

Collected Prefaces from the First Three Editions of Anna Fischer-Dückelmann's *The Wife as Family Doctor* (1911)

Abstract

These prefaces chart the evolution of one of the greatest publishing successes in the history of modern German knowledge: *The Wife as Family Doctor* [*Die Frau als Hausärztin*]. As a practical advice book based on state-of-the-art science, it dispelled contemporary taboos and, in the process, helped women guide their families toward health, hygiene, and healing. The book presupposed that women were knowledgeable enough to read about, understand, and apply healthcare practices without the supervision of physicians or clinicians. Such independence rankled not a few medical professionals in Wilhelmine Germany, but the author and readers of the *Hausärztin* were undeterred.

Source

Preface.

The purpose of the present book is to provide a wealth of practical suggestions, precepts, and warnings to help women maintain and regain their physical and mental health on their often thorny path through life. We believe that the best way to do this is to avoid, as much as possible, exhausting theoretical treatises, incomprehensible or off-putting illustrations, and explanations of very rare, abnormal conditions that are not of the slightest benefit to women, and instead to look for words and images consistent with life's challenge, which are so very diverse. Hopefully, we have succeeded in doing so!

The fact that we could not completely avoid explanations and scientific justifications will be obvious to anyone who realizes that such a book should also be instructive and must satisfy the needs of readers with various levels of education. We therefore ask our readers, for their own good, not to skip over anything, but rather to devote special attention to the basic chapters of the first part, that is, the section on nutrition. Only then can the third part fully achieve its goal; the same is true of the second part, which, though the shortest, is indispensable for mothers.

Opponents of our school of thought may accuse us of excessively advocating "self-help" in the *Family Doctor* (in contrast to other similar works) and thereby contributing to an ostensibly detrimental trend in our times, or of presenting too much nudity in our images, to dangerous effect. To that we answer: our era has initiated liberation from the authority of the old-school physician over life and health. People have begun to want to help themselves, and any insightful physician who works in the interest of humanity, and not only on behalf of his own professional tribe, will gladly welcome these efforts as positive progress and will lend his full support to them. It is also wrong to believe that in lending support the physician saws off the very branch on which he sits. It is only on the one hand that the nature of his activity is changing, insofar as he is now becoming more a guardian of health instead of, as before, only exploiting the misery of his fellow human beings. On the other hand, the scientifically and practically trained physician is so essential on account of today's sorry state of general health that, despite any and all self-help by laypersons, he will never be entirely superfluous. To prevent laypersons from becoming overconfident about their own capabilities, I have always pointed out the danger of self-treatment, whenever it seemed necessary, and I have always emphasized the need to consult a trained physician.

As for the second accusation, I believe that, given the declining beauty of the human body and the growing lack of appreciation for nature, one of the main objectives of this sort of book is to return to certain basics, in order to liberate and uplift the female sex, which is still enveloped in disease, prejudice, and uncertainty. People who examine our book with a clear and unprejudiced mind also know that health and beauty can only be rediscovered within nature, that the naked human body is therefore not inherently repellent or forbidden but only unfamiliar. People should regard our illustrations with this in mind, first delighting in our naked children, who are likely to awaken most quickly an appreciation for naturalness.

Furthermore, we want to help and heal and not just be interesting!

May the work speak for itself and meet the objectives that we have laid out.

Dresden-Loschwitz, Malerstr.18.

Anna Fischer-Dückelmann

Doctorate conferred in Zurich

Preface to the Five Hundred Thousandth Copy.

Only a few years after the first appearance of our book, we have already reached five hundred thousand copies in print. There are ten foreign-language translations; in distant parts of the world, women are reading *The Family Doctor* in their native languages and are compelled to rethink misguided hygienic practices, which unfortunately are not lacking in any country.

Once again, the publisher and author have spared no effort in improving and enhancing every aspect of the work. Consequently, many additions have been made to the text and the book has been significantly enriched with illustrations and art inserts, which, for the most part, are true to life. Practically-oriented illustrated herb guides have been included. Extensive attention has been devoted to exercises for women, so that many sickly readers have the opportunity to achieve very beneficial physical conditioning without the need for lessons.

A new color print showing skin diseases will allow any serious reader to establish clarity in cases of illness before consulting a physician, and the illustration for “walking in dewy grass” (a yoga practice) will inspire many mothers and health care practitioners to imitate the practice as a means of toughening up their own. *The Family Doctor* was received unusually warmly and gratefully by women and men from all circles of the population, as numerous letters show. We were also pleased by endorsements from the press and the medical world.

May these five hundred thousand copies of the “wife’s book” win over additional circles and help promote enlightenment and the refinement of conventions, wherever needed!

Dresden and Stuttgart, autumn 1908

Author and publishing house

Preface to the Jubilee Edition of 750,000 Copies

Once again, *The Family Doctor* has found its way into thousands of additional homes, and with higher sales than ever before, it is celebrating its jubilee for having reached three-quarters of a million copies. As always, the author has endeavored to feature only practically applicable and proven home treatment methods, instead of engaging in fruitless polemics and emphasizing ongoing conflicts. Exhausting theoretical treatises, illustrations from strictly scientific works that are repulsive to laypersons and are only intended for the eyes of physicians continue to be excluded from *The Family Doctor*. This is particularly the case with illustrations of venereal diseases, which have

recently been circulated very widely in brazen imitation of our work. Therefore, I repeat here again that *The Family Doctor*, which today teaches healthcare to hundreds of thousands of families in thirteen languages, is not a physician's handbook but rather a household reference that gave the world of women something that they previously did not have from a woman's pen. The author is able to reject, with just as much decisiveness as calmness, the hostility exhibited by some opponents in the medical profession. She has before her evidence of how our work, reviled by retrograde physicians' circles hostile to the great reform movements of modern times, has been used precisely by these circles, as the model for the most dishonest imitations of the title, the layout, and the content. – Our opponents could not expose themselves more completely! –

Looking back over the last few years, I should mention that *The Family Doctor* has received the highest accolades at recent hygiene expositions, including certificates and gold medals in Leipzig and Berlin and the Grand Prize in Paris, at the hygiene exposition sponsored by the French Minister of Labor, a prize never before awarded to a German book. The work received similar recognition in being awarded the Grand Prize at the Brussels World Exposition in the previous year. The work is also included in the private Imperial libraries of the German Kaiser and the Austrian Kaiser, as well as in the libraries of the heads of state of almost all civilized nations.

To make the new edition even more complete, we have added numerous supplements, reorganized the information on medicinal herbs for clarity, and added new illustrations. The chapter on "First Aid for Accidents" has been considerably expanded and supplemented with illustrations that demonstrate the usefulness of female assistants. A new album with anatomical models that can be taken apart, created by one of today's leading anatomical artists in accordance with the specifications of the author, serves to depict the differences between man and woman in an easily comprehensible manner, thus complementing the pertinent explanations in *The Family Doctor*.

We are issuing *The Family Doctor* in its nice new form in the hope that it continues to find favor, and with the wish that the goodness contained herein brings blessings to countless people, as it has previously.

Dresden and Stuttgart, in February 1911.

Author and publishing house.

Source: Anna Fischer-Dückelmann, *Die Frau als Hausärztin: ein ärztliches Nachschlagebuch der Gesundheitspflege und Heilkunde in der Familie, mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der Frauen- und Kinderkrankheiten, Geburtshilfe und Kinderpflege*. Stuttgart: Süddeutsches Verlags-Institut, 1911, pp. V–X.
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Translation: Kathleen Dell'Orto

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