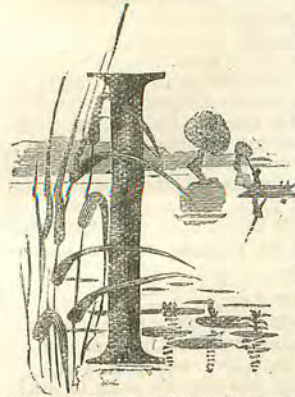


MEDICINES: WHEN TO TAKE AND WHEN TO AVOID.

By MEDICUS.



HAVE more faith in the common sense of my readers than to think for a moment that they will be deterred from reading this paper by a glance at its not-over-taking title. Well, medicine is never very taking at the best, but yet and not-

withstanding most people nowadays, both old and young, take, or have to take, a deal too much of it. A blind faith in the efficacy of medicine for the cure of diseases and the restoration of shattered systems to a state of health has been the ruin of many thousands. Older people often go on working and working when they had far better rest. They promise themselves a holiday, but fix the date of it too far ahead; they feel they need a recess, but they imagine that any time will do, and they console themselves with the thought that if they do get rather low in health, a consultation or two with the family physician, and a course of medicine, are sure to put them "straight," as they phrase it. Alas! they often find to their sorrow that sufficient injury may be done to the system from one week of forced work to necessitate for its reparation months on months of living by rule, to say nothing of swallowing draughts, pills, and potions enough to stock a cottage hospital. And the not-over-comforting thought dawns upon them at last, that they might just as well have let all this physic alone, trusted to healthful food and a regulated regimen, and so saved the druggist's bill.

On the other hand, while older people seek relief in medicines from real or fancied ills, that might be cured or dispelled without them, they force young folks to take them, sometimes, I own, to their advantage, more frequently, I fear, to their detriment.

But this is not all I have to deplore, for it is positively painful to think that girls, both old and young, often dose themselves to their detriment—injudiciously.

Now, do not misunderstand me: it is the abuse, not the use of medicine; in other words, it is the indiscriminate use of drugs that I wish to hold up a warning hand against.

Taken at the right time and with due precautions, medicines seem at times to work miracles; taken recklessly, the only thing that they are likely to work is mischief. I state a fact, and one that even the youngest girl whose eyes fall on these pages may easily remember as long as she lives.

It is girls in their "teens" who are the most likely to err in medicine-taking, in over-doctoring themselves. The very young take physic with an abhorrence which even the prospective sugar plum cannot entirely banish, while nothing short of force will succeed in making an infant swallow a nauseous powder or draught. Whether that child-on-knee, strenuously resisting the efforts of her nurse to pour a modicum of medicine down the little throat, be or be not nature personified endeavouring to teach us grown-up folks a lesson, I shall not pause here to consider. The fact remains, that people take medicine and administer it to others where there is no

earthly reason to do so, and that their so doing is productive of evil.

When, then, it may very reasonably be asked, should one use tonics, or any other class of drug likely to do them good? If I were to reply, "Never, unless the drug is prescribed by a medical man and compounded by a chemist," I would be giving advice which could not always be adhered to. This is an age of advancement, everybody knows a little of every science, and the science of physic forms no exception. Besides, people are often so positioned as not to be able to consult a doctor. A certain amount of use must be made of the family medicine chest; if it were not so I should not be writing, month after month, in the columns of THE GIRL'S OWN PAPER.

A better reply to the question is this: "Never take drugs of any kind if you can possibly do without them." I think, then, I shall best serve the purpose I have in view, if I say a few words about the properties, not of individual drugs, but about one or two of the classes in which they are usually arranged. I shall then finish with a few words of general advice, which I trust our girls will read, and, having read, remember.

