HEALTH PRIMERS. PERSONAL APPEARANCES IN HEALTH AND DISEASE

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Health primers. Personal Appearances in Health and Disease by Various

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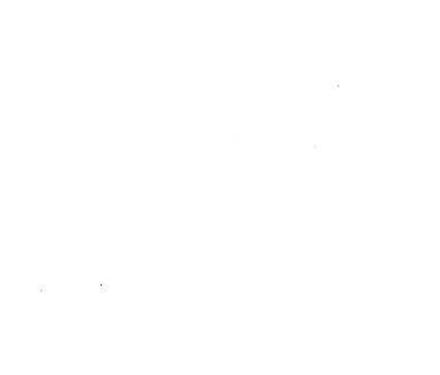
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PERSONAL APPEARANCES

IN HEALTH AND DISEASE.

INTRODUCTION.

IF a person wholly unacquainted with the structure of the body or with any of its functions could be confronted with a number of individuals, some of whom are what we call healthy and others what we call unhealthy, he would have very little difficulty in discriminating the one group from the other. The unhealthy ones might none of them be suffering from any grave disease, they might even be pursuing their ordinary avocations, and yet without putting a single question to them this unskilled, and possibly not very discerning, individual would have but little hesitation in making the broad distinction. He could not tell why he arrived at that conclusion, he might only say that these did not "look so well "as those; yet he would have gone through the process of picturing to himself what a healthy man should be, and would contrast his ideal with the forms before him. It is very likely indeed that here and there he might make a mistake, for being an undiscerning man he might be deceived by the appearance of health which some diseases give, or by not knowing the limits to which a body performing all its functions well enough to be considered healthy may exhibit a leanness to which he would feel inclined to apply the term of illness. Still, with some few exceptions, he would be in the main right. If he were asked to push his conclusions further, and to point out among the unhealthy ones those whom he deemed most and those least ill, and try and construct a scale of ill-health from the frames before him, it is likely that he would go very wide of the mark indeed.

Now it is the object of this little book to try and explain as briefly as possible how and why variations that are so plain on the surface can be taken as indices of disorder within, to give the reasons for form-changes which occur within the limits of health, and for those which mark the departure from those boundaries. It cannot be denied that this is a subject of very great importance; but it is beset with difficulties on all sides, difficulties such as those which the mere definitions of the terms "health" and "non-health" imply.

One great difficulty stares us in the face at the outset, and it is this: although built up on a definite plan, when viewed from the standpoint of the morphologist alone, the individual variations in the form of the body, slight though they be, are yet so numerous as to dispel once and for all any notion that there is an ideal of human form which can be described in so many words. Of