

still, until the welcome sound of a clock striking seven made it justifiable to get up and light the kitchen fire.

"Ye'll be too tired for church this morning, dearie," said Mrs. Barnes, looking anxiously at the white cheeks and hollow eyes. "'Twas surely a great shock to you, finding poor Master Phil all sudden like that. Poor dear, he's not long for this world; but it did one good to see him and the Squire shake hands, and to think as there's a little lad of the old stock to inherit the Hall."

"Yes—he'll seem like another nursing of your own, grannie," and Mary stopped the garrulous old mouth with a kiss. How little note the aged take of the sharp, swiftly-passing sorrows of youth.

An hour or two later the old woman was contentedly superintending their simple Christmas dinner, while Mary, disclaiming fatigue, was on her way to the holly-decked village church.

Again they had the "toiler's hymn," as one weary-hearted woman among the worshippers called it in her heart.

Low and soft, sweet and clear, by turns, it sounded in Mary's ears, and, with the words, the rush of memories returned, sweeping over the toil-worn years, back to the bright days of early girlhood.

"O Prince of Peace, Thou knowest well
This weary world below,"

She cried, a little quietly, under her sheltering nurse's veil; but there was no bitterness in the tears, and, when the service was over, she could respond kindly, even brightly, to the Christmas greetings her village neighbours were ready to offer.

There were not many who had stayed for the highest festival service; most of the thrifty house-wives attended the early service, and afterwards stayed at home to cook the dinner, while their husbands and children went to church. But among those who had knelt with her, there was, as Mary expected, one tall well-known form, and it was no surprise to hear George Bromley's deep voice wishing her "a happy Christmas," and to perceive his intention of walking home by her side.

He was a fine specimen of the British yeoman-farmer, broad-shouldered, athletic and frank-spoken, and for twelve years he had been hopelessly in love with Mary Barnes. For something seemed to have snapped in the girl's heart, in that early parting with her boy-lover, and hitherto she had always given him the same hopeless response: "I cannot, George—all that was over for me long ago."

"How the years spin round," he said, in his hearty cheery voice, as they tramped along the snow-sprinkled ground side by side.

"And here's Christmas once more—the good old time of joy and love and happiness—and Mary, you know I've come to ask the old question—the same I've put to you these twelve Christmases past. I want a Christmas gift, the only one worth having in all the world to me, your love, Mary, or, if you can't give me that, just the right to give you all mine."

There was a break in the strong voice, for the man's heart ached for the disappointment he foresaw; the same which had damped his Christmas joy through all these years. But—what was this? This strange surprise that had come to him, this sudden, indescribable flood of hope and joy?

Instead of the usual negative, a strange silence, a mantling of colour in the pale face that recalled the beautiful Mary of old, a tremulous movement of the unresisting hand he had drawn within his own.

"Mary," he said, bending forward to look into her half-averted face, and the ring of triumph was already audible in his voice, "is it to be yes at last? Oh, my dear, my dear, am I to have my Christmas gift at last?"

"A poor one, George—a very poor reward for such long-suffering patience."

"The best—the richest the world can hold for me!" he cried joyfully. "I have not waited in vain."

"Oh, dear, faithful, generous heart,"—and the girl's tears fell fast and softly now—"so constant, while mine was wasted on a dream; the real awakening came to me long ago. Mine was little more than a child's passing fancy, but I believed that his life had been wrecked for me; his, which within a year of our parting passed into another woman's keeping. But I am awake, and free now, George, if it be not too late," and, even as he clasped her hand, the sweet clear sound of the Christmas bells clanged through the frosty air, and mingling with them came dimly to Mary's mind the memory of old lines, learned at school long ago:

"Ring out, wild bells, to the wild sky,
The flying cloud, the frosty light;
The year is dying in the night,
Ring out, wild bells, and let him die.
Ring out the old, ring in the new,
Ring, happy bells, across the snow,
The year is going, let him go,
Ring out the false, ring in the true."



HOW TO BE HAPPY IN WINTER.

By "MEDICUS."

"It will be an early winter this year, sir," said Farmer Jass, as I went down this morning, October 11th, with my dogs to fetch my mail.

"Ay, that it will," said his bucolic companion; "just look at the berries on the 'olly-trees yonder. An early winter and a 'ard one."

