know what she had to depend upon for filling her stall. The note went on: —

"If I did not feel sure, dearest Ida, that the fulfilment of your generous promises is certain to be so amply satisfactory I should be reduced at the present moment to the greatest state of despair. Next to your own dear little self, Miss de Mattos was my most active helper. Such a heap of things she had made for me; I saw them in her room last Wednesday. I only wish that I had taken them away with me then, as she offered to let me do!

"Late last night her maid came round to say her mistress had fallen ill with scarlet fever—a light form, the doctor says—but of course none of the things can be brought away for the fancy fair, for fear of spreading infection, and I had so counted on them.

"Now all my hope is in what you may have prepared for me, and the trust that, under the circumstances, you will spend all this week likewise in working like a Trojan for the benefit of my stall.

"Hoping to see you this afternoon, or to hear from you this evening,

"I remain yours,

"Overwhelmed with business,

"ALICE BROAD."

As Mrs. Deacon folded up the letter she sighed, and Ida, lifting her tear-stained face, sobbed, "You too think it a bad business, mamma?"

"I think it a very bad business indeed," replied Mrs. Deacon, very gravely, "that all people should learn to distrust my child, should have reason to put no faith in her promises. And all because she persists in indulging her indolent love of putting off everything she has to do, or undertakes to do, to the last moment."

"I thought that you did not care much about fancy fairs," muttered Ida, turning restive again under reproof; but the tears streamed as heavily as before when her mother answered, in the same sad and serious tones—

"I care very much for kept promises, very much for the healthful, bright activity of spirit that does its best to keep them. Ah! Ida, when do you mean to pray, not with lips only, but with your heart, against your besetting sin? Is that also to be put off till a last moment, which may come as a thief in the night when you are least aware. From the moment you rise in the morning, which is always so late that you have scarcely time to say your prayers much less to pray them, till you jump into bed hurriedly at night in the same prayerless state, your days are all passed in putting everything off till the last moment. I confess that I feel ashamed, as most mothers would do, that our friends should all have to learn your laziness, but I am much more grieved when I think of the doom pronounced against the unprofitable servant who was too idle to make use of his Lord's gift. Remember we are not told that he did anything whatever that we call "bad," he was only indolent, lazy, idle. And for him the awful words were said, "Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness."

As Mrs. Deacon uttered that last solemn word she moved away from Ida's side, and left the room. It had indeed been a painful shock to her to find that not even a matter about which Ida had professed a great amount of girlish enthusiasm had induced her to make any effort to overcome the indolence to which day by day she showed an increasing disposition to yield. If Ida felt miserable, her mother was at least equally sad.

But to return to Maggie Hill, whom we left plodding her weary way home to her sister, with her bag as heavy as when she started, and her purse as empty.

(To be concluded.)

THE MIND AND THE HEALTH.

By MEDICUS.

ONE of England's greatest political heroes, now, alas! gone from amongst us — succumbing in his goodly old age to the accident of a cold—was probably one of the hardest working men that ever lived. And not in politics alone were his talents displayed, for his labours were equally as arduous in the vineyard of literature. His career is surely a proof that hard work and constant employment of mind are the very reverse of incompatible with longevity.

A lady of my acquaintance is not ashamed to confess to the allotted span—the three-score years and ten. She has been a most active woman all her life, both in mind and body, and there are certainly few signs of age about her yet. On the contrary, she enjoys exceptionally good health. She is fond of young folks, as all right-minded people of her age are, and there are few of their amusements she cannot take part in with zest. She says she tires sooner than she used to do. This alone reminds her of the flight of time. But why, you may ask me, do I adduce these cases? Is long life, then, a thing to be so devoutly wished for? I do not say it is. This paper is not written with the view to teaching my fair readers how to attain longevity, else it would have had quite a different title. But when we look at the number of aged people who are infirm, we must confess it is far better to be old and hale than old and ailing. Why should age be infirm? Nature, I am convinced, never meant it to be so. On the contrary, after a long life, well spent, the only forerunner to the coming change—apart from accidents—is simply a feeling of tiredness, a weariness, and a wish for rest. This is natural old age. Ah! but mark me, girl readers, there is an old age that cometh not of years, but of carelessness in living and waste of health. Some there be who, as far as all the phenomena of old age are concerned, positively begin to go down hill shortly after twenty. Now I would have those I address be the healthiest of the healthy; that is my ambition. I would have them learn these words by heart, and lay them to heart: *Non est vivere sed valere vita.** And it is with this view that I come before you, month after month, and in my homely matter-of-fact fashion try to teach you some of the golden rules of health, and the simple but beautiful laws of hygiene. My subject matter this month, I flatter myself, you will find neither dry nor uninteresting. The mind has a marvellous effect for good or for bad over the health, and if it be allowed to lie fallow and never exercised, or if the thoughts are unemployed, they act as a depressant, lower vitality, and prey upon the human frame, making it in reality old before its time.

But not only should the mind be kept rightly employed; it should be kept amused as well. Constant work means oftentimes constant worry, and this in itself is depressing and wearying.

