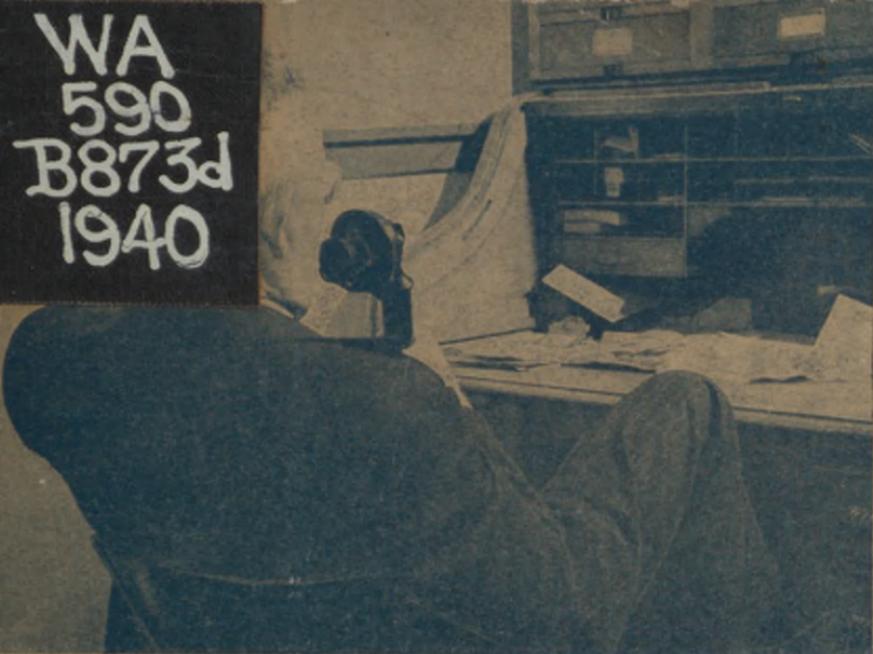


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"DOCTOR JONES"

SAYS —

BY PAUL B. BROOKS, M.D.

*Dr. Parsons
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"DOCTOR JONES" SAYS—

By PAUL B. BROOKS, M.D.



NEW YORK STATE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
ALBANY, N. Y.

EDWARD S. GODFREY, JR., M.D.
Commissioner

Reprinted from Health News 1940

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THE HEALTH HUNTERS IN ACTION

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FOREWORD

This booklet has been published in response to numerous requests, including a petition signed by a number of members of the department staff and others, for a reprinting of " 'Doctor Jones' Says —" "in book form".

"Doctor Jones" is a character in the Health Hunters plays which have been broadcast weekly from seventeen radio stations in New York State over a period of several years. The plays, all of which carry health messages, relate to the activities and experiences of the Hunter family and their friends and neighbors in the imaginary village of Utopia.

Dr. Mortimer Jones is an elderly physician, the village health officer and, for many years, was the only physician in the village. He is portrayed as "a progressive doctor of the old school" and is the friend and confidant of most of his neighbors, including the Hunter family.

The author of the "Doctor Jones" column in HEALTH NEWS has taken the part of Doctor Jones in the plays from their beginning. The son of a busy small-town physician, as a boy and later as a young practitioner in the same town he had many and intimate contacts with "country doctors". The character of Doctor Jones, he has said, represents a composite of the personalities of his father and some of the others with whom he was associated in those earlier years.

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* Dr. William N. Macartney died on June 15, 1940.

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* A Sanitary Code amendment, enacted after this was written, made district health officers responsible for the issuance of camp permits.

EARSTRAIN

"You know it's kind of funny, when you stop to think of it, the way we look at being hard of hearing. It took us a long time to get wise to this business of eyestrain but now we start testing the eyes of the youngsters and putting glasses on 'em almost as soon as they can toddle around. Take us grown-ups: if there's anything the matter with our eyes—and there usually is—we wear glasses and take it as a matter of course. We have to feel, sometimes, to see if we've got 'em on, we're so used to 'em. To be suffering from eyestrain and not doing anything about it—why, it's sort of a disgrace, like bedbugs.

"We don't take any pains to get glasses that don't show—not even the women. The more conspicuous they are, the better, it seems like—all those horn bows and these pinch-nose things,—you know—with strings on 'em and so on. If we don't wear something to advertise that we're hard of seeing, we aren't in style.

"But our ears—that's something different again. Why, until here lately, a youngster could go through school—if he ever did get through—and only hear a word now and then and we just put him down as not bright or something. If we did discover what the matter was, we thought about the only thing there was to do was to holler at him. And the rest of us, if we're hard of hearing—and there's a lot of us can't hear as good as we ought to—we go around half hearing things, scared to death for fear somebody will find it out.

"It isn't as if there wasn't anything to do about it. If the ear specialists can't cure us, why there's hearing devices that are no more conspicuous than our glasses are. They cost a little more, maybe, but even if we can afford 'em, most of us, we don't use 'em. And then this lip-reading business: they tell me that anyone that's got brains and can see can learn to tell what anybody's saying from watching his lips.

"Yes, sir. Human nature is funny. We're like a lot of sheep; we don't start 'til the crowd does. We need a Prince of Wales to start wearing a hearing device and going to a lip-reading class, then everybody will want to do it. Fact is, my hearing isn't quite so good as it used to be. Say, that's an idea! I don't know but I'll try it myself. Why shouldn't we take care of our earstrain as well as our eyestrain?"

FINGERS IN THE SALAD

“Several times lately, when I’ve been up to the city on some business, I’ve had my lunch at one of these cafeteria places:—you know, where everything’s out in sight? It’s a good place, too; the food’s good and they give you a lot for your money. The place was full every time. Well, there’s one thing I kind of shy off from when I go in there now and that’s salad. There’s a girl there that her job is keeping the salads fixed up. I watched her two or three days and, every time,—most of the stuff she handled with her hands—she’d get some salad dressing or something on her fingers and she’d lick ’em off and then she’d pick up some lettuce leaves or something else and put ’em on a plate.

“She was a nice looking girl, this girl was—looked clean and all that. I’d rather it would be her than a lot of ’em I’ve seen. But, just the same, being good looking don’t keep ’em from having sore throat and such things and I don’t suppose a disease germ would be any less a disease germ just because the throat it was parked in happened to be attached to a good looking young lady.

“They say ‘what you don’t know won’t hurt you.’ If that was so, I’d be pretty safe—but the fellow that said that was talking through his hat. Yes, sir, I’m convinced that a good many of these cases of septic sore throat and other contagious diseases that we can’t tell where they come from—that they come from germs being put in our food and on our drinking glasses and so on by folks that don’t know it any more than we do.

“But this girl I was speaking of—if it was down home here I’d have called her over and given her a little fatherly advice; but up there, if I’d tried it, they’d probably have thrown me out. Just the same, somebody ought to say something to her.”

INFORMATION, PLEASE

"We don't talk, any more, down my way, about 'public health education'; it's health information service. Yes, sir; I came to the conclusion it was information people wanted—and not education.

"The way it came about: here two or three years back I asked my board to set aside a hundred dollars for public health education. Well, one of 'em, Henry Smith—he's a good friend of mine but he's kind of hard-headed, if you know what I mean—he objected right away. Said if it was a matter of education we'd got a board of education and I'd better look to them. In fact, he said he didn't believe the public was feeling any great urge to be educated; at any rate, there hadn't any of 'em said anything to him about it. And the rest of 'em—I could see they didn't warm up to the idea much.

"Well, I said, if that was the way they felt about it, I didn't suppose there was any use of me spending my time writing a detailed report for 'em every month, the way I'd been doing. "But Doc," Henry says, "I don't see what that's got to do with it. This board," he says, "has got a right to know what you're doing as health officer—and why you're doing it. We're paying the bill, ain't we?" "Why, no," I said, "it isn't the board that's paying the bill; it's the taxpayers—the public." And all I wanted to do, I told 'em, was to give 'em the information they were entitled to have: what I was doing as health officer and why I was doing it, so they'd know what they were paying for, and to let 'em know what they could do themselves to protect their health and the health of their families. "That's all public health education is," I says, "just information, fixed up so it's easy to get at."

"Well, sir,—you know—there hadn't any of 'em ever looked at it that way before. The upshot of the matter was that they gave me the hundred dollars and the next year, without me asking them, they doubled it. But it isn't for public health education; it's for *health information service*."

THE SAFEST TIME FOR MEASLES

"I see the State Department of Health has got out a new pamphlet on measles. Think I'll see if I can't get enough of 'em to send around to all my folks here that have got youngsters—especially babies. Got some good stuff in 'em they ought to have.

"You know the grandmothers—they weren't so far off when they said it was a good thing for the youngsters to get measles when they were five or six years old. I used to think that was a crazy idea but, the fact is, there's something to it. Makes me think of old Doctor Hemingway—practiced here when I was a boy. One day in the summer he was going by George Pettingill's and Sarah was out there, and he says, 'Sairey, you know what I'd do if I was you? You and George have both had the measles. I'd send the baby over to your mother's and keep him there; then I'd let one of the boys go over to Elton and fetch a few measles back with him. They're just the right age,' he says, 'to have 'em and it's warm weather—and I've got plenty of time right now to look after 'em.'

"Well, I never felt I wanted to take the responsibility, like the old doctor did, of advising people to expose their kids to measles; but just the same—just as that circular says—the safest time to have 'em is between five and fifteen years. Have 'em then and they're over with—and they go kind of hard with grown-ups, sometimes, especially if they're along in years. You see, with measles, if you're exposed to 'em, young or old, you're practically sure to get 'em. With other diseases it's different; if you can avoid 'em till you're grown up you may never get 'em.

"But you notice the old doctor told 'em to send the baby away. That's the big thing. It's dangerous business for babies, having measles. In fact, according to that circular, fifty-one per cent of the deaths are in babies under three. We want to either send the babies away or keep the measles away. But there's one thing that applies to all of 'em, young and old alike; if they get measles *take care of 'em*. Put 'em to bed and keep 'em there until the doctor says they can get up. That's just as good a rule in measles as it is in influenza—and that's saying a lot. Yes, sir. I'm going to get some of those pamphlets."

BIRTH CONTROL FOR FLIES

"There's something funny about flies: the way they sort of kid you along. Something like—but I guess I won't say it; might be misunderstood.

"Anyway, you take a fly buzzing around your head when you're trying to sleep and it will incite you to profanity and violence. Then, another time, you listen to their buzzing and, if you're alone in years and sentimental, it's sort of like music: reminds you of the old days when you were a boy and used to play in the horse barn back on the farm. Incidentally, those were the 'good old days' when the chances of raising a whole family of children and a whole flock of turkeys were about equal or less.

"But there's no point getting sentimental about flies. They're useless critters anyway you look at it. A fly naturally don't live long and it must be a lot pleasanter to get hit with a swatter than to freeze to death or die from the fungus disease they get. Besides, swatting flies is nice, light, healthy exercise for elderly people and convalescents. In fact, there's some people, that get real good at it, that like hunting flies better than they do hunting deer, for instance—and they aren't running any risk of shooting somebody's cow by mistake.

"But, joking aside, you can't rely on just swatting 'em. Somebody has figured out that, the rate they lay eggs and hatch out, the total product of one good layer in forty days would be 140 pounds of flies—and that's providing only half of 'em lived. So you'd probably get buried before you got far with the swatting. The thing to do is to keep 'em from breeding. The State Health Department has got a circular that tells you how to do it—that all you've got to do is to ask for it. It seems there's no law against birth control if it's limited to flies.

"You remember the story about the fellow that went in to the lunch counter place? (I got this out of a well-known ladies' magazine so it must be all right.) He looked over the pies on the counter and says: 'Give me a piece of that currant pie over there.' 'Shoo!', the girl says, 'that ain't currant—it's custard.' Well, considering the habits of flies and how many germs they can carry on their feet, if we're going to let 'em walk on our pie, we ought to furnish mats for 'em to wipe their feet on. Flypaper probably would do.

"The address of the State Department of Health, in case you want to send for that circular, is just 'Albany, New York.' I guess you don't have to put 'Division of Fly Control' on it."

DRIVERS IN A HURRY

“According to the State Motor Vehicle Bureau 2762 people were killed, and 101,402 injured in automobile accidents in 1936; and, at that, New York has a good record as compared with other states. That’s about twice as many as were reported killed, wounded and missing after the battle of Gettysburg but when I see the number of automobiles and the way they tear around, the wonder to me is that the figures aren’t bigger than they are.

“The main trouble seems to be that these fellows are in too much of a hurry: can’t wait a minute for anything or anybody; toot their horns and dash in and out; expect everybody else to get out of their way. The funny part of it is most of ’em aren’t going anywhere in particular and haven’t got anything important to do when they get there. If folks are really important they don’t have to make a commotion to show it and, anyway, they’ve usually got sense enough to take their time. It’s unfortunate that when they turn out new cars, they can’t furnish brains to go with ’em. Well—when I was driving a horse and a skunk got in the road, I used to get pretty sore but I always let him have the right of way. One reason there aren’t more accidents is that a lot of intelligent people have learned that it isn’t worth while fighting for your right of way with that kind of a driver.

“Most of the pedestrians that were killed or hurt, according to this report, were hit crossing the street between regular intersections. Of course drivers ought to be looking out for foolish pedestrians—but they aren’t always. I’m glad to see that they’re teaching the school children, nowadays, to cross with the light and ‘look both ways.’

“The safety campaigns are accomplishing something, I guess. The sensible people take notice. But it’s hard to teach an old dog new tricks—if he isn’t intelligent. The hope for the future, I’d say, lies in educating the children. They ought to have regular courses in school. Of course, I recognize that they have a lot of things they have to teach—and a limited time to do it. But, in these days, it’s more important to know when to cross the street than it is to know when Hannibal crossed the Alps. They might better not know that ‘all Gaul is divided in three parts’ than not know that it’s undivided gall to grab somebody else’s right of way. All the kids expect to drive cars. They’ll be good drivers, too, if they just get it into their heads that a good driver is a careful driver and being a smart Aleck with a car is a sign of mental inferiority.”

THE RAGWEED QUESTION

“Speaking of hay fever: last year I pretty near got in wrong with some of the women around here. They’d heard a lot about ragweed and they decided they’d put on a campaign to get rid of it. For one thing they figured they’d go before the Village Board and get ’em to enact an ordinance requiring property owners to clean up their ragweed and setting a penalty for having it. They wanted me to go along and back ’em up. Well, I told ’em they might just as well pass an ordinance requiring everybody to put cotton in their nose or to go to the Adirondacks. It would be just as easy to enforce and accomplish just as much.

“About that time they started shooting questions at me: ‘Did I ever have hay fever? Wouldn’t we be better off without ragweed? Wouldn’t I admit that it would be possible to cut down all the ragweed in the village?’ One of ’em decided I was lazy; opposed to it because it would make extra work for me. I admitted I was lazy; just lazy enough so I didn’t believe in putting in work where it wouldn’t do any good; there were too many other things to do that we knew would give results. Furthermore, I was constitutionally opposed to cluttering up the books with unenforceable ordinances. Somebody said if they couldn’t get any help from me maybe they’d cut it down themselves. Later on they decided they’d cut down diphtheria instead: help round up the youngsters that hadn’t had toxoid.

“You see, the way it is with this ragweed pest, the village is full of it and we’ve got it all around us. As somebody said, it’s a by-product of modern civilization—like some other undesirable things. You take some sections of the Adirondacks and they haven’t got much of any of it. There it isn’t much of a trick to get rid of the little they have and the woods and mountains, I suppose, keep the pollen from blowing in from the outside. But take it here: we could cut down all our weeds (which I’m in favor of, though I doubt if I’ll live long enough to see it) but, if we did, we’d get the pollen just the same from all around us; we’d still have the hay fever. As long as there’s a limit on our time and money, we might better put it where it will count.

“It’s like Rastus and the merry-go-round. You remember he rode all the afternoon and, just as his money was all gone, Mandy came along. ‘Well,’ she said, ‘yo’s done spent all yo’ money an’ yo’s had a nice long ride—but whah’s yo’ all *been*?’ That’s the way it would be: we’d spend all our money and have a nice busy time but, when we got through—so far as hay fever was concerned—we’d be right where we started.”

VITAMINS FOR THE PICKING

"It was Russell Conwell, if I remember right, that used to give a lecture where he told about people going all over the world hunting for gold or diamonds—or maybe it was coal—and then discovering that they had what they were looking for right in their own back yard. 'An Acre of Diamonds'—I believe that was what he called it.

"In these days we don't spend much time looking for diamonds, most of us, outside of some of these girls that are looking for one in a platinum setting—and I notice quite a lot of 'em, nowadays, seem to be satisfied to wait and get their diamonds after they've been married ten or fifteen years. But we've learned so much about nutrition, in the past few years, that we're all looking for vitamins. That's one reason there's such a demand for all kinds of green vegetables. Take spinach, for instance: I hear there's some talk of adopting it as the national vegetable and it's no wonder, when you see what it does for 'Popeye, the sailor man.'

"Well, sir, right out in most of our backyards there's vitamins going to waste. We can have 'em just for the picking and get some sunshine and fresh air and exercise into the bargain. There's weeds that's the best kind of eating, if you like greens, that keep coming along all through the season. About the first thing that shows up in the spring is chicory. I used to go after it with a hoe; now I take a basket. Then there's milkweed—take just the tender tips before the blossoms start—there's nothing much better. And pursley—'pussley,' some of the folks around here call it—has small, shiny leaves and reddish stalks that branch out in every direction and run along the ground. You'll find it in most any garden and it lasts most of the summer, if you give it a chance. Most folks think it's a terrible pest but, my way of thinking, it's the best green there is. The French, they're supposed to be pretty good judges of victuals—I've heard they consider it a great delicacy. In fact, my next door neighbor tells me his father used to raise it to fat hogs on, so there must be vitamins or something in it. Where you find that growing you're apt to find lamb's quarters. That's another one that makes good greens.

"The funny thing about it: I was brought up in the country but I never knew some of these things were good to eat until I read about 'em in a state health department circular a year or so ago. If you're interested in greens I'd advise you to send and get it."

CHECKING THE KNOCKS

"The first car I ever had was a Model-T. I don't get paid, the way some folks do, for advertising cars, so I won't mention the make but I don't mind saying that it was a good car. It wasn't exactly what you'd call an 'airflow' model,—although the air did flow through it pretty free along about January or February,—but they put good stuff in 'em in those days. Well, what I started to say: the fellow that used to do my work, he was the best automobile doctor I ever knew. He could make a diagnosis, sometimes, just from listening with one ear, and both eyes shut—and he took an interest in his work. He told me once that if I'd get it checked up two or three times a year and put in new parts when it needed 'em, it would run as long as I would. 'But, Doc,' says he, 'there's one thing you want to remember: if you hear a knock or something that isn't right, don't put it off; get it looked into right away; it will save you money in the long run.'

"Well, sir,—I've often thought: that's just as true of people as it is of automobiles. The main difference is—or one of 'em, anyway—you can't supply spare parts for the human machine. They may do it some time, but not yet. So that makes it all the more important to catch the knocks and things when they first show up, before any serious damage has been done. If one cylinder is missing and you let it go long enough it may do damage all the way down the line—and some of it can't be fixed.

"Now, of course, what I'm driving at is periodic health examinations and I'm thinking right now particularly about children just beginning school. Just like my automobile doctor there said, it pays to catch the knocks and things when they first start and before unnecessary damage has been done. Let me give you an example. I know a fellow that's driving a delivery truck—probably gets twelve dollars a week, more or less,—his range of activities is very limited and he has an 'inferiority complex' that he probably never will overcome. If he'd had the right kind of an examination at the right time it might have been very different. He was a bright, active youngster but he didn't get far in school—just didn't seem to be able to apply himself. Finally he got a 'nervous breakdown' and quit school and went to work. Years later it came out that the whole trouble probably was eyestrain but, by that time, it was too late to start over again. That sort of thing is happening all the time, even today.

"Yes, sir. A man is a poor stick (and I'm not thinking of Charlie McCarthy either) if he isn't worth as much attention as an automobile. It pays to check up on the knocks and do it right from the beginning."

BUILDING HEALTHY YOUNGSTERS

“Awhile back I stopped to pass the time of day with one of my youngsters down here and I said: ‘Well, it won’t be long now before school’ll be opening up again. I suppose you’re glad?’ Course, that’s like remarks about the weather: what you might call kind of trite. But you know how it is: when the conversation starts a little hard, it takes something like that to sort of prime it and get it flowing free.

“Well, anyway—what I started to say: I expected, of course, he’d pull a wry face and say ‘No,’ he was sorry. Instead of that he says: ‘Sure’—and, the way he said it I knew he really meant it. Well sir,—you hear a criticism once in awhile, back here in the country, about the school systems, nowadays, being too hifalutin and all that but when they make getting educated interesting enough so you see kids going to school and liking it, you certainly got to hand it to ’em.

“Another thing they’re doing now, that they didn’t use to do: they’re building healthy youngsters. I hear somebody, occasionally, growling about having to pay for school medical inspection: giving the children physical examinations, checking their eyes and ears, looking over their hearts and lungs and all that business. Well, I asked one of ’em if he didn’t think it would be an awful poor farmer that would spend his time milking into a leaky pail and he agreed it would. I told him that was just the way it was with these youngsters: the better shape they were in physically and mentally the better they’d hold education. That’s been demonstrated a good many times: when children are backward and don’t get along in school, it’s pretty liable to be because they’ve got something the matter with ’em. Another thing: somebody figured out awhile ago how much state money some of these schools lost because children were out of school on account of sickness—and it was a lot more than it would have cost ’em to keep ’em well.

“Yes sir. Spending money for good health work in schools: it’s a long-term investment and one of the few that pays big dividends and still is sound.”

SPEAKING OF COWS

“Speaking of cows: in one of the state licensing examinations for doctors they asked a question about what bovine mastitis was and one fellow, so I heard, said it was inflammation of the cow’s ‘rudder.’ Some wisecracker said he probably was thinking of a steer. Maybe he came from New York. Certainly there aren’t many people up around this way that don’t know that the udder is the most important part of the cow, at least if it’s milk you’re looking for. In fact, Doctor Udall—he’s one of the professors over at the Cornell Veterinary College—I heard him say that dairy farmers ought to keep in mind that when they’re buying a cow they’re ‘buying an udder.’ What he meant, of course, was that a cow without a good udder was a liability and they ought to take pains to see that the udders were sound and free from mastitis. Yet they don’t seem to, always.

“No sir; it’s a surprising thing how many people there are—folk that’s associated with cows all the time, more or less,—that are all mixed up on this mastitis business. One thing they don’t seem to be able to get straight is the connection between mastitis and epidemics—scarlet fever and septic sore throat. They know how common mastitis is and when somebody tells ’em some of these epidemics come from cows with mastitis, they say: ‘Well; if epidemics come from mastitis why don’t we have ’em all the time instead of just once in a while?’ This same question came up at a medical meeting where I was. A couple of health officers were the only ones there that knew the answer. The thing of it is: the general run of mastitis is caused by a variety of streptococcus that affects cows but not humans—at least doesn’t cause scarlet fever and septic sore throat. Once in a while the cow gets infected with a streptococcus that comes from a human: usually a milker that’s had scarlet fever or septic sore throat. That’s when we get the epidemics. In other words, when you get an epidemic from a case of mastitis, the bug that causes the mastitis is *from a human source*.

“One of my patients told me that mastitis caused the dairy farmers so much trouble they were sick of hearing about it: just hearing the word irritated ’em. But, the way it looks to me, it don’t irritate the farmer hearing about it any more than it does the cow having it. Getting information is like taking castor oil: it’s awful unpleasant but the sooner you get it down the sooner you get rid of the trouble.”

PICKING A NEW DOCTOR

"You know, this job of picking out a new doctor is one that bothers a lot of folks. There's something in the Bible, isn't there, to the effect that 'man looketh on the outward appearance,' or something like that? Well, that's the way it is with a lot of people when it comes to sizing up doctors.

"Like one time one of my young families, here in town, was moving to a city and they asked me to give 'em the name of a doctor there, they could call on if they needed one. A year or so later they were back for a visit and the young lady dropped in to see me. In the course of the conversation it came out that she didn't think much of the fellow I sent her to. It seems she went to his office to see him and the first thing she noticed was that she couldn't see any books around or any instruments or apparatus to speak of. Then another thing, after he'd looked her over he didn't tell her what was the matter. He wanted her to have some laboratory specimens taken and come back again. She couldn't see that, so she went to a fellow one of her friends told her about. He had a lot of equipment spread around and half a dozen different diplomas on the wall—at least they looked like diplomas. Almost as soon as he looked at her he told her she had neuritis. I asked her if he cured her as quick as that and she said 'No,' that was one reason why she came to see me; she still had it.

"Well, as I explained to her, a good doctor, that's got his reputation made, he don't have to plaster his walls with things that look like diplomas and have a lot of fancy apparatus out in sight to impress people. They go to see him, not his tools. And you can't judge a doctor by the kind of car he drives or how fast he drives it. In fact, I remember well, when I first started in practice, if I got a call two houses away, I'd hitch up the horse and drive all around Robin Hood's barn to get there, trying to look busy. After I got plenty to do I was satisfied to walk—and go across the backyard, at that.

"And this business of quick diagnosis: there's some things, of course, you can tell as soon as you look at 'em. But, even there, you slip up once in awhile: like the young fellow that told Charlie Aiken his arthritis came from his teeth. 'Well, then, by gum, I've been stung,' Charlie says, 'I just paid eighty dollars for 'em.' But when it comes to things that aren't so obvious,—well, just for example, they had my car in the garage three days and took it all to pieces, trying to figure out what a squeak came from. You can't take a man to pieces,—at least not beyond a certain point, and it takes time to make a diagnosis. It's a lot safer to depend on a doctor that won't tell you what's the matter until he knows."

THE DOCTOR'S RESPONSIBILITY

"We had quite a discussion, in one of our county medical society meetings awhile ago, on the question of how far the private doctor ought to go in getting his families to have periodical health examinations or getting 'em to send their youngsters in for such things as diphtheria inoculations, and school medical examinations, and so on. Some of 'em claimed it wasn't ethical: if they came to 'em, all right; but, if they didn't they weren't supposed to go out drumming up business.

"Of course I may be kind of old fashioned but, the way I look at it, the family doctor—if he *is* the family doctor—he's got a responsibility for seeing that his families know what's good for 'em in such lines, and have a chance to get it, one way or another. For instance, if they've got children going to school, or starting in, he ought to explain why a physical examination is necessary and try to see that they get one: I mean a good, thorough examination; not just something to get by the school requirements. The main thing isn't who's going to do it; it's their getting the examination. The same way with diphtheria immunization: if one of my youngsters got diphtheria and I hadn't done my best to get 'em immunized, I'd feel personally responsible.

"And, what's more, I never was one of those that hesitated to suggest to my families that they come in for such things, or send their youngsters in, and if I think they ought to pay, I tell 'em so. It's worth more to them than it is to me. Same as awhile ago, I said to a mother, I said: 'You send Cassie over this afternoon; I'm going to look her over before she starts in school.' She wanted to know how much it was going to cost and I told her, considering who it was, it'd be five dollars. Why, she said, she heard I only charged two dollars for examining Johnny Blank. 'All right,' I said, 'do you want to be rated in the two dollar class? You have Cassie there at half past two'—and she did so.

"That reminds me: three or four years ago I heard a doctor telling—you'd know him, if I mentioned his name; he's one of the high ups—he's got a lot of wealthy people he looks after) he said he explained to 'em why they ought to have periodical health examinations and they'd been coming in regular and paying twenty-five dollars an examination. I never heard anybody accusing him of being unethical. Why should they? These folks got their money's worth or they wouldn't have kept coming.

"There's just two things about it, the way I see it. I wouldn't expect a doctor to go out and drag in somebody else's patients. I'm talking about families you take care of right along. The other thing is giving 'em a good job. I believe in giving them their money's worth, even if I do it for nothing. I'm like old Doctor Gadsby. He did the school examinations, over in his town, for twenty-five cents apiece. Somebody complained about the cost. 'You got no kick coming,' he says, 'I gave 'em a fifty-cent examination.'"

