

A PLAIN TALK WITH SENSIBLE GIRLS.

By "MEDICUS."

No, girl readers mine, I'm not breaking up—not from age, anyhow—and I believe I have much more good advice to give you yet before I lay down my pen for ever and for aye.

But I have lately broken down for a month, and I am not sure that I am not behind with my work for the dear old "G.O.P." It was like this: I had worn myself out book-writing, and went north to Edinburgh for a breath of my native air. I suffered from dull headache for some days, then came a violent fit of sneezing, and immediately after terrible hæmorrhage from the nostrils.

Well, this pulls even an athletic gentleman-gipsy down, and since then my strength has been about equal to that of a baby-mouse.

People who suffer from nose-bleeding should never over-eat, nor take iron nor port-wine. It is better to be below par in such a case.

I would not during my illness have a doctor of any kind. But, although I am a doctor myself, in this I was wrong. Don't you girls do as I do, but do as I bid you. Loss of blood is always serious, and quickly pulls one down. Then you have to get up again, and that is not always so easy.

Well, now, to get off a disagreeable subject, I want to write for this month just a few old-fashioned paragraphs that it will do you good to read, I think.

We've got through the spring months and have entered those of summer. And there is truly a deal that may be done in the sweet summer by the invalid who wishes to get well, by the not over-strong who wish to become healthy and happy, and for girls in health who wish to improve beauty of complexion, without the aid of quack remedies with pretty names and high prices. I can easily address all three classes at one and the same time.

1. A word about early rising. Many poets have eulogised it who never saw a sunrise in their lives. Now no young girl should be compelled to rise even in summer before half-past seven. If she feels unrested she will be nervous, and go about her work in a half-hearted kind of way all day, perhaps with hot brow and eyes. But let her go early to bed. Indeed it is true that two hours' sleep before midnight are better than three after. Older people—sometimes the young too—often feel a difficulty in dropping off after they lie down. Well, narcotics are out of the question. The best plan is to read for awhile, till you seem to want to doze, or to close your eyes and repeat verses to yourself, hymns, or even the dreamy, delightful poems of Longfellow.

Another excellent way of dozing off is to forget all worldly cares, and try to get hold of your last night's dream. Think it over, and you are sure to go off peaceably and have a good night.

2. But now you are awake, and your bath—cold—is ready, for you have had the water put in the night before.

If you bathe in cold water every morning and take a hot bath in the evening once a week, you won't need soap except for the hands and feet. But let it be the purest soap you can get, anyhow; no soft, dyed, cheap, frothy trash. This is destruction itself to the complexion. As I write on scientific and medical subjects, I have made quite a host of converts to my ideas of healthful life. Many hundreds of letters reach me, eulogising the system. Here is an extract from one: "Since reading your papers months and months ago, I have practised the morning tub, even in winter: I open my bedroom-windows top and bottom and never take cold; I also buy only the best tea, and never infuse it longer

than three minutes, when I pour it off into a warm, fresh teapot. I never eat meat with tea. I have left off the use of patent pills entirely, and feel quite a new man."

As to the cold tub, just sponge well over, then towel well, first the smooth then the rougher towel. If inclined to take colds, rub the lower part of the neck and upper portion of the chest till red. Dress slowly. Pay particular attention to the teeth and nails; they are favourite resorts of dangerous microbes. Don't use powder for the face. It blocks up the pores and the complexion becomes speedily aged and lost. Let nature paint your cheeks. The hair needs particular care and no applications; good brushing will cause the natural oil to be secreted.

If you want a good wash for the gums you may make it yourself; equal parts of eau de cologne and tincture of myrrh. Charcoal tooth-powder is best and safest. Brush the teeth up and down as well as across, and inside as well as out, and this after every meal.

3. *Hurrying for Breakfast.*—Well, after all, bathing and dressing and ten minutes in the garden you ought to have a good appetite. But if not, commence the plan of taking half a pint of hot water first thing every morning with a squeeze of lemon in it.

Don't eat too heartily in the morning, and take cocoa or milk instead of tea. Eat your breakfast slowly, and drink the cocoa after. No girl or grown woman either is in good health who has to sit and shiver over a "cuppie o' tea" before eating something solid. Eat leisurely and you will not over-eat. If you over-eat at breakfast, you will feel languid and inactive all the forenoon.

