

were looking up into his, were shining softly through a mist of tears. He saw the deep love in them, and was satisfied.

And after he was gone she lay with the same happy smile lingering on her face, making her look like a pleasant gleam of sunshine in her corner of the ward.

John and Mary Kent were much respected in Oxley, where they had lived all their lives. Mary, when a bright, strong, young girl, had been taken into service at the Hall as kitchen-maid, and was in a fair way to become a first-rate cook, when John Kent stepped in and persuaded her that to share his humble home, enriched by his honest, manly love, presented a surer prospect of happiness, and was altogether more to be desired, than the fulfilment of the dreams in which she had indulged of some day occupying such a post as that held by Mrs. White, the housekeeper at the Hall. Such had at one time been her ambition, but John Kent knocked all that on the head, and led her off in triumph to the little village church, where they became man and wife.

That had been nearly forty years ago. They were a young, good-looking couple then. But many a wave of sorrow had passed over them since, only, however, cementing the two hearts more closely together. They had laid three dearly loved children in the grave; besides the often repeated trial of weeks, sometimes even months, in the winter without work. Through all, however, they had held fast to their principles, enduring any hardships—nay, even actual want—rather than owe any man anything.

Honest and upright, kind-hearted and neighbourly, and always ready to do one another a good turn, there were scarcely any two people in Oxley so respected and esteemed.

Partly owing to her former connection with the Hall, Mary and her husband were great favourites with Mr. and Mrs. Temple; whilst little Miss Lily, their only remaining child, and the pet not only of the Hall but the whole village, was a frequent visitor at the Kents' cottage, which lay very near the park gates.

Thus old John, as he sat with the door wide open for the sake of coolness, eating his solitary dinner, was not very much surprised on looking up to see what it was casting a shadow along the floor, to perceive a well-known little figure standing in the doorway; her bright-golden hair falling about her shoulders made in the sunshine a sort of glory round the fair, artless face.

"May I come in, John?"

"Ay, to be sure, Miss Lily. To think of your asking such a question!"

"But you are at your dinner," she said, hesitatingly, feeling a little delicacy lest she should be intruding.

"That don't matter, miss, unless your mind," he said, as he rose to place her a chair. "It isn't very grand fare I have to-day," he continued, "for, you see, my missus is away, so I have to make shift for myself. But that don't matter, for I'm strong and hearty, and I hope she is having some nice, dainty little morsel that will tempt her appetite, which has been getting so bad of late."

"Poor John!" said Lily, with a pitying look in her blue eyes. "How dreadfully you must miss your wife; you must be so lonely without her."

"I shall be right glad when I get her back again," he responded. "Yes, it is a bit ionesome without her, for you see, Miss Lily, she and I have never been separated for nigh upon forty years, so we ain't used to being apart."

"Forty years!" echoed Lily. "What a very long time! And yet," she added, after a pause, "for ever and ever is longer than that, isn't it?"

"Ay, to be sure," said John, though not at once seeing her drift.

"And you and she will be together for ever and ever in heaven, won't you?"

"Ay, through God's mercy," rejoined Kent, with a brightening look, as he gazed into the sweet, serious face of his little comforter. "So we needn't grumble at this separation, when it's only for such a little while compared to 'for ever and ever.' I won't go heaving no more sighs like I did this morning, when the place felt so silent with nobody to speak to, and I so awkward, too, over the work. But I won't be so thankless any more. Thank you, Miss Lily, for that 'for ever and ever.'"

"Couldn't I help tidy up the place for you?" asked the little girl. "Do let me try," she added, fearing that the look of amusement which overspread John's face meant a refusal of her offer. "I am so fond of putting things to rights and being useful."

"Thank you, kindly, missie; but it wouldn't do for such as you to be righting up an old man's cottage."

And John could not forbear a laugh at the mere thought of the little lady from the Hall, the heiress of many a broad acre in Oxley, soiling her hands with such work.

"It is enough for you," he pursued, "to brighten up the old man with the sight of your bonnie face. It was just like yourself to come in to cheer him up now the wife is away."