And first, let me dismiss with a brief line or two the so-called patent medicines, which you see so much advertised in every newspaper you take up. Their name is legion. This being so, it would be a wonder if there were not some good ones among them. At the university where I had the honour of being dubbed M.D., &c., we had to take a kind of a vow, or, at all events, give a solemn promise never to prescribe what is called quack medicine, which means any remedial compound the nature of which is kept secret. I hope I do not break that promise when I candidly admit that, were I leaving England to-morrow, there are one or two patent medicines I should assuredly place in my medicine chest. But nevertheless my professional knowledge gives me the power to tell the good from the bad. You have not that aid, therefore I say avoid patent medicines, unless under very good advice. Above all, avoid those sorts that are advertised and sold to cure a long column of complaints. There is another danger connected with the use of patent medicines, especially pills; if you once commence to take them you may have to go on with them, and go on increasing the dose. Of a certain patent pill which shall be nameless, and the dose of which—to a beginner—is two at night, I know a gentleman (marvellous to say he still lives) who never felt perfectly happy until he had got down forty just before popping into bed. He was at least constantly complaining, and no wonder; but there was really nothing the matter with the poor, foolish fellow—except the pills.

But if the incautious use of patent drugs is to be deprecated, so also is that of patent cosmetics. And by cosmetics I mean the multitude of nostrums, face powders, and other applications which girls often use to add to their beauty. Add to it, indeed! Why, it detracts from it. Oh! young girls, the best face cosmetic in the world is a good long walk in the early morning. "Beauty is but skin deep" used to be a common saying. "Beauty is but powder deep" would often be nearer the mark nowadays. But there! I will not say another word on the subject. I might not have said so much, only I am writing in a flower garden. I see a deal of beauty about me, but nothing artificial.

Perhaps—and now I am addressing more particularly my senior readers—perhaps, I was going to say, there is no class of medicines more recklessly used than what are called aperients. The "simple dose of castor oil" which we force down baby's throat, how often it might be dispensed with! Probably she

would not look so pale, so pallid, if she were less coddled indoors; probably, if she spent more time in her perambulator and less in her bassinet, the nauseous dose, simple and all as it seems, might be dispensed with. And the worst of it is this, that by this "simple dose" poor baby may only be made well for a little while, and the dose may need repeating. Change her food and re-change it, and only give medicine as a final resource. Castor oil is a capital medicine, nevertheless; but I have often doubted whether the struggle a child undergoes before you can get it to swallow a single mouthful does not do her more harm than the remedy itself does good. A little manna is easily taken; so, too, is a little carbonate of magnesia in the pap, though even this must not be given constantly.

Well, the seidlitz powder is another "simple" medicine; so is the rhubarb or colocynth pill at bedtime. Yes, very good in their way.

"Josephine is looking quite pale, papa," says an anxious mother, referring to her daughter. "Hadn't you better give her a pill of some kind?"

Papa had much better wait a little. Meanwhile, if Josephine will throw down that interesting exciting novel and get out of doors two or three hours every day for a fortnight, there will not be the slightest occasion for her mamma to suggest a pill of some kind. And papa should remember that aperients are usually debilitating in their nature, but that when necessity renders their use imperative, much good may be done by giving a tonic of some kind along with them.

And talking of tonics reminds me that girls and people in general have very erroneous notions about this class of medicine. It is certainly a very popular kind of remedy; too much so, because, taken injudiciously, tonics are most harmful. The tonics best known to my readers are doubtless iron in some form, quinine, and the bitter tonics. Cod liver oil is also a favourite, and justly so too, when (1) it is really required, and when (2) the stomach can bear it.

There is a general impression prevalent that tonics must do good, that they are simply medicines which strengthen, and can be taken with benefit *ad libitum*. Hear what a great authority, Professor Nelligan, says on the subject. "Tonics are medicines, the continued administration of which in debilitated and relaxed conditions of the body impart strength and vigour without producing excitement."

"If, however, he adds, "they are given when the system is in a healthy state, their action, like that of stimulants, is followed by collapse."

To make the learned gentleman's meaning plain to my youthful reader, let us suppose a case; and that will be just like telling a story, will it not?

Clementina Wilson is a young girl, who has to work for her living, like many a one else. A good portion of the day is her own, however, to spend as she pleases. About a year ago—I must now adopt the past tense—she found she was not so well as usual; she felt languid, unhappy, and out of sorts, and her reflection in the glass was anything but a ruddy one. She had little appetite, and preferred spending a good deal of time on the sofa which she might have spent more advantageously out of doors. She wanted to take advice, but didn't care, or was shy or something. A pill a friend recommended gave her only temporary relief. Well, one day her eye alighted on a paper, written by a man called Medicus, wherein she read that for girls in her condition three or four grain doses of the citrate of iron and quinine thrice daily in water with a few drops of orange bitters added was an excellent remedy, if an aperient pill—

some very mild one—were taken about twice a week, *if* out-door exercise were taken, *if* a cold or tepid bath were taken in the morning, and *if* she did not bend quite so much over her work as was her wont, for the simple reason that in this world no one has a right to kill herself in order to make a living. So Clementina tried the remedy, and lo! and behold in about a month she was quite herself again. She clapped her hands with joy. "I will always use the citrate," she said, "whenever I feel the least bit out of sorts."