But, on the other hand, relaxation from hours of labour does not necessarily imply rest. If the body is tired and the bones ache, lie prone by all means, and take a book and read. But do we not often hear girls complain—after they have got a day or two's holiday—that they don't know what to do with themselves? There seems to be a gap made in their everyday life that they do not know exactly how to fill up. Apart from holidays, however, every girl has, or ought to have, several hours of the day all to herself; the question, then, "What should I do with my leisure time?" comes to be one that is far from unimportant, and one's happiness and health may depend upon a correct answer thereto.

I will try to answer the question for you, or, failing that, put you on the fair road to answer it for yourself. And, to begin, I wish you to believe with me that idleness is prejudicial to the health. This is a truth; it is more, it is an axiom.

Every girl, then, should, in my opinion, have a hobby or hobbies. I confess I do not like the sound of the word "hobby," but I have no better to use. I mean to imply by it some pursuit which may be followed with pleasure. I will now mention a few of the hobbies which may be taken up by girls, with the certainty that by keeping the mind delightfully employed they are conducive to health and a vigorous longevity.

Hobbies may be divided into two classes—namely, outdoor hobbies and indoor hobbies. The former are, of course, more suited for summer recreation; the latter, for the long fore-nights of winter.

Can anything be more delightful, I wonder, than the occupation of flower gardening, when conducted with care and taste? It is not necessary that the space you cultivate should be very large. Better, perhaps, it should not be so, but it will be very small indeed if you cannot succeed in keeping up a perfect succession of beautiful blooms, from the very day that the snowdrops, crocuses, and primroses first rear their modest heads above the brown earth, until the starry and radiant chrysanthemums droop and die beneath the chilling breath of the coming winter. In adopting the flower garden as a hobby a beginner should not attempt too much at first. Lay out your plot of ground, if possible, in the end of this year or very early in the beginning of next. Let the ground be as rich as possible, for you cannot expect to get rich flowers from a poor soil. Let it also, if possible, have a sunny aspect and shelter from the high winds. Follow some plan in laying out your ground, and this plan should first be devised and sketched on paper, with all its walks and beds and borders. For a small garden, tiles, I think, make the best edging, though some like box. Daisies look pretty as an edging, so does the crimson-blossomed sea-pink. Do not despise early spring flowers; no flower that blows or blooms can be considered common, they are all beautiful, and remember Who made them. Do not despise old-fashioned flowers either; what can be prettier than stocks and wallflowers, or gorgeous bells of foxglove growing in semi-shaded nooks, or daisies white and red, or pansies of every hue. Sweet williams make a nice show, and there are dozens of others all easy of culture coming into season month by month and generally blooming for eight weeks at a time. Roses you will have; half standards are best for small gardens, and you can easily learn to bud them yourself on stems of the wild brier. In bedding-out time geraniums will come in charmingly, their gorgeous blossoms enriched by the blue of the tender lobelia, and the orange green of the golden pyrethrum. Nor will annuals be forgotten, best sown in beds, clusters, or borders. What can be more taking, for example, than a border of crimson linums (*Linum grandiflorum rubrum*), set off with splendid marigolds and starry larkspurs. But there, I must not pretend to teach gardening, I am but an amateur myself. I only want to show that health is to be found in the garden, and if you put your heart and mind to the

* Life does not consist of mere living, but living in the full enjoyment of health.

cultivation of flowers, and keep a little book in which to note the results of the experience of one year as your guide for the next, your reward will be great. Early rising will strengthen your nerves, the exercise and use of your garden tools will harden your muscles, and before the summer is over it will be strange indeed if the roses you cultivate be not reflected in your own cheeks, and your breath be as pure as the perfume of honeysuckle blossom.

The study of botany is a health-hobby of no mean order. It carries one far afield, it entails exercise, and it ensures fresh air and sunshine. And it is a study that not only invigorates the body but strengthens the mind as well; therefore, I recommend it. I think, though, that it should be combined to some degree with the study of natural history. In your walks through the fields, in the woods, and by the hedgerows you will meet with many a beautiful bird and beast and beetle. What a pity it would be not to cultivate their acquaintance, to find out their names and ways and habits and habitats, so that if ever you meet them again you will be able to look upon them as quite old friends.

But here let Medicus have a word *in propriâ personâ*. Whether gardening or botanising, you will consult your health and safety by wearing strong soled shoes and thick, warm woollen stockings.

A girl might combine the hobbies of botany or gardening with that of keeping a pet or two. It seems to me such a pleasure, when I am out walking, to be able to cull some favourite herb or seedling plant to carry home to one of my pets.

"There is an eye that marks my coming,
And grows brighter when I come."

Yes, and there are usually a good many pairs of eyes too, and the knowledge that I never return without something nice in my pocket does not detract from their brightness, I assure you.

Birds probably make the best pets for girls, but white mice or rats are very wise and very affectionate and funny; and even rabbits and guinea-pigs are not to be despised. And to those girls who live in country places, outdoor members of the feathered race—such as fowls, or ducks of various kinds, golden and silver pheasants, &c.—are far from uninteresting as pets.