"Mamma and I both thought you would be lonely, so she said I might run down and try to catch you as you came in to dinner. And we want to know how your wife is, and how she likes the hospital."

"She's mightily pleased with everything there; and it's a fine place sure enough. She thinks she will soon get better there."

"I hope she will. Won't it be nice to have her come back well and strong?"

"Well, darling, did you find old John at home?" asked Mrs. Temple, as she met her little girl at their own gate, and turned to walk with her up the carriage drive leading to the house.

"Yes, mamma; and he looked so sad and lonely when I went in."

"I daresay he was glad to see you."

"Yes; at least he said he was. He was at dinner, but it was not at all a nice dinner, mamma; and he had had to cook it all himself."

"Poor old man! Suppose, dear, you were to take him some dinner to-morrow—something nice already cooked. Should you like to do that?"

"Yes, indeed I should, mamma. And mayn't I do it every day?"

"We will see, dear."

"Do say yes, please, mamma. Because he misses his wife so, and there is nobody to do anything for him. And don't you think it would make Mrs. Kent happier to know he was being taken care of whilst she is away from him? And it is only a few minutes' walk to their cottage."

"Very well, dear; I think we must try to carry out your nice little plan," said Mrs. Temple, stooping to kiss the eager upturned face. "I am so glad my child has early learnt to care for those around her. It is what I want her to do all through life—to seek to brighten the lives of others. Now run away, dearest, and get ready for luncheon, or you will be late."

(To be continued.)



FACTS AND FALLACIES ABOUT FOOD AND PHYSIC.

By MEDICUS.



FACTS and fallacies about food and physic!" I think I hear some girl exclaim, as her eyes glance over the heading of this paper. "What an exceedingly dry title, to be sure. And what an absurd lot of f's in it!"

Yes, reader, there are, and if I had spelt the word *physic* as phonographists do, thus, "fizik," there would have been one more f, would there not? Yet notwithstanding my somewhat harsh and alliterative title, I believe that in this article, if you only condescend to read it, you will find something to interest you and instruct you as well.

I must make one confession, however, before I go any further, and then I will have the pleasure of starting with an easy mind. It is not, then, young girls alone that I have in view while I sit here to-day, but girls of all ages, young and—not to call young. My audience will therefore be a somewhat mixed one, and if there be many invalids among them, so much the better; in a professional point of view, though the invalids themselves might prefer it otherwise.

Healthy strong girls may read this paper if they choose, and even their brothers may look over their shoulders; but if, on the other hand, they do not choose, why, they can turn the leaf, and they will be sure to find something far more entertaining.

I have mentioned the word "invalids." Of these there are many different sorts and degrees. There is, for example, the invalid who has never all her life been strong, who has been born constitutionally weak. There is the invalid who has inherited some kind of trouble or is the child of parents who have died of some ailment that usually descends in families. There is the invalid who has had the misfortune to come by some accident, or receive some shock to the system, although well and strong previously. There is the invalid who has gone through some severe illness, febrile or otherwise, and who has never rightly recovered therefrom. And last, but not least to be pitied, there is the nervous invalid. Among these there are, of course, various degrees of invalidity, and these degrees vary with each individual invalid at different times, according perhaps to the state of the atmosphere, but more commonly I am bound to say according to the state of the digestion. But there are invalids who are constantly confined to one position; these everyone must pity and perforce be kind to, for their very helplessness appeals to the best feelings of our human nature. And on the other hand, there are invalids who are seldom or never ill enough to be confined to their beds, but go about their duties all day, almost mechanically, but with little heart or will, who have many and many a miserable moment, many and many an ache and pain they say nothing about, lest their best friends should tire listening to their complaints, who have often to feign an interest in matters in which they feel none, who have often to smile when they would rather weep, who pass nights of sleepless pain or "dream perturbed sleep," and who waken unrefreshed and still a-weary, whose very hearts

"— are tired of their own sad beat,
Which finds no echo in this busy world,
That cannot pause to answer."

