Briefly, to review the various forms of propaganda enumerated above, the promotion of a "week to focus public attention, etc.," has certainly the advantage of objective appeal, and may be so organized as to have real educational value. On the other hand, it may degenerate into a mere "stunt," stimulating curiosity for a few days, without any lasting effect. It should not be made an annual affair in any locality, as it is certain to become stereotyped and monotonous. It may have great value in small centres of population where public opinion needs stimulation as to the necessity of progressive action towards the advancement of public health. In large centres of population, where administration is already highly organized and progressive, it is unnecessary, and has the grave disadvantage that its organization necessarily falls upon the staff of the public health department and seriously interrupts the routine duties of its officials.

Teaching of hygiene in the schools should be a most valuable means both of propaganda and of education in hygiene. At present I fear it is not. With an overcrowded curriculum, and the necessity of cramming for examinations, the subject is not generally popular among school teachers, directors of education, or those utterly undefined people who arrogate to themselves the title of educationists. In my experience any teaching of hygiene that is given is, with few exceptions, perfunctory and in the wrong hands. In too many cases, especially in the so-called "non-provided" schools, the hygienic conditions in which the children are still compelled to spend a large portion of their childhood are so deplorable that any attempt at "precept" would be merely farcical. In my experience the schools now provided by local authorities are not only sanitary, but provide an environment of dignity which must have an elevating effect on the character, outlook, and ambition of children from the squalid homes of the poorest classes in the community. It is unfortunately nearly always in the schools maintained by the various religious sects in this country that we find conditions that are likely to hasten the departure of children to the next world—doubtless under the best auspices from the point of view of the "denominational" managers.

The promotion of public lectures can be of the utmost value, provided the lectures are given by people with the right experience and the inborn faculty of interesting and really instructing people about subjects in which they are intimately concerned. Public lectures in large halls, given by eminent persons to large audiences, even with the aid of magic lanterns, may be widely attended, but are of doubtful value. On the other hand, intimate conversations on health matters, given to quite small audiences, especially when followed by questions, which develop into a discussion between the lecturer and his audience, can be of real educational value. A number of such lectures have been given in Sheffield under the auspices of the local Insurance Committee actually in the works, and during the employees' own time. They have not only been well attended, but we have evidence that the interest aroused has spread widely among the very classes whom we wish to approach. A great deal of similar and equally successful work is being done under the auspices of the Workers' Education Association and the Miners' Welfare Association.

The distribution of special literature is a process of careful selection, of elimination of propaganda by uninformative or unbalanced faddists, and the encouragement of well-written and sound educational matter. Like every medical officer of health, I have submitted to me an inordinate number of pamphlets, etc., with offers of unlimited supplies for free distribution. I look upon them all with suspicion, and most of them find their way to the wastepaper basket. In common with most of my colleagues, I find the little magazine called *Better Health*, published by the Central Council for Health Education, of real value, and so well edited as to be free from any objectionable features. It is the only publication at present distributed officially by my department, apart from purely local leaflets, etc.

There remains for consideration only the proper use of the press. All medical men know that we have to use great discretion in this matter, and that we are very properly restrained by rules laid down by the General

Medical Council. The general health, thanks largely to past propaganda work, has become of such public interest that anything bearing on it is now good "copy" for the press, and consequently welcome. There is accordingly an inducement to medical men to contribute articles dealing with these matters. If such articles are signed, the writer, if in practice, inevitably comes under the suspicion of advertising, which is, and I hope will always continue to be, anathema to the profession in this country. It is, however, open to any medical man to contribute to the press any information which he believes to be of public importance, and reliable, as from "a medical correspondent," and for such contributions he is perfectly entitled to receive any fees usually paid by the journal which publishes his contribution. Personally I believe it to be most important that the public should be kept in touch with the progress of medical science by wise and well-informed contributions to the public press.

In conclusion, I wish to declare my belief that the most important work done in the propagation of knowledge about health matters is that which is being done daily and persistently, without ostentation or advertisement, by our public health departments, their sanitary services, their maternity and child welfare services, their school medical services, tuberculosis services, and other sections of their activities of which the public know little, but from which they derive more benefit than they ever will from any much-advertised "propaganda."

