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THE HUMOURS OF A COUNTRY PRACTICE

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I HAVE had a theory for some years past that the country doctor ought to get more enjoyment out of life, whether he did or not, than his confrere in the city; and now I know that he does. The fable of the country mouse and the city mouse fits so obviously to the present case that it is unnecessary to apply it. I will give instead my own experience in a country practice.

I had formed my idea of the country practitioner and his practice largely from the flattering representations of him set forth by his avowed lay admirers, the artist and the author, who have imputed to him, as it will be remembered, all the virtues, and likewise the usual reward of virtue: which, being its own reward, is not capable of further simplification. I was convinced that he retained a spirit of cheerfulness when the weather or the financial outlook, or both, were bad; and that his position in a paternal community was affected by neither commercial depression nor the change of political parties. I understood that at the proper season he picked great quantities of little roots and leaves such as he would require later on, and with suitable resinous gums and juices and brown sugar boiled them in a pot on the stove until they became very potent medicated syrups, chiefly cathartic in principle, which I readily believed would prove exceedingly efficacious when the right time came to exhibit them. I knew furthermore that he was a man of a heavy moral habit, gruff but wholesome, and that on rare occasions he would unexpectedly come out with remarks which were full of profound wisdom, and were gratefully remembered by his contemporaries and handed down to an appre-