

A NEW YEAR'S HEALTH SERMON.

By "MEDICUS."



HERE is nothing certain in this life save the unexpected. When I wrote my last paper I was in fine form, and as hard as flint, not to put too fine a point on it. I almost rejoiced in my strength. Two weeks after I was down with laryngitis or inflammation of the organ of voice, and even now I have little more voice than a church mouse.

I cannot sing over my violin anyhow. One should never boast of one's strength. My readers will observe that I am inclined to be melancholic. Yes, and perhaps a trifle hysterical too, simply to this extent, that I could not listen to beautiful music, nor read anything like the story of Dickens's Little Nell without shed—I mean, you know, without making a baby of myself, and I should hate to do that.

The guitar is the sweetest and saddest of all music. I daren't play mine to-night. Well, open confession is good for the soul, girls. And I'll confess some more, and perhaps you'll like me none the worse for it. When lying ill what worried me more than anything else was the thoughts that I had to miss my monthly health sermon to you.

I am not a vain man—very, very far from that, yet I believe some of you missed your "Medicus." Was it not so? Out of the many, many thousands of subscribers to THE GIRL'S OWN PAPER there is no doubt thousands who never look at my particular columns, but then there are more who do, and these of course I consider my very choicest of friends. To these I address myself in this first month, of what I trust will be to you all a glad new year.

I daresay many of you are now making good resolutions; you are going to keep a journal; you are going to take greater care of your health; you are going to read more; take more regular exercise, and perhaps the cold tub in the morning, and do this, that, and t'other. Well, if you could only keep up those resolutions, if you would swing the clubs or dumb-bells every morning with regulated motions, and if you were to make the morning sponge baths a well-established institution, you would indeed feel yourself improved in health and strength, and consequently in happiness. As for keeping a journal you may try, but I don't think you will succeed. However, good resolutions are not to be despised, even if they are broken through after a bit. They send us a step or two onwards, anyhow, towards the good. I'm preaching, am I? Well, never mind, but I will tell you of one very good resolve. Try to make somebody or some animal a little happier every day of your life. A kind word or two to a child even does the child good, and it does you good as well. It is a kind of double blessing, you know. But never expect any reward for it either here or hereafter. That were selfishness. Just do good for the mere sake of doing good. But there is another point of view from which this doing little acts of kindness to the human beings or animals you meet or mingle with, and it is a physical one. Many girls are

troubled with sleeplessness and restlessness. Well, one of the best soporifics in the world is this. After you have turned in—pardon my sailor language—after you have gone to bed then, just think over the events of the day. "Have I made anyone or any of God's creatures happy to-day? Have I been cross when it would have been better to keep my temper? Have I done my duty to those above me?" Answer these to yourself. I don't think you shall have answered them all ere sleep steals, wave after wave like sea billows, over your senses and wafted you away to the land of dreams.

I am not a Buddhist, girls, but there are some points in their religion which we would do well to follow. While we are all too content to remain *in statu quo* as regards our ethics, trusting, as of course we ever ought to trust, to the mercy and clemency of Him who rules over all, the Buddhists are ever striving onwards from good to better, from better to better, and to reach the best. They are never content with themselves. Should not we Christians do the same? But do we? Do we not often harbour spite and spleen and all uncharitableness instead of trying our best to crush these feelings, as the Highland red deer crush the snakes under their feet. Mind you this, that health brings happiness, but that happiness is increased to a marvellous extent, if we but feel that we are striving day after day to make our souls more white. And the very knowledge that we are doing so reacts upon the bodily constitution and helps to strengthen that. Very strange but very true! The more pure in thought and kind in heart one is, the more healthy one will be, if the ordinary physical laws be obeyed. And don't you forget it, please.

By the way, will you let me point out to you one sin that I grieve to say is all too common among young girls, but which is not difficult to avoid. I don't mean to accuse them openly of telling little bits of fibs, but of exaggerating when relating incidents of everyday life. They get carried away and excited as it were, and make mountains out of mole-hills. A crowd for instance they have seen on the street around a woman who has fainted, a crowd of say fifty, is multiplied into hundreds. A hot day is terrific, the thermometer must have stood at 90°; a cold day awful; the cabman who whipped a lazy horse was killing him. Or they go for a drive and it was just too awfully nice for anything. And so on and so forth. This may seem a little matter, but it is indeed a bad habit, and it is most unladylike. Perhaps this will fetch you. Anyhow, I beg and pray of you to strive and fight against this most prevalent and evil habit, and I'm sure you'll conquer.

It is nearly ten o'clock and I am weary—debility, you know, from my recent illness. I will finish this paper to-morrow morning. What a heavenly night it is. The moon is shining, high up in the heavens like a silver shield, and so brightly that the stars are hardly seen and there isn't a breath of wind. I can almost hear the leaves falling down from the linden trees. It is a beautiful world if we didn't try to hurry through it all so fast and be constantly worrying after excitement. Good-night.

