

and as a rule made up of school-girl gush, sentiment and twaddle. So their ultimate destination is the Balaam basket.

Nevertheless, although a man some years over fifty may be as hardly thought not so strong as a fellow in his twenties, I, for one, do not wish to have illnesses, for the pleasure of describing them with a greater degree of minuteness to my girl-readers.

But here is a morsel of my own experience that may be welcome to some. After ten years' service in the Royal Navy constantly abroad, I was invalided on half-pay and became a *litterateur*. I was invalided for chronic rheumatism. I had some years before caught jungle fever on the East Coast of Africa. We soon after ran on shore, and I knocked an ugly hole in our saucy gun-boat and ripped away our keel. We got off on a very high tide and proceeded to Bombay docks. It was pump, pump, pump, three hours every watch for nearly three weeks. Then we reached the docks.

But all our pumping could not have saved us had not Providence been kind. You have heard I suppose about—

"The sweet little cherub who sits up aloft,
To look after the life of poor Jack."

Well, that cherub, during our hazardous voyage to Bombay must have been aloft with us. For strange to say, the ship sucked into the leak a quantity of floating sea-weed, partially filling it up and thus saving our lives.

But though I got easily over the jungle fever, I found myself getting stiff and ill. The appetite failed, I felt constantly tired, when I sat down it pained me much to get up again. Before reaching Bombay—remember I was the only medical man in charge—I was obliged to keep to my hammock, and my patients—and they were very many—just came or hobbled to the quarter-deck where I lay, and there were treated by me—whom my messmates thought a dying man, because a huge shark day after day kept following the ship, in spite of the fact that whenever a fin of his appeared above water, it was played upon by a fountain of revolver bullets.

I was pretty ill when I reached Bombay, red and swollen joints, and sickness all over.

Captain G—, a dear, kind little fellow, said I must go on shore to the Military Hospital. There was no Navy one.

"What!" I cried peevishly, "and leave all my poor patients! No, sir, unless they go too, I remain."

So I was humoured. And a pretty procession we made, filing through the streets and along the esplanade borne in hammocks, by red marines and blue-jackets. Fifteen suffering men and a pale-faced young doctor. Arrived at Dr. Dimmock's he told me he could take the men but had no officers' wards disengaged. But seeing me look so sad and ill, his heart melted in pity for me. There was one outlying building, he said, that I might have, however. I jumped at the proposal, that is as far as any man in acute rheumatism could jump.

It was indeed a lonesome ward, but very large—three huge open windows at each side, and my bed in the corner. I had an Indian servant, however, as faithful as a dog, who

slept on a mat on the floor and never left me five minutes night or day.

For a whole month I was utterly helpless, unable so much as to lift a hand to my aching brow, or move a foot. I think I lived on medicine, soda-water and squee (a kind of flour porridge). Moreover when Pandoo left the room for a few minutes in flew at least a score of impudent Indian crows. There was no species of mischief they were not versed in. The remains of my squee (N.B. They were too wise to tackle the physic) was eaten up, so was my fruit, and they hopped all over the ward with my spoons.

Seeing my helplessness, one or two would sometimes hop on to my chest and glance at me most roguishly. "You've got blue eyes," one seemed to say, "We've often picked out dark ones, but never blue. Give us a bit."

The wonder is they didn't blind me. But when bare-legged, linen-dressed Pandoo re-entered, the rout was soon completed, though the din of it was a perfect pandemonium.

Now here is a strange thing, some years after this I contracted chronic rheumatism, and was sent to Haslar Hospital. When I was discharged on half-pay, I soon took to cycling, and have been a wheel-man ever since. But although I take but little care of myself, sleeping with open windows, bathing all the year round, letting my clothes when wet dry on my back for example, and doing much that I ought not to do, the wheel has entirely cured me, and I have never had a twinge of rheumatism, and very seldom a cold since I took to it.