II.—THE PRACTITIONER.*

BY

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In any discussion which may prove to be controversial it is a great advantage to find some basis of agreement from which to start. In this case we may well find one in the statement that *health is the most important element in human happiness*. Since the object of propaganda can only be to increase the standard of health, we must, then, agree that the question of its value deserves our sympathetic study and demands our frank and careful scrutiny.

This movement, with the backing of a young and energetic Ministry, has been taken up with enthusiasm by many public-spirited persons. Sections of the press have pushed it in the interests of their readers, or eagerly exploited it in the pursuit of their net sales campaign. The result is that it has attained the rank of a fashion, so that the G.P. (the initials stand for both general practitioner and general public) find it easier to render their unstudied sympathy than to apply the scrutiny either frank or careful.

No one who speaks on this question fails to quote Mr. Lloyd George's phrase: "You cannot run an A1 empire on a C3 population." Having quoted it they consider that there is no necessity to go further, and no one ever inquires into the evidence on which our population was alleged to be C3. If in the interests of careful scrutiny you do inquire, you will find no evidence to disprove, and some to support, the view that it was based on the figures obtained as the result of medical examination of those civilians left when the Conscription Act was passed—that is to say, at a time when Mr. Asquith told us that five million men had already volunteered and had been passed A1. Until someone can disprove this view, and unless figures are produced capable of some sort of comparison with other countries like France and Germany, the phrase has no whit more value for our present discussion than has the exactly parallel statement of fact that "You cannot make butter out of buttermilk."

But apart from all this, there is other evidence that we can judge for ourselves. Both the birth rate and the death rate are falling, therefore the average age of the population must be increasing. It needs no proving that the years per head spent in unproductive old age are also increasing, and it follows that it is more than ever important that the effective years of every life should be as

* Read in a discussion in the Section of Medical Sociology at the Annual Meeting of the British Medical Association, Manchester, 1928.

healthful as possible, in the interests of the nation, apart from all considerations of the happiness of the individual.

In this health campaign every sort of method is adopted. There are lectures, leaflets, posters, films, and, last but not least, powerful articles from the pens of various discarded leaders of medical thought in the columns of certain organs of the press. The most promising sign about all these activities is the stress that is laid on the education of the young. Whether or no the performance keeps faith with that promise is a question which requires our serious consideration. It should always be borne in mind that health is more likely to be attained when it is not the direct object of pursuit. If we wish to instruct the individual, health education is more valuable if it teaches the main conditions of a healthy life, and forms those habits which are likely to attain it.

Everyone here will admit that the Boy Scouts and the Girl Guides are doing the most valuable work possible for those of school age, while the National Association for the Provision of Playing Fields is carrying on the work for the older children and the adolescents. Their success is due to the fact that health is not the direct object of pursuit, but that they do teach those habits which are likely to attain it. It has been claimed that previous health propaganda dots the i's and crosses the t's for all these movements. One can only insist that in so far as they succeed in making the young think of health with a capital H they are doing the very worst thing possible for the furtherance of their ultimate aim.

With regard to the posters here are three questions for the consideration of the meeting:

1. As they are at present do they do any good?
2. Could they be amended so as to do more good?
3. Are they edited with sufficient care?

The third question I would myself answer with an emphatic No.

One poster was put up in at least one child welfare centre depicting in gay and attractive colours a little girl reaching up to get hold of a kettle boiling on an open stove. The audience to be instructed consisted of children under 5 years old. One must admit that is a perfectly sound way of teaching children by bitter experience the maxim "The burnt child shuns the fire"; but surely if the health societies really think it necessary that this lesson has to be learnt by personal experience, it would have been more humane and probably less costly in child life to have instituted during health week, on the lines of the old vaccination stations, a *burning station* where each child was made to touch a red-hot poker. It would at least have been possible to regulate the dosage.

