RHEUMATISM IN THE YOUNG.

CHIEFLY ADDRESSED TO MOTHERS AND ELDER SISTERS.

By MERCUCI.

I have come to shirk this paper with an apology to my youthful readers, because I am going to make use of a technical word or term, which, although a very necessary one, you shall seldom or never hear in ordinary conversation.

I make my apology now for the word: it is, diarrhcea, a Greek compound, and any girl who has a brother older than ten, has only to ask him, and he will at once tell her what the roots of the word are. But failing the brother, there is the dictionary, and that will inform you that diarrhcea means a particular function or state of body which predisposes to diseases of any kind, especially blood diseases. Now that is a instance, the consumptive diarrhcea, and many others, and among them, unhappily for suffering humanity, we have the rheumatic diarrhcea. Mothers know only too well what rheumatism in a child means, but few perhaps know that there are many degrees of this terrible complaint, and that oftentimes children suffer from it in a mild form without any symptoms even suspecting what it is that ails them.

Well now, I write a good deal on rheumatism in grown up people, and I am bound to say that I do take much pleasure in it, for I cannot help feeling that in nine cases out of ten the ailment is all but incurable.

Villy is it so? you may ask me. Then mark my reply, as I say, Aquilisthesia can only fairly be established is all but impossible to eradicate or change.

In children it is different. Their cases of rheumatism are not only more easy and satisfactory to treat, but, as there are years and years before them in which to grow, they have a far better chance of getting clear of the diarrhcea.

I am of the opinion, too, that when called upon to treat or cure a case of rheumatism, it is the duty of the medical attendant not to rest till he has made his patient, for the time being, to a happy termination, but to give such directions for the diet and conduct of living, so to speak, of his little patient after her cure, as shall tend to prevent the recurrency of the disease, if not change the diarrhcea entirely.

In this paper I mean to practise what I preach, and give a few hints for the guidance on the straight paths of health to those who have once been the victims of rheumatism.

Now for the complaint. Rheumatism is a common and influential complaint. To commence with, rheumatism, whether in its acute or its chronic stage, may occur owing to the little patient having a natural tendency thereto. In other words, rheumatism is hereditary.

"It is in the blood," some would say. But as far as the aliment under consideration is concerned, that saying, although very often heard, is simply all nonsense. It is not in the blood: there is no disease germ afflating in the vital fluid waiting for a chance to sow itself in the veins and arteries of a person with the rheumatic diathesis may be as pure as mountain air, and for the most part it is. No, the diathesis does not depend upon the blood, but whether this is healthy or not, every week at the farthest—but on a peculiar formation of body internally. Probably the nervous system itself has a good deal to do with these things, and if the body is strong, or it may be strong and still be irritable, the liver is also irritable, and the coats of the stomach singularly so. This last statement must be borne in mind, not only while we are prescribing for a young patient suffering from rheumatism, but in laying down rules for the subsequent regimen, which shall have an object in view, and a cure of the diathes.

Well, the stomach is not only extremely irritable during an attack of rheumatism, but in constantly secreting large quantities of acid, but the converse is also true, and in a person predisposed to the disease, whatsoever irritates the stomach is apt to produce an over-eating, or eating what does not agree, induces a congested state of the stomach; the gastric juice or lactic acid fluid, which in small quantities is necessary for health, is poured out in larger quantities than can be used; it passes out of the stomach and sets up mischief there; it passes with the food into the blood itself, and remains there, and it is applied to properly and healthily nourish the body; it irritates the brain and heart, and produces fever, symptoms, which rest on the stomach and keep up the mischief, and in bad cases the over-abundance of acid in the blood even acts in quite a chemical way, and throws down a deposit of the salts therein, and this precipitate settles in the joints, and produces pain and inflammation of the joints. The reason why this deposit generally takes place about the ligaments of joints and the tendons of muscles is doubtless the more dependent position and the slower circulation through them, just as it is we find deposits of mud and sand, not in tumbling parts of rivers, but in the shallows of the beach and bends where the current is less strong.

Be this as it may, rheumatism is caused by an over-abundance of acid in the system; and during the time the acid is circulating in large quantities exposure to damp or to cold may set up inflammation, and fever and all its attendant dangers, pains, and miseries, which may end in a favourable or very unfavourable way.

If the reader has followed me so far—though I am really afraid my younger girls will not have—I am about to enter upon a period of the plan aimed at getting rid of symptoms in—
stead of eradicate the causes. If the stomach be filled with acid, nothing is more easy than to neutralise it; a dose of bicarbonate of potash or soda will do this; but will your bicarbonate of potash or soda reduce the irritating congested state of the stomach that causes the secretion of the acid? The very reverse, it seems to me. An emetic would do as well if not better. Not that I hold with emetics for the simple reason that they give a shock to the whole system, irritate the stomach terribly, and may injure delicate internal organs.

Well, there is the acid treatment. This it would almost seem has been successful in the hands of a good many practitioners. They give the only medicine simply lime juice or lemon juice. This is not homoeopathic treatment; it is not "like cure like," but rather the substitution of one acid for the other. I do not myself object to lime juice being taken in small quantities during an attack of rheumatism—as a drink, if it be appreciated by the patient. But I should not depend upon it as a cure.