I couldn't stop to argufy. I had only slackened speed for the moment, for I was riding.

Well, it is just nine o'clock, and, as I sit by the open window of my wigwam, as I do all the year round, I am fain to envelop my pen-hand in a silk handkerchief to prevent numbness.

An early winter and a hard one! Is there any truth, I wonder, in what the man says? I am asking that question of a beautiful robin who sits nodding and singing to me from the top of the wild-bird restaurant not ten yards off.

The little rascal answers "yes!" For well he knows that as soon as there are any signs of inclement weather the restaurant will be well supplied with soft foods and seeds also. But as he comes to my window-sill for crumbs in summer even there can't be a great deal of reliance placed on his word.

But I ask the trees, that sway and sway in a seemingly drowsy fashion in the bitter blast. The linden or lime tree is ever a talkative kind of tree. In spring they sing, but now they moan, for wild winds only a few days ago swept through their branches, and there is but little leaf left upon them now. "Ah," they answer, "we fear it will, but we are all prepared and soon shall go to sleep."

Lucky trees! Perhaps. But I should not like so long a rest.

The stately poplars, the rustling sycamores and solemn pines return me but little answer to my query, so I fall back upon the berries on the holly. It is a pretty fallacy, that is all, but everybody believes that God provides a plentiful crop of holly berries for the birds to eat in January, just as he tempers the wind to the shorn lamb. It does one good to believe this, at all events.

Now I do not pretend to be a weather-prophet, but I augur that December will be open and January very icy, and therefore nice. I am ever an optimist, and can generally manage to see a rift of blue between the darkest clouds, and if I don't; why, then I just think of the blue beyond, above.

Anyhow, be the weather of January what it may, and we can't alter it, it will still be the

deadest month in all the year, and as cold has always a somewhat deleterious effect upon the human system, we should at least know how to fight against it.

Nervous people, and those whose blood is none too thick, suffer most from cold. What should they do about it? Cuddle up by the fire and close every nook and cranny through which the air might find entrance? Go about laden with heavy clothing, goloshes and water-proofs? No, no, no, to all these questions.

Cold affects most of the organs of the body to some considerable extent. It is apt to drive the blood inwards upon the lungs, for instance, and little bits of colds and coughs are the result. It sends it also back upon the liver, and as stomach and liver are first cousins, they conspire together to give one a first-class attack of indigestion. In this we have not only what we medical men call "stomach catarrh"—which, goodness knows, is bad enough to bear, and makes one bearish too—but also, more or less, of congestion of the liver. In such a condition, the bile, instead of being properly expelled to do its useful work in the economy of nature, is partially taken up into the blood, and oh, what misery this entails. We don't quite know what is the matter with us, nor what to do. We are

apt to be cross; we have to restrain ourselves from saying nasty things even to our best friends; we cry "Get out of the way, cat," to poor pussy, who comes purring up to greet us; a little puff of wind out of doors causes us to shiver; we are sleepy and mopeish and would like to lie down, when night comes, however, we can't sleep; our favourite authors we no longer love, and on the whole we are just about as closely packed with wretchedness as we possibly can be.

Cold affects the muscles and joints of the body also, because the calibre of the arteries and veins is lessened and the blood can no longer go spanking merrily on. In fact, the muscles are starved for the time being, and call out aloud with many a twinge and ache.

Cold affects the head too, and this, with the bile that is in the blood, makes one unfit for happy healthful work, especially of an intellectual sort.

As for the face, well, in gloomy, wretched weather, like that which I am trying to describe, it does not do for almost any girl to look much in the glass, for the skin is nothing like so pure and transparent as it used to be: it is drawn, that is, the skin is contracted, and if ever she had comedons (black-heads)—and they always do leave a tiny cicatrix—how distinctly they now show forth. The eyes too are less clear, and the nose, erst so white and comely, is pinched to a degree that accords not with the lines of beauty. A sad picture this, I grant you, but I'm sorry to say it is a true one, and I refrain from throwing in chillblains, rough hands and red ears, which cause the beautifully got-up nostrums displayed on the chemists' counter to be singularly attractive to the afflicted lassie.

Well, now, in giving advice in these columns, I never experience more than one difficulty, and it is this: I have to address not only the busy workaday girl, and her name is legion, but also those who have happily more leisure. My advice would, of course, suit both, but can it be applied? Ah, there is the rub, as Shakespeare says. Well, I try to do my best, and no one can do any more.