Now, sufferers from ill health, taken as a

body, are easily divisible into three great classes. First, those who may be called acutely ill, who are labouring under some definite malady, which must run a certain course, and end either in recovery, partial or complete, or in death. These must be treated by a visible medical practitioner, who will do his best to guide the disease to a successful termination, and it is needless to say that such persons can gain no good end by reading medical papers in a magazine. Secondly, there are the convalescents; they are, as a rule, the happiest of all sick people, for they have little else to do but get well, and then, glorious thought, begin life anew again. As convalescence is through many causes sometimes delayed, I may at some future day address a paper to this class. Thirdly, we have the chronically ill, in other words, the confirmed invalid.

Since I wrote the last word I have been thinking—thinking for fully five minutes, thinking and trying to remember if there can be any case of invalidity the sufferings of which it is impossible to alleviate—and I have come to the conclusion that there is not. Well, now, to each individual invalid the act of dwelling upon his own symptoms, or pondering over his case, has a peculiar charm. He is constantly wondering whether this, that, or the other plan of treatment, this, that, or the other kind of medicine, might not effect a cure, or make him better at least, for every invalid is more or less nervous. Probably some who read these lines may have given up taking medical advice of any kind, as nothing seemed to do them any or much good, and they may now be treating themselves or undergoing no treatment at all. But they cannot have given up all interest in themselves, and most, if not all, of them are ready enough to jump at any hope that may be held out to them.

Alas! and alas! how often does this hope not come in the form of some vile quack medicine—pill or potion bitter, or drop—they may see advertised in the daily papers. Better, ten thousand times better, they should never see a newspaper at all, and never know how the world wags beyond their own parish, than that they should be deluded by such wills-o'-the-wisp. For if the indiscriminate use of physics that are pure and of proved efficacy is to be decried as dangerous, how much more so the use and abuse of compounds of which nothing is known for certain, except the fact they are advertised by individuals solely with a view of making money; individuals who fatten on the sorrows of those they profess to benefit, who, vampire-like, live by sucking the very life-blood of their deluded victims.

It is no exaggeration to say that tens of thousands of individuals are annually hurried to their graves by remedies advertised in a taking way in the columns of our leading newspapers. Knowing as I do how vast is the extent of the circulation of our GIRL'S OWN PAPER, knowing that the sun never sets on our columns, for they are read in every country and every clime, in lordly hall and humble cot, by peevish and peasant, I deem it a very great privilege, indeed, to be able to lift up my voice—and that I do so earnestly, heaven bears witness—and warn my readers, young and old, against the use of the medicines they see so cunningly advertised in the journals of the day. And please remember this, that the longer the advertisement, and the more insinuating the wording thereof, the more dangerous is the article advertised likely to prove.

On the other hand, a large number of invalids are very fond of reading popular medical works, and of prescribing for themselves. Well, these books are generally written with an honest purpose, and no doubt

do a great deal of good, especially in districts when the services of a medical man are not easily procured. But it is in cases of acute illness where they are likely to be of most service: they then supply the stitch in time that saves nine. An invalid will often, however, receive some benefit, either fancied or real, from some particular medicine or compound of several medicines, and henceforth and for ever pins his faith to it, making very practical use of this faith by taking the medicine almost constantly. A greater mistake, or a more dangerous one, could not easily be made.

The very fact that after a time this drug or physic has to be taken in increased doses ought to prove to the recipient thereof that it is in some way or other interfering with the laws and economy of Nature, and therefore is dangerous in the extreme.

The abuse of medicine is very much to be deprecated; the "British Pharmacopœia" has no business in the hands of any girl, whether her years number fifteen or fifty, and prescriptions that have done good some time or other, or to somebody or other, ought either to be torn up and put in the fire, or left to take the dry rot on the file of the chemist who compounded them.