HAPPINESS AND HEALTH

"Sometimes I wonder if us health officers don't put too much stress on this idea of increasing the 'span of life,' as we call it. For one thing, unless folks understand what you're driving at,—as most of 'em don't,—it's liable to be a little misleading. Like a woman said to me awhile ago, she says: 'Take Pa, now: for the last ten years of his life he spent most of his time reading all the health articles he could get hold of. He took everything and did everything they told him to; but when he was took with pneumonia and passed away he was only seventy-nine—and that's three years younger than his father was when he died. I don't believe there's anything to it,' she says. Well, knowing the kind of 'health articles' her father probably'd been reading—and the kind of junk he'd been dosing himself with—I didn't wonder he died young. But as I tried to explain to her, you can't just go, like turning on a faucet, and draw yourself an extra ten years of life. There's certain things we can do—most of us—and things we can avoid, that'll tend to increase our chances of living longer. But when you say the span of life can be increased a certain number of years, it don't mean everybody is going to live that much longer; some will live longer and some will live shorter; what you're talking about is the *average*.

"Another thing that's more important than that: there isn't much point, so far as I can see, in keeping anybody around for an extra five or ten years, unless he can be comfortable and useful—and happy. I wouldn't thank anybody to keep me alive if I couldn't be anything more than a laboratory specimen—like Carrel kept tissue alive in a test tube. I think we're too much inclined—us health folks—to think of this whole business as if it was a laboratory problem and people were a lot of frogs or guinea pigs: keep 'em alive an extra year and get our names in the scientific 'Who's Who.' We sort of forget about the individuals.

"I don't know but it would be a good thing if we'd forget all about death rates and the span of life and all that sort of thing for awhile and devote our attention to seeing that the folks that are living—that are right here now—today—get some satisfaction out of it. Feed the ones that are hungry; the ones that are worried, help 'em with their problems and give 'em a little human sympathy, where they need it, and so on. State of mind, according to my way of thinking, is more important than length of years. If you haven't got happiness you haven't got health."

SLIPPING AWAY TO MEETINGS

"A while ago I slipped away and went to a public health meeting down in New York. While I was gone a man I've taken care of for thirty years, off and on,—he got sick and had to call somebody else. When he heard that what I'd been away for was 'just a meeting,' he was inclined to be kind o' peeved. Well, I told him I guess I was some like Mert Pevins. They had a picnic over to the Lake and Mert—he was quite a swimmer—he went in. He dove off the springboard and he didn't come up for—it seemed like an awful long time. Somebody started after a rope and Grandma Badgely was just saying what a nice fellow Mert used to be—when he came up, blowing like a sea lion. 'What you looking so surprised about?' Mert says; 'My gosh! I got to breathe *once* in a while, ain't I?'

"That's the way it is. You take anybody that's doing the same kind of work the year around,—especially if it's something along scientific lines, where methods are changing and they're making progress all the time,—he needs to get away once in so often and breathe some different air: get a little inspiration and compare notes with others in the same line—find out what's going on in the world. Like old Mart Lowrey says:—Mart's the best well digger anywhere around,—but every now and then he takes a week off—won't do any digging. 'I want to see something besides holes in the ground,' Mart says. 'I don't want to turn into no mole.'

"Take Miss Joyce, here, our public health nurse. She goes to all the sessions they have in this 'continuation' course the State gives and a couple of meetings or so a year and we always pay her expenses (that is, the board does). We figure it's a good investment; she's a better nurse for it and gives us better service. She not only knows more about what's going on in her line—keeps up on the new ideas and all that—but it keeps up her interest in her work and gives her a fresh start—like winding up the eight-day clock.

"It's really part of your education, when you get right down to it. You go to school and college to learn *how* to educate yourself and you spend the rest of your life doing it—that is you do if you want to keep growing. As long as your roots are soaking up education, you keep growing; when you stop growing, you begin to dry up.

"Yes, sir, I'm a firm believer in the value of meetings and conferences, when they're the right kind and you go with a definite purpose. Not like my Grandmother Bellows: when I was a boy she took me with her to a funeral at the church. She sat up behind the mourners and cried all through the services. Just as we got out the door the old lady whispered to me: 'Mort,' she says, 'whose funeral did he say this was?'"

ANGELS WITHOUT WINGS

"The other night, on the radio, they asked a fellow what he figured an angel ought to look like. Right off quick he said: like his little four-year-old daughter. Well,—that was a good answer and it made a hit. But I know some folks that, if they'd asked 'em that question, more'n likely would have said an angel would look like a nurse they'd known.

"In fact there's a family over the other side of town here—the man's a bricklayer—got a wife and a twelve-year-old kid. Last winter, right in the middle of a good job, he fell off a scaffolding—this fellow did—and broke his ankle. I suggested the welfare officer (knowing they couldn't have much of anything ahead) but they wouldn't listen to that. Well—the young woman, she got a job over in the mill and the man hobbled around and he and the little girl managed with the housekeeping. They were getting along fairly well when—Bang!—the woman came down with pneumonia. There we were, the nearest hospital miles away and they couldn't afford a nurse; yet there were things that had to be done right away—getting the laboratory specimen and so on, and seeing about serum,—and a million other things. Well, sir; for a few minutes there I felt, myself, as if we were sunk.

"Just about then I heard a rustle. It might have passed for wings if there hadn't been some good substantial footsteps along with it. In breezed the public health nurse: saw my car out there and just dropped in to see if there was anything she could do. That nurse, she's got freckles and she'll tip the scales upward of a hundred and fifty—but she couldn't have looked more like an angel if she'd been 'Little Eva' herself. It wasn't any time at all before she had the woman fixed up and had a laboratory specimen and, in spite of everything, things were beginning to look brighter. Yes, sir; if she can't qualify as a Grade 1 angel, then I claim they ought to amend the qualifications.

"They say you 'can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear' (Let's see—what is it they make this rayon stuff out of?). Anyway, I wouldn't expect anybody to make an R. N. out of a broken-legged bricklayer—not in three or four lessons, anyway. But before she got through with him I'll be switched if he didn't do a pretty fair job of nursing; at any rate between him and the little girl, with the nurse dropping in once or twice a day to keep things going straight, we got through it and the woman got well. No, sir,—with the transportation facilities we've got now, angels don't need wings any more.

"Well, this is the pneumonia season again and, if there's one thing more important than another, it's nursing service—and serum early and, of course, a good doctor. Anyhow, between all of us—the district state health officer, the welfare officer, the public health nurse and me—this year we've sort of got things planned out ahead of time. So, like Hookie Wood said the other day when the judge sent him up for four months: 'I ain't got to worry about *this* winter, anyway.'"

FRENCH HEELS

"Years ago, I knew a man—a successful lawyer, he was—that had some very positive ideas. He said to me once: 'Doc,' he said, 'if you want to make money practicing medicine, learn all there is to know about feet and set up as a specialist. Yes, sir; feet are mighty important and all you got to do is to look to see that they're at the bottom of a lot of things. Bad feet not only cause no end of pain and discomfort but they're even responsible for troubles in other parts of the body. Knowing that and then seeing the way a lot of feet get treated, it makes you wonder that folks get along as well as they do—some of 'em.

"You remember the story of Achilles: the only weak spot he had was his heel and that's what got him, eventually. They named a tendon after him—the one that runs from the calf muscle down to the heel—and it was very appropriate, because trouble with that tendon has knocked out a lot of people since Achilles' day. Those old Greeks, too, they used to go in considerable for beauty—and we're just beginning to realize, it seems, that some of their ideas were pretty sound. They used to figure that the foot was one of the most beautiful parts of the body. But there's one thing you notice, in all the old pictures and statues: their feet were just the way nature made 'em, with both ends so they'd set on the ground and toes that spread out the way they were intended to. What's more, they had feet that not only were worth looking at but that could be walked on—I mean by the people they belonged to.

"I suppose Nature could still turn out just as good a foot job as she ever did if we'd give her a chance. But, late years, she's had an awful lot to contend with, between polio cases being neglected and folks with distorted ideas of beauty—and so on. There's these things they call 'French heels': I suppose they've actually been responsible for more deformed feet than polio has—I mean the kind of deformity where this tendon of Achilles gets shortened so they can't get their heels down on the ground and have to walk around all the time on their toes. It's enough to make anybody want to start a revolution. Here of late we're getting fairly well caught up on the aftercare of polio but the deformities from shoes with high heels and narrow toes, they're still way ahead of us.

"I can see one big ray of hope for the future, though, and that's in the intelligence and independence of the 'rising generations.' It is not too much to hope that the average American woman will again develop a normal foot, good to look at as well as to walk on. When that time comes she will have a walk-away."



ANTIQUES AND IDEAS

"When I was a boy the women folks in my family were always looking forward to the time when they could afford to refurnish the house. 'There's that table,' my sister says, 'just look at it!' 'Why,' she says, 'it's *old*. I can't remember when it wasn't old. That mahogany stuff is all out of style. Everything now is black walnut.' So, finally, they had an auction. That gateleg table, as I remember it, sold for something like two dollars. A few years ago my sister was up for a visit and we got onto the subject of antiques. 'I don't know what I wouldn't give for some of the things we sold at that auction,' she says. 'There's that parlor table: *I can't remember when it wasn't old*. A piece like that,' she says, 'you can't buy it today for love or money.'

"Well, sir,—I've often thought: it's a good deal the same way with our ideas about things—I mean in medicine and public health and so on. We'll hold to one idea for years and see plenty of proof that it's sound; then some fellow comes along and starts a new 'school of thought'—and everything goes 'black walnut.' If you cling to any remnant of the old idea: 'Ha, ha. He's a back number.' They don't even want it up in the attic; got to have an auction—so everybody'll know it's been thrown out. Then years later we begin to discover that there was some pretty good stuff in the old idea, after all; and we wonder why we were quite so brash about junking it.

"For example, take this sunlight business. Forty-odd years ago, they were advising folks to protect their skin. Now they not only don't wear hats and parasols but—well, even the babies, they bake 'em brown on both sides and think it's all right so long as they do it in a 'slow oven.' But they're discovering, more and more, that too much of these chemical rays does serious damage. That's why nature rushes in the pigment: trying to keep 'em out. Now we're kind of sorry we didn't stow the old ideas away in the attic, instead of scrapping 'em completely. It's kind of embarrassing having it get out that we've been steering people wrong.

"There was a time when they laid all sorts of communicable diseases to the sun and moon and weather conditions and such things. Then bacteria were discovered and everything went 'black walnut.' Well; there's no question about the bacteria; they're here to stay—unfortunately—but, just the same, the relation between seasons and weather conditions and disease would stand more study than it's getting, the way it looks to me.

"Yes; that's one thing we're learning from the antique business: just because there's something newer don't mean the old stuff is all junk. If it was good in its day and comes back, the older it is the more valuable it is. So, whether it's on old piece of furniture or an old idea, it's safer to stow it away than to throw it away."

SPEAKING OF IDEAS

“What I said here awhile back about stowing away old ideas until we’re sure we won’t want ’em again, instead of throwing ’em away—I got a card from a doctor over in New Jersey quoting some scripture along the same line: ‘Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.’ There’s some more to it, though, that the way this doctor interprets it, sort of brings out the other side of the proposition: ‘Quench not the spirit. Despise not prophesyings.’ What he figures that means is not to be afraid to think new thoughts and not to despise the other fellow’s new ideas. That’s good sound advice, anyway. “Yes, sir; it’s awful hard for most of us to admit that a new idea’s any good—unless it happens to be our own. I suppose it’s that same old selfishness of ours. It’s at the bottom of most of our troubles and shortcomings.

“I was reading, awhile ago, what James Flexner wrote about Dr. Ephraim McDowell, down there in Kentucky. Back in 1809, when everybody that knew anything about it knew that ovarian tumors were bound to be fatal because abdomens couldn’t be opened, McDowell had a bad case and decided to try taking out the tumor. Back in the country, that was, before they had anesthetics. They were all set to string him up for murder—and might have if the woman hadn’t lived.

“Another fellow, along about 1873, when everybody knew that diphtheria came from smelling sewer gas, this doctor, he ‘prophesied’ that it was caused by some kind of a living body they couldn’t see: a germ, in other words. One of the leading medical journals had an editorial (an ‘idiotorial,’ the way it looks now) raking this fellow over the coals and telling how many kinds of a chump he was. And look at Pasteur and his rabies virus treatment; they certainly tried hard enough to ‘quench’ his spirit. Those are the fellows that keep us moving ahead—but it takes courage to stake a reputation on something everybody else knows isn’t so.

“Of course that don’t mean that every new idea is a good one, any more than ideas are wrong just because they’re old. Like Henry Smith said about his wife: she got a new idea about the way the furniture in the parlor ought to be arranged and Henry like to broke his back helping her move everything from where it was to where it wasn’t. After she’d looked it over a couple of minutes she says: ‘Henry, we’re going to put it all back where it was. I haven’t decided yet where I want it.’ Anyway, she had a chance to try out her idea—and from what Henry said, her spirit wasn’t quenched any. Besides, he said he intended to bowl that night, so he made a saving on the exercise. “What it sort of comes down to: any of us can get ideas on a corner but none of us can get a corner on ideas. The Hyde Park system is pretty good, I guess: if some fellow thinks he’s got an idea, give him a soap box and let him tell us about it.”

LOCAL LABORATORY SERVICE

"Awhile ago I was talking to one of our business men here about how we ought to have a county laboratory. 'Yeah,' he says, 'I suppose so. You doctors are always looking for something.' Well—that sort of got my goat. 'All right,' I said, 'supposin' we are. If the doctors ever put in a bill for the work they've done for people in this county they never got paid for,' I says, 'it would take more than a little laboratory service to square it.' And it would.

"But you know, it's a funny thing. That's the idea most everybody's got. If they set up a county laboratory they're going to be doing something for the doctors. Well, I claim it wouldn't hurt 'em any if they did. But the thing of it is, it ain't so. When a doctor sends a specimen to a laboratory, it's the patient and not the doctor that benefits. The doctor—he's just an agent in the matter.

"Like last winter, Mr. Van Regal—he's one of our bankers here—his grandson got pneumonia. Of course I had to get a specimen to a laboratory where they could 'type' the bugs before I could tell which kind of serum to give him and, in that stuff, every hour counts; the quicker they get it, the better. The old gentleman, he sets a lot of store by his grandson. When I told him the nearest laboratory was forty-five miles away and we'd have to wait 'til we could send a specimen there and get a report back, he couldn't understand why us doctors hadn't seen to it that there was one right here. The fact is, a year ago I tried to interest him in the county laboratory idea and it just went in one ear and out the other. But this time *his grandson's* life, maybe, was going to depend on quick service. That was a horse of a different color.

"Yes. You take it with all these things—whether it's a youngster with a sore throat, or a question of giving insulin in diabetes, or milk examinations or what not—we're the ones that take the specimens, because we know how and know when it's necessary; but the people themselves are the—what do you call it?—the 'ultimate beneficiaries.' "The laboratory—there's no question about it—it's the backbone of medicine and public health. The folks in any community that haven't got good laboratory service easily available, it's themselves they're cheating, not the doctors. And I said to one of 'em the other day, I said: 'There's just about three more of you hardshells that's got to find out from experience that delays in laboratory service hurt you and not me. Then,' I said, 'we'll get a county laboratory.' "

THE OFFICIAL HANDY MAN

"Last fall I went past one of these 'trading post' places you see around now and they had a sign out something like this: 'Anything you can't find a place for—bring to us. We take anything.' Well, sir; that's about the idea a lot of folks have about health departments: if you've got a problem that everybody else says nothing can be done about it, take it to the health officer.

"Like a man came in back in July—said his next door neighbors' chickens were running all over his garden and he wanted to make a complaint. 'Yeah,' I said, 'but where does the public health come in?' 'Well,' this fellow says, 'I'll show you where the *chickens* come in; the public health is *your job*.' So I spent twenty minutes explaining to him that, no matter how bad those chickens were for his garden, it had nothing to do with public health and so I or the board of health wouldn't have any jurisdiction. All the time he was sort of boiling away there, until he couldn't stand it any longer. 'My gosh, Doc!', he says, 'what's a health department *for*, anyway?'

"Well, not having the rest of the afternoon free, to answer his question, I made the mistake us health officers too often make; I said, 'Oh, all right, I'll see what I can do'—and I spent another hour later on persuading his neighbor to shut up his chickens, as a favor to me;—and it is a mistake, too, because—the people that won't take the trouble to find out what the health officer's job really is—it encourages 'em to keep on thinking that he's just the official handy man. If he spends his time doing their odd jobs—things that have nothing to do with health—he's going to neglect the really important things. Then everybody's got a legitimate kick. A health officer that really knows his job and does it, and has a living to make on the side, he can't afford to spend his time going around shutting people's chickens up or trying to settle neighborhood scraps. And, what's more, the lawyers have got to eat, too, haven't they?

"Yes, sir; you'd be surprised all the things folks expect the health officer to do: make their landlord turn on more heat; stop somebody's dog from barking; shut off a smell they don't like; take a dead cat out of the road that somebody's run over; in fact, they expect him to be everything from the garbage man and village cop to Santa Claus.

"Makes me think of the time Alonzo Dickey came before the board of health to complain because I hadn't made the trains stop blowing for the crossing back of his house. I explained there were two kinds of nuisances: public health nuisances, and public nuisances—those that are annoying but don't affect health. 'Doc,' the Mayor says, 'you're wrong. There's three kinds.' 'What do you mean,' I said 'three kinds?' 'Why,' the Mayor says, 'you overlooked Alonzo.'"

EXAGGERATION DON'T PAY

“Speaking of health information service, I was on a train, here awhile ago, going to a meeting and I struck up an acquaintance with a fellow that said he was in the advertising business. I happened to have a copy with me of this ‘Drink More Milk’ ad we’ve been running here in the local paper, so I showed it to him. It told how milk is the best food there is, cheap at any reasonable price—and about experiments where a lot of school kids that had extra milk every day—how they gained more height and weight than the others and had better scholarship—and so on. I thought it was pretty good, myself.

“Well, I saw right away he didn’t think much of it. He was diplomatic about it: he just read it and handed it back to me. All he said was ‘Uh huh.’ So I asked him what was wrong about it. ‘Well,’ he says, ‘let me show you.’ So he got out a pad and fixed up one himself. It had a sketch of a stylish looking young lady on it and the stuff he wrote—say!—if you didn’t know better you’d think any homely Dumb Dora, if she wanted to be a movie queen, all she’d got to do was drink a quart of milk a day. ‘Well,’ I said, ‘that’s a nice looking young lady, all right, but you don’t really believe that stuff, do you?’ ‘Oh,’ he says, ‘it’s more or less true.’ And it was: more or *less*. ‘I’ll tell you,’ he says, ‘it’s just like commercial advertising. You can’t expect to get anywhere,’ he says, ‘if you stick to facts. You’ve got to exaggerate a little.’

“I didn’t tell him this but it made me think of the old story about the fellow that went into the restaurant with the sign on it—‘The Kind of Coffee Mother Used to Make.’ He asked the waiter, he says: ‘Are you sure this coffee here is the kind mother used to make?’ The waiter said it sure was. ‘All right,’ he says, ‘give me tea.’ And that’s the way I feel about it: if that’s commercial advertising, I’ll stick to the truth. I may be a little old-fashioned but I figure it’s better business—in the long run, anyway.

“Yes. It’s awful easy, when you’re full of enthusiasm for some new project—it’s like putting the biggest apples on the top of the basket—when you’re anxious to make a sale, it’s a temptation to put all the arguments for it on the top and sort of stick the objections down at the bottom, out of sight. But it don’t pay. You don’t have to sell a community more’n about one gold brick and the next time you show up you’re liable to have the dog set on you before you get past the front gate.”

PUBLIC HEALTH IS PURCHASABLE

“That slogan of the State Health Department’s? Well, ‘public health is purchasable,’ all right. Sure. But it can’t be got hanging around waiting for bargain days—or anything like that. There’s exceptions to every rule but, taking it by and large, you get just what you pay for. If you pay for shoddy, you get shoddy. A community that’s big enough to afford an efficient health outfit to lead the way—like in a city or a county—all that’s necessary is for the people and the officials in it to get to realize what public health is worth to ’em and want it bad enough to go and get it. The first thing for ’em to ‘purchase’ is a well-trained and experienced health officer—and that means trained and experienced in public health, not in politics. Then let him lay out the rest of the program for ’em.

“The way I look at it, high pressure salesmanship don’t pay—not in this line. The value of public health is something that’s growing on people year by year. I believe in giving ’em the facts—not dressed up to look like something they ain’t but good, plain, honest facts—and keeping them before ’em, for that matter—then letting nature take its course. It’s better to have ’em convinced, even if it takes a little longer. And I’m here to tell you that the facts—what good health work can do for a community, and what lack of it can do and has done—they don’t need any dressing up; they’re plenty convincing without it.

“‘Within natural limitations,’ this slogan says, ‘any community can determine its own death rate.’ I was at a school meeting one time—got there late—and a man up front got up and said something. Fellow sitting side of me says: ‘That’s a good idea. Who is that? The fellow next to him says: ‘Oh, that’s only Seth Wilkins.’ Then they both laughed. Well—in that case being Seth Wilkins was a ‘natural limitation.’ But, of course, what it really means is: you can’t ‘unscrew the unscrutable,’ as the old colored minister said. For instance, you can’t keep people from dying of old age—although our ideas are gradually changing about where the old age line ought to be drawn. Did you read in the papers, here lately, about the doctor eighty-two years old that’s still doing business—and runs three miles a day for exercise? I wouldn’t advise any of the eighty-year-olds around here to start trying that three-mile stuff though.

“The ‘death rate’ of a community means the number of people that die in it each year per thousand of population. That’s kind of technical, especially when you live in a small place. When you say the death rate is so-and-so it don’t register with most people. It might make more impression if we talked about the people that are kept alive.

“That slogan, though—it expresses an idea and the idea is that if any community wants the most valuable asset it can possibly have—community health—and wants it bad enough to work for it and pay for it, it’s to be had.”

THE SEVEN DWARFS

"When I was up to the city, here awhile ago, I went and saw this new Walt Disney movie—you know: 'Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs'? Of course, I had other business up there; and, even if I hadn't, isn't a doctor ever supposed—well, anyway, I saw it and it's all it's cracked up to be, outside of just one thing. Yes, sir, it's a wonderful picture. I didn't expect to ever live to see a fairy story come to life right before my eyes—but that's about what it does.

"Those seven little dwarfs, there—you know 'Snow White,' she supposed they were children 'til they got out in sight—and I'll never forget how surprised she looked. 'Why,' she says, 'they're little *men*!' Of course, I've known women, before now, that when they got better acquainted with the 'little men,' or big men—whichever it happened to be—they've tied up to, they've discovered that they were really overgrown children.

"I don't suppose they had any psychologists in that long list of names on the front. They run 'em so fast you can't read 'em all. But, anyway, whether they did or not those seven little dwarfs, they're pretty typical, some ways, of a lot of men: they look like men and never think of themselves as anything else but they think and act, a lot of the time, like children. Take the fellow that, when something goes wrong on the job, he goes home to supper and complains about the food and pouts and sulks until his wife coddles him into being good-natured—if he's got that kind of a wife. Another one, he's always looking for a chance to make an impression on the boss—he wants to be the favorite child. Then there's the fellow that struts around acting important, trying to show other people what a big man he is—and the more doubtful he is about it, himself, the more he struts. Still another is always getting something the matter with him; what he wants is sympathy—and so on. The trouble is, our bodies and our intellects grow up, sometimes, faster'n our feelings and emotions do.

"But this picture—there's just one bad thing about it; it ought to be just the one for children to see—but it isn't, not for young ones, anyway. That witch scene, there in the dungeon: it's art, all right and it won't hurt grown-ups, even if they do go home and dream about it; but all those horrors—it isn't the kind of stuff for the little ones. It was bad enough in the original story. Why, right back of me, there was a mother—I heard her say: 'Don't be afraid, dear. It's only make believe.' But she couldn't make him believe that. Things like that, sometimes, they make a lasting impression. Yes, sir; there are adults—any number of 'em—that are suffering from neuroses today that some impression like that in childhood has had a lot to do with. No; I'd say twelve years would be a reasonable age limit.

"I wouldn't have missed seeing it, myself, but the next one Walt Disney makes, I hope they'll keep the little folks in mind, as well as the grown-up children."

THOUGHTS LOCKED IN

"You remember there in Pinafore, that song of little Buttercup's: 'Things are seldom what they seem; skim milk masquerades for cream'—and so on? Well, sir—there's more truth than poetry in that—applied right to our every-day life: the reasons we say and do things, a lot of times, they aren't what we think they are, at all.

"It seems we've got kind of a funny hook-up in our mental system. We've got two minds, as you might say, working at the same time. One is doing the thinking we think we're doing. The other is chuck full of memories and thoughts—millions of 'em—we're entirely unconscious of except when one comes to the top now and then or as you see the results of 'em, when you're acquainted with the signs. They began accumulating there from the day we were born—and even before. In fact a large part of 'em are put there in early childhood, when the mind is most open to impressions, and they influence our thinking and acting—a lot of 'em do—for better or for worse, as the minister says.

"For instance, here's a fairly common sort of experience: for years I disliked a certain shade of dark green. I put on a necktie that color somebody gave me, and went home before night and took it off; it made me so uncomfortable, almost sick to my stomach. Then one day, all of a sudden, an old memory came to the top. When I couldn't have been more than four years old, a woman used to help take care of me. When she held me on her lap, her breath was so bad I wanted to get away. She had a dress just that color and, all those years, without my being conscious of the reason, that shade of green was associated with something unpleasant. When I saw the explanation, then I got over feeling that way.

"Things that happen that give a youngster a bad scare, or thoughts that seem wicked to him, like hating his father or mother when they've punished him for something (and don't think for a moment such things don't happen), the worse they seem, the more apt they are to be shoved out of consciousness, 'repressed.' They appear to be completely forgotten. Actually they're locked up in some mental 'dungeon cell,' shaking the doors and yelling to get out, while a sort of a mental prison guard is standing over 'em trying to keep 'em from getting loose. It's that sort of thing going on that's responsible for a lot of the neurotics—the cases of 'nervous breakdown.'

"Thoughts and impressions that are out in the open, where we can look 'em over, they may be unpleasant and all that but they aren't likely to cause trouble—not neuroses anyway. It's the ones that are locked in, where you can feel the rattling and the conflict but don't know what it comes from. Of course the best thing—it isn't easy but there's ways of doing it in some cases—is to explore this unconscious mind and let these locked-in ideas out and give 'em a hearing. The way Saint John puts it: ' . . . Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.'"

REGULATION CAN BE OVER-DONE

"A friend of mine's got a car he used to have trouble starting in cold weather. Still he followed the directions in the instruction book to the letter. One thing they had there in italics: 'Never pump on the starter pedal.' One time he was telling some mechanic's helper in the service station about it and this fellow says: 'Well—do you pump on the starter pedal?' They couldn't catch him that way, so he said: 'No, it was against the rules.' 'Yeah, I know,' this fellow says, 'but next time you try it.' He never had any trouble starting after that. The only way I could figure it out was that maybe, some time, they made a car that started the way the book said and the car was changed but the rule wasn't.

"I've seen some health regulations, before now, that I wonder if they didn't happen about the same way. Some fellow that was supposed to know a lot about it wrote 'em—no telling how long ago—and a board that didn't claim to know much about it adopted 'em. Then others copied 'em until, finally, they were in effect in so many places that most everybody assumed they must be all right, even if nobody could think of any good reason for their ever being adopted.

"You know, it's one of the traits of human nature—especially if we had to walk pretty straight when we were youngsters—we don't like restrictions ourselves but we like to have a hand in making other folks toe the mark. So when we get in a position to do it, it's sort of a natural tendency to begin looking around trying to find something to regulate. Some fellow discovers that there's no law or regulation that says you have to wipe your feet before you go in the house, so he sits down and writes one. If somebody questions it, he says: 'Well, do you think people ought to walk on clean floors with dirty feet? Then how can any reasonable person object to it?' Still, I always felt it would be kind of nice to have a few things you could do or not do, just because you wanted to.

