

The Club Smoking Room

By HAVANA

"HULLO doctor," said the journalist, "you look a bit fagged and thin after the Christmas holidays. Have you been converted to the new fasting cure, and foresworn the good things of life? I don't fancy the fasting craze is very popular at Christmas time. Most people believe in plenty of plum pudding and mince pies. It shows how strong custom is with us that we stick to the hot indigestible dinner of an old-fashioned English Christmas, no matter where we are or how hot it may be. I was crossing the line one Christmas Day, and the heat was enough to cook one alive. I just longed for fruit and ices and cool drinks, but we had steaming hot roast beef and stodgy pudding, and lukewarm heavy English beer, and not only was this hopelessly unsuitable fare provided but most of the passengers ate quite as much as they would have done if they had been in England with snow on the ground. I wonder some of them didn't die of apoplexy. I suppose the fact of the matter is that the average Briton looks upon these things as a part of his religion. Perhaps, doctor, you have been too busy physicking the victims of Christmas fare to really enjoy a holiday."

"To tell the truth," replied the medico, "I do feel a bit fagged. I was called out three times on Christmas Day, and when I returned late at night I found a young fellow who had ridden in from the bush waiting for me, with a spare horse to ride back with him to attend an urgent case. I found the patient was not in any very immediate danger, though it was absolutely necessary that I should get there within the next twenty-four hours. I simply couldn't have gone with him that night, however pressing the case had been, as I should have been too worn out to attend to it properly. I got a few hours sleep and managed to drive a part of the way next day, but the roads were so bad that I had to leave my trap and ride a great raw-boned horse that they had sent for me. The saddle was broken, and so were the stirrup leathers. I had to ride with short stirrups, and the old wound in my knee made the journey far from pleasant. The roads after the recent rains were in an awful state, and we had nothing but a slippery bridle-track for a good part of the way. However I got there in time, and was able to save the patient, but if anything had occurred to delay me a few hours longer the case would have been past mending. I wonder that with all our many subsidies the Government doesn't take some steps to subsidise a medical man for country districts. At it happened in the case I was called out to, the patient had been fairly skilfully treated, and there was no very immediate danger, but I had heard of two deaths only the week before, because no medical man could be got in time. I don't fancy people realise at all the risks run by some of our back block settlers. A man might easily meet with an accident and bleed to death before help could arrive, and the women often undergo untold sufferings for want of medical aid. Many of our country settlers' wives suffer all their lives from not having had proper treatment at a critical time."

"There I am quite with you," said an old settler. "I remember a case where the doctor arrived just an hour too late to save the mother's life, and I have often known of cases where they were only just in time. But, quite apart from this, it comes jolly hard on a town doctor, used to train and motor-cars, to

have to ride a half-broken horse through some of our bush mud. It is jolly plucky of them to go, I reckon, especially as they often have to lose their night's rest. Besides, no man can be at his best after several hours in the saddle, and perhaps a spill or two on the way. You want a special class of men for country work—men with good physique and used to riding in all sorts of country. No man could earn a living in the country without some outside aid. He would have to keep two traps and several horses, and he could not expect big fees. As things are, the settler not only has great difficulty in getting medical aid, but he has to pay a man ten or twenty guineas to go out, and not many of our fellows can afford that sum. I do think that if the Government moved in the direction of subsidising medical men for the back-blocks they would be doing a good deal towards helping closer settlement. No man cares to take a young wife away into the wilds, where there is no chance of getting a doctor in case of serious illness or accident, and men do not care to live an absolutely solitary life. The Government might provide a free house and a few acres of land and a pound for pound subsidy, or what the settlers could guarantee. Luckily our country women are healthier than their town sisters, and they survive many things which would kill a daughter of the city or a fashionable lady."

"What you say," replied the doctor, "is very true. I am a poor rider myself at the best of times, but since the accident when I was thrown out of my trap, I have hardly been able to ride at all. I injured my knee very badly, and I daresay you remember, and I am quite unable to grip the saddle, and whenever I have a long ride it is simply torture to me. In this case I was speaking of I had to charge ten guineas to pay me at all. I lost two days, and all but capsize my trap in a rut, and I was thoroughly done up when I got home, and had to send another doctor to two of my cases. But the people were none too well off, and I wish I could have afforded to let them off the fee altogether. It would do some of our neurasthenic town patients good if they could see the plucky way in which country people meet illness or misfortune. In town half my time is taken up with the malade imaginaire—people who have nothing on earth the matter with them, except the want of something to do."