If my readers only knew what a fearfully and wonderfully complex thing the digestive canal is, they would tremble to swallow the simplest pill lest mechanism so delicate and beautiful should be deranged irremediably. We sometimes hear the process of digestion talked about as simple. Simple, indeed! Why, it is a multiple of many processes. There is not a force in nature—mechanical, chemical, or electric—that is not called upon to assist in the magic art of blood-making. We must not call it simple.

Aperient medicines are much abused. Except in rare cases, the body can be kept cool without remedies of this class—by exercise of an exhilarating nature taken in the open air, or exercise taken even in the house by those who feel themselves unable to stand the weather. The worst of aperient medicines is that if one begins to take them habitually, alterations of structure in the digestive canal take place, Nature endeavours to accommodate herself to the strain caused by such medicine, and it is not easy to give up the use of them. But I can assure you, my readers, pill-taking is a most absurd practice, and one likely to lead to chronic and incurable illnesses. I have no wish to frighten anyone, but it is my duty to say that I have known cases of malignant and incurable tumours which I believe I could trace to the pill-taking habit I am talking about. Aperients are all very well in their way, but should only be taken in extreme cases, and when other and simpler means fail to cool the blood and body, such as eating oranges or ripe fruit in the morning, the use of the bath, exercise in the forenoon, and plenty of well-boiled green vegetables to dinner.

Many girls rush to tonics, iron, iron and quinine, bitter tonics, or acid tonics, when they think they are out of sorts or want strengthening. Well, in certain cases this may be all very well, but recourse should not be had to these even until regulation in diet, drink, and exercise has been adopted. Though bitter infusions with a little aromatic sulphuric acid, or dilute phosphoric, or nitro-hydrochloric acid, and tincture of oranges make a healthful and appetising tonic if taken before meals, be warned, for if tonics are continued long they may give rise to serious liver disturbance, which might terminate in dangerous congestion or death.

Some of my invalid readers who have followed me thus far may now well say, "Surely 'Medicus' objects to physic in any form?" I do not. I but caution you against the abuse thereof, and I give you this golden rule to go

by in prescribing for yourself, if prescribe for yourself you will and must. Never continue the use of any medicine for any length of time. Omit it for days and weeks, give Nature a chance of trying her own unaided strength. She may, perchance, do better without your dosing at all.

Cordials are medicines which some of you who are not young may need at times. Of course, they are in reality stimulants, and as such useful in moderation; but the same golden rule I give above should apply to them likewise.

Sleep-producing draughts or pills should be taken by no one unless prescribed by the family physician; they are highly dangerous.

But the greatest benefit accrues to invalids, not from medicine-taking, but from judicious method and plan in dieting oneself.

The fallacy on which many invalids trip and stumble is that of believing that they must be constantly eating with a view to keep the strength up. It is a dangerous and often fatal blunder; it is one, to say the very least, that leads to extreme discomfort during the day and to restless nights, and militates very much against the chance of speedy recovery.

I know a lady at the present moment who is an invalid and likely to remain so. She seldom moves off the chair or sofa, though she could if she liked, and takes no exercise, although her limbs are wasting for the want of it. She has got an absurd notion that she must support nature, as she terms it, by constantly eating all kinds of strong but curiously cooked foods, soups, jellies, delicate entrees and what-nots. By the term what-not, I do not mean that airy piece of furniture you hold music, etc., in, though it might be as well for the lady in question if she did eat this what-not and be done with it—that would be a quicker way out of her misery. Well, when she finds she has no appetite she conjures one up by the aid of cordials and more what-nots, and thus she spends the day. Good sleep after all this is of course out of the question, so she has to call in the aid of a sleeping draught. This lady is not very exceedingly young, she confesses to forty. Well, but she might be fat and fair at that, were she to live and move in more rational way.

Yes, it is a very great fallacy for anyone, whether ill or not, to eat more than they can comfortably digest. We might well take a lesson from the lower animals. When one of these, be it beast or bird, feels itself ailing, what does it do? Why, seeks out a quiet corner where it can rest unmolested for many hours, and during this time it takes no food of any kind.

"Reason raise o'er instinct as you can,
In this 'tis Heaven directs, in that 'tis man."