"Laws and regulations are supposed to be for the protection of the public—not just to make somebody do something. The way it looks to me, every regulation we can't give some good reason for—can't produce some evidence that it's necessary and accomplishes some good—it ought to be crossed off. It might be a good thing to have some kind of a jury of experts that we'd have to go before, every now and then, and defend 'em. And maybe we ought to limit regulations the way they do membership in some clubs: not put on a new one 'til we could cross off one to make room for it. I suppose we'd be kind of lost without any regulations—we're so used to 'em—but there's more danger of having too many than not enough. It's some like old Judge Kinney said when he had the fellow up for bigamy: 'It's better for most men to marry,' he says, 'although there's no law that compels it. But,' he says, 'three wives at one time is too many. A man with that many, even if he hasn't violated any law, ought to be put away for his own protection.'"

BUILDING TEETH

"This survey the Public Health Service made awhile ago—I saw by the paper they found out that one out of every five people never'd been to a dentist. Well, of course, there's now and then somebody that can get along without a dentist. I knew one fellow eighty years old that never'd lost a tooth or had one filled, but they're pretty rare. It just meant that when his teeth were built they put good stuff in 'em. There's others—well, as Peleg Bartlett said about one of his neighbors over there—Peleg says: 'I've washed my hands of trying to help him. He's so pig-headed you can't learn him nothin'.'

"The ones I'm concerned about chiefly, though, are the children—not only now but the next generation. Folks are getting more and more to realize the importance of taking their children to the dentist right from the time they're able to toddle. What they don't seem to understand though, a lot of 'em, is that the dentist can't *make* good teeth for 'em; all he can do is help 'em take care of the ones they've got. The building of their teeth starts way back before they're born. It's the mother that has to furnish the material to build 'em out of and if the stuff ain't there—well, they just can't have sound teeth, that's all, no matter what the dentist does.

"Anybody that's been raised in the country knows that spring and summer calves usually do better than those born in the fall and winter. They know, too—some of 'em do, anyway—that it has something to do with fresh green food being plentiful then. The explanation is that this green stuff furnishes the cows with minerals and vitamins that go into their milk and especially into the milk fat—that is some of the vitamins.

"By the same token the best time for a baby to be born is early summer, too. The mother needs plenty of green vegetables and butter-fat, especially in the last couple of months of pregnancy, when the enamel is being put on the first teeth and the second set are under construction. She needs 'em, too, when she's nursing the baby, because right after birth the enamel job on the permanent teeth is started. Then by the end of six months the tooth-building job is practically finished and they're ready for delivery. If they aren't right when they're delivered there's no taking 'em back. They're stuck with 'em for life—or as long as they last.

"I heard about a fellow, the other day, that when his mother-in-law's will was read, she left him her false teeth. That was kind of pointed but, at that, I don't think it was as bad as starting a youngster out in life with two bad sets of natural teeth."

THE BIRTH OF A BABY

“Well—the birth of a baby seems to be quite a novelty, judging from the commotion over those pictures. It’s kind of funny, too, when you stop to think that everybody on the face of the earth has been born at one time or another. You’d think it would be such an old story that nobody’d even bother to look at ’em.

“I don’t know how many times I’ve heard folks say that one of the advantages of having youngsters grow up on a farm was that you didn’t have to give ’em any of this tommyrot about the stork bringing babies, the doctor bringing ’em in his satchel and all that—they didn’t put it just that way but that’s what they meant—because they just learned naturally by seeing things being born. You try any of this stork stuff on a farm kid and he’s liable to give you the ‘Ha-ha.’ He knows better. He’s seen life as it really is and there isn’t any mystery about it.

“You know how they always figure—a lot of folks—that city youngsters are more sophisticated than their country cousins; I don’t know whether they get that magazine much back on the farms but I’d like to bet, if they do, those pictures weren’t half so much of a sensation back there as they were in the big towns. It seems to be all right, the way some folks look at it, for youngsters to see pictures of gangsters mowing down folks with machine guns and all sorts of suggestive stuff but for ’em to see a clean picture showing an age-old natural process—the one that brought us all into the world—nothing attractive or alluring about it but true to life—and that’s shocking. Makes me think of what one of the youngsters down here said. He had a tear in his breeches and his mother was scolding him for going around with it. ‘Well, gee, Mom!’ he says, ‘ain’t everybody got skin?’

“No, I don’t see anything to get excited about, myself. It’d be better for everybody, the way it looks to me, if they’d started taking the mystery and the nonsense out of childbirth a hundred years ago, instead of waiting ’til 1938. If they had we wouldn’t be having all this trouble making prospective mothers see the necessity of going to their doctors ahead of time for check-ups—and prospective fathers, too, for that matter—and I’ve got an idea maybe our maternal death rate wouldn’t be as high as it is, either. This ‘Sweet Mystery of Life’ stuff—it sounds awful nice in a song, but a lot of the ‘mystery’ is just plain ignorance.”

WASSERMANN TESTS AND EMPLOYMENT

"Up in the city, here awhile back, the chief of police (he was raised down here in our place) they'd been having an examination to fill some places on the force and one of the most promising applicants—his Wassermann test was positive. The question came up right away whether they ought to turn him down or put him on. He admitted he'd had syphilis, this fellow did, but he'd been taking treatments for something like six months. That same question—I suppose it comes up a lot of times when folks are looking for jobs. He asked me—the chief did—what I thought about it. When I said 'I'd put him on,' it seemed to sort of surprise him.

"Well, when you stop to think of it, why shouldn't they? Here was a husky young fellow—he'd been under treatment right from the start, before any permanent damage had been done. His condition wasn't infectious and it wasn't going to be, providing he kept up his treatment 'til he was cured—and, of course, they were in a position to see that he did. There was no reason why he wouldn't make a perfectly good cop and last just as long as any of 'em.

"Then you take folks working in restaurants and such places—food handlers. In some towns they have regulations that they've got to have Wassermann tests. Of course it's a good thing for *anybody* to have the test, for that matter, but the main trouble with such a regulation is—when they get a positive reaction they seem to think, a lot of 'em, they ought to take 'em away from their job. Well—there's just about as much danger of getting syphilis through food as there is fracturing your skull falling over a splinter from somebody's wooden leg—if you can figure that out. I said something like that to one man awhile ago and he said, 'All right—would you like to think your food was being handled by somebody that had syphilis?' Well, for that matter I wouldn't like to think of its being handled by a lot of 'em that haven't got syphilis, either. The ones to worry about are the ones where there's some real danger—like typhoid carriers, and so on.

"No. There's people working all around us that have syphilis and sometimes even they themselves don't know they've got it. Everybody ought to have a Wassermann test for his own protection—and his children's—but we can't expect 'em to warm up to the idea if they're liable to lose their job as a result of it. What we want to do is get 'em under treatment—those that need it—before serious damage has been done. The syphilis cases that are infectious, if they spread the disease it's pretty safe to say it won't be by working at their jobs."

TIME OUT FOR THINKING

"The other day a fellow in a big car pulled up to the curb and rammed on his brakes—wanted to know if he was on the right road to New York. The fact was he was going right in the opposite direction. So I told him he just passed a big sign, four or five miles back, that pointed the other way. 'That so?' he says, 'I noticed a sign back there but I didn't have time to look at it.' That's the way with a lot of folks these days; they've got such important business somewhere and they're in such a hurry to get there, they can't take time to stop and find out whether that's where they're going or not.

"Makes me think of the time Gabe Turner was running to a fire in the next block. Gabe was no great sprouts as a sprinter but, at that, he could run a lot faster'n he could think. Somebody hollered and says: 'Hey, Gabe, where's the fire?' Gabe stopped and looked kind of annoyed. 'I ain't-got-time—to tell you,' he says, and he started running again.

"That old saying—'more haste, less speed'—I always figured there was considerable in that. I'm thinking right now of a fellow—he was the head of a business concern—a regular go-getter. On the go, he was, from early morning 'til late at night. I used to tell him he ought to take time to set down, now and then, and 'unlax,' as Andy says, and get acquainted with himself and his family. 'Yeah, I know,' he says, 'but gosh, Doc, I've got too much at stake. I can't afford to stop.' Well, he stopped, all right. He cracked up, finally—got a 'nervous breakdown'—and there was a whole year he didn't do anything at all. I know another one that's headed the same way. It don't pay to try to set the world afire and burn yourself up doing it.

"When you get right down to it, there's mighty few jobs that wouldn't be better done if we took time off to give 'em a little thought. If we're going somewhere we ain't been before, we're liable to get there sooner and in better shape if we take time to get air in our tires and see't we've got plenty of gas—and sort of set down and take a look at the map before we start—and so on.

"I've often thought—it'd be a good idea if folks—I mean 'specially those that have important jobs to do, if they'd set aside maybe half an hour every day just for thinking—thinking where it is they're heading and why; whether they're on the right road and what they're going to do when they get there. Like the poet said:

'Half the trouble that we see,
Trouble brewed for you and me,
Probably would never be
If we'd think.'

WHAT IMAGINATION WILL DO

"Here awhile ago the State Medical Journal told about some old fellow that said he attributed his good health and long life to being born before disease germs were discovered. Well, I don't suppose not knowing there was burglars around would keep your house from being robbed. I'm afraid the old gentleman's theory won't hold water. Germs haven't been discovered *yet*, so far as some people are concerned, but they're going to die young from diseases caused by 'em. I presume the real answer was his constitution was so good—this old fellow—the germs just couldn't get any foothold.

"Same time, though, there's no doubt but what there's a lot of folks that'd be better off if they could forget about germs. Their worrying about what the germs'll do to 'em does more harm than the germs themselves would a lot of times. Like the fellow said about his mother-in-law. Back when automobiles first came around he had her out with the horse and buggy—this fellow did—and they met one. He was trying to handle the horse with one hand and hold his mother-in-law on the seat with the other. Some fellow came out and wanted to know if he should lead the horse by. 'No,' he says, 'If you'll lead the old lady by, I can handle the horse.'

"Yes, sir. It's remarkable what imagination will do. Why, a doctor from the State Health Department told me, once, how he went out to Salamanca, during the flu epidemic back in 1918. The temporary hospital they'd rigged up was full—the doctors were way behind and he was there to sort of help 'em out. A little while after he got there he began to feel kind of chilly and so on, so he went back to the hotel and washed off his thermometer and took his temperature and the thermometer read 105°. Well—he thought how far he was from home and there wasn't any chance of getting a doctor—and him feeling worse all the time—so he got into bed and prepared to die. After he'd laid there a few minutes he began to feel better, so he decided he'd take his temperature again. That time it was normal. He went in the bathroom to wash it off and then he discovered he'd washed it the first time under the hot water spout. So he got dressed and went back to work.

"Yes, you can make people sick by telling 'em, often enough, how bad they look. And one of the best ways I know to keep well, outside of having a doctor check you up once in a while, is to cultivate the idea of *being well*."

WHY THE FLY?

"That story about Nelson Eddy losing his voice at the concert over in Syracuse—I read in the paper here lately—that certainly was a new one on me. Right'n the middle of a song, so they claim, he took a deep breath and all of a sudden he couldn't make a sound. All he could do was gasp. Of course he had visions of his voice being gone forever—and all that. He got off the stage as quick as he could and a coughing spell hit him—and he *coughed up a fly*. Then he went back and explained to the audience—and sung 'em the 'Flea song.' That was getting even with the fly, all right.

"You know—it's kind of funny but just a couple of days before that somebody discovered a fly here in Utopia and, before they could swat it, it got away. Of course I've heard of flies being carried from one place to another in automobiles and so on—but I guess there's nothing to it. I wondered, though, why they'd have 'em—flies, that is—in a place like Syracuse.

"Speaking of swatting flies, I read the other day about a fellow being condemned to death for swatting three of 'em on top of his head. That was in the *Ohio Health News*, so I suppose it's authentic. Lysippus, the fellow's name was. He was attending a dinner at the Emperor's palace, along about 442 A. D. He stood those flies as long as he could—then he socked 'em. It seems the Emperor's wife—name was Eduocia—she'd given orders that flies were to be protected. She was quite an observer, this lady was, and she'd noticed that wherever there was filth there was always flies; so she concluded they must be scavengers, working for the good of mankind.

"I guess that's what you'd call an 'uncontrolled observation.' She wasn't the first one that ever jumped to the wrong conclusion—or the last one, either. Of course the fact of it was the flies hatched out in the filth—or they wouldn't have been there. And their habits haven't changed any since. All you got to do is have a little decaying organic matter lying around and there'll be plenty of 'em. Some fellow said the fly was a friend of man because, knowing they carry germs on their feet and breed in filth, it leads us to clean up our premises. That's fine—if it does.

"Ed Pettingill was telling me, one day, what a record one of his hens had made: an egg a day for I don't know how many months. I told him that wasn't anything to brag of; a fly could lay 150 eggs at one laying and they hatched out and grew up in twelve days without even having to be sat on. Since we've been keeping things cleaned up, though, we don't have 'em any more—that is relatively speaking."

"FIFTY YEARS A COUNTRY DOCTOR"*

"This new book of Doctor Macartney's 'Fifty Years a Country Doctor,' I was glad to see it got a good sendoff, because I hope a lot of folks'll read it—doctors along with the rest. It ought to be good for what ails us. We've been getting so all kind of het up over socialized medicine and inadequacy of medical care and one thing and another, it won't hurt us a bit to sit down with this fine old country doctor and 'unlax' and sort of get our feet on the ground again. I figure we need to have our memories refreshed, a lot of us, on the importance of human relationships in medicine.

"You know, there's a good many people—I find they've got the idea, somehow, that doctors have changed, that they aren't so human as they used to be—or something. They think back to the family doctors that took care of 'em when they were kids—used to fish peppermint candy out of their coat-tail pockets and tell 'em funny stories and all that and, somehow, there's something missing. I don't know how many times I've heard 'em say, like one fellow put in, not long ago: 'The old doc,' he says, 'maybe he wasn't so scientific as the doctors are today but, just the same,' he says, 'I used to begin to feel better as soon as he came in the door.'

"I guess probably it's our fault, mostly, people getting that idea. Medicine's kept getting more and more scientific and it takes longer to prepare for it. We get to depend more and more on hospitals and laboratories and instruments of precision, as they call 'em, and somehow personality and the human side of it—they've kind of got shoved into the back seat. Then, of course, these modern generations, they expect their doctors to be in keeping with the times and if they ain't streamlined and got all the latest gadgets they think they ought to be traded in for a new model.

"Well, sir, when you get right down to it, a doctor no matter how scientific he is or how skillful, if he can't tune in with human nature and if he hasn't got the personality to inspire confidence and courage, he's working at a big disadvantage. Whether it's getting sick or getting well, the mind figures in it just as much as the body does. A steam shovel—it'll dig a perfectly good hole but it takes something more'n a human machine to pull a fellow *out* of a hole when he's sick in mind and body. Plenty of times folks need the doctor's personality more'n they do his pills.

"Specialists and group medicine and so on—they're fine in their place—that is, when they're good—but they'll never take the place of the 'family doctor.' And any system of practice that don't allow for the personal relationship between doctor and patient it won't stand up—not if I'm any judge."

* Dr. William M. Macartney died on June 15, 1940.

HELL ON WHEELS

"Back when I was a young fellow—I haven't heard it in a long time, but they used to have an expression 'Hell on wheels'. That was along about the time bicycles had got down where you didn't need a step-ladder to get on 'em and a parachute to get off with, and the younger element were all riding the new 'safeties'—and some of the old folks, too. The boys—they all aspired to be racers and when a bunch of 'em came tearing down the sidewalk ten or twelve miles an hour, the pedestrians—if they weren't handy on their feet they were liable to lose some of their bark—if nothing more. I suppose, maybe, that's where the expression 'Hell on wheels' came from.

"Anyway, the pedestrians—they thought they were getting a bad break back in those days, some of 'em did, but—Boy!—they ought to see 'em now after they've been run over by an automobile. Yes, sir—it's got so 'Hell on wheels' really means something. You take a lot of selfish and rattled headed drivers, dashing around on public highways in cars that'll run faster'n trains used to—and that just about describes it. For a dog, they say being hit by an automobile, now, is a 'natural death'—according to the International Classification, or whatever it is. It will be for folks, too, before long, unless some of the people driving cars get over being roadhogs and get so they'll give the other fellow the benefit of the doubt once in a while. Of course the main trouble is there's some hog in most of us and there's nothing like driving or dodging automobiles to bring it out.

"But—I never saw anything yet that didn't have more'n one side to it. Down in New York, that's famous for the way they handle their traffic, I've often noticed: they make the cars all stop when the light's against 'em but when they're supposed to have the right of way, the pedestrians are dodging in and out like a herd of greased pigs. One fellow that was starting to dash across in front of a bunch of taxis—a big cop grabbed him: 'Wait a minute,' he says, 'if you want to get killed here's a truck coming that'll do a better job.' Down there, if a pedestrian stops when the light's against him they think he's from Syracuse—or somewhere. 'Pigs is pigs,' whether they're on foot or on wheels. Out on Long Island even the hens have learned not to run across the road in front of a car. Pedestrians ought to be able to learn, if a hen can."



THE HANDS THAT ROCK THE CRADLES

"Maybe you noticed that article in the July *Good Housekeeping*: 'Should Women Take Over the World?' The lady that wrote that allowed they should. 'The men,' she says, 'have had plenty of time to demonstrate what they could do and they've demonstrated it by making a mess of things.' Then she goes on to explain, item by item, why women are better fitted than men are for handling the job. Well, sir; I never had much success arguing with a woman, not even when she's wrong; and this time, much as I hate to admit it, I think she's right. In fact, I expect the only reason us men ever got away with this 'better half' stuff was that the women figured it would work like the gas in a balloon: it would keep us looking and feeling big and, at the same time, up where we wouldn't be getting under foot.

"But it's some like Henry Smith said about running his business. He said he knew his wife had a better business head than he did—but, if he let her move in and take charge, then where'd *he* be? 'With her help,' Henry says, 'I can bluff it out as a business man; but,' he says 'as a housewife my rating'd be nothing minus a hundred.' And that's the thing of it: the homes and families. In the long run it'll make more difference what kind of homes we have and what kind of children we're raising than it will who happens to be sitting in the seats of the mighty at any particular time. One way to make the world better is to have better people in it. The children we're raising today will be the people that'll be running the world tomorrow. Most of the character building is done in the first five or six years of life. When better bodies and characters are built, the parents will build 'em. We need the influence of good women in the world but where it's needed first and foremost is in the home.

"No. The old fallacies that it wasn't feminine to have brains and use 'em and that women shouldn't have any voice anywhere but in the home—they've gone the way of Mother Hubbards and Congress gaiters. Votes for women have dispelled the illusion about masculine superiority. The hands that rock the cradles can rock the seats of the mighty if the occasion arises.

"But the way I figure it, whether it's running a home or running the world—it ain't a woman's job or a man's job alone. It ought to be a partnership affair. Male or female, it's sympathetic understanding and common sense and honesty and unselfishness that make good parents and it's those same qualities that go to make good citizens and good public officials. The best way to 'take over the world' is to look after the children: see't they grow up with normal bodies and a healthy outlook on life—and in the meantime do the best we can with our votes and influence—male or female."

THE FAT OF THE LAND

"You know, I wonder how long it's going to be before the over-weights get wise to these advertising fat-cure fellows: 'living on the fat of the land'—the A. M. A. Journal says about 'em. Back in the old days when you had to be plump to get your picture on a cigarette card, I suppose these birds had to work some other game. In fact one of 'em I read about, before he went into the reducing line—they said he'd worked another game so hard he got reduced himself to confinement in jail for a little matter of eight months. But later on the dressmakers, they decided to change to slender models, so the women had to make themselves over to fit the new style dresses. When they hung out the fat's-off sign, fortune favored the fakers, as you might say.

"I read one pretty good one: a thin man connected with one of the investigating agencies wrote a letter to one of these advertising concerns, asking for their literature and signed it "Miss" Somebody or other. He got the literature and along with it a letter that said all you've got to do is take our dope and 'the new and bewildering grace of youth will steal as if by magic over your entire form.' That certainly was an inducement to a skinny guy of forty, especially seeing they'd send him thirty cents worth of this stuff for only twenty dollars.

"All this might be funny if it wasn't so serious. Just getting taken in by a skin game—folks usually get over that. It's the dangerous stuff they send out—some of 'em: things a competent physician, with a patient right under his observation, would give with extreme caution, if at all. Thyroid extract, that's one of 'em. It'll take off weight, all right, if you get enough of it. All you got to do is see somebody with exophthalmic goiter to know that—and also to understand why that isn't the kind of stuff to be monkeyed with.

"But one of the worst of 'em is some stuff—the chemical name of one of 'em is dinitrophenol. In fact, what got me started on this was something I just read in a medical journal. Ordinarily this stuff is used in making explosives—and, the way it looks to me, it's liable to cause some explosions if they keep on selling it for reducing purposes. Anyway, what I started to say: according to this article, there's a preparation that comes in capsules—that's sold, or was anyway—right here in this state, that apparently's got one of these combinations in it; doctors from several different parts of the country reported cases of cataracts that came on after they were supposed to have taken this stuff. One woman, according to the report, developed cataracts and, inside of twelve days, was totally blind in both eyes.

"Yes, sir. Looking at it more ways than one: 'Eyes have they but they see not.'"

DAMAGE SUITS

"Here late years it's got to be kind of a popular stunt, this giving awards for one thing and another: the best motion picture performance of the year, Miss America—and all that. There's one of 'em I've been considerably interested in: the one to the person that's done the most for public health. Whoever it is that's done the judging, I haven't any criticism of their selections. There's one fellow, though, that I claim ought to have been considered but probably wasn't and that's the guy that won the first damage suit for getting typhoid fever from a public water supply. Maybe he didn't fire the gun that was heard around the world but it wasn't long before an awful lot of municipal officials were beginning to get the echoes from that case.

"Back some years ago I was on the village board here for awhile and I discovered then that if there was one thing municipal officials didn't like most it was damage suits, where there was some question of negligence. In those days it usually was somebody that fell over a bad place in the sidewalk or something or other, thereby not only losing his standing but suffering physical and mental anguish and being deprived of his services and so on—you know: all this stuff the lawyers put in to make it legal. And the first question that always came up: did the officials know about this bad spot or what not? If they did and hadn't done anything about it, that was bad, right at the start. The worst of it was: it wasn't only the village but the officials themselves might be personally liable.

Well—since this fellow got the precedent established—fired the first gun, as you might say—the idea has sort of spread. They don't limit it, any more, to suing municipalities. There was that case out West there where the fellow got the judgment for getting undulant fever from milk. And just lately, where several people staying at one of these resort places got sick and claimed it was the water—I heard some of 'em had started suits against the proprietor.

"It's a wonder some of the lawyers hadn't got the idea before. There wasn't anything new about the principle that where somebody's responsible for seeing that certain things are done to make milk and water and food safe and they aren't done, there's a liability somewhere if damage results. You don't have to be a lawyer to see that's just plain common sense.

"What that fellow did—that first one there—a considerable number of folks, official and otherwise, that had responsibilities but had kind of dozed off and forgotten about 'em, he stuck a pin in 'em, so to speak: woke 'em up and got 'em stirring again—thereby benefiting the public health no end. Maybe the heart, like Webster is, 'is the spring of all our actions and purposes' but it appears the surest way to release the spring is to touch the pocketbook."

GASTROENTERITIS

"The other day one of the folks here that reads HEALTH NEWS—I met him on the street and he'd been reading about some of these gastroenteritis outbreaks; he wanted to know what this 'new disease' was. When I said it wasn't a new disease he was all set for an argument. 'Why,' he says, 'five outbreaks of it were reported inside of seven days, according to the Health Department. And up until the last few years I never heard of such a thing.' I told him he made me think of the time Henry Smith had it and I gave him a prescription for eight ounces of oleum ricini. A little later Henry called me up: 'Doc,' he says, 'I think that druggist made a mistake. You remember,' he says, 'what you wrote in that recipe you gave me—oleum something or other, with some kind of a sign after it?' I said I did. 'Well, sir—by gum!' Henry says, 'all he gave me was half a pint of castor oil.' No, whether you call it gastroenteritis or summer complaint or mollygrables or what not, there's nothing new about it. But giving it its medical name sort of dresses it up and makes it look new—like simonizing a car.

"The thing that *is* new about it, though, comparatively so, is our finding out that it occurs in outbreaks and what it comes from. We used to just take it as a matter of course: about so many babies had to die every year from summer complaint and the pneumonia and stuff that went with it. Along the latter part of the summer most of the grown-ups expected to be afflicted with it more or less; we laid it to the corn and cucumbers getting ripe and the water getting low and so on. Now we know there's always a definite cause for it: bacteria or a poison of some kind. When we started looking into it instead of taking it for granted, we found out we were just having one epidemic after another—same as we used to with diphtheria and typhoid fever. So, then, the State began requiring health officers to report when there was any unusual number of cases of stomach and intestinal disturbances. That's when folks began hearing about 'gastroenteritis.'

"The main thing, of course, is preventing it. We're doing fairly well with the little babies. Cleaning up the milk and pasteurizing it—where it's been done the infant death rate from diarrheal diseases has gone down like a flight of stairs. But it looks like we're kind of backward so far as the older ones are concerned: drinking polluted water without any treatment; raw milk from cows with udder disease, when a few cents more'd buy good, safe milk; leaving meat and such stuff in a warm place overnight; custard-filled pastries—and so on and so forth. Talking about it don't seem to get us far. I guess we're some like that houn' dog: he was howling because he was setting on a sand burr and was too lazy to get up."

THIS CARRIER BUSINESS

"You remember, just lately, we were talking about gastroenteritis—summer complaint, cholera morbus, whatever name you prefer. As Henry Smith said: he didn't give a hang what I called it, so long as I gave him something to get rid of it. Well, what I was going to say: it isn't dangerous in itself, not ordinarily—but there's times when it's sort of an advance agent, as you might say, for a disease that is dangerous and that's typhoid fever.

"When there's an outbreak of intestinal trouble from polluted water, it's usually a question for the next two or three weeks whether there's going to be typhoid cases following it. It's quite liable to be intestinal germs the water's polluted with and there's always the possibility some of 'em might have come from a typhoid carrier—somebody, that is, that's had typhoid fever some time and got over it but's still carrying the bugs. And, of course—it isn't a pleasant thought to meditate on but there's only one way to get typhoid fever and that's to swallow typhoid germs from the discharges of another person that's infected with 'em. Mostly it's where the discharges have gotten into drinking water or the carrier gets 'em on his hands and then handles milk or some other food.

"It's a peculiar thing—this carrier business. The folks that get typhoid fever—around three per cent of those that pull through, they go right on harboring the germs, maybe for life. Sometimes they'll only discharge 'em once in a while—like when they have an intestinal upset or something that kind of sets 'em loose. Of course they can't feel these germs or see 'em, so the first they know they're carriers, a lot of times, is when an epidemic gets traced to 'em. After they're once discovered, they're kept under observation, the carriers are, and they keep 'em away from handling food and so on. The State's got something like four hundred of 'em on their calling list, so I hear. Those aren't the ones that are most dangerous, though; it's the ones we *don't* know about.

"There's been a big improvement since I started in: treating the water supplies, pasteurizing milk, folks learning to be more careful where and what they eat and drink—there aren't more'n about a twentieth as many deaths from it as there were thirty years ago, and there's young doctors today that have never seen a case. In fact, there's some that claim what we've got now is an irreducible minimum—'residual typhoid,' they call it. But, considering where we get typhoid, if we can't get rid of the rest of it it don't speak very well for the intelligence and cleanliness of the American people. I feel some like old Charlie Pritchard said about the bedbugs. They'd got rid of 'em everywhere except in the hired man's room and 'by gum!' Charlie said, they were going to get 'em out of there, too, before they got through, if they had to get rid of the hired man to do it."

NATIONAL PSYCHONEUROSES

"Somebody that was writing about conditions over on the other side, here awhile ago, referred to it as a 'mad house' over there. You know, that comes awful near to being more than just a figure of speech and if you know a little something about human psychology, it isn't hard to understand. When you get right down to it, a nation is nothing but just a conglomeration of individuals—like the body's made up of a lot of different kinds of living cells. Whether it's individual health or national health, the same principles apply. They're suffering from psychoneuroses, some of those countries are, and if they don't get the right kind of mental treatment pretty soon, their condition, some of 'em, is liable to develop into insanity. What they need is a good heavy dose of sedative to quiet 'em down and a consultation of psychiatrists to study out their complexes.

