

## Annotations.

## HEALTH LECTURES.

The Education Authority of the London County Council is turning its attention to the organisation of evening lectures on health, home nursing, and infant care during the coming autumn and winter, open to girls of sixteen years of age and over.

An elementary knowledge of the laws of health is very essential to those who will be the future mothers of the nation. We are glad the London County Council is taking up this important matter, and hope the lectures will meet with a cordial reception. There has been a curious indifference on these subjects in the past. We remember the case of a girl who withdrew from a physiology class in an elementary school in the following terms:—"Please, teacher, mother says it's unnecessary, and it's rude!"

## THE DISEASES OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

Dr. S. G. Tallentyre, writing in the *Cornhill Magazine* on the above subject, describes a condition of treatment and nursing of hapless patients in the eighteenth century, which leads us to be thankful that our lot has fallen in pleasanter places. Here is a description of the eighteenth century patient:—

The feeble voice from behind the curtains of the four-post bed—that happiest hunting-ground of the microbe—pleading for air or water was always taken to be, not the voice of the patient's nature, but of the vicious longing of his disease. The invariable rule was, when he gasped for breath, to draw the curtains tighter, and seal the windows yet more hermetically; when he burnt with fever, to heap on the blankets; when he begged for water, to give him nothing to drink; when he refused food, to stuff him with it; to take a request to sleep as an infallible sign that he ought to be kept awake, and a request to be washed as the solemn token that soap and water would be fatal.

The medical treatises of the age are full of sad examples of Young Ladies of Beauty, Fortune and Great Merit, who, on the eve of being married, "went to bed perfectly well and woke up stone dead" of "an inflammatory sore throat caught by a night air," while the Young Gentlemen of Parts and Breeding who died from inadvertently leaving open their bedroom windows during the night, can only have been exceeded by the number of young gentlemen who must have died from inadvertently keeping them shut.

One advanced spirit indeed, by name Adair, had the temerity to suggest that pure air was beneficial for "catarrhal coughs," and that invalids "ought to bathe their feet in water once a week," and "when it can conveniently be done, use a moderately warm bath once a month," but no one paid any heed to him, the prevail-

ing rule as to washing being "hands often, feet seldom, heads never!" Nevertheless, if ailments could not be definitely attributed to too much air these were credited to too much washing!

Again, errors of diet must surely have played a considerable part in the causation of disease. We read:—

When Montesquieu said that dinner killed one-half of the Parisians, and supper the other half, he might have spoken for London as well. When one thinks of the succession of heavy meats, of the capons and the boars' heads, the luscious pasties, the creams, stuffings, and mincemeats which the ladies of the family spent all their time and ingenuity in devising, one is tempted to rejoice that such domesticity is indeed a lost art, and to think that to the incapacity of the modern cook and to the indifference of the modern housekeeper is owing no little part of such health and spirits as one has. And then the world not only ate so enormously and so injudiciously, but so often! The terrible breakfast, with small beer, and table groaning with large meats, precluded, indeed, a lengthy mid-day meal. But by three or four o'clock great-grandpapa and grandmamma were feeding again. As late as the early Victorian period this fearful repast embraced about twelve courses, all enormously heavy and indigestible, and, so far as possible, put on the table together, so that the diner could see his troubles in front of him, and know the worst at once. Does the present age quite realise that when its forefathers had sat, perhaps, three hours over this meal, drunk steadily for two or three more, and taken a dish of tea with their womenkind, the whole party then returned to the dining-room and had a supper on the cold remains of the dinner?

Among the fashionable diseases of the eighteenth century, besides "that aldermanic distemper" gout, was "miliary fever," a most prevalent complaint according to contemporary writers; "anatomical fevers" and fainting fits—"spleens, vapours, and hysterical distempers" of various sorts. Sometimes they took the form of "Fits of Screaming, Fidgeting, Peevishness, Discontent, Ill-Humour, Yawning, and Stretching," which fits were put down to any cause but the right one. Then there was the comprehensive term "a fever," which meant anything from a rash or boils to small-pox.

A bit of advice by Dr. Cheyne, clearly in advance of his times, to the fair sex is recorded. The doctor "cautioned the fair against attempting to cure vapours by 'drinking a bottle heartily every day!'"

Well, we have progressed since then, but who knows whether two centuries hence some writer may not be delving into the records of the twentieth century and writing articles for current magazines descriptive of the curious methods prevalent in our own day.

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