

On Catching Cold.

One of the lectures to the public at Gresham College, London, was delivered by Dr. B. Sydenham Thompson on the seasonable topic of catching cold. After a description of the symptoms and the pathological condition induced by cold, he passed on to the more interesting points as to its prevention and cure. In regard to prevention, he deprecates a too much fear of catching cold and the dread of the least exposure to cold air, as being very likely to bring about the tender hot-house-plant condition. Exposure to cold air, he insisted, does no harm, except under the condition of its moving rapidly in a small space. Thus exposure to strong wind in the open air does no harm, while a Portuguese proverb said with a great deal of truth, if you catch cold from a draught through a keyhole you had better make your will. It was draughts coming with great rapidity through small openings which were so especially injurious. Living constantly in very impure air made people very sensitive to cold, and ill-ventilated bedrooms had much to answer for in this respect.

It was a mistake to suppose that night air, except in arid places, was obnoxious. In London night air was purer than air in the day, and he advised everyone, while avoiding a direct draught, to keep the bedroom window slightly opened. The effect of want of ventilation was strikingly illustrated in the case of horses. When left to run in the fields they were hardy, and did not suffer at all from cold; but cooped up in warm stables they became very sensitive to cold and prone to serious and fatal affections of the chest. That was a lesson to us to keep our bedrooms cool and well-ventilated. In clothing, the great thing was to vary the character and amount according to the season and weather, avoiding the extremes of always being swathed in flannel no matter what the temperature; or of never wearing flannels at all. As a rule we might imitate with advantage in cold weather the example of Russians and Canadians, who were careful to put on very warm outer clothing when leaving the house, and to remove it the moment they came in.

Of the curative treatment, what was called the "dry method" had once been in great vogue. This consisted of abstaining from all fluids for 24, 36, or 48 hours, and where rigorously followed at the outset the cold was generally stopped. He would not recommend this treatment to any but those in thoroughly good health, for in the delirium or the sickly derangements of the vital organs, especially the liver and the digestive organs by the abstention from fluids, brought about evils more serious than the cold. Another method was the maintenance of an equally warm temperature, and where this could be done the skin was soon restored to a more natural condition, and the evil was relieved. The mucous lining, however, could be more rapidly relieved by inducing the skin to perspire vigorously, and if this was done at the outset the cold would be checked. This could be done by a hot bath; or very much better, by a Turkish bath, for while in a hot water bath it was not possible to endure a greater heat than 100 to 103 degrees, in a Turkish bath a temperature of 150 to 200 degrees could be sustained without discomfort. Vigorous perspiration was in this way induced, the blood was drawn from the internal organs to the surface, much of its impurity eliminated, and if the cold douche was avoided, and the skin was got thoroughly to work, the patient walked away in an hour, and left his cold behind.

A GENTLEMAN in Bombay, seeing an anchorite sitting under a cocoanut tree, asked for an interest in his prayers. The anchorite replied, he would with pleasure grant the request, but he scarce knew what best to ask for him. "I have seen you often," said he, "and you appear to enjoy good health, and to have everything that can conduce to human happiness; perhaps the best thing I can ask for you will be a grateful heart."

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