

HEALTH HABITS VIA THE TEXTBOOK

By Morris Fishbein

THAT the development of health teaching has been rapid as well as recent is reflected in the textbooks that are available to the grade and high schools, and in the volumes that are recommended for prospective teachers of hygiene. The books vary from the most modern type of artistically designed, beautifully illustrated, and well written volumes to the ancient compilations of a decade ago. The former outshine the latter as much as a modern story book for the child of six surpasses McGuffey's First Reader.

Dr. Woods Hutchinson, among the first of the physicians to take up the education of the public in matters of health, is responsible for a series of volumes designed to pass the child from elementary facts through physical culture to personal, and finally to community, hygiene. The books are not particularly inspiring and the nearest attempt at lightening a somewhat dreary subject is an occasional far fetched metaphor. The first of the series, "A Handbook of Health", appeared in 1911 and has passed through some eighteen printings and revisions. In this volume appear all the ancient moralistic impressions of the past relative to the harmfulness of coffee and tea, of tobacco and of alcohol, without any reference to modern investigations which have yielded facts to replace empirical beliefs. A more recent book by Dr. Hutchinson, "Building Strong Bodies", begins to show a glimmering of recognition of the fact that science is applying itself to health problems. In

this book only of the Hutchinson series is there a mention of the vitamins, those remarkable, as yet unisolated, substances which are known, by the effects of their absence, to be responsible for proper growth of the living organism and for life itself. In this book there are excellent chapters on swimming but nothing is said of resuscitation of the drowned, a measure which should be known to every lay person, because only early administration of the manual resuscitation method will save the lives hitherto lost through delay. But we cannot indorse Dr. Hutchinson's books for other reasons! In the chapter on how to play baseball he tells the boys that they may not play well because of indigestion, biliousness, or adenoids. Why continue to perpetrate such unscientific and antediluvian terms as "biliousness"? A little more attention to detail and to the advances that have come in medical science might greatly improve these books. They would still fall short, however, because they rely on an ancient pedagogic method rather than on modern conceptions.

Dr. Charles P. Emerson, professor of medicine in the Indiana University, and George H. Betts of Northwestern University have cooperated in a two volume series on health which has passed through four editions. The books are fairly satisfactory as to content but burdened by a sort of pedagogic condescension, a tone that the child inevitably recognizes as accompanying something unpleasant. Since health is

a most pleasant, cheerful, and enjoyable condition, it might better be approached in that manner. No doubt this series is used to advantage to convey the elementary lessons of hygiene. A little attention to lightening the tone and making the books more attractive would greatly heighten their value.

Passing to the two volume contribution of Professor M. V. O'Shea of the University of Wisconsin and Dr. John Harvey Kellogg of the Battle Creek Sanitarium, we find two more authors clinging, albeit somewhat less tenaciously, to the grimness of appearance and dullness of style that mar most of the books on health for children. Here again is the attempt to teach elementary anatomy and physiology as a part of the course in the inculcation of health habits. And here also is emphasis on that dangerous trinity, coffee, tobacco, and alcohol, of which we shall have more to say later.

In the books by Grace Hallock and Dr. C.-E. A. Winslow we begin to approximate somewhat modern ideals in pedagogy and in health teaching. The very covers themselves in deep blue and gold are cheerful and attractive. The type is large and widely leaded so as to be easily read. Most of the facts are brought out in story form; the exercises are games that may be played and things to be done with tangible results, and the pictures seem joyful, even to an adult. The progression from "The Land of Health" for little children to the two books on "Healthy Living" for the older ones is an easy road. In these books there is some attempt to convey the established truths without perpetuating the moral conceptions of a past generation. Best of all, these volumes include also some emphasis on the great personalities responsible for modern hygiene. The stories of Pasteur, Koch, Gorgas, and

Ross will do as much to inspire the adolescent to worship at the shrines of health and science as will the lives of Napoleon, Alexander, or Cæsar to lead him to the study of war.