The rationale of this is probably as follows. My skin is always beautifully open, that is the pores are, and one would scarcely believe what an amount of effete matter is daily discharged from the skin. My liver seldom troubles me. Sitting so much as I do, I suffer in other ways, however. Well, the best cure for this is prevention—if that is not an Irish bull. But plenty of ripe fruit before breakfast, oatmeal, the cycle and early rising keeps one well and happy. Frequent change of underclothing and socks or stockings is a *sine qua non*.

Keep on the road, I say, winter and summer. I'd rather pedal through mud than run the risk of having obstructed pores. On the other hand if you spurt much, it will stretch or weaken the heart, so that if you are at all inclined to have chronic rheumatism, you will be far more likely to take it.

At what age may one commence cycling? It is best, of course, to begin young. But a gentleman of my acquaintance, who lives in a very hilly country, took to the safety some years ago. He was then sixty-three, I believe, but thin, active, and wiry.

He was being threatened with chronic rheumatism, but that is entirely gone.

I would not, however, advise an elderly, stout lady or gentleman to adopt the cycle. In these cases, the heart is nearly always more or less flabby, and not only surrounded with bands of fat, but as pale as a spring chicken's.

Again, it does not follow that cycling will reduce corpulence, although it will gradually bring up the muscular strength. A patient of mine, a very free liver, had the courage to give up stimulants entirely. Well, he began to grow fat, and I recommended a good tricycle—he was not very young—but, strangely

enough, the more he rode, the rounder he grew. So he had to abandon this fascinating exercise.

So those who are beginning to suffer from rheumatism, either about the joints or muscles, should at once diet themselves, not eating too much and being careful to take nothing that creates acidity of the stomach. If the stomach is soured so will the blood be and deposits will take place in ligaments. Hence the pain.

Walking and plenty of it is the exercise for stout folks.

The cold bath every morning, a warm bath every third evening, and a Turkish bath once a week have often made a man or woman young and active again in six months' time.

Let me caution the reader against the quack blood-purifying medicines so freely advertised in the press. Even sarsaparilla, though at one time so much extolled, is now found out to be a fraud. I heard a very eminent professor say, not long ago, that, as far as blood-purification was concerned, sarsaparilla was about as useless as a decoction of hay would be.

Too much sugar should not be taken by those inclined to either corpulence or rheumatism. But it is strength and energy for the wiry man, and even for the nervous.

Saccharin may be taken for a few weeks, but remember that in the end it does much harm—is almost a poison in fact.

Well, although compared to the people who possess that unhappy slight inclination to *embonpoint*, we hardy, somewhat nervous individuals are the salt of the earth and keep the world ago, there is one thing which we should remember. We must never overdo it. I confess I do not always practice what I preach, but then I'm like a finger-post at cross-roads. Sufficient if it tells you the road. You must not expect it to come down and walk all the way alongside you. But there is a verse in the Corinthians which I think we should all remember:

"Let him who thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

I sometimes experience the truth of this. It is just while I am feeling fittest, that I catch a nasty little cold, the toothache, or tic, or a week of partial insomnia—this last caused by writing too long without sufficient exercise in the fresh air. And I always say I'll be wiser—but I never am. Sitting with damp or wet feet often encourages an attack of rheumatism. So does sitting in a draught with damp clothing on. But otherwise, speaking from my own experience, I never catch cold or anything else though writing all day close beside the widely-opened windows of my wigwam winter and summer. If in a train, the windows should be let down, and so long as you feel no chill there is no danger even should you be riding against the wind.

Waterproof clothing and those feet-rotting contrivances called goloshes speedily open the door for rheumatism to enter.

Well, for the cure of chronic rheumatism, I believe far more in the regulation of diet, regular exercise daily, avoidance of exposure to inclement weather, the baths as stated above, and all-wool clothing night and day (no linen sheets), than I do in medicine. The latter may be needed, but can only be prescribed for individual cases, according to symptoms and constitution.