From the extended use that is made of lectures, articles in the press, etc., it is evident that it is not intended to restrict propaganda to the juveniles. No child could be expected to read and enjoy Mr. Bruce Lane's weekly letter in the *Daily Ailment*. Probably more, and not less, care is needed in the editing of these for the advice of adults. Because men and women have more reason to think of their health it is the more incumbent on us to see that our teaching does not fall into the easy but disastrous error of making them think of their ill health. No poster or lecturer ever reminds people to think of their manifold blessings; and yet all doctors in their daily work achieve more than half of their success by engendering in patients a cheery optimism, either because of the doctor's personality, or because, seeing that his doctor does not look worried, the patient decides for himself that all is well.

There are various bodies and societies which devote themselves to certain special aspects of the social health. For instance, the British Council of Social Hygiene, which runs the anti-venereal disease campaign. Its efforts are worthy of all praise, and it does achieve a large measure of success with regard to men; perhaps to a less extent with women. It does produce a certain amount of syphilophobia; but this is a small matter, since the complaint is so promptly cured as soon as advice is sought. In considering the success of this propaganda it must never be forgotten that it has an enormous advantage, in that it advocates early advice, and can point to an almost certain cure free of all expense if its advice is followed.

The position of the cancer leaflets issued by the Ministry of Health is by no means so satisfactory. It would be very valuable if this meeting would discuss thoroughly the advisability of the distribution of these to the public. The leaflets have not the value noted as appertaining to the anti-venereal disease campaign. We cannot point to any certain cure even in the early stages of the disease. We are not able to tell people how to distinguish those symptoms which may arise early enough in the course of the malady to give treatment every possible chance of success with the one exception of uterine haemorrhage after the menopause. On the other hand, we do know that if we circulate these pamphlets we shall cause an enormous number of the laity to be more terrified of cancer than they already are. My own view is definitely against circulation. There is one great disadvantage that a doctor suffers when ill: he knows too much about disease for his own peace of mind; the qualifying mitigation is that his training enables him to appreciate reasons against his worst fears. Why should we hand our disability to the public in an aggravated form, since we can give them part only of the knowledge and none of the training?

It is very difficult to harm the young by propaganda, since they care for none of these things; but with adults the position is vastly different. The particular class of adult which greedily devours everything about health it can get hold of is exactly that type to whom it is most harmful. This group of introspective people is already far too much occupied with the functioning of the various bodily organs. On all of them the effect is bound to be deleterious, to many it will be disastrous. A genuine hypochondriac is a sick man, and as such deserves our respect and care. But does not propaganda tend to produce his pinchbeck imitation the valetudinarian, who is of all men the most miserable, and of all human objects the most useless? So long as health is regarded as a means to a useful life, it is life's greatest boon; once it is made his aim in life, it is man's greatest curse. This danger is peculiarly inherent in the activities of that society which advocates constant regular medical examinations.

The infinitesimal good that might be gained is far outweighed by the enormous harm that is certain to be caused by making people overanxious. Take, for example, their suggestion that all persons should be examined before taking a holiday in order to see what they were fit for. What sort of a holiday would the golfer get after the doctor had told him to wear gumboots on a wet day, the angler who might go out only when the sun had full power, or the Leicestershire man told that he might not jump any fences? Why, the thing is an absurdity.

It is surely unnecessary to say anything on the subject of health weeks. If a man holds that health can only be taught by teaching healthy habits in youth, what can you expect him to say about a scheme which sets aside some hours of one week out of fifty-two for the consideration of the subject? The very idea of a health week is the complete reversal of all his views on health.

Lest you should say that no constructive suggestion has been put forward, may I give you a quotation from *How to Make the Best of Life*, by Dr. Glanville? It contains a truth much neglected at the present time; it is a better motto for a poster than any yet issued by a health society, and it is no bad creed for any man.

"The best way to live well is to work well. Good work is the daily test and safeguard of personal health."

III.—THE PRESS.*

BY

H. A. GWYNNE,

PRESIDENT OF THE INSTITUTE OF JOURNALISTS.

THE press and the medical profession in some respects are opposed to each other, for the former lives and has its being by purveying publicity, while the latter must by the nature of the functions it performs be restrained and discreet. A common ground of agreement between these opposite aims is somewhat difficult to discover, but I am

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