megrim like to court the retirement and concealment, I may say, of their rooms. There are many strange symptoms affecting the sight and sensations, which are generally very alarming to the patient, such as partial blindness, flashes of light, crackling in the brain, numbness of limbs, pins and needles, and a heavy stupid feeling, and these often make the sufferer fear he is to be struck with paralysis.

Well, now, I hope the reader has already suspected, from what I have said of the causes of megrim, that the treatment cannot be in all cases the same, but to a large degree of the preventive order.

We must admit that the chief seat of the ailment is the head. I do not say that it is always the brain itself, though it often is. It may be the brain-coverings that are congested. Some medical men doubt whether the liver has anything to do with the trouble. I myself do not. I mean that a bilious attack may culminate in megrim, for any poison that *ought* to be

eliminated by the great secreting organs, and is not so got rid of, will cause a species of blood-poisoning. The bile, as all know, has most important functions to perform in the animal economy, but if it is retained in the blood, the consequences are disastrous.

"I believe," said Mr. Rubens, "I could prevent my headache if I could be always on my guard. But *nemo semper sapit*, you know."

Well, but my friend did learn to live by rule, and still does, and although barely forty, he no longer suffers from megrim. He is a changed man.

Night hours and long hours of labour, whether mental or bodily, must be avoided. That is the first *sine quâ non* of a return to health. Secondly, good nutritious diet must be taken, but over-eating must be strenuously guarded against. Exercise must become one of the daily habits of life. A hobby has ere now acted in itself as a cure. It must, however, be a hobby that keeps one out in the open air, and pleasantly engages the mind, while it exercises without fatiguing the body. Sleep will thus be got without dangerous artificial means, and remember sleep is all-important. Whenever one's daily occupation interferes in any way with his natural rest at night, he is on the brink of danger. The Turkish or Russian bath (taken under medical advice) will very often tend to ward off an attack.

The diet, though nutritious, must be plain. For drink, I have reason to believe lithia water will be found to do good, but a cup of tea in the afternoon is a great comfort. If there be much acidity, a soda and gentian mixture; if paleness of face and gums, iron; but the system *must* be kept open by rational means. Cod-liver oil with pancreatic emulsion often does much good. Try it and see. Do everything possible to get into a healthy habit of body and a calm condition of mind, and all will go well. When an attack does take place, send for a doctor, for the remedies most in use belong to the class called dangerous.

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THE ENGAGEMENT RING.

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**T**HIS ring recalls the happy day  
He told his love to me,  
Which all my future life will stay  
Enshrined in memory.

What charms were mine to draw his heart  
To choose so poor a prize?  
With loyal trust, while doubts depart,  
I look into his eyes.

Dear ring, with rapture, new and fond,  
I see your jewels shine,  
And dream of brighter joys, beyond  
All former hopes of mine.

And yet the days must not be spent  
In dreams, however fair,  
For I would strive, with fixed intent,  
His highest aims to share.

My task, to aid his steadfast will,  
When clouds are dark above,  
To rule, his constant subject still,  
By sweet constraint of love.

I kiss his treasured ring, and vow,  
In hours of bliss or pain,  
His blessing, as he calls me now,  
Hereafter to remain. J. R. EASTWOOD.