

## The Household.

### Talks With my Patients.

BY A FAMILY DOCTOR.

#### MY DESPONDING PATIENT.

Medical men, in general practice, very frequently meet with the desponding patient. Indeed a practitioner invariably has in his *clientele* cases of lowness of spirits of every grade, ranging from simple *ennui*, or weariness, to utter dejectedness, or hypochondriasis.

If we can once determine the cause of the depression of spirits, and have it in our power to remove it, we are generally successful in the treatment of such cases. They are very often, however, complicated with some functional or obscure ailment of the heart. Nor can the symptoms of hypochondria remain unremoved for a length of time, without interfering with the blood-making process in a very material way. So we find concomitantly dyspepsia, constipation, sluggishness of the liver, and general scantiness of the secretions, with often a hot, not to say feverish, condition of both mind and body.

The sufferer is not always in the same frame of mind. The dejectedness ebbs and flows like the tide. There are times when he is bright and joyful, though it is a very emotional, almost hysterical kind of joyfulness, and this may give place very quickly to fits of irritability and quickness of temper, during which the patient often says or does things that there is no one more truly sorry for than he is himself a short time afterwards.

Hard study, too close attention to business, worldly cares and worldly sorrows, are all causes of hypochondria. So too are neglect of personal ablution, want of exercise, slothful habits, indulgence in the pleasures of the table and the use of drugs. I ought to have said the abuse of drugs, but when I wrote the word "use" I was thinking of those narcotics called night-draughts, or night-caps, which too many people indulge in by way of coaxing the goddess *Somna* to smooth their pillows. For sleeplessness is one symptom, and a painful and distressing one it is, of hypochondria. There is often an actual dread of night, the patients knowing that while others are sleeping as soundly as the traditional middy on the maintop, slumber will not visit their eyelids till the small hours in the morning, and that even then it will be a half-wakeful, and often dream-perturbed sleep.

Cases of this kind require special treatment, in accordance with the causes that have given rise to the mischief; but this much may be said about all of them: narcotics never fail to increase the hypochondria, tonics may or may not do good, and aperients do harm, as a rule.

It is astonishing how small an excuse will of ten lead people to commence use of night or sleeping draughts. Extra fatigue, pain, a day or two of mental anxiety, grief from the death of a relative, anxiety of any kind—any of these will banish sleep from the pillow, but if the temporary inconvenience is borne with sleep will return, and with it happiness and health. On the other hand, if sleeping draughts be taken, congestion of the brain and its membranes is certain to follow to a greater or less

extent, and after a time the sleep that is obtained is so far from being refreshing, that the patient next day is tired, jaded, cold and weary, brightening up—through the natural reaction—only towards evening, at the very time the nerves ought to be calming down, preparatory to a night of wholesome rest.

#### Walking.

It would be money to the pocket, happiness to the heart, and sedative to the nerves of the great American people—especially its woman-kind—if they knew how to walk and how to enjoy walking. They are a fine race physically, if they had more flesh on their bones and blood in their veins; if they did not labor under the insane delusion that it was a breach of good manners for any woman professing to belong to social life to weigh more than a hundred and twenty-five pounds. They have good heads and fine foreheads, when the prevalent spasm for bangs passes over and allows you to see them, but the tendency of both brains and body is toward length without breadth or thickness; they mount high, but go neither broadly or deeply enough. They are full of new ideas, of gropings and grasplings; they are rich in inventions and innovations; but the solid thought necessary to amalgamate all the brilliancies and vagaries into sound sense and make practical wisdom come from it is what we most need. And walking will do it by a natural doctrine of evolution. For walking doth beget healthy appetite, and appetite cries for food, and food makes blood, and blood left to itself develops brawn and brain. When the shoulders widen—everything else being equal—the mental processes broaden also. This is a fact in mental philosophy.—[Boston Journal.

#### Housework at Home.

When there are a number of girls at home it is an excellent plan to allow each one in turn to assume the responsibility of housekeeping for a certain time. It doesn't hurt girls to be made to take a measure of responsibility concerning household tasks; far otherwise, it does them immense good. Let them in succession have a week at a time, charge of the chamber work, the mending, the cooking, the buying even for the family, all of course under proper supervision, and their faculties of reason, perception, judgment, discrimination, and continuity will be more developed in one month of training than in six months of common schooling? We all know, who know anything at all of such matters, that often it is a great deal easier for mothers to do the work themselves than to teach young girls how to do it. But when will they learn if they are not taught? and if their own mothers haven't patience to teach them, who can be expected to?

It is cruelty to children to permit them to grow up in ignorance of that which it most concerns them to know. Let them also learn to buy for the family; it is something to know how to spend money judiciously. It is a pity that girls and boys are not taught more than they are about the prices, values, and qualities of articles, both of diet and dress, in ordinary family use.

With a little attention on the part of parents

they might learn how judiciously to select their own clothing, and to be able to tell what prices they should pay, what qualities recommend, one above another, and of what materials the various fabrics are made, and very much concerning their mode of manufacture. They can easily learn how to discern the difference between good meat and bad, sugar of first, and inferior grades, flour that will make bread of prime quality, and flour that cannot be trusted, and so of all other things of common use, with their prices.

Knowledge of this sort imparted as occasion serves, here a little and there a little, in familiar conversation, and illustrated by reference to the objects under discussion, will prove of immense value to young people when they, self-impelled or by outward necessity, launch out for themselves upon the sea of life.

#### Sick Children.

It is better to take your child to the doctor unnecessarily than to postpone this duty and find that it is too late. A few hours in the disease of children may make all the difference between hopeful and hopeless cases.

When you make counsel with a doctor give him your explicit confidence. Do not permit a friend—even though the friend be an experienced old mother and nurse—to disturb confidence in the doctor. If you lose confidence in him, get another physician.

When a child is old enough to know what you mean never threaten it with the doctor. It may be important some day that your child should not be frightened at the doctor, but regard him as a friend and helper.

A sick child demands a nursing mother, who has tact, patience, firmness, added to her affection. With these, so much can be done, without them the battle may be hopeless from the first.

It is asserted that every year three thousand people die in New York who need not die if proper care were taken of them. High heated terms have much to do with death. Every hour that a child is exposed to a temperature above eighty-five or eighty-eight degrees, in a crowded neighborhood, it is robbed of vitality. High heat acts injuriously on its blood, nerve and muscle cells, and also on the digestive system of the child, and the milk of the nurse. High heat does more—it decomposes all organic refuse and dirt in houses and about them, and poisons air, water, food, clothing, bedding, carpets, etc. Hence the need of excursions for children and of cleanliness at home.

Do not lift or drag a child by its arms. You strain ligaments which were not intended to bear the weight of the body. A grown person swinging from a bar with his hands relieves the ligaments by the use of muscles.

Correspondence signed "Justice" is received from Toronto. We would feel obliged if the writer would furnish the name and address. The name would not be published, but it is necessary to know that correspondence is genuine.

A very complete filling for open cracks in floors may be made by thoroughly soaking newspapers in paste made of one pound of flour, three quarts of water, and a tablespoonful of alum thoroughly boiled and mixed. Make the final mixture about as thick as putty and it will harden like *papier mache*.