For girls who dwell by the sad sea wave, as the poet calls it, a more delightful occupation could hardly be conceived than that of collecting and studying the various kinds of seaweed, especially that washed up after a storm, and the many curious objects of interest to be found on the seashore. To the natural historian, not a weed is there and not a pebble but has its story to tell.

Now just a word or two, suggestively, about indoor hobbies. Artificial flower-making is a charming one. It matters but little which you make your flowers of—whether paper, or wax, or anything else. Study nature as closely as may be, and the time will pass pleasantly enough, and the employment will tend to bring you health

I can give you no advice about sewing or embroidery or crewel work. They are all good in one way, but let me give you a word of warning. Do not sit too closely, avoid cramped and stooping habits, do not work in too bright a light, nor in a dim one. A light which is mellowed by passing through a ground-glass globe is the best. In working embroidery or sewing, avoid fatigue, or anything approaching to it.

The scrap-book hobby is a good one. I do not mean pasting up bits of flowers and figures which you buy by the gross, but verses and extracts from papers, periodicals, or magazines, and good engravings. You find these in many of our weeklies and monthlies, and a scrap-book may be so lined by them as to become quite a pleasure to look back upon when the year is passed and gone.

In reading good books in the winter evenings do not fail to mark notable passages with a little blue cross on the margin. You can refer back and think over these passages, and note them down in a book with your own remarks. Much good may accrue from this. In writing your own ideas remember these lines—

"Think not too meanly of thy low estate,
Thou hast a choice—to choose is to create."

It is excellent exercise for the mind, the writing of verses. Do not let it keep you from sleep, however.

Although I do not like people given to quotations—a man or woman who quotes being, in my opinion, as bad, if not worse, than a punster—still, the exercise of writing down good quotations from good authors is one that is not to be despised.

Space warns me I must close, but I must have one last word. It is this: there is no better hobby than that of music, none so pleasant, none so healthful, and, if I dared to choose an instrument for you, I would recommend the only perfect one in the world—the violin. At the same time, if you would have good sound lungs, warranted to defy colds and coughs with all their attendant ills, learn to sing. "If," says someone whose name I forget, "you would keep spring in your hearts, learn to sing. There is more merit in music than most people are aware of. Songs are like sunshine—they fill the bosom with such cheerfulness and buoyancy that, for the time being, you feel filled with June air, or like a meadow of clover in blossom."

DECIMA'S PROMISE.

By AGNES GIBERNE, Author of "Sun, Moon, and Stars," &c.

CHAPTER IX.

FEARS AND HOPES.

"DESSIE," said Mrs. Fitzroy, on the morning of the last day before Decima's journey, "I really must insist on your going to see Ella this afternoon. I cannot imagine why you have not been before. Of course you are busy; but surely you could spare half an hour. After all Ella's kindness to you, it is worse than thoughtless to neglect her at such a time."

"I did go a day or two ago, mamma; but she could not see me."

"You chose the very time when I warned you that she would be lying down; and you ought to have gone again. If you do not care enough for Baby to do so for his sake, you ought at least to show common consideration for poor dear Ella," Mrs. Fitzroy said, with unwonted warmth. "I really do not understand you, Dessie. You make such professions of caring for Ella at ordinary times, and yet now she is in this terrible trouble you don't care to go near her or to ask her how she is. It seems to me quite heartless, and I can see that both she and Cecil are hurt at the way in which you have behaved."

"I didn't suppose she would care, mamma."

"Then you ought to have supposed it. Of course, I do not wish you to tease Ella with chatter, when she is not fit for it. But to keep altogether out of her way is another matter. Mind, Dessie, I quite *insist* on your going after luncheon. I shall not be there myself before the evening, but you are not to wait for me."

Mrs. Fitzroy did not often speak in so authoritative a manner, and Decima was proportionately impressed. Luncheon over, she desired still to defer the evil moment as long as possible, and went to her packing. But at half-past three Mrs. Fitzroy came to her room with reminders, and at four o'clock Dessie left the house. Her pace grew slower and slower as she approached her brother's, and she stood full three minutes outside the door before she could summon courage to ring the bell.

"How is Master Hugh?" she asked, abruptly, of the servant.

"Very, very ill, Miss Dessie. He has been much worse the last hour—as bad as could be. I hoped it was the doctor, for he's been sent for, and he was out."

"Not really worse?" said Dessie.

"I'm afraid so, indeed, Miss Dessie. The convulsions came on again terrible, and Nurse thought almost he'd die before the doctor could be here. Poor dear little lamb!" and the girl put her handkerchief to her eyes. "I just couldn't bear to stay in the room and see him; and Master had to go out once, he was that upset. But Missis, she never gives in for a moment. It's wonderful to look at her, and think of what she's gone through."

All at once it flashed vividly into Dessie's mind how small was the likelihood that she would ever again, after that day, see her little nephew on earth. She had not realised the truth before; she had put it from her, had refused to face it, had occupied