

The second thing we have to do is to make a thorough study of the population question as a preliminary step towards formulating a population policy. We do not know enough to say what measures are likely to be effective in raising fertility. The experience of other countries does not encourage us to follow their example. In no country, except Germany, is there anything definite to show for the efforts that have been made; and the conditions in which the birth-rate has risen in Germany, since the coming into power of the National Socialists in 1933, are so exceptional that it would be unsafe to assume that what has been effective there would be effective elsewhere. It would be useless to embark upon a population policy until we have good grounds for thinking that it would take us where we want to go. . . .

Experience shows that it is much easier to get the birth-rate down than to get it up. We shall probably find, adapting Mill's words quoted at the head of this chapter, that when the object is to raise the fertility of a people, "small means do not merely produce small effects; they produce no effects at all."

This is a popular, yet a profound book, done in the simple readable style of the English scholar.

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## THE VITAMINS

JUST six years ago a symposium on the vitamins which had appeared in *The Journal of the American Medical Association* was published in monograph form. Now a second symposium on that subject<sup>1</sup>, after having appeared last year in the same *Journal*, is likewise published as a monograph.

The opening sentence strikes the keynote when it states: "The achievements in the science of nutrition which have developed in recent years are among the most significant of all that have been made in modern medical science." And the succeeding chapters bear out this assertion.

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<sup>1</sup> THE VITAMINS. A Symposium Arranged under the Auspices of the Council on Pharmacy and Chemistry and the Council on Foods of the American Medical Association. Chicago, American Medical Association, 1939, 637 pp. \$1.50.

Nothing so graphically reflects the phenomenal growth in knowledge in this fundamental field as the three-fold increase in length in this new publication. Especially has the isolation and synthesis of the vitamins given fresh impetus to this already rapidly advancing subject. Hence topics slightly mentioned in a sentence or paragraph in the first book because of sparsity of data now occupy their own chapters. The first monograph had ten chapters; this one requires thirty-one. Discussed for each of the vitamins are their chemistry, their sources in foods, bodily requirements for them, their physiology, the pathology of avitaminoses, and pharmacological and therapeutic facts and properties. Also included are two chapters on ultra-violet radiation. Amazing as is the rapid development, in the vitamin sector of the nutritional field, the end is not yet. Of this a hint is given as the book closes with a chapter on other factors—less well-known vitamins. In arrangement and scope the book was indeed well conceived and well planned.

This enlarged task brought the number of authors to thirty, each top-flight in his topic. These experts have turned out a valuable, authoritative book. As a collaborative work it possesses certain features characteristic of such joint authorship. There is diversity of view which dispels dogmatism in interpretation and imparts to it vigor. Even some slight repetition accents facts which bear repetition. Out of a wealth, if not a welter of facts, the authors have shown fine discrimination in selection of material. The book is packed with much detailed worthwhile information, yet concisely written; it is scholarly yet practical. So high is the level of all the chapters that it would be unfair to single out any one for special mention. But, as an instance of workmanship which readers will not be slow to appreciate, such a difficult and debatable topic as the exact human requirements of the several vitamins, expressed in quantitative terms, has been treated forthrightly, critically, and thoroughly.

Nutrition cuts across all branches of medicine. Physicians who formerly regarded diet and nutrition as something unrelated and remote to their particular specialties have come to realize that they are neck-deep in nutritional problems. This monograph pertains to one important group of dietary essentials, the vitamins, so vital to nutrition. Here is a book for all: the nurse, the nutritionist, the graduate student in biological sciences, the student of medicine, the practitioner, the public health officer. In it each will find much useful information.

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