But that was just where error crept in. For Clementina took to use her darling citrate when there was really nothing more the matter with her than a good brisk walk would have banished entirely. Thus taking a tonic was in her case like taking a stimulant, taking wine in fact; and it left "collapse," exhaustion in other words. And was it any wonder then that in time Clementina grew really and seriously ill, and that a doctor had to be consulted, who, after a great deal of suffering on the innocent child's part, did manage to put her quite well again, and finally dismissed her, not with his blessing, but with a gruff but friendly caution "not to go doctoring at herself again."

There is a moral hidden away in that little story; to find it is your business, not mine.

I will say no more about tonics, then, as a class; but just a word about iron and quinine. Iron is an excellent blood tonic—I mean it improves and strengthens the blood. It causes heat of the body sometimes, however, and then the dose must be lessened. The dialysed iron drops are mild and effective. Quinine should be taken in very small doses. It is a good nerve tonic and general imparter of strength, always provided it is needed. It should be taken in much smaller doses than are usually given. The tincture of quinine is a good remedy in some cases of tic, or nervous toothache. Quinine sometimes affects the head, causing fullness of blood, and even dizziness. If it does it should be avoided.

Cod liver oil is excellent to combine with the tonic. But small doses must be taken at first, gradually increased.

Girls often fancy they are ill, and fly to medicine when they had much better trust to a change of diet.

When you do take tonics—and there are times when, perhaps, it is right you should—do not forget to combine with those excellent remedial aids, exercise in the open air, change of diet, and that which I am constantly preaching about, *the bath*.

Some girls are troubled a good deal with dyspepsia; and one of its most painful symptoms is acidity of the stomach and heartburn. Well, heartburn is very easily alleviated by taking a teaspoonful of bicarbonate of soda in half a tumblerful of cold water; but this is not getting at the root of the evil, it is not curing the dyspepsia. To do this strict regulation of diet is necessary, and as for the soda it is a most pernicious thing to swallow, it injures the coats of the stomach and does no end of mischief. So I say avoid it unless in extreme cases.

Some girls are constantly aiming at possessing a higher standard of health than they have; to such I say let well alone. Be content; we are not all made alike, we cannot be all giants in strength; and, perhaps if you are weakly in body you may have a more finely formed mind, a soul that, though easily east down, can enjoy more in one hour than others more vigorously formed can in a week. It is the weakly and the nervous that are constantly seeking relief from medicines. They are just those that ought not to. They should rather, by leading an exceedingly regular life, and studying temperance in all things, try to find

that greatest boon of all—contentment with their lot. And they should not forget that the best and the safest of all medicines is plenty of fresh air and sunshine.

CHATS ABOUT THE CALENDAR.



JANUARY received its name from the early Romans in honour of Janus, a deity who is always represented as having two faces—one looking back on the old year, and the other looking forward to the new. Our Saxon ancestors called this month Wolf-Monat, *i.e.*, wolf month, because of the popular belief that the wolves, which then infested the woods, were more daring and voracious than at any other time. Subsequently, when Christianity began to make way, the month gained the name of Aefter-Yula, or After-Christmas. But both titles were abandoned in favour of the Roman one. The practice of making presents on New Year's Day was doubtless derived from the Romans who settled in Britain, and spread the custom among our ancestors, together with the celebration of certain festivities. These festivities, however, in Rome were carried on amidst much rioting and unseemly mirth, while our Christian forefathers, blessed with the light of truth, rejected the superstition and excesses of the heathens, merely retaining those interchanges of good wishes and of presents which had accompanied the pagan celebrations.