"Yes, sir. What the world needs today more'n anything else, the way it looks to me,—it ain't more soldiers or more diplomats or more money; it's more mental hygiene.

"Naturally physical conditions are important—some of 'em—but it's the mind that runs the show. Like it says in Proverbs: A man—'as he thinketh in his heart, so is he.' The thing that makes it complicated: we know what we're thinking consciously but it's what we think in our 'heart'—thoughts we aren't conscious of, that cause a lot of our worst difficulties in life. Sickness, bad habits, delinquency, nerves, not being able to make a living or get along with people, unhappy marriages—all of 'em, and more besides, can be due to thoughts and early impressions getting tangled up down there in the unconscious mind. It's like a short-circuit down under the floor: you don't see the electricity or where it comes from; all you see's the smoke.

"It takes a very special sort of an expert to handle that kind of a job. We've got plenty of specialists of various kinds—too many of 'em, if anything—but real competent, sea-going psychologists, the kind that know how to take deep soundings,—we don't begin to have enough of 'em. And our training of educators and doctors and nurses and social workers—they need to put about seventy-five per cent more of that kind of psychology in their courses. Our college courses in psychology—it's interesting and it gives 'em a little inkling but, the way it looks to me, it don't get much below the surface. We don't more'n half understand human nature and we don't understand our own minds well enough to recognize that we don't understand—if you get what I mean. We can have more knowledge than a train-load of college professors and if we don't understand the workings of the human mind, we don't get to the bottom of the matter. It's like Henry Smith said when he took the box back to the clothing store: 'Two coats and vests is swell,' Henry says, 'but to do me any good that suit's got to have a pair of pants with it.' Yes, sir. I'd like to start a demand for more sound and sensible psychologists."

THE NURSE PAYS HER WAY

"One of the doctors from the state health department was down here one time and I introduced him to old Grandma Peasley. Later on she says: 'Well—what kind of a doctor is he, anyway? What does he do?' The old lady's a little hard of hearing. I told her he did health work. 'House work!' she says. I explained it to her as well as I could. 'And he don't have no *ride*?' he says. She just couldn't figure out how anybody could be a doctor and yet not ride around handing out pills and things. And, you know, it's the same way about public health nurses with a lot of folks. It's about as hard for them to grasp the idea of a nurse that don't wear a white uniform and cap and wait on sick folks as it'd be for me to understand the theory of relativity. The difference is they've got a chance of learning from experience and I haven't.

"What it comes right down to is that there's one duty most public health nurses neglect and that's advertising themselves—letting the public know what they do. Being an 'angel unawares' might be all right if it wasn't that they need a salary to live on and influential people to back 'em up—and all that depends on 'public sediment,' as Henry Smith calls it. The doctors, they know about it, usually, but they aren't very good advertisers, themselves.

"Back last fall, just before school opened, our nurse here was in one of the homes over across the railroad where the father was out of work and she discovered two of the kids was just getting over scarlet fever. They were all set to start in school. Before she got through she found out four or five more had been exposed. If she hadn't discovered 'em it's more'n likely we'd of had an epidemic and the school'd have lost enough state money, right there, to more'n paid her whole year's salary. That sort of thing, of course, anybody could understand, if they heard about it—which they usually don't.

"But some of the most remarkable things they do aren't really part of their job at all. Awhile ago our nurse, here, was having a Sunday off and visiting some friends of hers. There was a family visiting next door and she noticed a boy, 'long about thirteen years old, with a bad wryneck—head twisted way around to one side. Well—she sort of butted in—asked the mother what they were doing about it and so on. The upshot of the matter was he had a simple operation that cured him. Later on she showed me a picture they sent her; a nice looking youngster, with his head around straight, where it belonged. Her 'butting in' there probably saved him going through life handicapped by that deformity. If she didn't do anything else this year she'd have earned her salary, my way of thinking. But they're doing that sort of thing all the time. Not only that but they're ready any time to roll up their sleeves and help you in a pinch.

"Yes, sir. If any good public health nurse won't save a county enough so she won't cost 'em a cent, I'll eat my shirt. And I've got a terrible sensitive stomach, too—when it comes to eating shirts."

THINGS WAITING TO BE DONE

"There are some things, you know, about this business of socialized medicine and adequacy of medical care and so on that are what you might call a little mite controversial. I can see a possibility of its taking quite a considerable amount of negotiating before we all see eye to eye on what the problem is and what to do about it. That being so, it might not be a bad idea, while we're waiting to agree on what to do, to go ahead and do some of the things we can all agree are waiting to be done. It might work like Dave Harum said about fleas on a dog. Having fleas, Dave said, was good for a dog: it kept him occupied so he didn't have time to brood over being a dog. So doing some of the things we're all agreed ought to be done, we'd be moving in the right direction and, the same time, it'd sort of take our minds off from the controversial questions that're bothering us.

"For instance, there's hardly a doctor—around these parts anyway—but what's got one or two old folks on his hands. He's willing enough, the doctor is, to look after 'em medically, but they need continuous nursing care and so on that they can't afford. Their friends and relatives don't want 'em and the hospital won't take 'em. Anything anybody can do for 'em—there ain't likely to be much argument about it.

"Then there's these arthritis cases. One fellow I know he had a good job 'til he got all crippled up so't now he not only can't work but he can't even feed himself. He needs care, if anybody ever did—but where can he get it? They require a lot of handling, these arthritis cases do, but the hospitals won't take 'em. In fact I don't suppose they can.

"And, of course, the narcotic addicts, they're a problem to themselves and the doctor and everybody else. A lot of folks are accustomed to thinking of 'em as criminals, more or less—that is, unless they've had some personal experience—but I've known some mighty fine folks that've picked up the drug habit. It might happen to anybody. If they can get the right care, there's some of 'em that'll get over it. But there's mighty few of 'em get the right care because they've got to be in an institution and there's no institution'll take 'em—not unless they've got money enough to go to a high-priced sanitarium. So there's another medical care problem there won't be much argument about.

"And another thing that occurs to me: some of these sparsely settled rural counties, the doctors' services would go a lot further if there was more public health nurses to give 'em a hand and help out in the pinches. We know how to get them, too.

"Yes. I suppose we got to go on debating these questions 'til we get 'em all settled. But we ought to be past the old side-wheeler days: we don't need to stop the boat every time the whistle blows."

THE EYES HAVE IT

"Some fellow, once, called the eye the 'window of the soul.' What he was thinking about, of course, was being on the outside looking in, as you might say. A fellow looking into his best girl's eyes: if he had time to think about it he'd probably figure what he saw there was a reflection of her soul. Of course, I ain't much posted on this 'soul' business but if what some of 'em see is—

"But, anyway, what I was coming to: to the one that's on the inside looking out—the one the eyes belong to—they're windows in a way that's easier to understand.

"I suppose it's some like being down in a submarine and seeing things through a periscope: the eye sort of takes a picture of what's going on outside and sends it through the optic nerve to the brain to be interpreted. Yes, sir—the eyes are important pieces of equipment and they're awful hard to get along without.

"But another thing about it: if you were down in this submarine looking through the periscope and the glass was dirty or there was something out of kilter, so the picture wasn't clear, you'd find it mighty wearing, to say the least—and if it got bad enough your submarine would be practically out of commission. Well—it's the same thing, more or less, when your eyes are out of order, only it's your mind and body that suffer as a result. And most people don't realize what a lot of different kinds of ailments can come from eye trouble.

"Why—here just lately, a young fellow came in to see me: he was nervous and having headaches and dizzy spells—had times when he was sick to his stomach and so on. I tried a simple test that showed he had astigmatism. That's where the eye-ball's sort of irregular shaped, so the light rays don't focus just right. 'But,' he says, 'I can see just as well as I ever could.' And so he could—but in order to do it he was straining his eyes all the time and I figured it was the eyestrain was causing his trouble. I sent him to an eye doctor and he hasn't had any trouble since. I suppose he's needed glasses ever since he was a kid.

"That's one big thing they're doing with the school physical examinations: checking up on their eyes. And that's the time when it's most important. It may make all the difference between a youngster being a good student and no student at all: some little eye defect that can be easily corrected. It isn't always so simple, of course. Some eye troubles are caused by physical conditions that won't be discovered without a careful physical examination. That and the fact that you can't make a satisfactory examination of children's eyes without using 'drops'—that's why they ought to go to an oculist—I mean an eye doctor.

"Yes, sir. If the question before the house is which organ of the body contributes most to happiness and mental development, I'd say the eyes have it—only you can spell it E-Y-E-S if you think it'd look better."

HANDWRITING ON THE WALL

“One of the men that was over on the other side when they were trying to control typhus fever over there—this was back before the World War—I was thinking the other day of something he was telling. Typhus, of course, is spread by the body louse and so they had delousing stations, where they took people in and cleaned ’em up and disinfected their clothes and so on. Well—it seems they had some sort of a superstition there in this country where he was: not having lice was bad luck—or something like that; anyway, when they came out of the delousing stations there was fellows there waiting to sell ’em more lice. Scared as they were, these folks, of getting the fever, still they wouldn’t let anybody deprive ’em of their inalienable right to be lousy.

“What made me think of that story was hearing about some of these places where the health authorities, trying to protect the people they’re responsible for, have passed regulations to pasteurize the milk. In some of these places there’s still folks that’ll take their pails and drive outside somewhere to some farm and buy uninspected raw milk. It don’t seem to do any good telling ’em it ain’t safe; they want raw milk and they’re going to have it, whether or no. I suppose they figure, some of ’em, they’re saving money. One fellow I heard about, though, he got undulant fever that way. I wonder how much he figures he saved. Yes, sir—we have some funny ideas, some of us.

“You know, this business of treating our public water supplies—it’s that, very largely, that’s made typhoid fever almost a rare disease—I can remember well when there was folks that used to argue against chlorination of water, the same way some of ’em do now about pasteurizing milk. They’d take their pails and bottles and go and get water from somebody’s well or spring somewhere. It’s been ten years, at least, since I’ve heard of anybody doing that. Today there isn’t hardly a public water supply in the State that isn’t treated and everybody’s glad of it.

“I noticed the other day—I saw some figures that said that in the cities of the State, including New York, something over 99 per cent of the milk is pasteurized. In the rural places it’s only something like 38 per cent. And it’s in these rural towns that pretty near all the milkborne epidemics have been: 141 of ’em, I think it was, in 21 years. New York City hadn’t had *one* in all that time. It sort of looks to me like what you might call ‘handwriting on the wall.’”

THE DANGER IN NOT UNDERSTANDING

"The fellow that wrote the book of Proverbs—I don't know's he had raising children in mind when he said it but he said one thing there that every parent'd do well to mull over. 'Wisdom,' he says, 'is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding.'

"Failure of parents to understand their children—along with failure to recognize that they don't understand 'em—I expect it's wrecked more lives than any one thing. And our not understanding 'em isn't surprising when we know that most of us, we don't even understand ourselves: I mean the way our mind works—and it's the way our mind works that determines how we behave.

"A friend of mine's got a valuable watch—given to him, it was, when he retired. He told me, one day, it was losing time and I asked him why he didn't regulate it. 'No, sir,' he says, 'I think too much of that watch. There don't anybody monkey with that but an expert.' And, of course, I knew he was right. Still, delicate and complicated as a watch is, all you got to do is open it up and the whole works is right there in sight.

"But you take the human mind: the thoughts you're thinking and the things they lead you to do: it might look as if that was all there was to it—but that ain't the half of it. There's a part of the mind that's working all the time, that you aren't any more conscious of than you are of your liver working; and that unconscious part of the mind and the impressions registered in it determine to a large extent what you think and do. We're like that rooster in the story 'Chanticleer,' he thought the sun came up because he crowed but actually it was the sun coming up that made him crow. A watch is a simple mechanism, side of the mind. Yet a parent thinks he's perfectly competent to handle a child.

"Let me give you an example: something they've found out from experiments on children. Babies aren't naturally afraid of animals but they're frightened by loud noises. Just when a baby's seeing a dog for the first time, a door slams. The baby associates the bang with the dog and all the rest of his life, maybe, when a dog comes near him he feels scared or uncomfortable. Consciously, he's forgot all about that dog-noise combination and the parent never'd know about it—but the impression's still working.

"The same way, tantrums, unnatural fears, bashfulness, being a bully or a coward, being a 'Mr. Milquetoast' or a rabid 'anti,' all of 'em may be the result of misdirected parental efforts. If Little Willie's got 'the devil in him,' the one to examine first is the parent. When you find a problem child look for a problem parent.

"It ain't easy getting the understanding our old friend, there, wrote about. Most parents can't hope to be experts in child psychology. But if they realize that they *don't* understand, that's a big step in the right direction."

FALLACIES ABOUT FOOD HANDLERS

"You know, one of the things there's been a lot of misunderstanding about is this business of examination of food handlers in public eating places—cooks and waiters and so on. We've known for years that a certain proportion of folks were carriers of disease germs, typhoid principally. The germs are in their discharges and they may get on their hands and from there into the food and, of course, that's liable to mean trouble. You've heard about 'Typhoid Mary': she was a cook that was a typhoid carrier and moved around a lot; and everywhere that Mary went the germs were sure to go, so she was responsible for a whole lot of cases. Another point: they can examine specimens in the laboratory and find the germs if they're there.

"Well—knowing these things, back several years ago a lot of places—New York City was one of 'em—began making regulations that required these food handlers to go to a doctor for examination—usually it was once a year—and have a certificate that they were free from infection. Sometimes the examinations were made by health department doctors. These doctors were supposed to take laboratory specimens and all that. For a long time it was looked on as quite an important public health measure—this routine examination was.

"Then, here within the last few years, the folks up at the State Health Department, they came to the conclusion it wasn't worth while and they said so. It seems a lot of these carriers, they're what they call 'intermittent': the germs are in their gall bladder but they only show up once in awhile in the discharges. It may take seven or eight examinations before they catch 'em, so a single examination that didn't show anything, it wouldn't mean a thing. It'd give a 'false sense of security,' as they say. Laboratories that weren't doing that kind of work right along, they might miss 'em, even if they were there. All of these examinations, of course, they have to be paid for—either the city or the food handler himself. Another thing: most doctors, of course, are honest but once in awhile—well, it kind of looked as if some of the examinations weren't any too thorough.

"Finally, four years ago, Dr. Rice, down in New York City, he announced they were going to quit it. In eighteen years, he said, they'd examined three and a half million specimens and only found thirty typhoid carriers. If you figure the cost at two dollars an examination—which is about right, I guess—finding those thirty carriers figured up to better'n \$230,000 a piece. I'd say that's a little mite expensive—wouldn't you?

"Of course it's almost kind of embarrassing—something you've been doing for years—to have to back up and start over again. But it's some like a fellow said the other day: 'Doc,' he says, 'For twenty years I've been laboring under the impression I was the boss in my house but I've come to the conclusion I was wrong. I want you to witness to the fact,' he says, 'that I'm man enough to admit it.'"

BUDGETS

“When we’ve been talking here about our budgets for health work, I often think of old Brad Seeley—used to farm it down there on the River Road. He was pretty well fixed, Brad was, but he’d pinch a penny so hard it’d almost make the Indian yelp. Yet, every few years he’d pack up his grip-sack and take a trip down to New York; take a couple neighbors with him, he would, and pay all their expenses. He said once they’d just finished painting his horse-barn red and he wanted to see what kind of a job they could do on the city. I asked him if it didn’t set him back considerable—those trips. ‘Well, Doc,’ Brad says, ‘I don’t believe in throwing money away but I don’t mind spending a dollar when I get something to show for it.’”

“And so, one of the things I always think of, around budget time, is whether we’re spending our money and putting in our time and effort where we’re going to ‘get something to show for it.’ There’s plenty of things that’d be nice to do—and sometimes there’s influential people want ’em done—that have little or nothing to do with health. Then there’s other things—plenty of ’em—that you know right from the start they’ll save lives and make the town healthier. So long as that’s our job and there’s a limit to what we can spend, I claim it’s just ordinary common sense and good business to lay it out where we know it’ll get the results we’re after. I’m in favor of folks having automobiles but it wouldn’t make sense, if we had twelve dollars a week to support a family on, to spend five of it making payments on a car. It’s the same principle.

“Back a few years ago a bunch of our folks here, they got sort of het up because the farmer that took away their garbage didn’t get around regular enough and they decided we ought to set up a village collection—and charge it to the health fund. Some of ’em didn’t like it very well but I told ’em I wasn’t in favor of it unless they could show me where it would save some lives or prevent some sickness—which they couldn’t.

“I showed ’em how many children used to die from diphtheria and how, since we’d kept ’em inoculated, we hadn’t had a death from it. We haven’t had a case of typhoid fever in I don’t know how many years. Our public health nurse—everybody can see, now, what she’s doing for us. Pasteurizing our milk and looking after the mothers and babies, we’re cutting down our infant deaths. We’re preventing tuberculosis checking up on the children that’ve been exposed. That’s the kind of stuff I mean.

“No. I’m like Brad. I believe in laying out the time and money we’ve got to spend where we know we’ll ‘get something to show for it.’”

WASTING PICKLE BOTTLES

"Some of these stories I've read about the old West, a lot of their scraps were over water—its being scarce and all that. Nowadays, of course, we don't have occasion to do much shooting over it but still, off and on, it's the cause of somebody getting their dander up.

"What made me think of it, a fellow came in to see me awhile ago—he was bristled up like a hedge-hog. It seems he took a sample of water from his well—in a pickle bottle, I guess 'twas—and mailed it up to the State laboratory; wanted it analyzed. He got a letter back—said they were sorry but they couldn't use it and referred him to me. He allowed he was a taxpayer and this was the first time he ever asked 'em to do anything for him—and so on and so forth. Of course I explained it to him and it finally turned out his well was all right, so he's feeling better.

"You see—what most people don't understand: there's quite a lot to it—this water sample business. The outfit the State sends us—the box has got two kinds of bottles in it; one big one for a chemical analysis and some smaller ones, that are sterile, for bacteriological examination. They have to be packed in ice. Then there's a card with it—a sanitary survey they call it—I'm supposed to give 'em a description of the surroundings: shows the chances of pollution and so on.

"Now, this bacteriological examination, if there's certain kinds of bacteria in it, if the bottle wasn't sterile and handled just right, it might be they came off'n the bottle or somebody's hands. And if it ain't packed in ice, the bacteria'll multiply so they can't tell anything about it.

"But if they find evidence of pollution, before they can interpret it—tell how serious it is—they want to know whether it's liable to be human—a cesspool or privy or something—or maybe just animals: like drainage from a pasture. And they want to know how it's constructed: the well or what not. In fact the health officer, sometimes, can tell just from looking at it whether it's probably safe or not.

"The point is that, without all this stuff, if they made the analysis (and it takes pretty near two weeks) their report'd be liable to be misleading, to say nothing of wasting valuable time. So I advise the folks around here instead of wasting good pickle bottles and getting all riled up, if there's a question about their water supply, to give me a ring and I'll look into it."

SURPLUS

“This business of surplus this and that—stuff to eat and stuff to make clothes of, and so forth—you know it seems to me there’s something kind of screwy about the whole proposition. Why, it couldn’t have been more’n about twelve or fifteen years ago these economic prognosticators—they were telling us that the rate the population was increasing, it wouldn’t be long before the world wouldn’t be able to produce enough to feed itself. Then, the next thing you know, it’s all ‘surplus.’ With half the folks going without something because they can’t get it, the other half is missing payments on the mortgage because they had such a good crop they can’t get rid of it. Around these parts it’s mostly milk; down south it’s cotton; down Bob Burns’ way it’s hogs; out West it’s wheat—and so it goes.

“What made me think of it, somebody I’m well acquainted with just came back from a trip to Florida and down there they’re worrying because they’ve got a bumper crop of citrus fruit, as they call it: oranges and grapefruit and so on. He read somewhere that they’d produced enough to furnish every man, woman and child in the United States with better’n a third of a box apiece, to say nothing of what California and Texas are doing. That’s probably enough vitamin C to protect the whole United States against scurvy, and the fun of eating ’em thrown in. He claims down there you can buy oranges for ten cents a dozen and I bet up North here there’ll be plenty of kids that’ll be lucky if they got a couple of ’em in their socks for Christmas. One fellow told him—this acquaintance of mine—that it costs more to ship a box of oranges up North here’n it does to produce the oranges themselves. The same time we hear about the transportation outfits suffering for want of stuff to ship. It’s kind of funny, ain’t it. Our team-work—it sort of looks like we’d got our signals mixed up.

“I ain’t any economist but the way it looks to me, these fellows with all this stuff on their hands—their problem is some like the one I’ve got with my last year’s vest: getting it around where it ought to go. It might be a good idea if a lot of these brilliant minds that don’t have any trouble figuring out how to run the country—if they’d get together and concentrate for a while on this problem of distribution. Like Fletch Toohey said about his wife’s relations: ‘The main trouble,’ Fletch says, ‘is to keep ’em moving.’”

NURSES AND HOT AIR

"My old friend, Henry Smith, I asked him one time how things were going. 'Well,' Henry says, 'they'd be going a darned sight better if I could only make more folks see things the way I do.' What I told Henry: I said before he could do that he'd have to see more things the way other folks did. And, you know, there's quite a lot to that: getting the other fellow's point of view before you start in trying to change his mind. When you do that—I've heard of some that came to the conclusion it was their own mind that needed changing.

"But, anyway, what made me think of it: I ran into a doctor the other day that came from one of these counties where they're talking about putting on more public health nurses. He said he wasn't in favor of it. Of course that kind of surprised me and I asked him why not. Why, he said, if you wanted one of 'em to stay and take care of a case, they didn't have time; all they did was go 'round giving instructions, 'and,' he says, 'we got enough people now shooting off hot air.' Well—I asked him what kind of a public health nurse he'd been working with and it turned out he hadn't been working with any. That was about what I figured. He'd got his information from somebody't didn't know any more about it'n he did.

"No, sir; a good public health nurse—there's times when the atmosphere needs warming up and she knows how to do it; but she don't have any time to spend 'shooting off hot air'—not when you find 'em getting up at four o'clock in the morning, driving over icy back roads to help with some baby case. If there's any hot air around, they need it to keep their feet warm.

"Naturally, a nurse that's got customers scattered over a quarter of a county, she can't settle down and take care of one patient long. It'd be easier for her if she could. What she can do, though: she can stay long enough to get 'em fixed up and organized and show 'em how to do things—help 'em to help 'emselfs, in other words—and keep an eye on 'em afterwards. That means a lot. It's fine if they can stay on cases that need 'em—but it takes more nurses.

"The advice they give, these nurses—you take a family, like I heard of: a father out of a job and four kids, one of 'em with pneumonia and the mother gone; if they don't need advice, I don't know who does, especially when the nurse gets a doctor and somebody to take care of the kid and finally helps the father get a job. And the doctor can't very well stay and give the youngster a bath and explain about making soup—and all that stuff.

"One trouble is: the folks that need the nurses most, they aren't usually the influential people in the community and they're like the nurses—they don't do much advertising. But, at that, you never can tell when some of the influential people may need 'em. I guess I'm like Henry: I wish I could make more people see it the way I do."

THE DOMESTIC PROBLEM

“This question of domestic servants—household employees or whatever you want to call ’em: cooks, maids, nurse girls and so on—mostly, around this section, it’s the ‘hired girl’—whether they ought to be required to go to a doctor and have a physical examination and get a certificate of health and all that—you know, it’s quite a question. The idea’s sort of getting around, here this last couple of years, that maybe we ought to have a law about it. The point of it is: they handle our food (I don’t know what some of us’d do if they didn’t) and they come in contact with the children and so forth and, if they had a communicable disease, they might do some damage. It’s something to think about, all right.

“Somehow, though—you take my housekeeper here: if they put through such a law as that, I’d hate to be the one to have to enforce it. I’d be in more danger from her disposition’n I would from her diseases. It might end up by me getting fired.

“Having a medical examination now and then, of course I claim it’s a good thing for most anybody—that is, providing they pick out a doctor that’ll take it seriously and give ’em a good, thorough examination; but these domestic employee people, I wouldn’t expect ’em to warm up to the idea much—not ’til they get more wages than most of ’em do now—unless we figure out some way to furnish the examinations free.

“Then, another thing—a lot of these ‘health certificates,’ they’re like some folks: they look awful impressive but they don’t count for much. That’s why, down in New York, they quit making the food handlers have ’em. It takes more’n just a routine examination to discover the really dangerous things, like typhoid carriers and venereal diseases and so on. For that matter, they could have a clean bill of health one day and be infected with some disease the next.

“No. When you’re taking on household help, I figure it’s a good idea to find out what you can about their health and after you get ’em—if you do—set ’em a good example by having health examinations yourself. But these folks—they tell me they’re kind of choosey about who they work for. I’d be afraid, if we put the idea in their heads, they’d be demanding a health certificate from us. I guess it’s about ‘six of one and a half a dozen of the other.’”

RATS AND TYPHUS

"Here awhile ago I was reading a book—*Old St. Paul's*, the name of it was—where the plot was laid in London along about 1644, at the time of the big epidemic of bubonic plague—'black death,' they called it. Say! If the things they tell in that story aren't more'n half true—well, I hear people worrying about the terrible conditions today and wondering what the world's 'coming to'; whatever it is, I don't figure there's much chance of its being as bad as what it's come *from*.

"In the two years there, something like seventy thousand people died. Quacks flourished and even the best doctors didn't know what caused the disease or how to handle it. People died so fast that, most of 'em, they just carted 'em off at night and dumped 'em in a pit and then they couldn't keep up with the job and they had bodies lying right where they'd died in the street. Most everybody that could was trying to get out of the city before the plague caught up with 'em. The pesthouses, as they called 'em, were crowded to the doors, practically no beds and no nurses, like we know 'em today. Top of all that, the (what is it you call 'em?)—the 'forces of law and order'—well, nobody was safe, not even in his own home and it seems to have been common practice to rob the dead of anything they had, even their clothes, before they dumped 'em in the hole. Yes, sir; it's hard for us now to imagine just how bad things were.

"But what I was thinking about, particularly: I can't remember that, in that whole story, there was any mention of rats, not in connection with the plague, anyway—and yet we know now that they were at the bottom of the whole thing—and, of course, the fleas that carried the infection from the rats to the humans. Not only that but it's rats that are keeping bubonic plague going today, in some parts of the world—except that, in some sections it's spread to other rodents, like it did to the ground squirrels out California way.

"You know it's interesting, when you stop to think of it, the way rats have epidemics of this disease and that, the same as people do—and, like with the plague, some of the same diseases—and how they'll spread from one part of the world to another. They spread 'along the lines of travel,' as you might say, because rats are great travelers—and they don't have to bother with any passports either. Remember, a few years back, the epidemic jaundice that came from rats? Trichinosis—and a lot of this food infection stuff, it's rats running over it—and mice. Yes; I'm strong for the 'good neighbor' idea but I draw the line at rats."

A TERRIBLE HEADACHE



“One of my young girl friends here—she’s in her last year in high school, taking fourth year English and all that, so I look to her to keep me posted on the latest slang. It’s kind of handy, you know, to be able to tell what they’re talking about: this younger generation. And, besides, some of it’s awful expressive. One of her admirers, a year or so ago, he was a ‘flat tire’ but now I gather he’s got sort of pumped up again—putting on airs, as you might say—because the last time I inquired about him he was a ‘pain in the neck.’ She didn’t seem to think she needed anything for that but now she’s got a new trouble: some kind of higher mathematics. She says it’s a ‘terrible headache.’ She wanted to know if I didn’t think she was working too hard. Well, I told her that kind of headache usually came from not working hard enough; if she’d dig in and pass the examination I’d guarantee a cure.

“Seriously, though, what I started in to say was about headaches. A bad headache is an awful mean thing to have—there’s no question about it, especially when it hangs on or keeps coming back, the way some people have ’em. And a lot of ’em, they’ll keep taking every kind of patent headache dope they hear of ’til finally they upset their digestion or, maybe, knock out their heart. It’s like Purley Adams, the time he came into the Fire Hall scared stiff, he was, because he’d just put his hand up and discovered a big swelling or something between his shoulders. Zenas Green, he examined it: ‘It looks pretty serious to me, Purley,’ Zenas says, ‘but it might help it some,’ he says, ‘if you’d take that coat hanger out of the back of your overcoat.’ And that’s the way with these headaches: the thing to do is to go and let a doctor find out what’s causing it.