"By Jove," said another doctor, "you do meet some rural cases sometimes. Perhaps it is not quite professional to talk about one's patients, but in a general way I think I am quite safe in saying that half of the people's ailments are purely imaginary. When the appendicitis craze was on, hundreds of people imagined that they ought to have their appendix removed. The big London surgeons were literally besieged by people clamorous for an operation. Most of them had nothing on earth the matter with them except fancy. It was not an uncommon thing for surgeons to do a pretended operation just to satisfy them. They would make a small incision and sew it up again, and the patient would be quite happy. If nothing had been done it is quite probable that many people would have worried themselves till they really did get ill. But even medical men caught the craze: One surgeon got an idea that all his patients were suffering from appendicitis. He used to lecture at one of the hospitals, and the medical students got a bit tired of his perpetual harping on the

one theme. They cured him pretty effectually. One of their number fainted just outside the great man's residence. Two others who were with him rang the surgery bell and carried their fainting comrade into the consulting room. The surgeon looked at the patient, and gave the other two students a long lecture on the symptoms attending appendicitis, the great danger of sudden collapse, and the necessity for prompt and skilful operation. "Now," he said, "if you had not brought this case to me the young fellow might have died. Other practitioners might have failed to recognise the symptoms, so unmistakable to the trained eye. You have saved his life." He made all ready to operate, and asked the two students to remove the patient's clothing. This they proceeded to do, and when they had taken off his coat the surgeon was considerably taken aback to find a large placard fastened to the back of the patient's waistcoat, and bearing in large letters the following touching inscription: "I have had my appendix removed. Please do not operate."

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me the least bit of good. Then I decided to give Dr. Williams' Pink Pills a trial, though I did not think that they would do me much good when the doctor's treatment had failed. But I got a box, and, do you know, that before I had finished it I felt a lot better. After that every dose put new life into me, and five boxes put me into the very best of health. Now I am as strong as ever I was."

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NEW ZEALAND RAILWAYS.

TUESDAY, 31st DECEMBER, 1907.

A train will leave Helensville for Taupo at 10.5 a.m. (after arrival of 7 a.m. train from Auckland).
A train will leave Taupo for Auckland at 12.30 p.m.
The 4.40 p.m. Kaipara train will leave Auckland at 6.10 p.m., and will run through to Kaitiaki.
The 4.15 p.m. train will run through to Cambridge.
A train will leave Auckland for Drury at 6.20 p.m.
A train will leave Auckland for Hamilton at 10.10 p.m.

WEDNESDAY, 1st JANUARY, 1908.
NEW YEAR'S DAY.

The following trains will NOT run:—
10.50 a.m. Auckland to Helensville.
12.30 p.m. Helensville to Auckland.
12.45 p.m. Auckland to Mercer.
8.20 a.m. Mercer to Auckland.
The usual stock trains between Auckland and Frankton will not run.
A train will leave Kaitiaki for Auckland at 7.0 a.m.
A special train will leave Auckland for Helensville at 8 a.m., returning Helensville to Auckland at 5 p.m.
The usual afternoon train will not leave Taupo till 2.15 p.m., Helensville 4.30 p.m., Henderson 6 p.m., arriving Auckland 7.2 p.m.
The usual 4.40 p.m. Helensville train will not leave Auckland till 7.40 p.m., and will run through to Kaitiaki.
A train stopping where required, will leave Hamilton for Ellerslie Racecourse and Auckland at 7.0 a.m., Otahuhu 11.7 a.m., arriving Racecourse 11.25 a.m.
A train will leave Auckland for Drury at 8.0 a.m., returning at 5.45 p.m.
A train will leave Auckland for Mercer at 7.12 p.m.
The usual 4.15 p.m. Frankton train will run through to Cambridge.

THURSDAY, 2nd JANUARY, 1908.

The following trains will NOT run:—
10.50 a.m. Auckland to Helensville.
12.30 p.m. Helensville to Auckland.
The usual 4.40 p.m. Helensville train will not leave Auckland till 7.40 p.m., and will run through to Kaitiaki.
A train will leave Auckland for Hamilton at 7.12 p.m.
Goods and Livestock traffic will be suspended on 1st and 2nd January.
For full particulars of trains and fares see Posters.

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