

## PROFESSIONAL REVIEW.

## HEALTH IN THE HOME.\*

A book by Dr. A. Knyvett Gordon, B.C., B.A. Cantab., commands attention both for its professional knowledge and literary merit, and we may add for the subtle satire which like a condiment, sparingly used, gives zest to the menu.

Dr. Gordon is sometime Exhibitioner, and Glyn Prizeman, King's College, Cambridge, University Scholar of St. Mary's Hospital, and formerly lecturer on Infectious Diseases in the University of Manchester, so his qualifications for his task are many.

The appearance of the book is particularly well timed, for the establishment of the Ministry of Health, and its resultant activities, have aroused the public interest in health questions to a greater degree than ever before. There was, therefore, need for a book which aims at putting the principles of preventive medicine in a popular form, and no one was better fitted to undertake this task than the author of "Health in the Home." The book should be read and studied by all who are concerned with the health of any section of the community, i.e., parents, teachers, medical students, nurses, midwives, and health visitors, and its price (5s. net.), brings it within the reach of all.

The contents are divided into three parts. Part I deals with the Mechanism of the Body and Health and Disease considered generally. Part II with Signs of Disease, and Part III with Domestic Hygiene.

In connection with the Mechanism of the Body the author lays down the principle that "before we can know anything about sickness we must have some conception of what the human body is—of what parts it is built up, and how it works." He reminds us, moreover, that "the body is by no means fool proof, and when we consider how it is misused by many and neglected by more, the wonder is not that illness results, but that it is not very much more common."

Discussing how the body can go wrong from illness, Dr. Gordon defines the most obvious causes as (1) those due to improper feeding—food deficient in quantity, excessive in quantity, or the use of the wrong kind of food.

(2) "One part of the body may be overworked or neglected through improper use. It is a fundamental truth of nature that constant work causes a part to wear out and break down, while intermittent use strengthens and develops it."

(3) "The body may be attacked from without. Very many diseases are known, and several more rightly suspected, to be due to the lodgment in the tissues of innumerable quantities of the bodies which we call microbes or germs. In considering what happens in such a case, we may conveniently keep to this conception of the landing of an

enemy army on the shores of our country." The soldiers of the defending army are the white corpuscles. "An illness results from two factors, attacks from without, and diminished resistance within."

## SIGNS OF DISEASE.

Part II deals largely with pain, first in general and then in its particular forms. Pain we are told, "is Nature's warning signal; it serves to indicate that there is something wrong with the body. That is as far as we can go, however, for there is no necessary relation between the intensity of the pain and the severity of the disease."

Dr. Gordon gives a grave warning against the empirical use of drugs by the public for the relief of symptoms, especially in cases of headache.

"The doctor, if he must use drugs at all in this and other ailments, does so only when they help to remove the cause; but when they are employed by the public they are taken to relieve symptoms only. The individual and domestic misery that results from this practice constitutes the skeleton in many a family cupboard."

Dealing with the question of colds, quite the worst name incidentally that could be given to the condition, as it perpetuates the old erroneous idea that they come only from exposure to draughts, Dr. Gordon points out that a cold is due to microbes, which multiply in the nose and throat. In many people the germs are almost always present, and whenever the patient gets run down a little they become more active and set up sneezing, running at the nose, and coughing. Many colds can be cured by discovering the microbe in the nose and making what is known as a "vaccine" from it, with the result that the patient is rid of his recurring trouble.

In regard to constipation in children, when due to an insufficiency of fat in the diet, Dr. Gordon speaks of the value of Virol, which supplies fat in a digestible form; for a similar reason he advocates its use in cases of emaciation and neurasthenia, when the higher nerve cells, which are largely composed of fat, require this substance for their rebuilding. He commends the use of Bovril as an article of invalid dietary, as more nourishing and cheaper than beeftea.

A word of warning is given on the subject of infection with the germs of enteric fever. "Many a nurse, for instance, has gone down with enteric fever by eating her food with fingers that have been recently touching the bedclothes of a patient. Hence great care should be taken by everyone in the house where a case is present never to sit down to a meal without washing the hands, and in fact never to touch food with the hands at all if it can be avoided."

As to what to do in fits, Dr. Gordon quotes the advice: "Let 'im fit," i.e., the attention of the onlookers should be confined to seeing that the patient does no harm to himself or his surroundings, and no attempt should ever be made to give a drug or anything else for treatment of the fit itself."

Neurasthenia is described as "in a way infec-

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