“Yes. A headache is a pain and, any kind of a pain: it’s nature’s way of telling you there’s something wrong somewhere that needs attention. It might be any one of a dozen or more different things. If it’s something serious—and once in a while it is—then the longer you let it go the worse it’s liable to get. I recall one girl¹ that’d been having sick headaches a day or two a week for nearly a year. When she finally came to me, I told her to try getting her glasses changed—which she did and she ain’t had one since.

“I reckon some of these folks must look at it the way the late Peleg Foster did. ‘You go to the drug store,’ Peleg says, ‘and you can look over the stuff they’ve got there and it tells right on it what’s into it and what it’s good for; but you go to a doctor and how do *you* know what he’s giving you?’ He didn’t believe in taking chances—Peleg didn’t.”

STREPTOCOCCUS HEMOLYTICUS

"These fairy stories they used to have, all about queer little people you couldn't see unless you had some sort of a special stand-in or something—they tell me the youngsters don't go in for that old-fashioned sort of stuff any more, now't they have wild west movies and what not to keep their little minds occupied—but, what I was going to say: I used to read 'em, back when I was three or four years old more or less but I never took much stock in 'em. I could swallow most anything in those days, from a collar button up—but not fairies, that you couldn't see.

"Well, sir—I had to grow up before I found out there were, actually, little people, as you might say, that were mighty important—so many of 'em that all the printing offices in the country ain't got ciphers enough to express it—that you couldn't see unless you had what you might call a 'magic glass.' I don't want to make it sound mysterious, so I'll mention right away that what I'm driving at is germs—bacteria for short—and the 'magic glass' is the microscope.

"Of course, the same as the fairies, there's good germs and there's bad ones. The good ones—they do nice things, like making nitrogen in the soil so things'll grow and giving that nice appetizing aroma to Limburger cheese and so on. The disease germs—they're what you might call the bacteriological underworld. They're up to some mischief all the time and multiply—why, say: they've got a birth rate that makes the birth rate of houseflies look like 'slow motion.'

"Well, sir, the streptococcus family—that's one of 'em—there's some fairly respectable branches but, mostly, they're about the toughest ones in the lot. There's one branch they call the hemolytic streptococci—they're gangsters from the day they're born.

"Yes. These hemolytic streptococci (that 'hemolytic' part of it is Greek for 'blood dissolving'; 'hemo': blood; 'lytic': dissolving)—you'll find 'em in wounds, where 'blood poisoning', as they used to call it, has set in and you let a gang of 'em get to going under just the right conditions, like in a can of milk, and they can cause scarlet fever and septic sore throat and even erysipelas in the people that drink the milk. They can, that is, if the milk ain't pasteurized. Another thing they do: they gang up with other disease germs, like the ones that specialize on causing pneumonia—and make things worse. Of course I know it's kind of harrowing—but so were some of the fairy stories.

"No. This ain't a lesson in bacteriology—not even for the kindergarten class. You might call it a bedtime story, though. They've certainly put an awful lot of folks to bed in their time—these streptococci have."

RUNNING THE GANTLET

"Somebody told me a story, once, about the savages some place or other—what a nice generous system they had for giving their prisoners their liberty. They lined up on both sides, with clubs and spears and so on, and let 'em 'run the gantlet,' like the Indians used to, only before they started 'em off they tied something over their eyes. If there was enough left of 'em when they got through to keep running, they let 'em go free. But the records didn't show that many of 'em ever got that far.

"What made me think of it: I was reading about a fellow on the Board of Education, down in New York—that he was trying to get 'em to start teaching sex hygiene in the schools down there. You know, it kind of struck me, the way we handle our children—it's some like those savages: along about eleven or twelve years old we turn 'em loose—sore of a 'blindman's buff' game—don't tell 'em what to look out for—and if they manage to get by all the dangers and temptations and what-not in the next few years, they get their freedom—maybe. Of course, our system, we don't call it blindfolding 'em: we call it keeping 'em innocent.

"I was talking to one of the fathers, here, a few years ago and he said he wasn't in favor of having the schools messing around in 'this sex stuff,' as he called it; he preferred to have his boy get his instructions along such lines at home. I asked him how much he'd given him. Well, he said the time wasn't ripe for it yet. 'Well, if that's the case,' I said, 'we must be having an awful backward season.' I don't think he knew his son as well as I did.

"Why, say, they were talking about the need for sex education as long ago as I was in medical school. It reminds me of the time a doctor friend of mine, over'n Chenango county, his father filled up his gasoline tank for him. He went out later, the doctor did, and after he'd cranked an hour or so he called the old gentleman and asked him where he got the gasoline. He pointed to a can over't the side of the barn. 'That?', the doctor says, (I'm leaving out some of it). 'Why,' he says, 'that was water.' I guess maybe we've had water in our gasoline all these years.

"No. When you get right down to it, most folks that know what's going on at all, they know their youngsters, before they start to 'run the gantlet,' they ought to have better information than what they can get from the kids around the corner. But when they think of doing anything about it, they're taken down with mental lockjaw or something and the men—well, it's like Mert Peven said, when he didn't dare set off the blasting powder he'd put under a stump: 'How'm I going to know,' Mert says, 'it won't fly back and hit *me*?' "

MEN, HOGS AND RATS

“One of the arguments for men and monkeys belonging to the same family—that is, outside of their acting considerable alike at times—they say they’re subject to the same diseases. Well—if that proves anything then the next question is: how about trichinosis? Men, hogs and rats—they’re the ones that have it, chiefly. That don’t look so good, does it—having hogs and rats in your family tree? But, at that, I guess it ain’t so bad as having trichinosis.

“Trichinosis, in case you don’t know—you get it from eating pork that ain’t properly cooked. It’s a worm, to start with—I mean the cause of it is; it grows in the intestines of the hog. These worms, they sort of work their way into the wall of the intestine and lay their eggs and then the larvae (you know: after the eggs have hatched out?)—they get picked up by the blood stream and finally settle down in the muscles. The muscles get made into one thing or another: sausage, hot dogs—even mixed into hamburgers, now and then, so they tell me. We eat ’em without enough cooking and there you are: the same thing happens inside of us.

“Well—these trichini—these larvae—they’ll park ’emselves in any muscle that happens to be handy. The handiest parking places, though—they’re in the muscles on the inside of the breastbone or between the ribs. Naturally, they ain’t healthy things to have crawling around in your muscles, so you have pains and fever and so on—and that’s trichinosis. Some people die from it and some don’t, the same as a lot of other diseases. Well, sir, you know, here lately they’ve dug up some new evidence, some fellows have, that looks like as high as twenty or thirty per cent of people’ve got it—in some sections, anyway. If that’s so it’s about time we quit talking and got busy.

“It seems the hogs, they get it mostly from eating garbage and refuse with pork scraps in it—the rats the same way. They used to figure hogs’d eat dead rats, too, but now the specialists, they claim they won’t—not unless they’re awful hungry, anyway.

“There’s no practical kind of meat inspection that’ll discover all of ’em. What we’ve got to do is to get people not to feed garbage to hogs that ain’t cooked—the garbage, that is. But, if you want to be safe, in the meantime, remember ‘Pigs is Pigs’ and ‘Keep the Home Fires Burning.’ (Say! That wasn’t bad, was it?)”

FOLKS THAT DON'T WANT DOCTORS

"Speaking of medical service: when I was an intern down at Bellevue Hospital they used to tell about an Italian that came in to the admitting office there one night—couldn't speak any English. They had quite a time examining him—seems he was what you might call uncooperative—didn't want to get up on the examining table and so on. After they figured out what was the matter with him he didn't seem to like the ward they sent him to and it took two orderlies to put him to bed. They gave him something to quiet him and along the next day they got hold of an interpreter and started in to take his history. He asked him—the interpreter did—where he felt sick and he said he didn't feel sick anywhere, so he asked him why he came to the hospital. He got off something with an exclamation point every other word. 'What did he say?' the doctor says. 'Well,' the interpreter told him, 'he says he came to see his brother-in-law, that's a patient up in Ward 19.'

"What made me think of that—I saw a reference to a survey the Massachusetts health department made of chronic diseases back in 1930. It seems there were 878 of these folks hadn't had a doctor inside of a year and they questioned 'em to find out why. Out of the whole 878, there was only 99 that said it was because they couldn't afford it or couldn't get 'em. Mostly it was because they didn't want a doctor—734 of 'em. Either they thought their condition wasn't serious enough to need 'em or that a doctor couldn't do 'em any good. A few were afraid of what a doctor might tell 'em.

"Makes me think of the time I was called to see a colored woman—a West Indian, she was—and when I put a thermometer under her tongue she couldn't shut her mouth. So I said I'd put it under her arm. 'No, sah,' she says, 'you ain' goin' to put that thing under mah ahm!' Course I asked her why. 'Well,' she says, 'a doctor put one there once and it *didn't do me no good.*'

"But what I was going to say: people that can afford to have doctors not wanting 'em, that's a side of this medical care question we don't give much thought to. Of course I don't question but what there's a lot of folks these days on small incomes that don't call a doctor when they need 'em because they feel they can't afford it—but the ones that can afford it as well as not: it would help considerable to promote adequacy of medical care if we could educate them to appreciate the value of it. Like a fellow said to me the other day: 'Doc,' he says, 'I've been going to a chiropractor, but' he says, 'I was reading an article about doctors in a magazine here the other day and I came to the conclusion,' he says, 'that maybe you'd do just as well—and I thought maybe you'd be cheaper.'"

BUILDING BABIES

“When it comes to building babies—you’d naturally think it was full as important as building a house. Yet you take a fellow that’s building a new house and he’ll insist on the architect being there at every step to see that things are going right. Half the time he won’t even trust him: he’ll be there himself to see that the contractor don’t skimp on the nails and don’t put in maple where it’s supposed to be oak—and so on. But you take that same fellow, when they’re building a baby in the family and he figures if he tones down his disposition a little and pays the bills, he’s doing his full duty. Of course, when the time comes, he’ll probably be tearing around worrying and wringing his hands and all that; but I got an idea maybe when he makes the biggest fuss, sometimes it’s because his conscience’s troubling him—I mean for not seeing’t the mother got proper care and attention ahead of time.

“Yes, sir. If all the prospective mothers had had the right care from the start, the cemeteries wouldn’t be half so full and the Lydia Pinkham’s probably’d all be out of business. There’d not only be less invalid women but there’d be better health generally. Why, say! I bet half the folks that’re wearing store teeth needn’t be if their mothers—and their grandmothers—had had enough minerals and vitamins in their diet.

“Proper care, of course, means going to a doctor just as soon as there’s any indications of a baby coming and having the doctor look after things ’til the baby’s born and the mother’s well again. There’s measurements need to be taken; various kinds of tests to see that the kidneys and other organs are working right and that there isn’t any disease that’s going to complicate things; diet to be looked after—any number of things that are more important than how many nails or what kind of lumber they put in a new house. For that matter a lot of folks’d be better off and happier if they’d go to a doctor for examination and so on when they first decide to get married—not just the blood test that’s required by law but a general examination. When it comes to married life, sometimes ‘a stitch in time’ will save a lot of ripping out later.

“Some people, of course, think they don’t need medical advice. Makes me think of the boy I knew: somebody gave him a dozen duck’s eggs and he arranged with a hen to set on ’em. He went out every few days and put fresh straw in the nest—cleaned off the eggs and so on. The result was: only one duck hatched out. He gave ’em plenty of care but the trouble was it was the wrong kind. Doctors don’t know everything but, you know what they say “Every man to his trade.’”

MATERNAL IMPRESSIONS

"Speaking of having babies—considering how many've been born since the custom was first started, you'd think we'd know all about it by this time. Yet there's things a lot of intelligent people'd swear were so that apparently aren't and there's others that probably are so that mighty few people know anything about.

"Take this business of what they call 'maternal impressions': I wish I'd kept track of all the mothers' and grandmothers' stories I've heard about things that've happened to babies because the mothers looked at something they shouldn't before the babies were born. Like Henry Smith: he said his mother took one look at him, after he was born—'There!' she says, 'I ought to've known better'n to look at that cage of monkeys so long, at the circus.' I suppose the thing of it was, they had to account for his looks some way and that was the best alibi in sight. The same as when you have some bad luck, like losing a suspender button when you're addressing the women's club or something: you can always look back and recall a black cat or some other bad-luck sign to account for it.

"The fact is nobody's ever produced any real evidence that anything the mother sees ever affects the baby. How could it? There's no nerves running from the mother to the baby—no wires, as you might say, for the impressions to travel over. The baby has his own circulation: don't get the mother's blood. In fact, he's completely formed—the baby is—around the end of the eighth week and usually, at that time, they don't know he's anywhere around. When there's malformations, they've usually developed long before the mother saw whatever she laid it to. Another thing: the same kinds of malformations—they find 'em in the lower animals, only more so.

"Something else, though, that does happen: there's good evidence that babies, before they're born, begin registering mental impressions that're still there, some of 'em, in adult life and maybe figure some way in nervous troubles. It might be a violent shaking up or a long, tough passage through the birth canal. It don't mean anything to the baby then—just discomfort and blind fright. Sometimes, though, they get hooked up with later experiences—these first mental impressions do, and come out in dreams years later. The psychoanalysts, they recognize what they call 'pre-birth' dreams, like when a person has some sort of a nightmare—thinks he's being dragged through a long, dark, winding tunnel; he's terrible scared for fear he won't get through; then he sees a light ahead and about that time he wakes up.

"Of course, these things I'm telling you; probably it's lucky for some folks there's no law compelling any body to believe 'em. But it might be like Herb Casey said about something old Judge Bassett told him: 'I don't believe a word of it,' Herb says, 'but,' he says, 'the judge usually gets things pretty straight and I wouldn't be surprised if it's so.'"

THEY CLOSED THE SCHOOL

"The little red school house and the school bus—I was thinking the other day: they're sort of symbolic, as you might say, of the progress of education. I suppose maybe they painted 'em red—the school houses, that is—because they used 'em mostly in the winter and it'd remind 'em to put on their red flannels.

"Of course, us old-timers, we're apt to get kind of sentimental about 'em—I mean the school house (I never knew anybody to get sentimental over red flannels)—but when I think back to the way a lot of youngsters used to walk three or four miles morning and night, the equipment they had—or didn't have—and so on, then hear somebody—but I guess we won't go into that. What I started to say: the progress in education hasn't been just in reading and writing and 'rithmetic' and such things. What I figure is just as important is the difference in the part the school plays in protecting health—not only the youngsters but the community.

"What made me think of it, the principal of one of the schools up the line here, one day when they were having recess and the youngsters were playing around outside, he said he looked out the window and saw a bunch of strange boys mixing in with 'em. He was sort of curious, so he went out and asked 'em where they came from and they said from over in the Mackville district. He asked 'em how come they wern't in school. Well, one of 'em said, the school was closed over there on account of scarlet fever. Of course he let the district superintendent know and it wasn't long before the school over there was running again.

"Yes, sir—I can remember well when it was the usual thing, if some of 'em came down with a contagious disease, we'd close up the school. In fact, we didn't know any too much about the diseases, the germs that caused 'em, how they spread and all that. We figured the disease'd go through the school and from there to the homes and we never knew where it would end.

"Now, of course, it's different. They've got school nurses and doctors to look after 'em when they're in school you know where they are, at any rate. They've even got the teachers posted on what to look for. If a youngster shows signs of coming down with it, they get him out before he has a chance to expose the others. The nurse goes home with him and tells 'em what to do—keeping him away from the rest of the family, getting a doctor and so forth. Smallpox and diphtheria—of course we don't have to worry about them because they've all been vaccinated. Nowadays it's *health begins in the school*—not disease."

FIGHT CANCER WITH KNOWLEDGE

“A newspaper item I was reading—some fellow figured out that, out of 3512 years since history began to be recorded, there’s been wars going on in 3153 of ’em. So the headline writer says: ‘History Shows War Normal in World.’ Well, looking at it the same way, it’s safe to say there wasn’t a year, that whole time, but what there were robberies and murders and epidemics going on. So they must be still more normal. It sort o’ looks like maybe we’d made a mistake and got ourselves born into the wrong world. Of course the truth of it is that neighbors all the time squabbling, whether it’s nations or individuals, is a sign of mental inferiority. It’ll go on ’til we’re better balanced and less selfish but it’ll never be ‘normal.’

“But what got me started on this, I was thinking about how the women in this country have taken matters in their own hands and are organizing for defense. It seems while we were worrying about possible enemies somewhere across the water, they woke up to the fact there’s a more dangerous one right here at home: one that’s absolutely ruthless—been killing off almost 20,000 people a year right in this one State, a majority of ’em women. So they didn’t waste any time temporizing, the women didn’t; they organized the Women’s Field Army and began a war of defense against cancer. As armies go, they’re about a hundred years ahead of their time because, instead of fighting with bombs and machine guns and poison gas, their principal equipment is brains.

“Yes, sir. They’ve adopted what you might call a modern revision of the system Cadmus, there, used when he sowed the dragon’s teeth and raised soldiers. Their slogan is ‘Fight Cancer with Knowledge’ and instead of scattering bombs they’ve hooked up with the doctors and the health departments and they’re scattering information about cancer and what to do about it.

“When you get right down to it, it’s all fairly simple. Cancer is curable if it’s treated early enough. The great trouble’s been: folks’d discover a lump somewhere or maybe a sore place that wouldn’t heal up and either they wouldn’t pay any attention to it or they’d put off going to a doctor or a clinic for fear they’d find out it really was something serious. Finally, when it’d gone so far they were driven to it, it’d be too late. Some of ’em have wasted the time fooling around with fake cancer cures. Yes—if you’ve got something you’re afraid is cancer, don’t wait to worry: go and find out. It probably ain’t but if it is, it’s just plain common sense to get it cured while its curable.”

EXPLORING THE UNKNOWN

"This business of exploration: 'Darkest Africa,' the North and South Poles, the South American jungles and so on—I used to wonder what it was made men so ready to risk their lives and put up with all sorts of discomforts for that sort of thing. I reckon now maybe I know the answer: it's the instinctive urge to satisfy curiosity. I presume there's a lot of folks'd think they could give a better answer'n that: love of adventure, desire for fame, interest in scientific discovery and what not. Maybe those things figure in it, some of 'em, but the way it looks to me, nothing short of one of these instinctive drives'd be powerful enough to make 'em go to so much trouble—these fellows.

"Yes, sir. It's the same old curiosity that makes a youngster, as soon as he's able to sit up and take notice, start trying to find out all about his body and how it works—and trying to see everything that's going on around him and figure out what it means. Later on, maybe, he'll be some kind of a scientist and get a big kick out of looking through a microscope trying to see what the germs are doing—or a surgeon, maybe, exploring the inside of the body. Or he might be a detective or an epidemiologist.

"Yes. It's just as natural for a youngster to have curiosity as it is for a cat to catch mice and all you got to do is to tell him there's things he ain't supposed to see or know about and he'll start getting up steam as a first-class explorer. Trying to scare it out of him—telling him it's naughty and all that—well, it's liable to drive it in, like they used to think taking a bath did with the measles but, sooner or later, it's bound to come out, one way or another. Maybe, when he gets grown up he'll start looking for the North Pole, if somebody ain't already pulled it up and carried it home for an antique or, on the other hand, he may end up with some kind of a neurosis—nervous trouble, in other words.

"The thing of it is, these instinctive drives of one kind or another, trying to suppress 'em, it's just like sitting on the safety valve of an engine: if the steam can't get out through the safety valve it'll blow out somewhere else. Curiosity, the same as steam, it's valuable if it finds the right outlet and it may be dangerous if it don't. Like Henry Smith says about his grandson: 'That boy,' Henry says, 'he's "Professor Quiz" and "Information Please" all in one. The only safe way,' Henry says, 'is to beat him to it: tell him what he wants to know before he can think of the questions.'"

GOING TO CAMP*

"Let's see: what was it Thackeray didn't say? Camp and the world camps with you; stay home and stay alone. I guess that'd just about fit the situation today. It won't be long now before the youngsters'll be packing up their duffel in their old kit bags—all of 'em, anyway, that can get anybody to send 'em or take 'em to camp.

"One of our boys, here, was telling me, the other day, he was aiming to go up to Camp Dudley—that's the big YMCA camp on Lake Champlain. Well, sir—five years ago they celebrated their fiftieth anniversary of continuous operation and it made me feel like the original old-timer. You know, I was there, as a boy, not long after they started, when Sumner F. Dudley was running it himself. When I was there I don't suppose there were more'n half a dozen organized camps in the State. Today there are better'n eight hundred of 'em.

"It's got to be 'big business,' this summer camp business has—and a big responsibility. What made me think of it: camp inspection's about my next job. You probably know: all these camps—more'n ten people, that is—they have to have permits from the health officer before they can open up. That means they have to be inspected to see't the water and milk supplies are going to be safe, that they're prepared to take care of any of 'em that get sick—and all that.

"In the past I've been kind of easy with 'em. Sometimes they'd just move in and I wouldn't know anything about it 'til I heard of it by accident. Maybe they'd have things fixed up right and maybe they wouldn't. This year I figure I'm going to tighten up on 'em. The law's been on the books long enough so't ignorance of it's no excuse—these folks, anyway, that make a business of taking children to camp and get paid for it. If they move in without a permit this year they're liable to find 'emselves closed up on short notice.

"Some of the parents, when they go to look over a camp—I've often noticed: about all they'll look at is how many boats and canoes they've got; where they're going to eat—and so on. Health conditions—they'll leave that to somebody else. But if a youngster gets typhoid from polluted water or undulant fever or something from unsafe milk, boats won't help much and they'll eat in bed—if they eat at all. And it'll make quite a difference whether there's a doctor handy or not. Yes, sir—if I was picking a camp the first thing I'd want to know'd be whether they had a permit from the health officer or not.

"A well managed camp, it's a wonderful thing for a youngster. It'll help to make men of 'em—or women: whichever they're supposed to be. But one that ain't—well, I guess what James Lee Ellenwood says about homes'd apply pretty well to camps: 'There is one test of any institution,' he says, 'What does it *do* to people?'"

* A Sanitary Code amendment enacted after this was written, made district health officers responsible for the issuance of camp permits.

WE'RE ALL A LITTLE QUEER

"Something I was reading here awhile ago: it seems patients that've been discharged as cured from one of the mental hospitals have formed an association. The object of it, so this article said, was to help change the public attitude toward mental diseases. Well, sir—you know, that comes so near being what you might call 'epoch making' it's a wonder to me the newspapers didn't have it plastered all over the front page. Maybe it don't sound quite so sensational but it's in the same class as the time the health official everybody knew refused to give a radio address because they wouldn't let him mention the name of the disease he was there to talk about. It's almost certain to start things moving.

"The way so many folks feel about mental disorders, it's like a lot of other popular prejudices: they're born in ignorance, as you might say. I suppose maybe this one goes back to the days when they laid 'em to devils. Why, it wasn't so many years ago, right here in this State, we were talking about 'lunacy' commissions. Of course old Luna—you take a young couple and there's no question but what moonlight does have a peculiar effect on their mental state but, still, we know now that the moon don't have anything to do with mental diseases. Just the same it's hard to shake off the idea there's something spooky about it.

"The fact is, even the psychiatrists, they're just beginning to understand some of these conditions. There's one disease—I don't know's I can spell it—schizophrenia (dementia praecox, we used to call it): they used to figure it was incurable. I've seen brilliant youngsters with it develop into worse than dumb animals. Today what they call 'insulin shock,' it's curing a lot of 'em. And of course we've known for years that a lot of the acute upsets—where they come on quickly—if they aren't too long getting 'em under treatment they get well and stay well. What's going to be the big thing in the future, though, is prevention. But we won't get far by letting 'George' do it. Us doctors, we've got to learn a pile of things we don't know about the human mind and the things that upset it. I guess maybe it's because we're all kind of 'queer' that we've left the most important thing in medicine 'til the last.

"I notice the new president of the American Medical Association says that here in New York State one out of every hundred and fifty folks is in a mental hospital. It wasn't because we're any nuttier than the rest of 'em he picked on us but because we've got better statistics, so he says. I might let him into a little secret our good statistics don't show up: if they took in all of us that are a 'little queer,' the figures probably'd be reversed: there'd be one out of every hundred and fifty on the outside. We might start a new association: folks that ought to be in a mental hospital and ain't."

IT PAYS TO ADVERTISE

“Speaking of public health nurses, when our nurse first came here, four or five years ago, one of the things I told her—I said: ‘Don’t forget, young lady, it pays to advertise.’ I presume likely that struck her, at the time, as kind of funny advice for a doctor to be giving a nurse. It wasn’t long, though, before she found out for herself what I was driving at: if you want your board to keep putting up the money to keep you on the job and want the public back of you, you’ve got to keep ’em posted on what you’re doing and why. You can’t expect ’em to warm up to something they don’t know anything about. Like Grandma Peasley said: she didn’t think much of hiring a man that’d work three dollars worth and she couldn’t see a blessed thing he’d done.

“This girl—I mean the nurse—she had an idea if she tended to business and did the best she could, her work’d speak for itself. I told her that was all right far as it went but the trouble was it might not speak to the right people. The folks she did things for—they’d appreciate it and want her to stay. But they ain’t the ones, usually, that do the deciding.

“Whether the nurse stays on—or whether they have more public health nurses or not—it depends chiefly on what kind of an impression she makes on the influential people. So I claim it’s just as much part of her job to see that these folks know what she’s doing and what it means as it is to do the things she’s hired to do.

“Of course, human nature being the way it is, the best way to make an impression on anybody is to do something *for him*. I’ve seen what you might call the ‘personal touch’ turn their opinions around like a turntable. But take it by and large the best way to reach most of ’em is through the local newspaper.

“When it comes to getting our stuff in the paper, we forget, sometimes, that running a newspaper is a business proposition—not a philanthropy. If we want them to help with the things we’re interested in, we ought to expect to give something in return. The nurse can’t usually pay for advertising—nor the health officer either, for that matter—but we can furnish ’em with news. I don’t suppose there’s a day passes, hardly, but what we run into something that’d make a good news story: the kind of stuff folks like to read—and that’s what the newspapers are looking for. And it’s not only stuff about our work: the nurse, traveling around the way she does, can pick up a lot of other items the paper’d like to get. Speaking of doing things for influential people, if she’ll make herself an unofficial reporter she’ll be doing something for the editor he’ll appreciate more than having her take his temperature and give him his medicine. Anyway, he’ll know she’s there.”

JUST ANOTHER NEUROTIC

"Back years ago, when I was getting started in practice, I had a patient that was dead sure he had a stricture in his intestine. He could put his finger right on the spot where it was. A peculiar thing about it: this man had taken care of an invalid wife for years and it wasn't until she began getting well that he developed his trouble. Anyway, I couldn't find anything wrong with his intestine and told him it was 'just imagination.'

"Finally I took him to a specialist and he put him in the hospital and did all sorts of tests on him and he said the same thing I did: there was nothing there. So we came back home. Every few days he was back in my office with the same old story: 'No better'; so uncomfortable he couldn't sleep nights and so on. I put him down as 'just another neurotic.' I tried all the different kinds of medicine I had—and the same things in different colors until we both got sick of seeing each other. Finally he moved away and the last thing I heard about him, he'd attempted suicide but lived through it. I suppose he thought—that fellow—that us doctors were a dumb lot. I guess we were—but not the way he thought.

"The thing of it was we didn't understand—at least I didn't—that these neurotic patients, there's a cause for their symptoms just as definite as there is for scarlet fever or the itch, only it's deeper buried and harder to get at. Telling 'em it's 'all imagination' and giving 'em pills for it—it'd be just as sensible and effective to holler for rain up the roof drainpipe. It don't make their suffering any less genuine because the cause is a repressed emotion instead of an ingrowing toenail and they can't help their symptoms any more'n the fellow with appendicitis can help having his pain. What they need—it ain't so much sympathy as it is intelligent understanding. They need a doctor the worst way—and they're quite apt to get one the worst way: going to somebody that don't understand the causes of their condition. It isn't operations or pills they need; it's psychiatry. Of course that don't mean there can't be something physically wrong with 'em, too—internal secretions or lack of some vitamin or what not—but if there is the psychiatrist is supposed to find it out.