A bright and beautiful morning. When I awoke at four to work the stars were still shining bright and near, and the great round moon was slowly declining in the west beyond the beautiful valley of the Thames. It looked almost weird shimmering through my giant

poplars. Why should I rise so early? Oh, I can assure you I do not believe in very early rising. Seven o'clock in summer and half-past seven in winter is early enough for anyone over sixteen years of age, and to girls under that age an hour more should be granted. But lying too long in bed softens the muscles and spoils beauty, for if the facial muscles are not strong they hang somewhat and give a flabby appearance to the countenance. Complexion too is injured by lazing in bed of a morning, because the liver is prepared to secrete bile—so important a factor in digestion—and does secrete it, but if the stomach is empty it may be to some extent absorbed and pass into the blood. Hence, yellowness of skin, languor, headaches and I can't tell you what all. I am putting it plainly and simply because I know you hate physiology.

But I for the present must work to windward, for my writings during my illness, have drifted far to the lee.

Now what I am going to tell you, is meant to encourage my fair readers not to be afraid of the cold bath. I made an experiment. I had missed my bath for over two weeks. Then I determined to try it, with *no* dash of hot water in it, mind you. The windows that first morning were so hard frozen, you could have written your name on a pane of glass with a hairpin.

I was perspiring through sheer debility; but in I went for it. The shock was rather severe. It was like going out of a cosy room and breathing the ice-dust of a highland snow-storm. But five minutes after I was in a pleasant glow. I have kept it up ever since of course, and mean to, God sparing me, through all the winter, be it ever so wild and icy.

Now pray don't misunderstand me; there are some girls whose hearts are too feeble to admit of their plunging into ice-cold water, or using the sponge bath. They may have a dash of hot water in it. Happy are those, however, who can take it cold. I believe they are sure to get married sooner than the others. They will, if they are careful in diet, exercise (recreative), etc., soon become hale, healthy and happy. In other words they will possess the *mens sana in corpore sano*.

By the way, girls who are unable for some reason, fanciful or real, to do as the wild birds do, and bathe every morning, should adopt the plan of dry rubbing with rough towels. It serves to draw the blood from internal organs, and keep the pores of the skin open. That is a word to the wise.

I have spoken about early rising, now just a sentence or two about going to bed. Grown-up people can do with but little sleep, but young folks must have a good share. The old saying that an hour before midnight is worth two after, is pretty nearly correct. It is not the length of time one sleeps, but the soundness of the slumber that refreshes one, and renews the strength. Some people can sleep more in one hour than others can in three. Because they really are asleep. A dreamful slumber does but little good, and you awake sleepy-eyed, and unrefreshed. I am convinced that the aching back and burning brows that many girls complain of, are brought about by their not retiring early enough. Weakly girls of this stamp should go to bed at nine, and they must have had no excitement for at least half-an-hour before going. No laughing or talking. Before turning in, let them read a short time. This calms the mind and takes the blood from the brain. A little

food may be taken shortly before lying down, a biscuit and a glass of milk, if they have had an early supper; if not, a tumblerful of cold spring water, with a teaspoonful of the effervescent citrate of lithia or potash in it, makes, in many cases, the best soporific that I know of.

Men should take a bottle of real soda-water immediately before lying down. By real soda-water, I mean that which contains fifteen grains of bi-carbonate of soda to each bottle. That is what I do myself when hot and restless after a hard day's work. Speaking from experience, I find this an excellent plan. I have tried spirits, stout, and wine negus,

but they only heat the brain. There is nothing like the soda-water. But endeavour to banish all thinking when you lie down. Or you may mentally recite hymns to yourself. I have many favourites which serve the purpose. The Scotch Bibles have all the psalms in metre, and the twenty-third is the most beautiful ever King David wrote. Then there is that sad, wailing hymn beginning—

“How still and peaceful is the grave,
When life's vain tumults past,
Th' appointed house by Heaven's decree,
Receives us all at last.”

Probably that other lovely hymn, which is

really a poetic edition of the Lord's Prayer, will be better known. It commences—

“O God of Bethel, by whose hand
Thy people still are fed;
Who through this weary pilgrimage
Hast all our fathers led.”

I have travelled much in wilderness and desert too, and in woods and wilds, and I cannot mentally repeat that hymn in bed without imagining myself tramping all alone through some wildery, with His hand to buoy me up.

But I weary you, so I must say, “Good-bye till we meet again in another month.”

ON AND OFF A PACK-SADDLE IN CENTRAL JAPAN.

PART III.



