

# A HUNDRED YEARS AGO

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## THE BUSY GP WHO MUST READ AS HE RUNS

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THE MEDICAL, SOCIAL, and personal problems in a general practice vary with locality, climate, and class of people, but certain drawbacks and difficulties are common to all practices.

The busy general practitioner, who must read as he runs, has to take patients as he finds them, and do the best he can for all who come before him. Educating the patient so that he may recover quickly, and avoid his favourite pitfall, and make the most of himself as a healthy human being, is within the physician's province, but more time and a new system of medical service would be necessary to give it full effect.

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The average patient is generally fairly considerate and tractable. He is easily induced to follow the dictates of common-sense and the advice which has been given him. But there is a troublesome minority of patients, whose selfish idiosyncrasies, contrariness, and lack of thought create an atmosphere of irritation to everybody in contact with them. The doctor's time is often wasted and his patience exhausted by such patients.

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We may meet with the extremes of temperament on a day's round. All alike require the firm hand, plain speech, and doses of moral discipline on the part of both medical attendant and those in immediate attendance.

The slightest pain or most trivial symptoms are sufficient to create a panic in some minds, and cause a call to be made on the medical man at inconvenient hours, day and night. Others will delay intimation until the evening. In a country practice, especially, this is important, so as to avoid covering the same ground twice on the same day. A little knowledge and ordinary judgement should enable most grown-up people to tell when to send for the doctor at once, and to convey to him some intelligent account of the nature of the illness.

On the other hand, there are the cases in which calling in the doctor is delayed either from motives of economy or indifference on the part of relatives. Not a few lives would be saved if parents and guardians could realize the gravity of certain well-known

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Female patients, as a rule, are more amenable and appreciative than men. They are more grateful for helpful hints and sympathy, and more loyal in co-operating with the doctor. In many cases, ailing mothers are in need of far more medical and nursing attention than they get, and reform of the future should be that they want for nothing in this respect, whatever may be their station in life.

Why are so many children shy or scared of the physician? It is to be hoped that increased familiarity of children with the School Clinic will make doctors, and even dentists, *personae gratae* in the home and elsewhere among the young.

Some people act as if doctors were sitting and waiting at home for a summons promptly to attend any case, however trivial. Oblivious of the calls on a doctor's time, and of the rights and necessities of other cases more urgent than their own.

All the doctor's tact is required in cases of unconscious lying and gross inaccuracy. Some patients will say anything and will coolly state they have carried out all the “doctor's orders”.

In mental or difficult cases, it might be a good plan to present patients with a printed set of general rules to follow in illness, and some statements as to the relation of doctor to patient. It would assist him to see his own part in effecting a cure, and the limits and etiquette attached to medical attendance.

By-and-by, when Public Health work is better organized, each household and every mother should receive periodically leaflets and cards in simple language dealing with general matters of hygiene and disease, and regulations as to medical and nursing attendance. This, along with the work of numerous modern agencies for instructing youth in the hygiene of the body and the laws of well-being, would prevent a vast amount of disease and inefficiency, and save much needless wear and tear on the part of the usually overworked general practitioner. Even under a purely individualistic medical system, it would be good business to unite in propaganda of an educational nature among all classes of the people by this and other means.



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