

IN THE JOY OF JUNE.

By W. GORDON STABLES, M.D., C.M., R.N. ("MEDICUS").



"Ah, what is so rare as a day in June!
Then, if ever, come perfect days—
Then Heaven tries the earth if it be in
tune,
And over it softly her warm ear lays."

Yes, and it would be a sorrowful heart indeed that could not rejoice in the joys of June. The fierce heat of July has not yet come to dry the earth and burn up the grass. There is a sweet freshness in the air, especially at early morn, that we do not find at any other time of the year. Showers may fall, the sky may weep, but its tears are tears of happiness, and they gladden the earth till every blade and leaf turns a brighter green.

And listen, if you live in the country, to those glorious outbursts of bird-song that arise from every copse and hedge. All know the melodious fluting of the blackbird, and the half-crazy song of the mavis or thrush, because these birds like to be close to the haunts of man; so too does the sweet lilting robin, and the chaffinch also, with his wild defiant notes that make echo ring from tree to tree.

But if we go further afield, if we penetrate into the silent woodlands, if we cross quiet green meadows or linger by reedy streams, we shall hear bird music which, though neither so loud nor so ambitious as that of our garden favourites, is sweet indeed to listen to. These songs are not meant for the ears of man; they are love ditties, pure and simple, sung by the male to his dear wee mate as she sits mute but enthralled, on her little grey nest, her orange bill and head leaning over the edge.

Here is a little June picture that rises to my mind as I write. I am lying, with a book by my side, among the white clover and orange

bird's-foot trefoil, near to the banks of a silent stream in Norfolk. The water moves lazily along in the sunshine, and tall green sedges adorn its banks, but among these sword-shaped blades is the crimson of the ragged robins and great orchid-like flowers of orange or yellow. Dark-plumed aquatic birds sail slowly past, now and then looking shorewards at me with great bright wondering eyes of jet. And, see, although there is hardly a breath of wind, there is just breeze enough—and, oh, 'tis balmy and sweet!—to gently sway some reeds between which is suspended the nest of a sedge-warbler.

I am near enough to see the owner's back and head as she sits there so cosily upon her eggs, and I am near enough to hear the low and beautiful song the male bird trills, as he sings to and fro on a twiglet not far away.

But his little morsel of a wife cannot live on music alone, so presently away he flies, and a few seconds afterwards I see him hovering over the nest, while he places soft food in the upturned yellow mouth of the hen. Again and again he goes and returns till she is satisfied, then he sits closer by her now and once more warbles that soft sweet song which, though meant only for her ears, falls also on mine. Surely this is an idyllic love-scene, and those who wander quietly by wood and stream, and who are themselves in touch with Nature, may feast their eyes on many such.

But June, dear young readers, is a kindly time—kindly not only to the birds and beasts and insects gay, but to us poor mortals, artificial though we be.

No need now, methinks, for any but town dwellers to go away for a holiday.

And, concerning holidays in general, I hold opinions which, although differing from those of many, are not far from the truth.

I maintain that no sickly person or weakly invalid should go on a long journey, to the seaside or elsewhere with the hopes of enjoying herself and getting rapidly well. Happiness, remember, is generated in our own hearts, and the condition of the mind depends entirely on that of the body. I do not mean to say that the pure air of a seaside watering-place, bracing or balmy, may not at times greatly improve the state of the health and be instrumental in enabling a patient to round the corner and get into the straight road, that leads to health. But there are many drawbacks to this holiday.

First and foremost, no sickly person can really enjoy the sights or scenes of such a watering-place. It is rest, *rest*, she seems to need, and perfect rest cannot be obtained here. Even in the quietest streets of, say, Brighton, an invalid is unable to obtain ten consecutive minutes of *siesta* on a sofa by the open window. Bands of nigger minstrels interfere with this, the everlasting street cries, and that horror of horrors, the hurdy-gurdy. The gorilla-like handle-turner will gape and grin at you, soliciting alms, till you feel life to be a burden—you'd fain lay down.

The Scots are notably first in all reforms, and the English adopt them after a time. Why then should not Brighton follow the example of Edinburgh, and banish street organs and street noises, as St. Patrick banished the frogs from "Ould Oirland." Let bands play and niggers sing along the beach, and everybody go mad there that wants to; but, as a journalist, I for one should write Brighton up as a model watering-place, if the side streets were but cleared of all objectionable noises. As it is, Brighton's quietest streets are not even desirable by night, and

many a poor soul who has tossed upon a bed of weariness till the June sun rises, and is dropping into a soothing sleep, is aroused by the crowing of cocks under her window, or, later on, by the yelp of the brutal milkman.

But even the railway journey to the seaside from, let us say, the Midlands is a terrible ordeal for the invalid; the depression or enervation caused by this is often so great that a whole week elapses before one recovers therefrom.

Many and many an invalid, I can assure you, is dragged away down to the seaside through mistaken kindness—only just to die.

I say boldly that medical men who send old and infirm patients away to Nice or any part of the Riviera have very much to account for.

Well, at a seaside watering-place on our own coast, should an invalid be minded to stay at an hotel, the noises, day and night—indoors, mind—are incessant, and there is an utter and entire absence of all the little comforts which made home so snug and comfortable.

In apartments it is even worse; the beds are seldom comfortable, all the surroundings are tawdry and trashy, and, as for the food, it is oftentimes inedible; if you have a joint or steak it is tough, fish is spoiled, a fowl done to a cinder, and the pudding splashy and tasteless.

A person in good health can stand all the discomforts of the modern watering-place, but for the invalid there are precious few of the joys of June at the seaside. Therefore I say let her take a holiday at home.

This latter is by no means impossible. All work must be given up, all care and worry must be forgotten. The main object is to let things slide for a month or more.

But all the rules of health must be obeyed; the food be moderate and tasty, but never forced. Where there is no appetite, there really is not the slightest good in stuffing the poor delicate stomach. Just that kind of food which seems palatable be eaten. And don't forget that one girl's meat is another girl's poison.

Put not too much faith in medicine; very often you will be better without any. But early rising is much to be recommended, and the cold bath in June often invigorates a weakly person more quickly than anything I know of.

Fresh air—with sunshine if you can get it—is invaluable. But linger and lounge about in the air all day long, and if you have an umbrella you need not fear a summer shower. No mackintoshes—they are most unwholesome and even dangerous. No goloshes.

Gardening is a most delightful and healthy pastime for June. It is thoughtful and caliative, though the exercise must not be carried to the boundary line of fatigue, else it will injure. If there is a seat in the garden so much the better, for then the invalid can rest now and then and read.

An invalid should avoid cycling, except very moderate exercise on the wheel on the most level of roads.

The "bike," I must admit, having been an ardent cyclist myself for over twenty years, is capable of curing many of the ills that flesh is heir to—chronic rheumatism among others—but, on the other hand, it has often produced fatal ailments of the heart and other internal organs, and so wheeled its votaries to the grave.

Another joy of June which the invalid may indulge in, is that of studying Nature while taking quiet walks in the country. There