It will be noticed that during an attack of rheumatism the perspiration flows sore, and it is also more profuse than in health. This is nothing more nor less than an effort of the mother Nature to get rid of the poison in the blood, and we cannot err in assisting her. For this purpose there is nothing better than the hot air bath and vapour bath commingled. One should keep the room cold, take hot air baths properly, a hot bath every day to induce profuse perspiration; a little sweet spirits of nitre will help this, and should be given three, four or five times a day. Aperients should be given to keep the system well open, colonel and jalap, suited to the age of the child, the first day, followed up some hours after with a good dose of salts andenna. Subsequently every morning any ordinary mild aperient should be given.

The ordinary effervescing draught of the shops, consisting of bicarbonate of potash with syrup of lemon and water in one bottle and citric acid and water in another, mixed when wanted according to directions, and given three, four or five times a day generally do much good.

Perfect rest is imperative, and this includes not only rest for the body in bed—sometimes, alas! there can be little of that—but rest for the irritable acid-producing stomach also. The food should be of the very lightest, and no forcing should be attempted. Do not be afraid of the child dying of starvation; she will not do so. Let the water be cool but not cold, and very well ventilated. Keep the house quiet; beware of noises of any kind. Sleep is most important, but do not attempt to improve it by giving sleeping draughts of any kind, not even spiritsuous, unless prescribed by your own doctor.

Change the nightdress very often, and see that the bedclothes are soft and warm without being heavy.

Let me just recapitulate briefly. We ordered the hot bath—all or water, or a combination—the keeping up of the perspiration by all legitimate means, a good aperient and daily aperients, cooling drinks, light food, no forcing, soothing applications to painful joints, and rest, rest, rest.

The earliest indication of returning health will be the restoration of the appetite, and now indeed you must be on your guard; the food must still be light, and meat forbidden for a long time. For one thing you must bear in mind during illness, convalescence and future life. The stomach must be guarded against irritation of every sort.

Cold must also be guarded against during convalescence.

Now, in conclusion, let me say a brief word or two, sometimes the after regime of a child subject to rheumatism. I can say all I need say in a single sentence. The child must not be over-coddled nor treated entirely like an invalid. She must come under the influence of those hygienic laws that govern the health of all children we wish to see growing up strong; but over and above this, the diet, in quantity and quality, must be most carefully regulated, and the greatest precautions should be ever adopted to prevent her from catching cold. The last portion of the sentence I have put in italics, to show its great importance.

Let flannel, light and soft, be worn next the skin; let plenty of exercise be taken regularly—open air driving to be avoided, as there is so much danger of catching cold attached to it. The system ought to be kept free, not by aperients, but by healthful outdoor exercise, assisted if necessary by eating fruits of all kinds, especially in the morning.

Now and then a Turkish bath will be found of the greatest service, and where it can be borne the soap bath every morning followed by a cold sponge bath, or a slightly tepid one.

Toiles, cold liver oil, etc ad genium eae, generally do more harm than good to children predisposed to rheumatism, although quinine may be taken during convalescence from an acute attack.

SEVEN YEARS FOR RACHEL;
OR, WELSH PICTURES SKETCHED FROM LIFE.

By ANNE BEALE.

CHAPTER XII.

THE NULL.

RACHEL has been nearly six months at the farm. In spite of hard work she looks much more healthy than she did when she left her father's roof, and as she stands at early morn on the top of the hill with a long, crooked stick in her hand, her face glowing with exercise, a rough, faithful cur panting by her side, and some milk-white sheep grazing around her, any observer might desire to paint or describe, or have some near interest in, a being so pure and so natural!

As it chances, one or two of her cows have wandered to the brow of the hill, and she has followed them there. The sun has just risen, and lets fly his shafts of liquid gold, over and through all nature. The glowing orb sits in majestic grandeur—far, far away into the indistinguishable distance go the green meadows with their constant flocks and herds; thick woods lie in rich patches here and there; the hedgerows never cease, but in endless variety interlace the uplands; the white-washed cottage dots the plain; at longer intervals the villages, with spire or tower, or the turrets of the old ruin, catch the sunshine; in the extreme distance, opposite the sun, the hills are of the bluest; high forlorn towers and there a faint mountain is seen upon which the darker shadows still remain. Through the meadows runs the Afon, threading its many way, a line of burnished silver, giving us back the vivid sun. Now it wanders by a farm-house and is lost in the trees that surround it; again it appears and makes its way towards a rustic cottage; once more it is hidden between some slight elevations, and then breaks forth anew, to gleam along the green fields. It visits hamlet, town, and ancient castle in its course. Here and there a light bridge crosses it, and the arches cast their shades into its waters, which reflect another bridge in the sunshine. Here a solitary fisherman in his light coracle, that sole remnant of the ancient Britons, paddles along and ruffles its smooth surface; whilst his cheerful whistle, united with that of the shepherd-boy, together swell the monotonous bleating of sheep, loving of herds, and the note of the awakening birds, form a harmonious chime.

Let it not be supposed that Rachel has been contemplating the sunrise all the time that we have been looking at the landscape. She has been busily collecting the cows, and as they are tractable beasts, with the help of the dog has almost succeeded. Cautiously they are feeling their way down the hill, and seem guided by the marks upon the steps which they are about to take.