"And that brings up something else—maybe I've mentioned it before. The mind, conscious and unconscious, it affects health—one way or the other—from the day we're born; yet the average general practitioner knows less about psychiatry than almost any other specialty. That's something the medical colleges ought to be thinking about. And, by the way: in the A.M.A. Journal for June 24* there's an article on Psychiatry and General Practice that'll stand a lot of reading. It wouldn't hurt an intelligent layman to read it, either. Like one old lady said once: 'I like to read a medical article now and then,' she says, 'like I do my Bible. I don't always understand 'em,' she says, 'but it reminds me to shun the devil and the doctors.'"

* 1939.

AGE LIMITS

"Maybe it hasn't got much to do with health—and then again maybe it has—but I was thinking what a lot of inconsistencies there are in this business of age limits on jobs. Years ago a friend of mine worked for a concern that made hammers that were known all over the world, practically, as the best that could be bought. They used to pride 'emselfes, this company did, on the length of time their employees had worked for 'em: thirty, forty, fifty years, some of 'em. A defective hammer'd have just about as good a chance of getting by one of 'em as a baseball fan'd have climbing over the fence to the World Series. And other industries that turned out high-class stuff—they used to look at it the same way: after they'd spent twenty or thirty years breaking a man in, they figured it was his duty to stay on for another twenty or so and give 'em the benefit of his experience. It seemed they went in for quality rather'n quantity.

"Then the situation sort of changed. I don't know whether it was the war or the boom coming on or automobiles or what but speed got to be the watchword, as you might say. We began hearing that it was an 'age of young men.' Maybe compensation insurance and pension systems had something to do with it. By the time the boom busted anybody over forty—they began running 'em on a siding and pulling up the track. All they were good for was junk.

"But the other side of it—it's kind of funny. Back here awhile ago when a man forty years old was appointed on the United State Supreme Court, they wondered whether he was old enough for the job; the way one New York editor put it—whether he had the 'ripeness of judgment and experience' the position called for. They decided he might get along all right, seeing there was another man got to be Chief Justice that was only forty-six when he was appointed. By the way, they used to have an age limit on health officers but they took it off. Maybe they decided being able to use their heads was more important than being able to stand on 'em. I've got sort of a hunch some more age limits are coming off pretty soon, too.

"About the size of it, the way it looks to me, a working organization is some like a kite: it's got to have plenty of lifting power but, the same time, it needs a tail to keep it right side up and a string to keep it from blowing away. The high-speed stuff—that's where the youngsters shine but they need the older ones to watch the signs and slow 'em down around the sharp curves.

"I see the committee the Secretary of Labor appointed—with six heads of big industries on it—they reported there's no sound basis for the prejudice against older workers. It sort o' looked, there one while, as if we were wasting our time, us health officers, making folks live longer but maybe there's something in the 'Father's Day' idea, after all."

TRY IT ON THE DOG

“Well, it’s dog days’ again and right now we’re hearing a lot about the prevalence of rabies, so I suppose a lot of folks are putting two and two together and trying to make six out of ’em. The fact of the matter is there’s just about as much relation between dogs and ‘dog days’ as there is between Grandma Smedley and school days. It seems the ‘ancients’—whoever and wherever they were—they found out that the Dog Star (Sirius, they called it) rose with the sun for a matter of five or six weeks, from early in July to along in September and that’s what ‘dog days’ mean. Of course they figured this star rising was responsible for the hot weather and everything that went with it—which there’s just as much basis for as there is for the idea that in ‘dog days’ dogs are more liable to go mad than other times.

“It’s probably true that more people get bitten by dogs in warm weather but if it is, it’s because this time of year more dogs and people are running around loose and getting in each other’s way. Actually, the statistics show more dogs have rabies in winter than in summer and they claim it’s liable to be more virulent.

“It’s too bad, when you stop to think of it, that the dog, the best side partner a man ever had that wasn’t human—and better’n some humans, if you ask me—that he has to be the animal that’s most liable to carry the worst disease man can have. Fortunately it’s relatively rare in people, since Pasteur invented the preventive treatment but anybody that once gets it, he’s all washed up. It’s practically a hundred per cent fatal. That’s why we don’t want to take any chances.

“The dogs in Australia—they don’t have any of it, so I was reading. Every dog that’s brought in, they quarantine ’em ’til they’re sure they’re all right. And they haven’t had any in Norway and Denmark and Sweden in better’n fifty years. But we’ll never get rid of it in this country—not ’til we handle the dog business different’n we’re handling it now.

“The thing of it is, it’s dogs running loose the way they do that keeps it going, especially the strays. I don’t suppose there’s anybody likes dogs any better’n I do but these strays running around loose without any care—sending ’em to Dog Heaven by the quick and painless route, they’d be a lot more comfortable and we’d be safer. And anybody that don’t think enough of a dog to keep him within bounds ought not to have one, the way I look at it. That’s one place where I figure we need a federal law, seeing there aren’t any fences between states: a quarantine on dogs coming into the country and making us take care of the ones we’ve got. I’m no believer in dictatorships, not for humans—but I ain’t sure it wouldn’t be a good idea to ‘try it on the dog.’”

RECOVERING FROM VACATION

"This vacation business—you know I've got an idea that if some statistician or somebody could add up all the days that've been wasted taking vacations it would run into figures that'd make the national budget look like a water-boy's pay check. It ain't that I don't believe in 'em. I do and I ain't above taking one myself now and then—although I've sort of come to the conclusion I don't need 'em as bad as I used to think I did. The old saying that 'all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy'—well, in these days if Jack don't manage to get in a little play along with his work it's pretty liable to be a sign he's a dull boy to start with. At any rate he's dull in the sense that he's never learned how to live. I've known some awful hard-working people that've managed to get a lot of fun out of life; in fact just asking 'em if they're going to take a vacation'd make 'em laugh, some of 'em.

"The thing of it is: it's a fine thing for most anybody to have a chance, now and then, to get away somewhere and see and do something different—sort of get his wheels out of the old rut, as you might say—but when it takes a week to get over a week's vacation there's something wrong. It looks to me like two weeks wasted. Why, I see people go tearing around, driving a couple hundred miles a day, getting their skin burned off, sitting up all night: when they get back, all tired out: 'Oh, well,' they say, 'anyway, it was a change.' It's a change, all right, but not a change for the better, if you ask me.

"When you get right down to it, feeling you've got to have a vacation, nine times out of ten it's a state of mind. It's wanting to escape from something. I know one fellow—he had a responsible position but he had to work under a man that irritated him and when he'd stood it as long as he thought he could, he'd go get drunk. That was the only way he could think of to forget the boss for a couple of days. Well—he married a nice girl and I guess she must have taken his mind off the boss. Anyway I haven't heard of his getting drunk since. The more we like our work and the better adjusted we are to life, the less we feel the need of vacations—unless we're sick or something.

"I can't think of any better example of what peace of mind'll do for anyone than old Dr. Freud. Eighty-three years old, exiled from his native country with most of his belongings left behind, operations for cancer of the jaw and all the rest—he's just written another book. He's faced all the facts of life and ain't afraid of any of 'em. Like a magazine said, awhile ago: 'Patient and resigned, secure in his fame, he spins out his last thoughts, and basks in the sun.' Yes. I'm in favor of sensible vacations for sensible people, but the less afraid we are of the 'facts of life' the less we're apt to feel the need of 'em."

HANDS IN THE WASHBASIN

"Back quite some years ago, when I was getting started in practice, business was kind of slack one day and I dropped out into the kitchen. They were pickling green peppers—doing something to 'em, anyway—and being sort of partial to peppers, I took a hand cutting 'em up. While I was fiddling around there the office doorbell rang so I rinsed my hands off under the spout and went in. It was a fellow that'd been here before—I knew he was good pay—had something in his eye, so I started rolling back his lid to take a look. All of a sudden he grabbed his eye and began dancing around: 'My gosh! Doc,' he says, 'what'd you have on your hands?' Of course I told him nothing at all—that was the substance of it, anyway (I'd sort of forgot about the peppers) but he didn't seem to be satisfied and walked out on me.

"Well, sir, that experience learned me a—I mean after that I was pretty careful to see't my hands got a good scrubbing before I went to work, especially when I was going to stick my fingers in somebody's eye. He came back, later, that fellow did—but, you know, I've often thought, since, maybe it'd be a good idea if disease germs had a little sting to 'em like that so't when you had 'em on your hands they'd sort of announce 'emselves. When you get right down to it I suppose more germs ride around on hands than most any other way.

"I remember back in the early days of antiseptic surgery, they tried disinfecting the air and all that stuff; then they began to find out that the main thing was having the hands of the operator good and clean. Of course, then, rubber gloves came along and that helped out.

"You take a person that's a typhoid carrier—that is with typhoid germs in his intestinal discharges—it's remarkable how easy it is for him to get 'em on his fingers. Then if he handles food—well, there you are! That's one good reason for having washbowls in toilet rooms—and using 'em.

"A lot of the scarlet fever and septic sore throat epidemics they've had, hands did it: the hired man on a farm had a sore throat, got the germs on his hands, rubbed 'em into a scratch on a cow's teat when he was milking, the cow got up an inflammation of the udder and the consumers were the goats—several hundred of 'em, in some cases. If the hired man had treated his hands to a little soap and water before he started milking it might not've happened.

"Covering up your sneezes when you have a cold—that's a fine idea. But when you cover 'em up with your hand and then, right away, shake hands with some fellow—well, I'd say you might better give him a dirty look than that kind of a dirty hand. And that's the way it goes.

"'Hands across the sea,' like they tell about, may help to promote peace—providing they don't get in somebody else's pocket. But when it comes to promoting health, I'd vote for hands in the washbasin."

PSYCHOANALYSIS

"Somebody asked me here awhile ago—they wanted to know what there was *to* 'this psychoanalysis business.' They only had about five minutes to spare—which was more'n I had—so I said it was a highly scientific method of digging up buried thoughts and looking 'em over and I told 'em if they'd drop around some night when I didn't have anything else to do I'd try'n explain a few of the high points about it as well as I could. The thing of it is: it ain't a five-minute subject. Too little explanation might be worse'n not any.

"One big trouble trying to make folks understand it is that, most of 'em, they already know so much about it that ain't so. I don't s'pose there's any medical subject that's been as much written about by people that knew as little about it as psychoanalysis has. The first class psychoanalysts—and I doubt if there's more'n a couple dozen of 'em in the country—they don't have time to spend writing this popular stuff and I don't know's they'd figure 'twas worth while, if they did. The professional writer fellows, they're more concerned—a lot of 'em are—with writing something that'll sell than they are with spreading the truth. The result is the average person, his ideas about it are about as clear as a bucket of mud. Usually he's prejudiced against it because he's heard so much about the 'sexstuff' in it.

"And, you know, it amuses me, sometimes, the way so many folks react to anything that has any reference to sex in it: they seem to think there must be something improper about it. Why, shucks! What's life, anyway, but sex? 'Male and female created he them.' Whether we're a poor fish or an insect or just a mere man we wouldn't be here if it wasn't for sex. In one form or another it's the incentive for all growth and development. It's the motive power for aspiration and achievement and the instinct more'n any other that determines success or failure in life. It figures in nervous and mental upsets just as it figures in most everything else in life. The only time it don't figure is after we're dead. No—if there's anything improper about sex it's in our own minds.

"The truth of it is that the man that learned how to explore the unconscious mind and uncover the repressed thoughts that are at the bottom of so many nervous and mental difficulties—*because* they're repressed—he made one of the most outstanding contributions in all the history of medical science. It'll never be a cure-all, psychoanalysis won't, because it takes an hour a day for anywhere from one to three or four years to handle one case and there ain't enough analysts and enough hours in the day to make it go around to everybody that might need it. My main point is that the kind of psychoanalysis a lot of these popular writers tell about ain't psychoanalysis at all—it's 'apple-sauce'—not very good apples, at that."

THE WASP WAIST

"It certainly does beat all! The way we've been trying to keep away from trouble in Europe—and now it comes out they're trying to send something over here that's bound to cause trouble. And it appears some of our own people are mixed up in it. Yes, sir! According to the papers one of these lady style experts came back from over there awhile ago and announced that 'Paris' had 'decreed' that women were to wear corsets again and now I open up a paper and see a store ad: 'Wasp waist returns via Paris.' Good night! Haven't we had trouble enough with the Japanese beetle and the English sparrow and foot-and-mouth disease and what not without being inflicted again with the wasp waist?

"I s'pose I'm sticking out my neck, just a mere doctor mixing into this style stuff but it always struck me kind of funny: these Paris decrees, as they call 'em. The time I was over there the French women I heard about, they didn't seem to be paying much attention to what 'Paris' said about styles; they were interested in what the American women were wearing. According to one Frenchman these folks that rig up the 'Paris models,' they make the best part of their living off from Americans. Seems to be another case of the prophet being without honor in his own country.

"It ain't that I'm against corsets 'per se,' as the fellow says; they have their place: take it after certain surgical operations—and there's other times when doctors recommend 'em. But this 'wasp waist' business! Why, say—all you got to do is look at a picture of some of the dumb-bells back in the nineties—that is, I mean when the women, a lot of 'em, were making 'emselves look like dumb-bells—all you got to do is take one look to see what effect that'd have on health. Some of those women practically made invalids of 'emselves. No, I claim corsets ought to be to prevent and correct deformities—not to create 'em.

"You take livers and stomachs and those various other interior installations, they need room to operate in. It's trouble enough, sometimes, making vital organs stay where they belong, without wearing any contraption that'll shove 'em out of place.

"No, sir! Display of a little common sense and independence—it ain't considered a detriment to a woman, not any more. I've got faith to believe they're going to vote down the wasp waist, no matter what Paris decrees."

GIRL OR BOY?

"This question of whether a baby's going to be a girl or a boy—it may not be in my time but some day I expect they're going to be able to order whichever one they want and get it, more or less. Stranger things than that have happened. I was reading, the other day, that after wars there's more boys born than girls. This fellow figured it might be because, after wars, the mothers weren't so well nourished. Somehow, being registered as a male myself, that idea don't just appeal to me: if there ain't enough material to turn out a first-class job it's liable to be a boy.

"That reminds me: the other day I was talking with a fellow and a certain man was mentioned. 'Do you know what he does for a hobby?,' this fellow says, 'He *knits!*' 'Well,' I said, 'What's the matter with that?' 'Why,' he says, 'do you like men that're blankety-blank sissies?' I didn't have time to argue with him but he plays in the band himself, this fellow does, and liking music's supposed to be sort of a feminine characteristic. But that don't make a sissy of him, any more'n cussing proves he's a man. When you get right down to it, most people that're what you'd call socially acceptable, their personality's more or less a mixture of masculine and feminine characteristics. A woman that there's no doubt about her being feminine, she goes in for athletics or she's got a good business head and so on. Then there's the singing cops and the generals that paint pictures—and what not. This 'he-man' stuff—why, say! A man that didn't have anything but strictly male traits you couldn't have him around—not unless you kept him in a cage.

"Of course there's extreme cases where it's abnormal. But, taking 'em by and large, a boy having some feminine traits and vice versa, it's mostly due to early impressions. I know a man that his mother wanted a girl and tried to make one out of him; the way she dressed him and curls and all that. Like a dutiful child he tried to be one, 'til he found out better. Getting things mixed up like that in their mind, it raises hob with 'em, sometimes, 'til they get it straightened out. And it's a funny thing: you take one of these swaggering guys that can't say anything mean enough about the 'sissies'—it's an even bet he's covering up an unconscious urge to be a girl himself.

"No. Seeing babies're all made out of the same kind of stuff and up to about the seventh week of their development they're all alike, the boys and girls,—that and the way they're brought up together,—it's no wonder you don't find many hundred-percenters."

WE'RE FOLKS, NOT FISH

"This past summer some of us were watching a youngster swimming and I agreed with the rest of 'em: she was 'a regular little fish.' But, you know, I got to thinking afterward: she was regular, all right and she was little and the way she handled herself in the water—she'd give a fish a run for his money but, just the same, it's a good thing for us humans to remember: water isn't our 'natural habitat,' as the fellow says. Take even Johnny Weismuller, there: if he had to choose between spending all his time in the water or in the trees, he'd do better in the trees.

"What brought it to mind: I was reading an article by a doctor—he's a nose, throat and ear man down in Florida—that's made quite a study of the connection between swimming and sinus and ear trouble. He brought out some things there I hadn't thought of.

"Of course water that's badly contaminated—most everybody knows it's liable to cause ear trouble where the drum's been perforated. That's why they advise using ear plugs. And getting it in your nose—it may lead to sinus infections. But it seems the water don't necessarily have to be contaminated. He'd had several cases that apparently came from swimming in a big spring-fed, natural pool where the water was practically pure, according to the analysis. It looks like the irritation from the water lowered resistance in the mucous membranes and the germs that were already in their noses got in their work.

"He's found out, this doctor has, that water animals and birds, their noses and ears—if they have 'em—well, take the alligator for instance: his nose is equipped with muscles that close it up, like a submarine, when he goes under water—so the water can't get in. Of course a first-class swimmer—a man, that is—he's learned to breathe out through his nose under water and that amounts to the same thing—while the air holds out, anyway.

"Chilling the body—that's another thing that lowers resistance to these ear and sinus infections. He claims water takes up heat from the body twenty-seven times faster than air. He experimented with 250 children, this doctor did, and found that after they'd been in the water forty-five minutes, in 220 of 'em their body temperature was down—some of 'em to as low as 95 degrees. We're not like some of these arctic water animals, like the seal and the whale and so on: their normal temperature runs from 101 to 104 degrees. They've got heat to spare; we haven't. And, of course, in our indoor pools we don't have the sun to help out, either.

"It's nothing against swimming, all this isn't. It's the finest sport in the world—and the best exercise. The point is to use sense and take precautions. We ain't fish or polar bears; we're mere human beings."

OVER THE FENCE



“There was a fellow down here awhile ago from Albany—was telling about the big celebration they had up in Buffalo over the opening of their new sewage disposal plant up there. Of course you have to be a sanitary engineer to get real sentimental about sewage (I heard of one of ’em: got all het up because his wife wouldn’t let him hang a picture of a disposal plant in the parlor ’longside his mother-in-law’s portrait). But, any-

way, Buffalo’d been discharging sewage into the Niagara river for years and hadn’t done anything about it. I suppose on account of the cost. It does run into considerable money. Now they’re as proud of their plant as a boy with his first pair of long pants and they’ve got a right to be: it’s one of the finest in the country, so they say.

“I remember reading about what happened back in the spring of thirty-three—I think it was. It seems an ice jam went out of the river all of a sudden and let loose an accumulated ‘slug’ of sewage (that’s what the engineers call it) and down below there, in Niagara Falls, they got their drinking water out of the river,—they had something like 10,000 cases of gastroenteritis—stomach and bowel trouble, that is. Of course they were chlorinating the water but they weren’t prepared for a deluge. Why, they claim they even saw the effects of it way up in the St. Lawrence river, three hundred miles away.

“You know this question of treating sewage—it’s some like building a new school in a small town: there’s most always an argument about it. Makes me think of the row we had over across the track here years ago. Some folks by the name of Mooney and a—I forget the name of the other family—they lived next to each other. The other fellow had a cesspool—overflowed on to Mooney’s back yard and wouldn’t do anything about it. Then Mrs. Mooney started emptying her slop pail over the fence and the fight was on. Like the story in my old third reader: ‘It makes a difference whose ox is gored.’ Well—both of ’em finally agreed to keep their slops at home and things quieted down.

“When you get right down to it, there ain’t an awful lot of difference, whether it’s a family or a municipality. All a city or village is—it’s just a collection of individuals that’ve parked ’emselves in the same locality. It may be an awful lot of trouble and expense to take care of their sewage but it ain’t any more polite for ’em to run it over onto the other fellow than it was for Mrs. Mooney to empty her pail over the fence. And they say treating the sewage ain’t going to lower Niagara Falls any. The water’ll be there, only it’ll be clean.”

SUPERSTITIONS ARE CATCHING

"Hallowe'en—where, if you don't lock up your front steps or your wheelbarrow, you're liable to find 'em up on a telephone pole somewhere—and this scribbling on windows and pictures of black cats and witches and so forth: it takes a terrible lot of imagination to think of that as celebration of a religious feast day. All the same that's what Hallowe'en is: it's the eve of All Saints' Day. It seems way back in the early days, the night before Hallowmas—that's what they used to call it—they figured that witches and various kinds of evil spirits had a night off and went out on a tear. So they built bonfires and made up faces and so on to scare 'em away. Nowadays you can't make up a face bad enough to keep the kids away and we've taken to bribing 'em with pennies and candy instead.

"But, you know, I was thinking: of course these comic strip pictures of witches and black cats and what not—nobody takes 'em seriously. But it's surprising how many people there are that, if a black cat crosses in front of their automobile—intelligent folks a lot of 'em—they're miserable the rest of the day. If it rains the next day or they get a plugged nickel, it was that black cat. The way it looks to me: any kind of a cat crossing in front of an automobile, it's liable to bring bad luck but mostly it's bad luck for the cat.

"Why, say—I know people that've got so many superstitions they aren't more'n fifty per cent efficient: they spend half their time dodging things or worrying about 'em. They won't start anything on Friday and they daresent go under a ladder; they're scared if they break a mirror and—well, there's a list of 'em as long as the telephone book.

"Of course all this stuff is just a product of ignorance: a hang-over from our savage ancestors. They didn't understand the causes of things and had to account for 'em some way. But it's hung over so long it's got to be a disease with a lot of people; just as much as St. Vitus dance or tuberculosis. It's a form of phobia; that's what it is. And it's catching. A child can catch it from the parents, the same as he can tuberculosis. That's the worst of it.

"Yes, sir. It's really a serious matter, that parents ought to give more thought to. Nobody's born with these phony ideas in their heads. But they pick 'em up, nine times out of ten, from watching and listening to the old folks. Unless they fall into intelligent hands and get cured while they're young, later on they'll pass the disease along to their children.

"It's hard to cure, after it's once set in but it can be helped. The best way to treat it, I figure, is to apply intelligence freely when you feel a spell coming on and do the thing you're afraid to do."

CLOSTRIDIUM BOTULINUM

"Some of the old folks—I remember when I was a youngster, when somebody'd discover a speck of something in the stuff they were eating, they'd say: 'Oh, well—you've got to eat a peck of dirt before you die.' And I've eaten places, before now, when I figure you could catch up on your quota in a whole lot less'n a lifetime. But when we're joking about it I wonder how many people've tumbled to the fact that two of the most fatal diseases we have come from the soil. Tetanus—lockjaw for short—of course you don't eat that; it's a wound affair. But the other one, botulism, you take a mighty little dirt from just the right place and can it along with some string beans or corn or something and don't heat it up enough and you might get a free ticket to 'the sweet bye and bye.'

"Yes, sir. If you're looking for a name for a new baby don't ever name it *Clostridium Botulinum*. It may sound like a Roman emperor but the fact is it's the name of a bug with an awful bad reputation. Fortunately it ain't got as much of a foothold in the soil around this section as it has out in some parts of the west but still I see the state health department, here this fall, reported six cases in two families—three in each. In one family one of the patients and two hogs died. The hogs got what was left of the spinach—canned at home, it was—and I guess 'twas lucky for the other patients there was quite a lot left. They got off better'n they usually do—these folks did. Ordinarily you've got less'n a fifty-fifty chance.

"This botulinus bug—you give it a chance to grow where the conditions are just right and it gives out a toxin so poisonous that a—well, what I was reading: a guinea pig was killed by such a small fraction of a teaspoonful that you could hardly count the ciphers. Yes, if I was thinking of tasting of any stuff that didn't look or smell just right (acid things, pickles and fruit and so on—you don't have to worry about them) before I did it I'd look and see if my life insurance premiums were up to date. Folks have died, before now, from just tasting of something that had botulinus toxin in it. It's kind of funny: you take diphtheria and tetanus toxin and they claim you can swallow it and it won't hurt you. But this stuff—boy!

"They claim it's more common—botulinus poisoning is, among some kinds of animals and birds and so on than it is in humans. I s'pose that's maybe how the bugs get in the soil. A lot of wild ducks out west, so I was reading, got it from digging around in warm, stagnant water.

"Of course when you consider the tons of stuff that've been canned at home and only thirteen cases in the State in ten years, it's nothing to lie awake nights over. It's like lightning: it ain't very liable to hit you but if it does, it's bad. The main thing is: if you're in doubt about any food, let it boil ten minutes before you eat it."

GIVE THE DOCTOR HIS DUE

"Old Dr. Hemingway, that practiced here when I was a boy—I remember his telling me once about one winter night, being called in the middle of the night to see an old fellow that had a big place seven or eight miles out here on the Ravine road. He'd been awful uncomfortable, the old man had and the doctor did a little operation that relieved him. 'Doctor,' he says, 'that's worth a hundred dollars to me!' Six months later the doctor sent him a bill for fifteen and he had to threaten to sue him before he got it. That kind of gratitude, I've often noticed, it's like love: sometimes the worse they have it the sooner they get over it.

"What made me think of it: all this debate about inadequacy of medical service, doctors' organizations being indicted for restraint of trade and so on—I think a lot of people are getting the idea that doctors are sort of an ornery lot—that they're running some kind of a racket or something. The way it looks to me, it's like a lot of this war news we've been getting: the more 'news' they get the less they know about the real situation. 'Actions speak louder than words,' as my mother used to say. I figure they'd hit it nearer right if they'd pay more attention to what their own doctors at home are doing and less to what the ones that get their names in the papers are saying.

"Doctors—well it's like Henry Smith says about horses. 'Hosses,' Henry says, 'they're like folks: there ain't none of 'em perfect.' They have their bad days, doctors do, and they get kind of uppish and all that but, if I do say it as shouldn't, there's an awful lot of folks that've had good reason to be glad the old doc was there when they needed him.

"Speaking of places without doctors, I know a place up above here: every now and then they send out an S.O.S. because they haven't got any doctor in the place. Well—they've had at least three and they've had to quit. The folks that're good pay, a lot of 'em, when the going's good they'll send over to the county seat and get one of the men over there. The only time they'll call the local doc is when they can't get anybody else. There's others, when it comes to paying—as somebody said: they wouldn't even pay his wife a visit. Not many doctors ever expect to get rich but, after all, they do have to eat.

"It might be a good idea if folks, every time they have reason to be grateful to their doctor, if they'd write it down so they wouldn't forget it. Then, if they'd have a meeting about once a year and compare notes—well, I've got an idea it would figure up that doctors aren't such a bad lot, at that."

HYGIENE, DENTAL AND MENTAL

"You remember, back some time ago, you were talking about some law or regulation or something and you said it didn't have 'any teeth in it'? Weren't you the one? Anyway, whoever it was, what they meant was it didn't have enough force to it—wasn't capable of taking hold of what it was supposed to. Of course that's a common expression but I wonder how many folks ever stopped to realize the significance of it.

"Well, sir—that idea of weakness and helplessness and so on coming from not having teeth—it's like some of the teeth: the roots of it go right down to the bottom of things. Makes me think of a squib I was reading. A throat specialist was starting to use a laryngoscope—you know: one of these things to look down your larynx—and he says to the woman, he says: 'You'd be surprised how far down we can see with these things.' 'Oh, Doctor,' she says, 'that hole in my stocking—I meant to change it but I didn't have time.'

"But to get back to the subject: if you ever had to have your teeth pulled out, especially the front ones, you probably remember how you felt. Having a lot of teeth pulled at one time, it's quite a shock, anyway—physically, that is. But I was thinking about the mental effect. Of course, thinking about how you look—it makes you self-conscious and you're handicapped when you come to eat and all that, but that ain't all there is to it. You're depressed and nervous—a lot of 'em are, out of proportion to the actual physical difficulty. They are, that is, if they don't understand the reasons for such mental reactions. Understanding such things—it works some like an antitoxin; helps to sort of neutralize the mental poison, as you might say.

"The reason for it: I s'pose for hundreds of generations—ever since we got civilized enough to have our teeth decay, the idea's been bred into us that without teeth we're helpless. And when you stop to think of it they couldn't always step out, the way we can today, and buy 'emself a set of store teeth. They didn't have ready-made food, all chewed and digested for 'em, either. So in our unconscious minds teeth have gotten to be sort of a symbol of strength and power: no teeth, no power.