The wassail bowl, carried from door to door, was a great institution among the Saxons. The most perfect fragment of the "wassail" exists in the usage of certain domestic banquets and corporation festivals. The person presiding stands up at the conclusion of the dinner, and drinks from a flagon, with a handle on each side, by which he holds it; while the toastmaster announces him as "drinking the health of his brethren out of the loving cup." This cup, which is the ancient wassail bowl, is then passed to the guest on his left hand, and by him to his next left hand neighbour, and as the loving cup thus passes round to all the guests in their turn, so each stands up and drinks to the president. The French keep up the practice of giving presents on New Year's Day to a surprising extent, and the day is in France recognised from this circumstance as *le Jour d'Etrennes*.

The sixth day of the month is especially known among our young folks as Twelfth Day, and the cake, which in most families forms an important part of the entertainment, is known by no other name than that of Twelfth Cake. Authorities differ in their accounts of the origin of the festive custom of drawing for king and queen, &c., when the cake is divided, some maintaining it to be derived from the practice of the Roman children, who, at the end of their saturnalia, drew lots with beans to see who would be king. The old calendars stated that on the vigil of this day "kings were created or elected by beans," and denominated the day itself "The Festival of Kings," which is still retained in Spain. Our children thus have a time-honoured custom as the foundation of their Twelfth Night amusements!

I wonder if any of my readers ever heard of Plough Monday? This is the first Monday after Epiphany, and received its appellation from its having been fixed upon by our forefathers as the period when they returned to

the duties of agriculture after the festivities of Christmas. The plough, being the fundamental instrument of husbandry, was not inaptly made the typical expression of the renewal of their labours. Time has, however, nearly worn out this ancient usage, to which perhaps the morris dancers in the North owe their existence, as they *sometimes drag* a plough from door to door soliciting plough money, wherewith to defray the expenses of a feast and a dance in the evening. January is represented in old paintings by the figure of a man clad in white, as the type of the snow on the ground; under his arm he carries a billet of wood, and near him stands the figure of the sign of Aquarius, the watery emblem in the Zodiac, into which the sun enters on the 19th of this month.

USEFUL HINTS.

HEADACHE.—Sponge the head all over night and morning with water as hot as you can bear it, and rub dry with a coarse towel.

CURE FOR BRONCHITIS OR SUFFOCATION.—One tablespoonful of salad oil to three of old French brandy. Put it into a bottle and shake well until it is a froth. Dose, one tablespoonful when necessary; likewise use a little of the liquid to rub the throat and between the shoulders gently with a warm hand.

CURE FOR BOILS.—A tablespoonful of yeast taken every day mixed in half a tumbler of cold water for three months, is a certain cure.

CURE FOR BURNS OR SCALDS.—An application of common whiting and oil (or water, if oil is not to hand) draws the fire out of the burn or scald, and gives immediate relief. Make the ingredients into a paste and lay it over the part affected, covering it up with some old linen and cotton wadding.

HEAT SPOTS ON SKIN.—One oz. of cream of tartar and half an ounce of flour of brimstone mixed. Take a teaspoonful of the powder and a teaspoonful of strained lemon juice in half a tumbler of cold water, three times a day for a fortnight. Vegetable diet and cold bathing desirable.

TO CLEAN DECANTERS OR BOTTLES.—Put the tea-leaves from the teapot into your decanters over night with a little cold water, in the morning shake them well until quite clean, then rinse and place in your bottle rack to drain. After polishing with a soft cloth, they look bright and beautiful.

TO PREVENT A TEA-POT GETTING MOULDY.—After washing and drying thoroughly, place a lump of sugar inside; it absorbs all dampness.

TO CLEAN JEWELLERY WITHOUT STONES.—Chains, lockets, anything without stones may be cleaned by brushing in soap and water with a small piece of soda in, then rinse and dry on a towel, after which place the articles in a large plate of bran, taking care to cover well with bran. Then put the plate in a moderately heated oven for half an hour and rub with a piece of wash-leather when you take them out of the oven.

FALLS.—Rub the part affected with a piece of fresh butter, and it will prevent a bruise or any discolouring of the skin.

CHILBLAINS.—Rub every night with oil or cold cream, and sleep in warm socks or stockings.

EARACHE.—A good sized linseed-meal poultice hot, with eight or ten drops of laudanum in the middle, will cure the most severe earache.