The Gulick Hygiene Series, edited by Luther Halsey Gulick, comprises the ultimate in the way of inhibiting scientific fact by moral earnestness. It includes a five book series that is graded and two extra volumes. In the volume called "Physiology, Hygiene and Sanitation" by Frances Gulick Jewett the whole armamentarium of science is brought to bear against tobacco and alcohol. The layman is frightened with all sorts of weird apparatus and with tracings and curves. He is shown the normal liver as contrasted with the hob nailed organ of the confirmed boozier, and every chapter harks back sooner or later to the life shortening effects of alcohol. The old bugaboo of autointoxication, an unscientific misconception long since relegated to the scrap heap, is again dragged forth to terrorize the misinformed. Even the disproved superstition that canned food must immediately be removed from the can and put in a glass dish to prevent ptomaine poisoning finds a place in this remarkable compilation of loose and irrational statements.

One picks up "A Journey to Health Land" and "Boys and Girls of Wake-up Town" with positive pleasure. They are by J. Mace Andress, lecturer on health education in Boston University, and Annie Turner Andress, formerly head of the kindergarten department of the state normal school in Worcester, Massachusetts. The illustrations in color are by Blanche Fisher Taite. Here is no vast marshaling of unapplied facts to stagger the child's mind, but simple little stories with poems and music and

beautiful drawings. Each story conveys one or two simple facts: that the child should go early to bed, that his room should be ventilated, that his teeth should be cleaned morning and night, and that fresh vegetables contain substances important to proper growth and functioning.

For teachers Professor Andress has provided "Health Education in Rural Schools", which is packed full with facts and with information as to how such facts may be conveyed properly to children. A somewhat similar book is "Health Work in the Schools" by Hoag and Terman. Here again teachers are told how to make health instruction vital and interesting, but the authors have not acquainted themselves with the variety of books available in this field, and fall back for their references on the outworn texts of a forgotten period.

Dr. Maximilian P. E. Groszmann, author of many books on the care of the child, submits "A Parents' Manual" in two volumes. The manual is replete with sound psychology based on careful observation. The sections on discipline, personal hygiene, and the minor physical handicaps are especially useful. If only all parents had a full understanding of the influences at work on the child's mind and body, what a saving in tortured spirits and anguished brains! How wonderful if parents could only realize the delight of the child in some slight opportunity to express its individuality!

Of special interest at a time when we are beginning to appreciate how much can be done for the minor distortions of the human frame is a book by Leah C. Thomas and Joel E. Goldthwait on "Body Mechanics and Health". Here special emphasis is placed on the use of physical exercises to correct bad posture and carriage. The greatest em-

phasis is placed first on correct standing, for it is realized that it is useless to instruct the child in gymnastics if he is to relax immediately into his old slouching posture. The rules for correct posture are simple: "Stand tall — head up — chin in — chest high — abdomen flat — weight on the balls of the feet."

The grown ups should be interested in some of the newer books on personal hygiene. The industrious E. L. Fisk presents not only "How to Live", which has sold hundreds of thousands of copies, but a newer work on "Health Building and Life Extension". The two volumes constitute a complete course in individual health. In "Health First: The Fine Art of Living" Dr. Henry Dwight Chapin gives simple directions for a healthy conduct of life. "The Prevention of Disease in the Individual" by Kenelm Winslow contains chapters on personal hygiene, the prevention of cancer, tuberculosis, and sexual diseases as well as a variety of other ailments, and finishes with a section on first aid. Finally "Personal Hygiene Applied" by Professor Jesse F. Williams, planned by its author for use by college students who wish not only to learn personal hygiene but also to relate the securing of health to ideals, ambitions, and hopes, will serve to round off the subject. It is a safe guide for the care of the body.

After all, one gets the impression that our teachers of health are a little far removed from the laboratory and the bedside where the facts about health and disease are being brought together. The books seem somehow a little back of the times. Empiricism dominates their teachings. Actually how good is the evidence that coffee or tobacco, taken as they are in modern civilization, in any way shorten life? And if the evidence is not well es-

tablished, why bring up the rising generation with prejudiced minds open to still further assault by ardent propagandists? Shall we not be doing better to train the child to believe only that which is proved, and to cultivate that persisting skepticism which Pasteur declared was the mark of a scientist?

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