"'Dental hygiene'? Why, yes—I s'pose so—or mental hygiene; whichever you prefer. Anyway—all you've got to do is change the D to an M and 'good dental hygiene' is 'good mental hygiene'—and that's just about the way it is."

THE STATE LABORATORY

“The way these scientific folks, laboratories and so on, shy off at publicity—afraid something’ll get out ahead of time and be misunderstood—it makes me think of a fellow in my class in medical school. He was six feet tall, an ex-football player, one of the most popular fellows in the class. I forget how the story came out but it seems he was a premature infant. Of course that was some years previous to his entering medical school—but it just goes to show that prematurity, while it’s undesirable, ain’t necessarily fatal.

“Speaking of laboratories: a few years back some relatives of mine out in the middle West, one of their youngsters came down with cerebrospinal meningitis and it looked pretty bad for him. Their doctor out there told ’em if they could only get some New York State meningitis serum they might be able to pull him through. Well, sir, the State Laboratory got some out to ’em and the boy got well—and he’s another six-footer now, too. Whether or not ’twas the serum did it, they all thought so—and so do I. But that shows how the State Laboratory and its products stand among people that know about such things, all over the country—and in other countries too, for that matter. And yet I’ll bet there’s better’n five million people right here in our own State never even heard of the State Laboratory, to say nothing of knowing what it does.

“Why, say! you take just the serums and vaccines and what not they make up there—I wouldn’t be afraid to bet the people that’ve had their lives saved by ’em, if you could get ’em together, there’d be enough to make a couple of good sized cities. And, of course, before they even start treating a lot of these diseases there’s various kinds of tests and what not—cultures and blood tests and so on, that have to be made. And besides that there’s water analyses and milk examinations and all that stuff.

“Of course there’s the local laboratories: they make a lot of these examinations, too. But that’s another thing: the standards in our local laboratories today are high enough so you can depend on their results. That’s mighty important, when it’s a matter of life and death. The State Laboratory’s had quite a lot to do with that.

“I s’pose all these ‘uncontrolled observations’ I’m making—maybe they wouldn’t approve of ’em. Just the same, I claim these laboratories ought not to be hiding their light ‘under a bushel’—not when the public’s paying the light bill.”

WHY SUGAR PILLS WERE INVENTED

“One of the medical stories that bobs up every so often—you remember the woman, the doctor put the thermometer under her tongue and went away and forgot it? The next day, when he came around to see her, she was still holding on to it. She heaved a deep breath: ‘Well, Doctor,’ she says, ‘I didn’t know’s I could stand it ’til you got here—but I can see it’s done me a world of good’. That’s the way it is, a lot of times: as long’s you *do* something, they’re satisfied. Of course there’s a lot of people, if you could keep a thermometer under their tongue for twelve hours or so—but I’m getting off the subject.

“Back in my medical college days there was somebody—I don’t remember who—but I got the idea drummed into my head that in medical and surgical conditions it was usually safer not to do anything than to do the wrong thing. Of course one thing they didn’t tell us in medical college was how to satisfy the friends and relatives. I hadn’t been out long before I began seeing cases where I’d figure it’d be better to wait developments for a few hours. ‘But, Doctor,’ somebody’d pipe up, ‘Aren’t you going to *do* anything?’ I expect that’s how ‘sugar pills’ came to be invented.

“Yes; I remember well a case I saw—back in the big polio epidemic—in 1916: a youngster, it was, had what they call the bulbar type—eye paralysis and so on. He seemed to be getting along pretty well but he was in a poor home and there weren’t any nurses to be got, so he was just lying there—which was the best thing he could’ve done, as it turned out. Anyway, some people got interested in the case and they insisted he ought to be taken to the hospital, where they could *do* something for him. So we got the ambulance and took him—as careful as we could. He hadn’t much more’n got there before his paralysis got worse and he died. There’s never been much question in my mind: it was moving him that did it.

“What made me think of this stuff was something I was reading in one of the magazines—about accident cases. You take somebody, for instance, that’s been hit by an automobile and may have broken bones—maybe his back’s been hurt. For anybody that didn’t understand such things or didn’t have the equipment to try to move him might mean the difference between life and death. But let anybody suggest leaving him lie on the pavement ’til the doctor gets there and the ‘collective wrath,’ as this fellow calls it, of the crowd begins to rise. If they can’t help the fellow that’s hurt they want to hang somebody that ain’t. No, sir; most accident cases—it’s safer to keep the crowd moving than the patient.”

SAVE THE DOG FROM RABIES

"Back last summer, I guess it was, you remember we were talking about rabies, 'dog days' not having anything to do with it and so on? Well, sir, the other day I heard a rabies story that's—well, I guess it's what you might call a 'three bell' story. It seems in a section of the State where they're having considerable rabies a man noticed a dog acting queer and picked him up and put him in the back of his car. He looked up a constable and asked him what ought to be done with him—the dog, that is. The constable, so they claim, advised him to get rid of him: drive outside of town and turn him loose. Instead of that he found a veterinarian and handed the dog over to him. It turned out it had rabies and had bitten several children that same day. Yes; that cop was a great help.

"But when you get right down to it, the main reason we're falling down on this job of controlling rabies—it ain't that folks are dumb; it's the misguided notions a lot of 'em have about dogs. Of course it's dogs running around loose that keep rabies going and it don't take any mental giant to figure out that the way to get rid of it is to stop the dogs running loose in the sections where they're liable to be exposed to it. And that's the law, too. But a lot of 'em that're fond of dogs, they seem to think it's an encroachment on canine liberty or something or other and they're ready to fight for a great principle. It's another example of the human tendency to get mental wires crossed and fight for the wrong principle. If they really want to do something to promote the interests and general welfare of canines, they might better get on the other side and fight for the eradication of rabies.

"You see, one trouble is: a dog that's got it—the virus can be in his saliva three or four days before he has any symptoms that'd be noticed. Before his condition was discovered he might bite a dozen dogs he met in his travels and nobody know anything about it. Of course even among perfectly normal and well-behaved dogs one biting another enough to break the skin is nothing unusual. These dogs, after they're bitten—it takes anywhere from two weeks to six months or more to come down with it and when they start 'running mad,' as they used to call it, nobody's looking for it. If they could only get this vaccine developed so you could be sure dogs that had it'd be protected, that might solve the problem but you can't depend on it, so they say—not yet.

"The law—when rabies is around—every dog that's off'n his own property and ain't on a leash, has to wear a muzzle. The local health officers and police are responsible for enforcing it—and they're responsible if they *don't* enforce it. It was made—that law was—for the protection of dogs, as well as humans, from one of the most fatal diseases there is. They say the dog's the best friend man's got. Well, sir—when rabies is around is a good time to demonstrate that man's the best friend the dog's got by getting rid of the disease."

PNEUMONIA

"Back in my hospital days down there in Bellevue, every winter the wards'd be full-up with pneumonia cases and a lot of the men were truck drivers. That is, they drove horses; that was before the days of motor trucks. Most of 'em drank considerable—these fellows did—and as soon as they began to get delirious they'd start driving. Some nights—why, say! you'd think there was a driving contest or something going on, there'd be so many of 'em at it at once. You'd hear 'em: 'Giddap, there!—Come on, Charlie!'—and all that stuff. Well, sir; it was sort of a tradition among the internes that if one of those fellows started trying to back up he was going to die—and darned if it didn't seem to work out. Yes, sir.

"Anyway, in those days some of 'em got well and some of 'em didn't. I guess it depended largely on their constitution. What we did for 'em depended mostly on what school of thought we were following at the time. They opened up the windows and packed 'em in ice or bundled 'em up with hot water bottles, gave 'em stimulants and oxygen and what not. We did all we knew how—but I never figured it made a terrible lot of difference.

"The last few years, though, it's been a different proposition. The laboratory folks, they got wise to the pneumonia bugs—the pneumococci, and began typing 'em, as they called it: divided 'em into groups. Four of 'em there were at first. Then they developed a serum for Type One that if they got it in time'd save a lot of 'em that used to die. Now they've got 'em divided up into so many types I've almost lost track of 'em: around thirty, I believe it is. And they've got serums for several of 'em.

"Yes. A pneumonia patient today, if he's got a good doctor—and gets him early enough and if there's a laboratory handy—he's got a good chance. You can take the sputum to the laboratory and in half an hour they'll tell you what type it is. Then you send to the district supply station and get the right serum and get it into him before the toxins—that is, the poisons these bugs give out—before they've had time to get him down, and there you are—and there he is. They've got to get it early, though, and be sure it's the right type.

"That isn't all, though. They say it never rains but it pours. The chemists came along with this new drug, sulfapyridine, that seems to work just as well as the serum does. So now we've got a choice of treatments, depending on the case. And both of 'em are scientific—not just shooting in the dark, like we used to. But either way the earlier you get 'em, the better. A few days' delay and—well, it ain't so good.

"It's like Alonzo Dickey—he got me out at six o'clock in the morning—wanted me to come right away. When I got there, there wasn't much of anything the matter with him. 'Well,' Alonzo says, 'medicine works better on me the first thing in the morning and besides,' he says, 'if you came later I might not be here myself.'"

PROPAGANDA

"This word 'propaganda'—you know it's kind of funny, how, every now and then, a perfectly good, respectable word like that sort of falls into disrepute. Like over there on the other side, when there's a battle or something and we read the—what do you call 'em? communiques?—the stories both sides put out. 'Oh, well,' we say, 'that's just propaganda.' In other words, it's just for home consumption, so you can't depend on it. And that's about the way we've come to think of it: something that's put out to influence the public and only shows one side of the picture; something it ain't safe to accept without checking up on it.

"Here a little while ago I looked it up in the dictionary—and, you know, you get a lot of surprises out of the old dictionary. At least I do. It seems the Propaganda was a congregation of cardinals and the College of the Propaganda was started in 1623 to educate priests for missionary work. Later on 'propaganda' got to mean any organization or plan for spreading a doctrine or set of principles.

"Nowadays, with all the fancy means of communication, you can't get away from it: organized publicity to influence you to buy something or do something—or not to do something. And nobody that's got brains and keeps 'em clicking needs to be told that quite a lot of it's one-sided and misleading, to say the least.

"I see by the paper some of these so-called consumer's organizations that criticize advertising—somebody claims communists are back of 'em. Well—I wouldn't know a communist from a free-will Baptist but I meet up with a lot of misleading advertising—treatments for this, that and the other thing and so on, that'd stand quite a lot of criticizing by somebody. That's one kind of propaganda. It makes you think of what old Virgil there said about bewareing of Greeks bearing gifts.

"But the advertising: I figure in time that'll sort of stimulate its own antitoxin. There's another side to it, though, I'm more concerned about. It's propaganda that's what you might call inadvertently misleading. Various kinds of schemes and projects, pro and con: public health, welfare, medical care and what not—there's a tendency at times to set out all the points that support one side of the case and cover up the ones that don't. Maybe stringing the public's necessary when you're running a war. I wouldn't know about that. But in matters like these, the way it looks to me, Lincoln's system was pretty good: giving his opponent's points as well as his own and letting the jury decide. Even if they didn't fall for his arguments, they thought more of him. Yes, sir—it's like putting a tack in the teacher's chair: when you carry a point by misleading arguments, you got to look out that you ain't the one that gets stuck in the end."

WHAT ABOUT IMMUNITY?

"One night I dropped in over't the Club and there was a bunch of old-timers sitting around there, settling world affairs and so on. When I went in—I don't know what they'd been talking about but somebody says, 'Doc, tell us in a few words what there is to this immunity business.' Of course that's the way it always is: there's plenty of time to sit around and gas about nothing in particular but when it comes to something like that they've always got to have it 'in a few words.'

"The shortest way I could think of to put it—I said it was being fixed so you couldn't catch things. 'Why, sure,' somebody says, 'That's what was the matter with that trottin' horse Henry Smith used to own.' Well, Henry said, the only trouble with that 'hoss'—it was just like Doc Jones here: they never gave him a decent start. Anyway, I told 'em I'd give 'em an illustration. There was some people, I said, that'd had several minute doses of knowledge injected into 'em. The effect was that their brains had built up sort of an immunity so't when they were exposed to large doses it didn't have any effect.

"Seriously, though, that's some the way it is. You take diphtheria toxoid, for example, (that's the toxin with the poison taken out): from one to three small doses injected under the skin—inside of a few months the body cells go to producing antitoxin. After that, if any diphtheria germs move in and try to do business this antitoxin acts as an antidote and the youngster doesn't get diphtheria. That's what they call active immunity—because the body cells do it themselves and, after they're once started, they keep it up.

"The reason I mentioned youngsters particularly: it's small children that're most liable to get diphtheria and so need the protection most. Of course when they're first born they usually have some immunity they've gotten from the mother but they lose that after a little. That's why they usually give 'em toxoid when they're about six months old. One nice thing about it: the younger they are the less it bothers 'em.

"When they haven't been immunized but have been exposed to diphtheria, they give 'em ready-made antitoxin. They get it from the blood of a horse that's been immunized. It stays in the person's blood for a few weeks—this antitoxin does and while it lasts it works the same as if they'd produced it themselves. They call that passive immunity—the body don't have to do anything about it except furnish parking space. This same antitoxin is used for treatment, only in larger doses. Other diseases—it's more or less the same: smallpox, typhoid, tetanus and so on. But we'll have to go into that some other time.

"Yes. I figure that while we're building defenses against imaginary foreign foes we ought not to neglect our defenses against the disease germs. They're already here."

THE YOUTH MOVEMENT

"A friend of mine—his youngster wanted to be a cop and, of course, that was a laudable ambition. But when he got his dad's revolver out of the bureau drawer and started out looking for bandits to shoot, 'Pop' decided the kid's ambitions were materializing a little too fast for his own good, so he called a conference to talk it over.

"What made me think of it: this 'youth movement' business—I've got sort of a feeling it needs to have the brakes put on it now and then, to keep it from going too far. Of course youngsters developing courage and self-reliance and initiative—that's normal and ought to be encouraged. They're handicapped for life, some of 'em are, by parents doing everything for 'em—never giving 'em a chance to make their own decisions or learn from their own mistakes. The CCC camps—I figure that's one of the best things the government ever did. And these Youth Congresses and what not; they get to stand on their own feet and think and speak for themselves. It's a fine thing and I'm for it—providing somebody sees to it their energy and enthusiasm don't get 'em to moving along faster'n their judgment can follow.

"I notice along about the time they're due for their first vote—I don't know where it comes from but a lot of 'em seem to get the idea they ought to be running the government. Putting that kind of ideas in their heads—I figure that's overdoing it a little. Learning to take responsibility is one thing; taking responsibility you ain't equipped for is something else. You know what a lot of folks said about sending half-trained soldiers to war: they'd just be 'cannon fodder.' It's like the boy that turned the grindstone for the man with the axe to grind: when they're disillusioned they're going to be hurt—bad enough, some of 'em, so they won't get over it right away.

"Yes, whether it's running a government or fighting a war, energy and enthusiasm ain't enough. It takes experience. Realizing limitations is just as important as seeing possibilities. It may slow 'em down but they're more liable to get there. Did you ever stop to think how much experience a seven-year-old youngster's had? Well, twenty-one years is quite a lot but, after all, it's only three times seven.

"It makes me think of the one they told about old Grandpa Pepper. He sent and got a box of pills to restore youth, or something like that. He was kind of impatient, the old gentleman was, so instead of taking one a day, like the directions said, he took the whole box one night before he went to bed. The next morning, so they claim, they had a terrible time waking him up. Finally he rolled over and grunted: 'All right, all right,' he says, 'I'll get up if you'll give me a chance—but I don't feel like going to school.' That was carrying the 'youth movement' a little too far."

QUACKS

“Speaking of quacks—did I ever tell you about the one that was responsible for an honest man going into medicine? Well, sir, this fellow was a carpenter—married, he was and had a daughter in high school. His wife developed cancer and she went to one or two doctors and they didn’t seem to be helping her. Finally somebody told ’em about a man—he called himself a doctor and advertised he could cure cancer. So they went to him. ‘Oh, yes,’ he said, ‘he could cure it’ but it would cost ’em—I forget how much but it was more’n they had. Anyway, they scraped together the money and he started treating her: some salve or something.

“To make a long story short, he treated her until their money was gone and she was getting worse all the time. Finally they heard about a good man—a real doctor, and they went to him. But by that time she was so far gone there wasn’t anything to do for her and she died.

“Right there and then this fellow decided he was going to be a doctor and an honest one. He went back to high school, in the same class with his seventeen-year-old daughter and graduated. Then he went to Syracuse Medical College and he’s still practicing down below there in the old home town—a village of about eight hundred. Yes, that’s an absolutely true story. I could show you the doctor’s name in the medical directory. It was no credit to the quack but it was his dishonesty and the human misery that came from it that inspired that one man, anyway, to a career of honest medical service.

“You know, I’ve often thought: we’ve got statistics on most everything—it’s too bad we haven’t got some that’d show what proportion of folks that’ve died wouldn’t have—not when they did anyway—if they’d gone to competent doctors in the first place, instead of advertising quacks. I’ve got an idea the figures’d be impressive enough so they’d offset quite a lot of advertising.

“Of course the trouble is—it’s like with syphilis, for example: even if we had such figures they’d only show the ones that died—and that ain’t half the story. They wouldn’t cover the thousands that’re paralyzed or riding around in wheel chairs or in hospitals for the insane that needn’t have been if they’d been properly treated. And that’s saying nothing of the tens of thousands that’ve squandered their money on fake ‘cures’ before they finally woke up.

“Of course, it’s kind of discouraging—that and all this war stuff and so on. But I guess maybe it’s like old Saint Paul there said: ‘. . . now we see through a glass, darkly. . .’ but the time’s coming when we’ll see things the way they really are.”

INFANTILE PARALYSIS

“Speaking of infantile paralysis—you know, it’s one of the interesting things about communicable diseases the way a disease, sometimes, will take on what you might call catchingness. Yes, I can remember well when, once in a great while, a youngster’d come down with it and, of course, we wouldn’t recognize it ’til they developed a paralysis of an arm or leg or something. We didn’t know anything about the cause of it—didn’t have all this laboratory stuff to help us. Well—we didn’t think of it then as catching and, so far as we could see, nobody else got it.

“Then, the next thing we knew it had lighted up and we began getting epidemics. You remember what a time we had there in 1916. Like a lot of other things, good and bad, we got it from Europe. It started down around New York and sort of followed the main lines of travel: up the river and then West, across the State and so on. Along at first it was mostly in the larger places; then epidemics began popping up out on what you might call the branch lines.

“During the epidemics we found out there were a lot of mild cases: ‘abortive’ cases, they used to call ’em—got well without any paralysis or so little it wouldn’t be discovered. Ordinary times, when there wasn’t any epidemic going on, cases like that might pass for grippe or most anything. Those early cases—of course now we know they didn’t just happen; the youngsters got it somewhere, from somebody else. I suppose maybe we had some of that same kind of mild cases, that didn’t get recognized. But why it got so much more catching there all of a sudden—I guess probably we’d better leave that for the experts to explain—if they can.

“The cause of it—of course we know now it’s a virus. Bacteria—you can see them, but a virus—well, it’s some like indigestion: you can’t see it but you can see the effects of it. But there’s some things about the way it spreads they ain’t got figured out yet. A lot of folks are working on it, though. I see here lately they’ve found it in sewage—this virus.

“There isn’t any cure for this disease, not yet. The aftercare, though—that’s the big thing: preventing deformities and helping ’em get back on their feet after they’ve been hit by it. Yes, sir! The right kind of aftercare—at the right time, it may make all the difference between their being hopeless cripples and useful citizens. Putting in our widow’s mites, here awhile ago, that’s going to help. It was a good thing for us, too, as well as the youngsters. It’s kind of uplifting to feel unselfish once in a while—even if we ain’t.”

SHOULD JOHNNY BE SPANKED?

"One of the psychologists—I saw by the paper where he'd decided they ought to revive the custom of spanking children when they're bad. He said it'd excite 'unpleasant protoplasmic reactions' that'd impress on their brain cells—or something—that being naughty produced unpleasant results. Well—I admit there's times, whether you're dealing with youngsters or grownups, when it seems like physical violence's the only thing that'll meet the situation. But inflicting physical pain ain't the only way of stimulating unpleasant protoplasmic reactions. There's other ways that're full as effective that're a lot more genteel—and, maybe, safer.

"Anyway, there's a side of it a lot of parents don't understand, that's worth considering. There's a couple of medical terms—the psychiatrists use 'em more'n the general practitioner does—they don't get advertised much. One of 'em is 'sadism.' Getting pleasure out of hurting something—that's what it means. Of course, you intimate to a father or mother that they enjoyed spanking a youngster and they'd want to have you arrested for holding subversive ideas—or something. And they don't enjoy it, most of 'em don't—not in the way they think of it: not consciously, that is.

"But the way it is: you start with young children and it's natural for 'em to be cruel. They're just little animals. The three-year-old, he gets a great kick out of twisting the dog's tail or sticking a pin in the baby. But little by little he gets it impressed on him that it's bad business to hurt things. After awhile he may even go to the other extreme and be extra tenderhearted. What he actually does: he don't get rid of his cruelty impulses—he just represses 'em: shoves 'em out of consciousness. They're there, just the same, only working under cover.

"Well, the youngster grows up and like other childhood instincts that get repressed, this one gets carried over into adult life—more in some folks than others. All you've got to do to see how some of it finds what you might call a natural outlet: go to a wrestling or boxing match and watch the crowd enthuse when somebody's getting his arm twisted or being hammered groggy. The ones that're too repressed to consciously enjoy seeing other folks suffer, they don't inflict pain unless they can find what looks like a good excuse to relieve their conscience and then they get their pleasure unconsciously.

"There may be a place for spanking (of course there is—but I mean in what you might call the social order) but we ought to be pretty sure our motive's the one we think it is. There's something else—that other medical term I mentioned, but I guess we'll have to leave that 'til some other time. Anyway, I figure slippers are intended for the feet and not the seat."

MORE ABOUT SPANKING

"Let's see. What was it we were talking about last week? Oh, yes: spanking children—the possibility of there being a hidden motive the parent didn't recognize, sadistic impulses and what not. That's right—and I said there was another side to it we'd talk about some other time.

"You know, I've often thought about what it says there in the Bible: 'Whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also'—and so on. Of course that's taking considerable chances. But I figure what they had in mind was something like this: if you didn't sock the fellow back but sort of counted ten, while you thought it over, you might reach the conclusion you had it coming to you. Makes me think of the boy that was sitting on the other one—said he was counting ten but he wanted to be sure he'd be there when he got through. Anyway, what I started to say: this spanking business—a good many times it's the parent deserves it more'n the kid does, for not setting him a better example and bringing him up right. That makes it worse for the youngster: there's nothing makes us any madder'n half realizing we're wrong ourselves and being in a spot where it'd be embarrassing to admit it.

"But to come back to this other matter, there's a term the mental experts use that means getting pleasure out of being hurt—that is under some conditions. I know that sounds kind of fishy and it ain't so easy to explain. Of course it goes without saying, no youngster, consciously, gets any entertainment out of a walloping. It hurts his feelings more ways than one. But there's plenty of grown-ups, if they could shake off their old inhibitions enough to really face the facts, would find that the memory of being spanked by somebody they loved, instead of being a painful memory really gave 'em sort of a thrill. What that means is that while what you might call the tactile sensation at the seat of operations was registering as pain, in his unconscious mind it was being permanently recorded as pleasure.

"Some of the extreme cases these unconscious pleasure memories sort of come to the top and they're so strong the individual gives in to 'em; actually gets somebody to hurt him, one way or another, for the enjoyment he gets out of it. They get into the courts now and then, these cases do. Of course that's a form of perversion. The ordinary run of mild cases, though, it's repressed and they don't recognize it themselves. You can see it cropping out in various ways, though—somebody that knows the signs can.

"No. If there's some drug or something we don't understand very well—may do good but's just as liable to do harm, I'd rather not use it on folks I'm responsible for. The same way with this spanking stuff: until we know more about it I figure, if we've got to do one or the other, we'd better spoil the rod and spare the child."

KEEPING PEOPLE "HEALTH MINDED"

"This Youth Congress here awhile ago—a lot of folks got quite disturbed because so many of 'em seemed to be sympathetic to communism and other what you might call radical ideas. They figured it was something wrong with these youngsters. Well, sir, the way it looks to me: the trouble's with us folks more'n 'tis with them.

"It makes me think: 'I've just been putting in a humidifier over't the house. For years we went along just taking it for granted the atmosphere was all right. Of course the furniture dried up and came apart—and my tobacco and all that, but I didn't think much about it. Then somebody sold me an instrument to measure humidity and—why, say! From the time the heat was turned on in the fall, 'til spring, we didn't have any humidity. Well, then I got this humidifier. So long as you keep her blowing out moisture, it's all right. But shut 'er off for twenty-four hours and down she goes. The heat—of course that's working all the time and you've got to keep pumping in moisture to keep up with it.

"And, you know, that's about the way it is with this other stuff. We've got so used to thinking of everything in this country as sound, and our ideas as the right ones, we just sort of take it for granted everybody'll think the same's we do just from being around and associating with us. But the communists and these other folks, they don't let up: they keep their stuff steaming all the time. It's like Hookie Wood: every time they used to have revival meetings, Hookie'd get religion and reform but when the meetings were over it wouldn't be long before he'd be over'n the county jail again.

"These youngsters—they ain't passed the impressionable age and they haven't had much experience to go by, so they're liable to be influenced by the ones that keep working on 'em. And what they're up against now, it's more so. They're apt to figure most any change'd be for the better—which we know ain't so. Of course some of our old ideas that've stood the test of time, as we say—we don't want to forget that testing instruments are being improved all the time. But if we're convinced they're right we can't just sit back and expect folks to soak 'em up. We've got to keep pumping 'em out, if we want results, just like that humidifier.

"And it's the same way with our public health business. If folks've begun to be a little 'health minded', it's just because the air's been kept full of public health for the last fifteen or twenty years. With all the other stuff that's in the air these days—and some of it's pretty hot—it's going to take more public health than ever to keep up the percentage. It reminds me of Ed Pringle's boat: Ed said he had to start bailing before it began to leak, in order to keep ahead of it. And I guess that's about it."

WHOA!

“Several years ago I was standing out on the street in one of the towns up the line here and a team of horses hitched on a two-seated surrey—didn’t have any driver—hove around the corner. They were stepping right along, those horses were. Well, sir, I’d always wanted to be a hero but never seemed to get to it, so I thought to myself: ‘Here’s my chance.’ I got out in the middle of the street, all set to grab one of ’em by the head as they went by. Just before they got to me—I used to be pretty well acquainted with horses, back in the old days, and maybe that was what gave me the idea: all of a sudden I said ‘Whoa, back!’ and say! those horses stopped so quick the back wheels almost went through the dashboard.

“And, you know, I was just thinking: there’s times when that same idea could be applied to advantage to other things beside runaway horses. We put in a lot of time and effort trying to stop something by elaborate and roundabout methods when we could stop it short by just saying the right words. Take these milkborne epidemics we have—anywhere from two to five or six every year—all we’d have to do to stop ’em would be to say ‘Pasteurize!’—that is providing it was said in a way that meant something.

“Yes. They tell me it’s got to a point where there’s only about 27 per cent of the milk upstate that ain’t pasteurized—most of it’s in rural sections—and that 27 per cent’s responsible for practically all the milk epidemics and cases of undulant fever. It appears the main reason we’ve still got that much is that there are still a considerable number of folks that, if they had to pasteurize or sell their milk to a pasteurizing plant, they think it’d cost ’em something.

“Considering what it means to the ones that get sick—hundreds of ’em in the course of a year—I wouldn’t say that was a very strong argument. And more’n that: I’ve got an idea if we could figure up how much business concerns lose every time there’s an epidemic, including falling off in milk sales, it’d foot up a lot higher’n what the pasteurizing would cost. No, sir. The way it looks to me, it’s pretty near time somebody said ‘Whoa!’ ”



OVEREATING

"The other day I was reading a letter from a man that runs a weekly newspaper—eighty-two years old, this man is; been publishing his own paper better'n fifty years. He said his health was so good he could 'still get out in center field and take the fungoes.' I don't know what a 'fungoe' is but if I was to get out in center field—when there's a ball game going on, anyway—I'd need to take something.

