

DISCUSSION

Question: Are we not fifty years behind the businessmen as regards efficiency? Some of us still write our own letters by hand. We still fill in our own certificates by hand in the surgery, when our secretaries ought to do it. We do not use modern devices to communicate with the secretary, or lights to signal the patient in. Therefore we have no time to deal with the patient as an individual. Ought not this aspect of the matter to be considered?

Dr Phillips: My comment on this is simple. I bought a dictating machine in 1934 and I would not dream of being without it. I cannot imagine how any of you people work without them. You failed to mention possibly the most important time-waster in practice, that is, getting the patients into some other place to undress and dress. The time wasted in dressing and undressing is fantastic. I would have thought that with substantially fewer people and substantially improved business efficiency, thoughtful doctors could do a very good job of work in general practice. As it is, the nearer one is to a teaching hospital, the worse the standard of general practice.

Question: Is sufficient stress being put upon exercise? I think that if people were advised to take more exercise they would not have so much trouble.

Dr Phillips: I would agree entirely, if you could persuade people to re-organize their lives to take a daily walk, but if people have not taken exercise for a long time and their knees and hips are beginning to go and their coronary circulation is uncertain and so forth, it is not always very wise to ask them to do more than take a walk. Dr Kennedy will bear me out that a three-mile walk is equivalent only to a thin slice of bread and butter. On the other hand, if you do not take that three mile walk you are five stone up in two years. The equation is pretty tight on the exercise side. Walking is more important for general health and for the joints. I would say that it is easier to regulate weight by food intake; walking is fine for general health.

Question: Are we apt to think that some people are overweight when they are not?

Dr Phillips: Yes, there are a group of people who are far above the ideal weights for their height and age. These are the people with very high specific gravity. I saw one family from Devonshire who were almost 50 per cent above average ideal weight for their height and age, but they were exceedingly wide. They were enormous people. Father at 78 could lift a five-barred gate, examine it, and

put it rather delicately back on the hinges without any movement at all. These are people who are obviously muscular. The endomorph has a problem for he has a different weight of gut and length of gut, and whether this has anything to do with his fuel requirements is uncertain. The work of the American, Sheldon, bears on this. His book, *The Varieties of Human Physique*, is the one to consult for information on variety of human constitution and he deals with the varieties of human personality in another work. These are the only scientific studies available. Pick up a skin-fold to find out if a person is fat. Feeling one fold is quite enough. There is no fat there, in a healthy person. The best guide is the latest tables of the Metropolitan Life Office, based on a huge experience scientifically analysed.

SOIL, NUTRITION, AND HEALTH

Lady Eve Balfour

The first thing I want to say is that the extraordinary complexity of cell nutrition revealed by scientific research year by year, ever since the discovery of vitamins, has produced a crying need for the establishment of a new kind of ecological research which one should perhaps call "agro-medical research." The habit, largely followed up to now, of separating off all the different sectors of the nutritional cycle into unco-ordinated compartments, has become a great handicap to progress. Professor Darlington recently (*New Scientist*, 11 January, 1962) put it like this: "The fragmentation of science which has led to an artificial separation between the plant kingdom, which 'belongs' to botany, and the animal kingdom which 'belongs' to zoology, and man, who 'belongs' to medicine, has had the effect of delaying the advance both of biology and of medicine." The point I want to make is that the time is over-ripe for an integration between these various specialisms.

We have not lacked pioneers to point the way. The now classic experiments of the late Sir Robert McCarrison, described originally in his Cantor lectures and recently republished by Faber and Faber, demonstrated convincingly the connection between what we eat and the standards of health we enjoy. The thing that made these experiments unique at the time was that they reversed the usual research procedure, of first using laboratory animals, in that his observations were first made on human groups. McCarrison felt that the extra-