HERE was nothing for it now but to scale the precipice, climb the mountain side, and descend into Kirizumi from the north. After crawling along the cliff for some perches, aided by shrubs and saplings which, happily for me,

grew close enough to form a kind of parapet, a hunter's trail, or narrow path, was gained, which led eventually to the village.

A strange spectacle that pretty village, where every house had been built for the accommodation and pleasure of summer boarders, presented. The previous day the river, swollen by the rains, had burst its bounds and swept through the narrow valley, breaking down bridges, carrying away trees, cutting up paths, and overturning houses. Several of these lay upside down in mid-stream, others tottered and hung sideways over the banks. The wooded heights around, glorious in their autumnal tints, with the remnants of climbing paths still clinging to their shelving sides, rose up even to the shoulders of the adjacent mountains, over all the cloudless sky, clear, shining

after rain. It was still mid-day, and the sun's rays brightened the recesses of the ravine, but the air of desolation was oppressing.

Except a few caretakers, the residents had fled for their lives that morning, on foot and in single file, along a narrow trail over the hills and far away, up and on to Karuizawa. Supplies had been cut off and provisions were running short, but I could do no less than order *taberou* (a meal) for my carriers, one of whom I subsequently discovered was attached to the staff of the hotel to which he had brought me, and had only done his duty as tout perhaps. Their gratitude was overwhelming, though not carried beyond the regulations of custom. It took the form of a psalm of thanksgiving, chanted on their knees, every phrase punctuated by knocking their foreheads on the matting. My friend in Mayebashi had always returned the salutations of her native visitors in kind, but these genuflexions were too much for my stiff knees, and I could only trust to their innate courtesy to excuse my want of manners. The dripping contents of my baskets next claimed attention. As there are no fires attainable in Japanese houses, a brazier of charcoal scarcely deserving the name, these had to be dried in the sun. This necessitated my remaining a day or two, for the sun only shines over that valley for a few hours about noon. I had a handsome bath-house, and a boarding-house containing

thirty rooms for my sole use and behoof, both standing high and dry on the rocks, but remembering that earthquakes often followed storms, and conscious of the neighbourhood of an active volcano, Asamayama, I was glad to charter a guide, who also acted as baggage carrier, the second morning and follow the trail of the refugees up hill and down dale, and over a mountain-height, through rich woods, carpeted with a wonderful

variety of ferns and grasses, to a pass above Karuizawa. There a magnificent view awaited us. Mountains to right and left, to the south, far as eye could reach, stretched the Kwanto (eight provinces), the richest and most fertile plain in all Japan, a land of corn and silk, rivers of water and “trees of the Lord.” Once, more than a thousand years ago, somewhere on these heights, perchance in this very spot, a young prince had stood and looked on this panorama. By the might of his arms and the aid of the divine gods of the land, he had won the country for his father, the Mikado of Western Nippon, away behind Fuziyama and the Hakone Mountain barrier, and remembering the cost at which that aid had been gained, and the fair young wife who had given her life to secure it, he flung his hands towards the heedless mountain-tops, the dwelling-place of the cruel gods, and groaned aloud, *Adzuma! Adzuma!* (My wife! my wife!) And *Adzuma* has been the name ever since by which this garden-ground of Japan is known in song and story.

To the north, eighteen hundred feet below, notwithstanding its great altitude (3000 feet above sea-level) lay the broad plateau of Karuizawa flanked by smoking Asamayama. Then at the head of the Usui Pass the North Western Railway renewed its interrupted course, broken at Yokogawa by that formidable mountain wall. And to the Railway Hotel we betook us after descending the grass-covered slopes to the town, and finding it waste and void so far as the foreign element was concerned, the summer residents having departed down the Pass at the first break in the storm, the adults on foot and the children in paniers securely tied on pack-horses.

Railway inns are not always desirable residences. The landlord of this was surly; in his youth he had probably been a *samurai*, and still bore himself with the aggressive hostility to all things foreign characteristic of those swaggering two-sworded gentry. A sleeping compartment, narrow and bare, was accorded grudgingly and charged for extortionately. Desiring the usual hot bath I was shown a room specially designed for that purpose. On one side it was open to the station yard, on the other a glass partition fenced it off (like a conservatory) from the general sitting-room thronged with tea-drinkers. A smiling damsel proffered her services as bath-woman, anxious to see what a foreigner looked like when disentangled from the unnecessarily numerous and jealously fastened, buttoned and hooked-up garments of civilisation. She was disappointed, ostentatious ablutions being forbidden by a modest and retiring disposition. Bathing is almost a religious rite in Japan. Anyway, its votaries love to perform it, as the Pharisees of old said their long prayers, where they may be seen of men. The night that followed was disturbed.



GATE OF BUDDHIST TEMPLE.