

SCIENCE

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EDUCATION IN RELATION TO PUBLIC HEALTH AND MEDICAL PRACTISE¹

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PERHAPS the most obvious thing that can be said in regard to education in relation to matters of health and medical practise is that such education is sadly needed. I may state the matter rather more strongly by saying that ignorance on these subjects is directly responsible in the United States alone for the loss of several hundred thousand lives each year, and an amount of sickness and suffering which we can express in no adequate measure. Ignorance of the laws of health, of the causes of disease, of how to avoid epidemics; ignorance of how to take care of children in the perilous period of infancy; ignorance of how to secure the proper medical aid in case of sickness and of how to take care of one's self or dependents when ill,—ignorance in one form or another is probably the most potent of all the allies of the angel of death.

The maintenance of life, whether in man or in lower animals, always implies an adequate adjustment of the organism to its environment. Since relatively few human beings die of old age, most death can be attributed to failure to make the proper adjustments. Among the things that our organism has to guard against are enemies of various sorts, lack of the proper quantity and quality of food, vicissitudes of climate, accidents and diseases, and it is obvious that the more we know of the various agencies that cause people to die, the more successful we shall be in avoiding or overcoming them. If one goes over the most common causes of death enumerated in the U. S. Mortality Statistics, he can not fail to be impressed

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