

When I was first qualified, I went into general practice. I soon found that though moderately well equipped in the diagnosis and treatment of diseases which I seldom encountered, I was disconcertingly ignorant in those matters about which I was most frequently consulted. Pneumonia I knew, and Rheumatic Fever, and Typhoid; I was so well acquainted with Phthisis that I confidently recognized it in every trivial cough; and, so well versed was I in heart-murmurs that I was prepared to discover them and treat them—with a combination of digitalis and words of serious warning—even when they had no real significance. With knowledge concerning Tabes, Tumours, and Trematodes I was full to overflowing; but I soon realized that I knew very little about a common Cold, less about ordinary Indigestion, and nothing at all about the rheumatic conditions. My knowledge of the subject of Personal Hygiene consisted in attributing to flannel all kinds of virtues, and to fresh air all manner of vices. In this dilemma I searched for a book which would lighten my darkness; but I found it not. I then determined that if time and circumstance should ever give me the opportunity of writing such a book, those of my juniors who found themselves in the same predicament should not want for such help as I might be able to afford them. The opportunity came about twelve years later, when I forsook the drive of a busy general practice for the comparative calm of consulting work.