

**NURSERY HYGIENE; A MANUAL
FOR THE INSTRUCTION OF THOSE
IN CHARGE OF INFANTS AND
YOUNG CHILDREN IN THE LAWS
OF HEALTH**

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Nursery Hygiene; A Manual for the Instruction of Those in Charge of Infants and Young Children in the Laws of Health by Boyd Burnett Joll

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INSTRUCTION OF THOSE IN CHARGE OF INFANTS
AND YOUNG CHILDREN
IN THE LAWS OF HEALTH.*

BY

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PREFACE.

THIS little manual was chiefly penned for the perusal of the parents and guardians of infants and young children, trusting that some little information may be found in its pages for their edification and instruction.

There is nothing strikingly new in it, but merely the experience in matters hygienic of a few years' general practice amongst such classes of society as a provincial town affords.

There are scores of such books,—on "Advice to a Wife," "Hints to Mothers," &c.,—all more or less bearing on the subject of the rearing of young children, but not many on the special lines I have followed,—those of sanitary or preventive medicine.

Inasmuch as it is intended more especially for the laity, I have omitted as far as possible all strictly medical phraseology and technicalities, and have popularised it by explanations, where these have struck me as necessary. But, as it will inevitably fall into the hands of some of my professional brethren occasionally, I trust that even to them it will not appear flat, stale, and unprofitable.

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INTRODUCTION.

THE care of the young is a subject of everyday importance ; one of which the sanitary reformer should never weary, however discouraging the results of his labour may seem ; and one in which he should be eagerly supported by the mother, the nurse, and by those in immediate charge of young children.

The healthy rearing of infants has been for many years one of the most grave social and medical problems, and should become, day by day, a more and more anxious theme, till the present high rate of mortality among children is very appreciably diminished.

The Registrar-General tells us that the death-rate of young children is so great that of all the deaths annually recorded by him, over forty per cent., or nearly one-half, occur before the age of five years, and that nearly one-fifth of all children born die within twelve months of their birth.

With these serious facts before us, and in these enlightened days of museums of hygiene, of health exhibitions, and sanitary reform, little apology is needed for bringing forward my small contribution, in the shape of a manual more especially designed for the instruction of

those who have the management and care of infants and young children in matters concerning their general health and development.

There are many aspects of preventive medicine to which the profession as a whole has hardly attached sufficient importance, and this is, I think, one of the most important. When one considers the large number of serious and fatal diseases which spring from apparently trivial causes, and that such beginnings are in many instances preventible by strict attention to what are termed the laws of health, any attention to such laws or observance of such rules which "doctors" or teachers (this being the strict meaning of the word) are every day trying to impress upon their pupils or patients will more than repay those who take heed to the directions they have received from those to whom they profess to have given their confidence as medical advisers. Comparatively little has been done in the domain of sanitary reform in infancy, if we except vaccination and such general counsel as family doctors are in the habit of giving, in their occasional visits to the nursery, to arrest or prevent those little beginnings of states of ill-health to which many varieties of disease in after-years owe their origin.

It is truly difficult to believe that there is nothing to be done, or that something of importance has not been omitted, to prevent or arrest such fatal diseases in their early stages,—their "period of incubation,"—and thus to banish, or at least to palliate, the untold suffering and anxiety which these cause in our midst, day by day.

It is almost impossible to portray a more affecting and heartrending picture than the sick bed of a little child, struck down by a painful and lingering illness, only to terminate in death, telling his own tale far more eloquently than words can. But this becomes infinitely a more dis-

troubling scene if we suffer from the horrible consciousness that such sickness might have been prevented by more care and attention to those simple rules of health which nature, or the skilful interpreter of nature, has taught us.

The treatment of particular cases of disease in infancy and childhood forms the subject-matter of nearly one-half of the general practitioner's daily thought; but as yet no very definite efforts have been made for the improvement of the constitutional health of the masses, or for the prevention of the enormous fatality of the first few years of children's existence, by arresting the morbid processes of everyday life, or by destroying those disease-germs from which such processes are supposed to originate. Some fifty years ago a few leaders of the medical profession, awakened to a revived interest in the subject of the diseases of children, made it into what is termed a "specialty." Courses of lectures were delivered to students in the various schools, and a few books were written on the subject. Some stir was made, and the excitement of special interest was kept up for a short time, and then it was allowed to die a natural death, or, let us rather hope, to hibernate; but one very important result of the search in quest of the causes of mortality from infectious diseases was to impress upon the profession, and through them upon the public, the all-important value and necessity of one of the greatest measures of sanitary reform of this century,—that of "vaccination."

The condition, character, and life of the young child is but the outline—the forecast of the adult state, whether we regard it from a physical, mental, or moral standpoint; yet comparatively little is done for the systematic promotion of health and the prevention of disease among the infant population. This state of the child's existence is to some extent recognised later on in life, and finds its expression in