Modern Baths and Bath Houses

Gerhard William Paul
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Author: Gerhard William Paul

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DISCUSSING the “uplifting power of the bath,” a writer in “Modern Sanitation” recently commented on the fact that “while for many years the subject of ‘bathing’ enjoyed a long slumber, it is gratifying to note the now constantly increasing reference to bathing and its benefits.”

In his practice as a sanitary engineer the author has had ample opportunity to deal with the subject of baths and bath houses in a practical way. Many of the baths in State hospitals and other institutions were installed under his superintendence, and the plumbing, water-supply and sanitary features of a number of the public or people’s bath houses in the city of New York were planned and specified by him.

A recent extended trip abroad gave the author an opportunity to visit numerous bath houses with a view of learning, by a personal inspection, how they are planned and equipped on the Continent of Europe.

He saw much regarding hydrotherapeutic, electric-light and air and sun baths that is probably new and of interest to his readers. During a month’s stay at one of the best-known sanatoriums in Germany (Dr. Lahmann’s, at a small place called “Zum Weissen Hirsch,” near the city of Dresden), he took various water baths, electric-light and steam baths, and also the air baths twice daily, beginning with them during cold winter weather in February, 1907. He became particularly impressed with the health-giving qualities of these air baths. In order to make them better known in the United States he devoted an entire chapter to this novel form of bathing, and included in it some interesting illustrations.

The modern spray or “rain bath,” the discussion of which occupies several chapters, is by this time so well known both
abroad and here that it is no longer novel. It remains, as was predicted by the author's earlier pamphlets and lectures on "Rain Baths," the best and most popular form of bathing for the masses.

A word about the illustrations of this book. They are gleaned from many different sources, and as far as was possible the author named the sources from which they were taken, and gave credit where an acknowledgment was due. Some of the plans and details are taken from his own practice in the line of domestic sanitary engineering. Others, and particularly the views from European bath houses, were gathered by him during his trip.

Though he traveled much in Europe in former years and during his recent trip, and though he lived for many years in Africa as well as in the United States, it never was the good fortune of the author to visit some of the far Eastern countries, such as Russia and Japan, or the countries of the "Land of the Midnight Sun." In books of travel one reads a good deal about the peculiar bathing customs of some of these countries, but rather than give "at second-hand" a description of these, merely re-worded by him, the author decided to give in the Appendix some extracts from the observations of well-known travelers, explorers and scientists, among them being Paul du Chaillu, Chamberlin, Fink, Professor Morse and Mrs. Fraser. The author believed that the readers would prefer this way of dealing with the subject, and accordingly his apologies are due to the writers mentioned for his having freely drawn from their books.

To quote again from "Modern Sanitation," "there is no doubt that the widespread distribution of bathing literature will in the end fulfill its every promise, with the result that we will be better people, morally, physically and intellectually."

If the publication of this book should help to attain the high goal outlined in the above-quoted sentence, the author would feel more than well repaid for the time required to prepare it.

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THE AUTHOR.
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