"Anyway, in the course of the last twenty-five years I've read a good many of this fellow's editorials—his ideas on health matters and so on—and I've disagreed with a lot of 'em. But one thing he said there'n his letter, I don't have any trouble agreeing with. The main thing, he said, was to get plenty of outdoor exercise, don't worry and use sense about your eating. Of course he left out what I'd call the *main* thing: that's having a good constitution. And not worrying: that's good advice, all right, but you might just as well tell a Model-T not to rattle as to tell some folks not to worry. Both of 'em—you'd have to build 'em over.

"But the eating part of it—I haven't got any statistics to prove it but I'd be willing to gamble that not using sense about eating has shortened the lives of more people past middle age than—well, than either cancer or syphilis, say. And the same fellow that the idea of having one of those diseases would give him a chill—he'll eat himself to death and won't give it a thought 'til he feels one foot in the grave. Overeating—it's like opening all the drafts on the furnace and shoveling in more coal'n it'll burn every day. It clogs up the kidneys and other organs and overworks the heart and, just like you'd expect, sooner or later they give out. And it don't do much good to call the plumber.

"If he gets indigestion—this fellow—that may save him. Like old Dr. Stephen Smith. When he was ninety-nine he said he attributed his age to the fact he'd had indigestion most of his life and had to live on bread and milk.

"The folks that can't get the food they need—I don't suppose they'd get much consolation out of knowing there's more danger in too much than in too little—in this country, anyway. Scientific facts ain't very filling. But if they could have what other folks eat that they'd be better off without, it'd give 'em all a break. Yes, sir. It's a good deal like fattening hogs: the more they overeat, the sooner the butcher'll get 'em."

HOW MUCH IS JUST ENOUGH?

"When we were talking, here awhile ago, about eating too much and all that—you remember, the question came up as to how much was just enough? Made me think of what President Lincoln said there when somebody asked him how long a man's legs ought to be: just long enough, he said, so they'd reach the ground. So this eating business—I'd say if we eat just enough to satisfy the needs of the body, without taking on board any surplus, that's just enough. Anybody that has to have it all figured out for 'em: the thing to do, if you've got a good husky appetite, is to stop when it's around eighty per cent satisfied.

"Of course it's a matter of kinds of food as well as quantity. The reason we're given these appetites—I gather it ain't just so we can have the fun of trying to satisfy 'em; it's because the body has to have building material to replace the wear and tear and fuel for heat and energy to keep steam up and so on.

"So the nutritionists, they tell us we need a 'balanced' diet: the right amount of proteins and minerals for building purposes; carbohydrates and fats to furnish heat and energy and all these different vitamins to—well, to do whatever they're supposed to. And this vitamin stuff—you know it's mighty interesting to think of all the things they've been doing for us, all these years, we didn't know anything about. Some of it we don't know yet. Then, of course, water: that ain't a food but we need a lot of it to keep us properly diluted—and so we won't dry up and blow away.

"The nutritionists—one way they figure out how much of this and that the body needs, they measure it in calories. That's a heat unit, a calorie is. Roughly, they tell me it's the amount of heat it takes to warm up four pounds of water one degree. That don't make us walking teakettles or anything like that. It ain't all a matter of heat. But that seems to be the simplest way of figuring energy requirements.

"We're supposed to have food that'll give us—it runs all the way from two thousand calories a day for a fellow with a soft job to four or five thousand, if you're a hard worker. Naturally, the less money anybody has to spend on food the more important it is to get the most for your money. For instance, a glass of milk furnishes 195 calories and a cup of tea only eighteen and they cost about the same.

"Yes, sir. Nutrition—the more we know about it the more we realize that eating's a science—as well as a habit. I'm in favor of more nutrition experts. Not being an invalid, though, I'd like their menus better if they'd dress 'em up a little more—put more pickles and onions and so on in 'em."

THE VOICE WITH A SMILE

“‘The Voice with a Smile’—when the telephone company put that out as a slogan here several years ago, you remember how it sort of caught on? It did with me, anyway. And I always figured one reason it went over so strong: the operators—they didn’t overdo it. Their voices just sounded pleasant: as if they were glad you called, instead of mad about it. Of course I don’t know how they felt but, anyway, it gave the impression of sincerity. A smile that’s a smirk, you not only don’t take it at its face value but it’s apt to make you kind of suspicious. Like the wolf that ate up Little Red Riding Hood’s grandma: he showed his teeth too much.

“What made me think of it, there’s one or two of these fellows on the radio—they get to talking about toothpaste or soup or pills or whatever they’re hired to talk about and they put so much sweetness in their voices—well, it reminds me of a relative of mine that took her first sea trip. She was out in a deck chair and getting along pretty good ’til the steward gave her some tea with too much sugar in it. They say one swallow don’t make a summer but it made her spring—and she just made it.

“It’s some like these diplomatic exchanges we’ve been hearing about the last couple of years: some of ’em are so diplomatic nobody takes any stock in ’em. Like a Mayor said to me, a few years ago: the health officer they’d had for a good many years was quitting and they were considering a fellow that worked for the—anyway, he didn’t live in that town. The Mayor asked me what I knew about him. I told him he knew his stuff, all right, and he was a hustler but I was afraid he wasn’t any too diplomatic. ‘Well,’ the Mayor says, ‘we’ve had more diplomacy’n anything else the last fifteen years. Now we’d like a little action.’ Of course it takes diplomacy to get things done but too much of it, the same as an over-done smile, it’s liable to defeat its purpose by stirring up distrust instead of good feeling. Of the two I’d rather be disliked than distrusted.

“Maybe it’s a little off the subject but you take this ‘make-up’ business on women: when it looks natural it’s fine. The right kind of touching up, it’ll take off ten years or so and it not only improves their looks but it’s good psychology. But when I see one that I’d guess was born at least as long ago as I was that’s got on more color’n she could’ve had when she was sixteen, it makes me suspect she’s older’n she looks. Yes, sir—whether it’s smiles or cosmetics, when they’re put on too thick they’re liable to be covering up something!”

WHEN THOUGHTS TURN TO WATER

“In the spring’ according to the poet, ‘the young man’s fancy lightly turns to thoughts of love.’ But there’s what you might call another version. In the spring, if the young man happens to be a sanitary engineer, quite considerable of his thoughts are apt to be turning to water. The reason is: that’s the time when the snow’s melting back in the hills and the floods are liable to be washing pollution into the wells and springs and public water supplies. The engineer, he’s sort of a modern Paul Revere, that goes around warning folks they’re coming and to get ready for ’em.

“Sometimes it seems as though the spring floods aren’t any more’n over before they’re warning us to look out for summer droughts—the engineers are. You know typhoid—they used to call it autumnal fever, because so many of the cases developed along in the early fall. I figure the dry weather had a lot to do with it: the regular water supplies running short—getting water from ponds and rivers and so on that had pollution in ’em. Of course, now, the places that’re up to date they have an extra chlorinating outfit and all that, so, if they have to fall back on water that’s liable to be contaminated, they can take care of it. The ones that ain’t—the State has these emergency chlorinators and the engineers tote ’em around and hook ’em up for ’em when they get in trouble. That works all right when they let ’em know in time.

“Speaking of typhoid fever, it wasn’t so many years ago we used to have a waterborne epidemic every little while—up in the hundreds, sometimes, the cases were. That’s where the great bulk of our typhoid came from and, of course, that meant a lot of typhoid carriers. Some of ’em’d spread the disease the rest of their lives, if they weren’t discovered. Now it’s got so water epidemics are pretty near as scarce around here as cigar store Indians and there’s a lot of young doctors never saw a case of typhoid. I believe in giving the devil his due, myself: I figure the engineers are entitled to most of the credit—chasing us up the way they have.

“But there’s a lot more to it than just avoiding epidemics. We need water for fire protection and street flushing, to keep our lawns and stuff from drying up and to take a bath once in a while. These spring floods and summer droughts—we ought to be saving up the water when there’s plenty of it so we’ll have it when there ain’t: more trees back on the watersheds and more storage space. Yes—I guess we still need somebody sort of booting from behind to keep us moving ahead.”

HE RECEIVES BEST WHO GIVES BEST

"A man that was well acquainted with Dr. Freud—the other day I was reading something he wrote about him and he says: 'Each person who knew him well . . . received from him just what he was equipped to receive.' I figure that's a comment that'll stand considerable cogitating.

"It makes me think of this radio business. Back in the early days I had a crystal set—and it was a pretty good one for that time. I'd spend half an hour trying one spot after another on the crystal and if I managed to hear anything at all it was pretty near a miracle. The radio waves—the air wasn't so full of 'em as it is now but they were there. The trouble was most of 'em didn't register on the equipment I had.

"Not long ago I was talking to a doctor friend of mine and I mentioned somebody that'd been to see a psychoanalyst. 'Oh,' the doctor says, 'one of *those* goofs!' Well, sir—I didn't spend any time trying to change his opinion. So far as that sort of thing was concerned he was still working with a crystal set.

"It reminds me of Pat Purdy's watch. Pat was an old fellow that used to be around here and he had a big hunting-case watch somebody gave him when he came over from the old country. About once a week he'd go up and compare it with the town clock. He never set it. He just wanted to see how far off the town clock was. That's the way it is with a lot of us: we're so well satisfied with some of our own ideas it never occurs to us that anything that don't agree with 'em could be right.

"And, you know, that remark about Dr. Freud—somehow it makes me think of the story of 'the loaves and the fishes.' That hungry 'multitude' there and only five loaves of bread—most anybody would've said: 'Five little loaves! They're no good. They wouldn't be a drop in the bucket.' But one man, because he was equipped to give as well as receive—he saw the value in 'em that the others didn't recognize and he made enough out of 'em to feed the whole outfit.

"The same way, whether it's coming in contact with a great scientist or going to medical college or what not: the fellow that's there just for what he can get out of it, he ain't equipped to receive much. It's the one that's there because he wants to help others—he's liable to be the best receptacle. And it's funny how it sort of works both ways: the more of what he receives he passes on to others, the more he has left for himself."

FACING FACTS ABOUT CANCER

"When I was a boy my sister got a year-old Shetland pony for Christmas and they gave me the job of 'breaking' him to drive. One of my burning ambitions, those days, was to be a horse trainer. Well, sir, before I got through with that pony—I still had my ambition but I'd decided a Shetland pony wasn't a horse. He knew more tricks'n I did.

"Anyway, there was a railroad station not far from our place and he was scared to death of an engine—this pony was. You could get him about so near and he'd get a brainstorm and he wasn't fussy whether he went backwards or sideways, so long as he got away. Then one day an engine was standing there and the fireman got a cookie out of his dinner pail and held it out. You could see there was a struggle going on—between being afraid and wanting the cookie. But he edged up a step at a time 'til he finally ate the cookie. From that time on every time he saw a train he wanted to take after it.

"And, you know, that's some the way it is with a lot of folks about going to see a doctor. Yes, I remember one woman that had some little thing—I forget now what it was—but, anyway, she got to worrying for fear it was a cancer. Her mother or her grandmother or somebody'd had it and she was afraid if she went to a doctor he'd tell her that was what 'twas. I don't suppose she ever put in a worse year in her life: couldn't eat or sleep and lost weight. Then, finally, somebody persuaded her to go and get it settled and she found out there was nothing to it. And the fact of the matter is: she actually made herself sicker and suffered more, worrying there for a year, than she would've if she'd actually had cancer and had it taken care of when she first suspected it.

"Of course cancer—it's like fire: there's something about it that's sort of terrifying. But suppose you suspected the house was afire. Most anybody'd be scairt. But a person with any sense—they wouldn't go'n hide somewhere and worry about being burned up. They'd get there as quick as they could and find out. And the main reason cancer's got such a bad reputation, it's because it's usually neglected. It's just like the fire: the quicker you get at it, the less liable it is to be serious. Whichever it is—fire or cancer—the more procrastination, the more danger. And, if they ain't got it they can relieve 'emselves of a terrible lot of worry by finding it out.

"Some folks are afraid to go to a doctor for fear he'll want to operate on 'em. Well, I never knew a reputable doctor that wouldn't rather tell somebody they didn't have cancer, any day, than to operate. But if you need an operation, it's a pretty good idea to have it while it'll do some good. Yes, sir. If the house is on fire I wouldn't advocate waiting 'til the next day to turn in an alarm."

WASHING THE DISHES

"They claim when a man bites a dog that's news. Well, then, by the same standard it ought to be news when a lot of men get interested enough in washing dishes so they put it down as a subject for discussion at a meeting. Of course I wouldn't want to be misunderstood: they weren't starting any movement to take over washing the dishes at home or anything like that. No; this meeting I'm thinking of was health officers and sanitary engineers and so on and they were talking about dishwashing in restaurants and soda fountains and such places.

"Of course, all these diseases that can be spread by mouth secretions—polio, scarlet fever, colds, pneumonia, tuberculosis and what not—a lot of people using the same glasses and eating tools without any washing to speak of in between, it's a pretty good way to scatter 'em around—the disease, that is. Anyway, the health department, here awhile ago, they decided it was about time to look into the dishwashing business. So they've been around to a lot of eating places—good, bad and indifferent, and taken swabbings from glasses and so on and examined 'em in the laboratory. And they've done a lot of experimenting to find out the best ways to get rid of the bacteria folks leave on the equipment.

"What they've found out—of course the big places, they use dishwashing machines but, otherwise it don't take any fancy equipment or any disinfectants or any of that stuff. All they need is a decent washing job, in clean and fairly hot water, with soap or some other good detergent, as they call it, and then rinse 'em in water too hot to hold your hands in. They advise turning 'em over'n letting 'em dry: not using dish towels. They just collect up germs and put 'em back on again, so they claim. A detergent, by the way,—that's stuff that sort of softens up the water and dissolves off the grease and lipstick and so forth.

"Of course they say charity begins at home. But I figure probably we'd better let the women handle the dishwashing there 'til we get the public eating places fixed up. Anyway, that's a bridge we can cross when we come to it."



ANALYSIS OF WATER SAMPLES

“Speaking of typhoid fever from water—this business of analysis of water samples: I find it’s confusing to a good many people. Back last summer, for instance, a woman in one of these summer boarding places came down with typhoid and they claimed it was the well water. They hired a lawyer to start a damage suit. Of course I’d taken samples and had ’em analyzed and he came in to see the reports—this lawyer did. The first thing he wanted to know—he says: ‘Did they find typhoid bacilli?’ When I told him they reported colon bacilli present but didn’t look for typhoid bacilli, he started to get up on his ear. I guess maybe he thought we were holding out on him or something. But I finally got him straightened out.

“You see the fact of the matter is: looking for typhoid bacilli in a sample like that—it’d be some like trying to find a couple of pennies you dropped somewhere on Broadway the day before. Even if they were still there the chances’d be against finding ’em. So they have to depend on what you might call circumstantial evidence. These colon bacilli, they’re intestinal organisms, too, and if there’s that kind of pollution there’s more of ’em and they’re easier to find.

“It’s some like when you hear a commotion in the henhouse: when you get out there you find a chicken gone and detect certain odors; you sort of put two and two together and conclude it probably was a skunk—even though you don’t see one. Of course, the colon bacilli—it ain’t quite so simple as that. But you know they’re either animal or human, and when you take the samples you look over the situation—make a survey, as they call it, so you’ve got a pretty fair idea whether it’s liable to be of animal origin, like drainage from a barnyard or what not, or human—like a cesspool or something. One thing you’ve got to look out for, though: folks are liable to have colon bacilli on their hands and unless you’re awful particular taking the sample they can get washed into it and show up in the laboratory examination.

“Anyway, if it looks like it’s human, then you start trying to locate the typhoid case or carrier the pollution came from. The only way anybody ever gets typhoid is from another person that’s infected with typhoid germs.

“The trouble with this kind of stuff, there’s most always some ifs and ands about it. You can’t usually ‘answer yes or no.’ You sort of put two and two together and if it makes four it’s probably the right answer—*if* you haven’t made a mistake somewhere.”

EXPLODED IDEAS ABOUT MILK

"Here in my collection, somewhere, I've got some shells I picked up over in France ten years after the World War. Of course they'd been exploded a long time—which made 'em more interesting as relics, as well as safer to have around.

"Something else I've got scattered around here in various places: I've got some of the old arguments against pasteurization of milk. I s'pose, in their day, they killed off a good many prospective pasteurizing ordinances and so on. But now they're perfectly safe to handle because, the same as those shells, they've been exploded.

"There's one of 'em—I was looking 'em over the other day—it said pasteurization killed the good bacteria as well as the bad ones: it killed off the souring bacteria, so the milk'd keep 'til it spoiled.

"Well, sir, you know I can remember, years ago, hearing one of the old docs that did surgery—he was talking about what he called 'laudable pus.' What he meant was—that was before they knew anything much about bacteria and surgical asepsis and all that: they expected every operation wound to have pus in it and if it didn't they thought it was a bad sign. And it was, a good many times, because all the operation wounds were infected and if they didn't get pus in 'em it meant nature wasn't putting up any fight. Now, of course, they get rid of the bacteria before they start operating.

"This milk business—it's more or less the same. You see, the bacteria that make milk sour—they don't belong there: they get into it along with dirt, one place or another. They're relatively harmless, so far's we know, but calling 'em 'good bacteria,' that's being a little too generous. The cleaner milk is the longer it takes it to sour—pasteurized or not. But back in the old days practically all the milk was dirty and if it didn't sour right away they thought there was something wrong with it. The truth of the matter is: pasteurization don't kill all the souring bacteria. It'd be just as well if it did, but the heat it'd take to do it—it'd give it that 'cooked taste' they object to.

"It makes me think of Old Dr. Williams. He advised Purley Adams to have his boy's nose operated on—deflected septum or something. Purley raised various objections—finally said he'd heard of somebody that, after a nose operation, lost his smell. 'Well, Purley,' the Old Doc says, 'if an operation'l cure that boy of his smell, that's another argument for it.' Yes, pasteurization making milk keep—it's an argument for, not against."

LAUGHING AT OUR THOUGHTS

"When I was a boy we used to have an old colored man work for us and he had quite a way of talking to himself. One day he was chuckling away there and I asked him what he was laughing at. 'I was laughing at my thoughts,' he says, 'he, he, he, he!' And you know that natural sense of humor—it seems to be kind of characteristic of colored people and it's been a saving feature, as you might say. If they can't find anything else to laugh at they can laugh at their thoughts.

"But there's quite a lot of youngsters, 'long about thirteen, fourteen, fifteen years old (along in there)—maybe I wouldn't appreciate it as well as I do if I hadn't been a boy once, myself—instead of laughing at their thoughts they worry about 'em: sex stuff, what they think of their parents, difficulties in school, frustrated ambitions and all that stuff.

"My mother, when I was a kid—a lot of things'd been impressed on my mind: 'Blessed are the pure in heart'; 'Evil is that evil thinketh' and so on. Well, I can recall a time when it seemed to me I must be different'n other people—the kind of thoughts I had and the way they were all jumbled up: good, bad and indifferent. I worried a lot about it and even wondered if, maybe, I wasn't going nuts or something. So far as I know I never did but, just the same, that sort of thing, if it don't find an outlet, sometimes it helps to lay the foundation of trouble later on.

"A conscience is an awful good thing to have but when it gets over-active—well, it's like electricity: if it's going to be useful instead of dangerous you've got to understand it and use it with discretion.

"Of course, later on, I discovered that other folks—sometimes they'd try not to admit it even to 'emselves, but being human they had the same kind of thoughts I did. I guess I told you about the Sunday school superintendent going under ether: why, say! he unloaded stuff there I s'pose he'd been repressing for years. I imagine it did him good.

"The parents—I'm in favor, all right, of fathers setting a good example but mighty little good ever came from their pretending to be something they ain't. If the youngsters aren't wise enough to suspect 'em of being hypocrites—which don't help their prestige any—then they're liable to figure it's hopeless trying to be as good as 'Pop' was, so that's a failure to worry about. When a boy's father is the last one the boy'd think of discussing his intimate thoughts with, there's something wrong with the old man. An ideal father—there's a few of 'em—he's got an adult mind but he can still talk as boy to boy."

LOOK OUT FOR FOOD INFECTION

“Our sanitary code, here in this State—the last twelve years or so us health officers’ve had to report what they call any unusual prevalence of sickness associated with bowel trouble, sore throat or fever. Outbreaks, in other words—we have to report ’em to the State Health Department. Of course when these things happen we’re usually busier’n a cranberry merchant in fair time, as the fellow says, and it’s sort of a nuisance, sometimes, to have to stop and call up the District Officer. But what we’re learning about the causes of these outbreaks—things like gastroenteritis (stomach and bowel trouble, that is)—I came to the conclusion a long time ago it was well worth all the trouble. And that’s the thing about all this reporting business: if they weren’t reported they wouldn’t get investigated and we wouldn’t know what they came from or how to prevent ’em. When it comes to that kind of stuff the old saying ‘where ignorance is bliss ’tis folly to be wise’—it’s a lot of hooey.

“I was just looking at a report of an outbreak of more’n forty cases of gastroenteritis—folks that ate ice cream at a church supper. One of the people that helped to make the ice cream—they found out they had staphylococci in their nose (*staphylococcus aureus*, they called it) and the same bugs were in the ice cream. The State Health Department records, by the way—they show several ice cream outbreaks of one thing and another and an interesting thing about ’em: they’re all from homemade stuff. When I see a sign ‘Home-made Ice Cream’—well, it’s like the fellow that went into the restaurant that had a sign: ‘The Kind of Coffee Mother Used to Make.’ He asked the waiter: ‘Is your coffee really the kind Mother used to make?’ The waiter said it sure was. ‘Then,’ the fellow says, ‘give me tea.’ Or did I tell that one before?

“Anyway, speaking of church suppers: I’ve heard of two or three gastroenteritis outbreaks where the woman cooked up chicken or something the night before—for salad, I suppose, and covered it up and left it overnight at room temperature. Of course, that’s just the kind of stuff bacteria like to grow in. That church atmosphere seems to be just as good for bacteria as it is for folks.

“Hot weather coming on—it’s the time when we’ve got to be looking out for food infection and all that. Most any kind of cooked food—vegetables and salads—meat and fish and that kind of stuff especially, it ain’t safe to leave it setting around at room temperature. You can’t always tell where the bacteria come from but they’re there and they’ll grow if you give ’em a chance. This weather the place for that kind of stuff is the refrigerator. A good rule: Keep yourself cool and your victuals cold.”

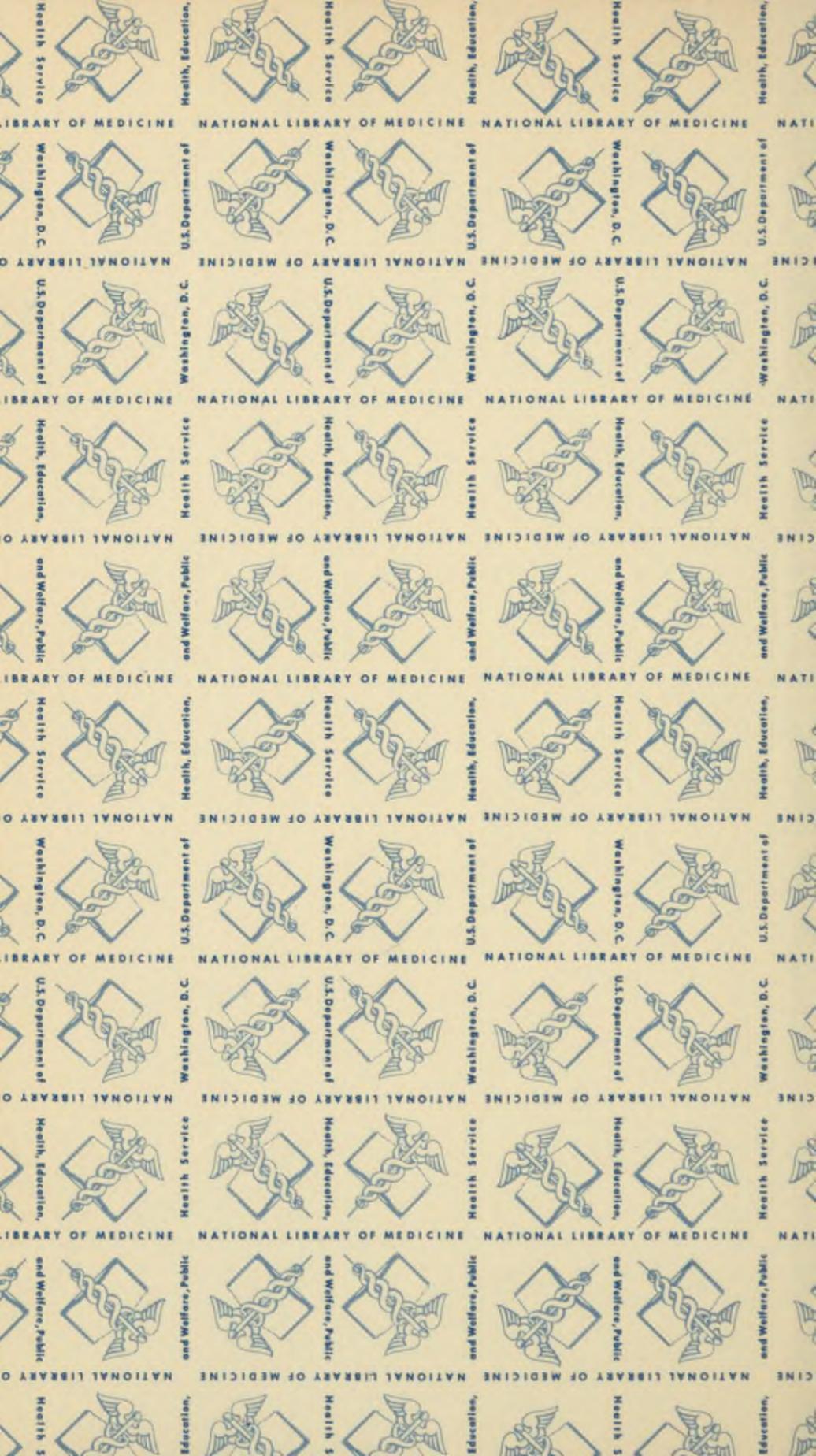
TRUE OR FALSE?

"You remember that little girl on one of the radio programs here awhile ago: they said she had 'absolute pitch'? What we make out of the music we hear, most of us: maybe we know whether the notes harmonize or make discords but if they asked us to tell what the notes were we heard we couldn't do it if our lives depended on it. But this little girl—they'd play chords of three or four notes on the piano and she'd name 'em right off. She was able to analyze what she heard and tell just what 'twas made up of.

"What I was thinking: it'd be awful handy if we could have something like that we could apply to other things beside music: the ability to analyze what we hear and read and to tell how much of it's true and how much ain't. It'd save wasting an awful lot of time and effort following after 'pied pipers', and traveling over wrong trails.

"It's some like this faculty dogs and homing pigeons have: take 'em off most anywhere and turn 'em loose and they'll take a bee line for home. That's something, by the way, that's still waiting to be explained. But, anyway, us humans that don't have that faculty—the best we can do is to depend on our geography and asking questions. Like Al Jones that used to be around here (no relation of mine): when he got drunk he'd forget where he lived. So he'd stop somebody: 'Excush me,' Al says, 'will you kindly tell me where Al Jones lives?' And the same way, when it comes to discriminating between truth and fiction: our best bet's to use what intelligence we've got and take time to think it out—and if we ain't informed on the subject ourselves, ask somebody that is. And, you know, I've often thought: one of the best things we can do for a school child to prepare him for life is to train him to discriminate between what's true and false.

"It's a good time to get in practice: all this war news and political campaigns and so on. But even in our own line—I've known one or two doctors that'd fall for most anything a clever drug salesman'd tell 'em. And some of this advertising stuff: the way a lot of people bite—you'd think they were sharks, not just plain suckers. It reminds me of the pug dog we used to have. My grandmother was sewing carpet rags one time and after she'd sewed about ten yards of 'em, she heard the dog choking. It turned out he'd swallowed 'em as fast as she dropped 'em down. 'Why,' she says, 'there must be something wrong with that dog—to swallow anything like that.' 'The only trouble with him,' my father says, 'he ain't discriminating.'"



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