



MAKING THE CLINIC ATTRACTIVE

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IT is a platitude that you cannot judge a person until you have been in his place. Unfortunately, few of us ever try to put ourselves in the other fellow's place and look at the world from the angle at which he is forced to see it. If we did, many situations in life might be altered and entire histories changed.

A person who applies to a city clinic for medical aid is generally one to whom adversity has come in some form or other. Bad health brings with it despondency, and when

coupled with poverty and circumstances over which one has little or no power, it presents the most difficult of all situations in life.

We who strive to make our homes attractive, our churches interesting, our business progressive, have done little to introduce these qualities into the clinic. That the clinic must be clean and sanitary is acknowledged. That it should be more than this seldom, if ever, occurs to us.

There is something about the white formality of the usual clinic room, its lack of color and warmth, that affects the entire atmosphere of the place. If it has taken great courage to enter the clinic, it takes even greater courage to stay.

There are clinics, however, in which an entirely new order of things is in progress today. In Syracuse we are trying to make our clinics as attractive and inviting as possible. In the health centers in the foreign districts we have resorted to the foreign railroad and steamboat posters with their charming color and artistic conceptions. Let us put ourselves in the place of the man to whom misfortune has come. Think what it would mean if, having been born in Poland or Italy, we had journeyed to a new country where misfortune and sickness had overtaken us. We are filled with dread at the thought of seeking aid from those whose ways seem so at variance with ours. At last we are persuaded to visit this strange place called a clinic. The first thing that meets our eyes is a scene from our own homeland. Is it not possible that the wall of reserve which we have built up because of our fear of the unknown may be undermined, and that we may begin to look at the nurse and the doctor as friends who will give us only kind and wise advice?

BUT not for sentimental reasons alone do we use the wall space of our clinics. We employ them for educational purposes as well. While the patient sits and waits for his

turn to receive treatment there is an excellent opportunity to give him some much needed health lessons. If, realizing this, we seize the chance to paste the walls over with a multitude of health posters, we may attract the patient's attention, but he only a jumbled-which have meaning to this we take a emphasizing health truth importance of or the value of sunlight and display this set Then these removed and



goes away with up mass of facts little or no him. To avoid set of posters one particular (such as the the right foods, fresh air, exercise) and for one month. posters are another unit in

the educational plan is put up for its term. In this way a constant educational program is going on in the clinics.

Exhibits also have their part to play. We have an exhibit showing a model "house of health" for a family of small means. Captions call attention to the desirable features of the house. For instance, the spectator is asked to observe that there is very small furniture for the very small children; that the household furniture is substantial but not ornate; that the draperies will launder easily; that the pleasantest bedroom and the one with the greatest number of windows is given over to the children; that the windows are kept open, top and bottom, in order to assure the right ventilation; that the sink is arranged for the comfort of the housewife; that screens are used in the windows; and that the baby has a crib instead of a cradle. Thus practical advice is not only given but it is illustrated in a way that makes it easy to

assimilate; and the time spent in waiting for treatments becomes as entertaining as it is instructive.

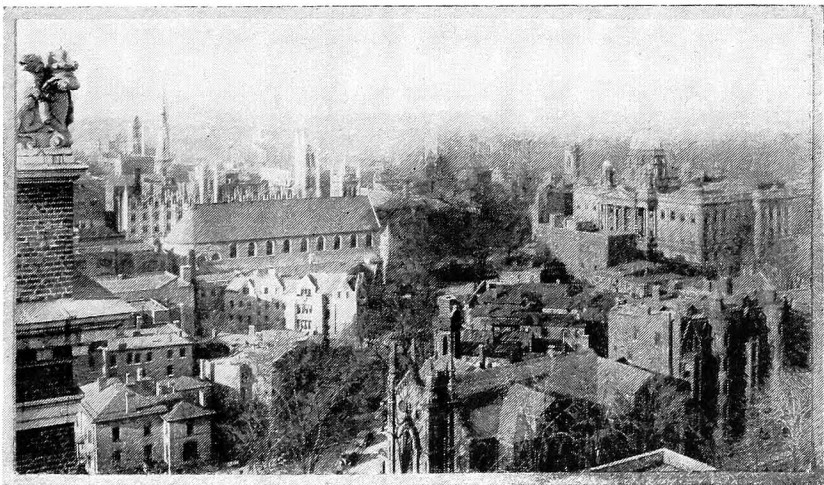
RACKS of literature may serve as another valuable way of interesting patients in their own health. It is when a man is sick that he is the most ready to receive advice about how to keep well. Most of the people who seek advice in a clinic are people with limited educational advantages. The literature prepared for them must therefore be simple. If you give a patient a book which looks like a textbook because of its many pages of fine print, you have lost a good opportunity, because he gets nothing out of it. Let the literature provided be clear and to the point in its text; endow it with large print; illustrate it profusely; make it attractive and cheerful, and you will again multiply the benefits carried away from the clinic.

One of the weaknesses in most large health organizations is its clinic literature. There is very little good health material on the market. There is a quantity of advertising material, but this is generally designed to emphasize the product for which it stands at the expense of competitive products. To assist health workers in Syracuse, we have compiled albums of sample health literature, suitable for use in the clinics. Before a new sample is placed in the album and thus made available for ordering, it must be approved by a committee which has been designated for this purpose.

Similarly, there are few good health posters. One wishes all the health organizations would band together and finance some really artistic products for use in promoting health. Poor drawing and composition do much to destroy the value of the health lessons by rendering them unattractive. Color on posters is found to be a very potent factor in compelling interest. It is also found that it takes one kind of poster to attract a child and another kind to interest an adult.

Health messages must be simply stated and not too difficult. It is much harder to write your message in one line than it is to compose an entire essay and it takes more time. Since posters are meant for the man who reads as he runs and for the man who gets his health lessons in a sitting, there is only one rule for the captions, and that is that they must be simple and direct.

Flowers lend charm to any room, in the clinic as well as the home. Wherever flowers or posters are used, wherever literature or exhibits are displayed, extra work is involved on the part of the workers in the clinics. Flowers which are allowed to become dried or wilted; posters that "hang by their thumb nails" until they are dusty and forlorn; health literature that lingers in the rack until it curls at the ends from sheer ennui; exhibits which are allowed to exist as collectors of dust, have no place in any educational or health system. If, however, through this extra effort these things that will make the clinics more attractive and instructive are maintained, extra happiness and health will be brought to those who visit them.





***P**OSSIBLY the greatest contribution of a distinguished character that America has made to public health is the development of the work of the public health nurse.*

—HON. WILLIAM H. WELCH, M.D.