The first mistake that a girl who feels the cold makes is "coddling." If she can she will throw herself into an easy chair with a nice book, and just get about as near to the fire as she conveniently can. This is not only foolish but decidedly harmful.

You have heard, I daresay, about that horrid *entrée* called *paté de foie gras*? It is made chiefly from the livers of geese by the terrible process of nailing them by the feet, and otherwise fastening them before the fire

for a length of time. Their sufferings must be great, but their livers become enlarged, and that is what is wanted to satisfy the gourmand.

Whenever you feel inclined to sit too close to the fire just think of that, for heat applied to the front of the chest night after night will slowly enlarge your liver, just as much as it does that of the gourmand's goose. So don't you do it if you are wise.

But nevertheless the animal heat must be kept up? True, and there are more ways than one of doing so without endangering the health. Good food should be partaken of, although one should eat in moderation, but more fat, milk and the starchy food may be taken in winter than in summer without the chance of their leading to *embonpoint*. It is strange enough that this last complaint often begins in the earlier months of summer, probably because one's surroundings are then such as to induce a quiet and happy frame of mind, whereas winter brings with it countless little worries. Nevertheless fatty meats and fatty fishes keep up the animal heat even in the coldest seasons of the year. So do sweets or sugar.

Another way of keeping up the animal heat and making a girl as hard in muscle as an athlete, is the plan of taking abundant exercise in the open air. The cycling season is practically over for a time, for after all, it is but poor pleasure to go splashing through the mud. But walking may well take the place of the wheel.

(Just one word within brackets concerning cycling, which I have never mentioned before. It is this. In the majority of human beings, the right side of the body is exercised at the expense of the left. The right crank of a cycle that has been ridden for a long time is, in nine-tenths of cases, more worn than the left. One in riding should therefore endeavour to make the left foot do its proper share of the work. After a time it will be found that a longer journey can thus be accomplished with greater ease.)

Well, walk in winter, and walk all you can within the boundary line of fatigue.

There are plenty of wholesome exhilarating exercises besides walking, that will readily commend themselves to the reader, but they should be taken out of doors.

As to meal hours: I suggest that if breakfast be partaken of at, say, eight, dinner should be eaten at one or half-past one o'clock. In summer-time a short walk may be advisable before breakfast, but in winter no one should go long fasting before the morning meal. The

consequences, especially to the delicate, may be bad.

Anything taken before breakfast, unless a glass of cold water, does more harm than good to most young folks.

Of course girls never take stimulants, such as wine or beer. But either lowers the temperature instead of raising it, although it may give a momentary sense of comfort and produce a stomachic glow.

Neither can I approve of hot drinks just before going to bed. I hope I do not appear in my readers' eyes to be extra harsh, but I maintain that everything that partakes of the nature of coddling oneself unless really ill does harm, because it tends to soften the flesh and that is simply what we wish to avoid in the cold season.

Winter, as we know, is the time for indoor entertainments of all kinds. Recreation is really a *sine qua non* of health. All nature longs for change. One mopes and may grow ill if stuck continually down amidst the dull routine of daily life. In summer we go to the seaside, and, as a rule, come back far more jaded and weary than when we left home. In winter, on the other hand, we do not go so far away, and a night's good rest dissipates the delightful though at times fatiguing exercise of even a party, whereas there is no fatigue at all about sitting in one's seat and hearing a good concert. In both cases, at all events, there is something to look back with pleasure upon, and this in itself helps to banish *ennui*, and so keep one in health.

Science has thrown open our bedroom windows even at night, and taught us many lessons from which all benefit who wish to listen to them.

Just one concluding hint, and I'm done. Many girls, then, suffer from fits of depression during the winter months. It is no good at all telling such to "never mind," or to "cheer up." They can't. They can no more be as other bright girls around them, than a rook can keep time in his flight with the swallow.

A girl like this requires medical treatment. While she should not be told that she is ill, yet she is, and the sooner she is seen to the better.

So you see that if a girl acts reasonably and gives way to no excess, but just maintains a happy medium, she may be quite as happy during the long dreary months of winter as in summer.

And isn't there the delights of the green and flowery spring-time to look forward to? "Spring-time—the only pretty ring time."

