THE TEACHING OF PHYSIOLOGY

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I have been engaged in physiological research and in teaching human physiology for about forty years during a period in which the most astounding progress has been made, and the subject from being of mainly academic interest has developed into being of deep significance for the welfare of mankind.

I wish to contend that the teaching of this branch of natural science has not kept pace with its increasing significance, that it should be taught to a larger number of people and in a more effective way than is usual at present.

I am not now concerned with the teaching of physiology to the small number of students who are going to engage in physiological research; they can pick up their factual knowledge during their apprenticeship, but I am thinking of all those people who need some knowledge of physiology to order their own lives and in their respective trades and professions, and my major contention is that this knowledge should be imparted mainly in a utilitarian way without any attempt to cover the whole subject as academically defined and delimited, but stressing definitely those parts of it which are most useful from the point of view of the pupils and therefore most likely to catch and hold their interest. I am convinced that at all stages the active cooperation of the pupils in the acquisition of this knowledge should be obtained.

Adopting this as my guiding principle, I would like to have the fundamentals of nutrition introduced as a subject in all lower schools—at least in the cities. While it is no doubt true that the instincts of children could guide them to a right selection of natural foods, this does not hold at all in the highly artificial environment in which most children are brought up; and they

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1 An address delivered before the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, Boston, on May 18, 1939.
Editor's Summary

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