4. *Exercise.*—Don't expect to retain good health if you do not attend to this. I cannot here record all the good that exercise does, or how it stirs the blood and sends it singing to every organ and muscle of the body, causing every gland and surface to do its duty pleasantly and well. Why, as I have said before, the very trees take exercise, or they get it when the wind blows and when they toss their arms in the glorious breeze. Were it a perpetual calm, they would soon wither and die. Probably the animal that takes the least exercise is the toad. I have owned some rather intelligent toads, but as a rule they are somewhat lethargic, to say the least. A toad of mine standing near his own door, when he heard any footstep, save mine, approaching, was too lazy to turn round to re-enter his home, he just backed astern and retreated in that formation. That toad is, I believe, alive now, but I don't think he will ever write a book, or do anything very brilliant. He wouldn't even go after moths or flies. They have to come to him to be eaten.

All kinds of exercise do good; walking for the weakly, cycling and rowing for the stronger, the dumb-bells and Indian clubs before breakfast or in the afternoon for all.

5. *Dress for Lady Cyclists.*—I agree with all right-minded women who write on this subject, that those horrible knickerbockers should be tabooed, and a short—not too short—skirt worn. Thus I can look with pleasure at girls on the bicycle. If when out riding I pass or meet a girl dressed in the loud style, I feel pleased when she is out of sight. For not until then do the birds' songs seem once more worth listening to, or the modest wild flowers look skywards.

If a girl wants to remain an old maid all her life, she can dress as she pleases; for she is certain never to have a proposal from a good man. I have a habit of speaking plainly, and I tell you, my readers, that if a girl whirling

through the streets of a village dressed in knickers could only hear the remarks made, she would borrow a nose-bag from the nearest cab-horse and hide her head in that.

6. *Recreation.*—The less wearily time hangs on one's hands the more happy and healthy will one become, and so I think that every girl ought to have a pleasant fad or fancy of some kind. I know of none much more delightful than that of drawing and painting, especially painting from nature and out of doors. But a girl must have some taste for this art, else she had better try something else. Drawing should be studied first, the best of paint can't hide bad drawing. There is no royal road to learning, but the girls who keep pegging away nearly always do good in the end.

However, I do not care what the fancy you adopt is, so long as you go in for it *con amore*. If it does no other good it will keep you from reading the every-day novel, which gives no more idea of real life than boys get in two-penny theatres. Avoid them if you would be happy and good. I don't advise you to read goody-goody books, remember, but there are hundreds of healthy books in the market written by big-hearted, healthy authors—read those.

7. *A Word about Clothing for Summer.*—I am not going to say anything about what is called "dress." Birds' plumage, I believe, is going out except grebe. I think if girls only saw grebes in their own happy homes on lakes and among the reeds, say, on the Norfolk Broads, I am sure they would abjure even this. As a man, I am like other men, and hate the new and awful hats, with flower-shows on top of them—impossible flowers too, for hat-makers are not naturalists, and make the most laughable mistakes. No real lover of nature can look on the flower-show hat without a shudder, no matter how pretty the face may be under it. For my own part I would rather meet a beautiful girl wearing a dish-clout than a flower-show hat.

The big sleeves will soon go the way of all other fads in finery. This is prophetic. Mary Jane is wearing them now, you know. Tall, graceful girls may wear moderately wide sleeves, but a short, dumpy lassie with very wide sleeves looks ridiculous, and has no more figure than a carpet tack.

Well, I advise delicate girls to wear thin, all-wool underclothing in summer as well as winter. I am sure that linen is the cause of many a severe illness and many a death.

I hope I have not offended any of my fair readers by writing thus plainly. Plain talk really does good at times, and the one who flatters you is not always your friend. A true friend is the greatest comfort we can have in this somewhat weary world. Alas! such friends are rare, and false friends fly from us when the first blast of adversity blows in our direction.

"But think not I mean that a' mankind are
sae,
It's the butterfly frien's that misfortune
should fear aye.
There are frien's worth the name, Guid sen'
they were mae
Wha, the cauldier the blast the closer draw
near ye.
The frien' wha can tell us our fau'ts to our
face,
But aye from our foes, in our absence, de-
fends us,
Leeze me on sic hearts! O' life's pack the
ace,
Wha scorn to disown us when naebody kens
us."