



The Abuses of Dr. Kellogg

The late 1800s and early 1900s hosted numerous medical practitioners with unsubstantiated ideas and unproven methods of healing — some helpful, some harmful, some simply sadistic. In fairness, Dr. John Harvey Kellogg cannot be blamed for all of the medical misconceptions and malpractices of his time; but, Kellogg was the most out-spoken, the best known, and the most influential in many ways, both good and bad.

Dr. Kellogg was an early promoter of healthy living via diet and exercise. A life-long member of the Seventh-Day Adventist church, he was editor of that organization's *Good Health* magazine prior to being named, in 1876, superintendent of what became America's premiere health spa, the Battle Creek Sanitarium. Kellogg was a member of the Michigan State Board of Health and the American Public Health Association. He was a fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, American College of Surgeons, and Royal Society of Medicine in England. When his super healthy life did end at the age of 91, he received tributes from Herbert Hoover, John D. Rockefeller, Jr., Senator Vandenberg and Frank Knox, Secretary of the Navy.

And yes, he and his brother invented Corn Flakes and other health foods.

As seems often the case, however, what looks wholesome on the surface can have a rotten core. In 1906, Kellogg was a co-founder the Race Betterment Foundation, a major center of the eugenics movement, promoting racial segregation and protection of "the gene pool" from non-whites and immigrants. Kellogg wrote numerous books, two of which¹ contain advice highlighted below. He was prone to make totally unfounded claims that were sometimes just silly — such as brunettes begin puberty earlier than blondes; but often downright scary — premature sexual development also occasions premature decay.

As you peruse the following quotes, keep in mind that the writer was a man of authority in his field who was respected and admired as an expert by most of the informed population, and that the opinions he expresses "are representative of those held by a significant portion of responsible society in the Puritan epoch during the latter part of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th Centuries."²

On Natural Functions: "Man, in whatever condition we find him, is more or less depraved. ... His appetites, his tastes, his habits, even his bodily functions are perverted."

On Unnatural Functions: "In males, one of the most general physical causes of sexual excitement is *constipation*. ... When this condition is chronic, as in habitual constipation, the unnatural excitement often leads to most serious results. One of these is the production of a horrible disease, *satyriasis*." [That is: a compulsion to have sex with women.]

On Female Desire: "The desire for sexual congress naturally exists in the female only at or immediately after the time of periodical development." [That is, when fertile.]

On Male Depletion: "Too frequent emissions of the life-giving fluid, and too frequent excitement of the nervous system are, as we have seen, in themselves most destructive. The result is the same within the marriage bond as without it. ... Many a man has, until his marriage, lived a most continent life; so has his wife. As soon as they are wedded, intercourse is indulged in night after night, neither party having any idea that these repeated sexual acts are excesses which the system of neither can bear, and which to the man, at least, are absolute ruin. The practice is continued till health is impaired, sometimes permanently."

On Senior Sex: "Sexual life begins with puberty, and, in the female, ends at about the age of forty-five years, the period known as

the *menopause*, or *turn of life*. At this period, according to the plainest indications of nature, all functional activity [*i.e.* sexual activity] should cease. If this law is disregarded, disease, premature decay, possibly local degenerations, will be sure to result. The generative power of the male is retained somewhat longer than that of the female, and by stimulation may be indulged at quite an advanced age, but only at the expense of shortening life, and running the risk of sudden death.

On Thoughts of Sex: "It is vain for a man to suppose himself chaste who allows his imagination to run riot amid scenes of amorous associations. ... Though he may never have committed an overt act of unchastity, if he cannot pass a handsome female in the street without, in imagination, approaching the secrets of her person, he is but one grade above the open libertine, and is as truly unchaste as the veriest debauchee. Man may not see these mental adulteries, he may not perceive these filthy imaginings; but ... they soil and mar the mind; and as the record of each day of life is photographed upon the books in Heaven, they each appear in bold relief, in all their innate hideousness." [Kellogg never explains why God, who made "the secrets of her person" would judge his creations to be hideous.]

On Flirtation: "We have not the slightest hesitation in pronouncing flirtation [by both genders] as pernicious in the extreme. It exerts a malign influence alike upon the mental, the moral, and the physical constitution of those who indulge it."

On mental illness: "The general prevalence of extravagant sexual excitement among the insane is a well-known fact."

On Marriage of the Undeveloped: [With the idea that women are not fully developed (physically mature) until age 20, and men until age 24.] "If the body is still incomplete, the reproductive elements must also be incomplete; and, in consequence, the progeny must be equally immature. [To be fair, Kellogg had no

knowledge of genes or DNA.] Other reasons he offers for postponing marriage: "During the development of the body, all its energies are required in perfecting the various tissues and organs. There is no material to be spared for any foreign purpose." ['Foreign' as in 'pleasurable.'] "The reproductive act is the most exhaustive of all vital acts. Its effect upon an undeveloped person is to retard growth, weaken the constitution, and dwarf the intellect."

On the Descendants of the Undeveloped: The undeveloped wife "is compelled to endure the burdens and pains of child-bearing when utterly unprepared for such a task, to say nothing of her unfitness for the other duties of a mother. With so many girl-mothers in the land, is it any wonder that there are so many thousands of unfortunate individuals who never seem to get beyond childhood in their development? ... They are unalterably molded; and the saddest fact of all is that they will give to their children the same imperfections; and the children will transmit them to another generation, and so the evil will go on increasing, unless checked by extinction." [The 'final solution' of eugenics.]

Commenting on such dire proscriptions, Hefner writes: "After digesting this book, the development of a great many [youth] was probably slowed appreciably. It takes far less than this to instill in the impressionable the seeds that will one day produce the bitter fruits of impotence and frigidity."³

On the Descendants of the Oversexed: "Such is nature's inexorable law, that the iniquities of the parents shall be visited upon the children ... One reason why the offspring suffer is that the seminal fluid deteriorates very rapidly by repeated indulgence. The spermatozoa do not have time to become maturely developed. Progeny resulting from such immature elements will possess the same deficiency. Hence the hosts of deformed, scrofulous, weazened, and idiotic children which curse the race, and

testify to the sensuality of their progenitors. Another reason is the physical and nervous exhaustion which the parents bring upon themselves, and which totally unfits them to beget sound, healthy offspring.

On the Descendants of the Lustful: "If a child is begotten in lust, its lower passions will as certainly be abnormally developed as peas will produce peas, or potatoes produce potatoes. If the child does not become a rake or a prostitute, it will be because of uncommonly fortunate surroundings, or a miracle of divine grace. But even then, what terrible struggles with sin and vice, with foul thoughts and lewd imaginations — the product of a naturally abnormal mind — must such an individual suffer! ... The influence of the father is, at the outset, as great as that of the mother. The unhappy or immoral thoughts of one alone at the critical moment when life is imparted, may fix for eternity a foul blot upon a character yet unformed."

On Birth Control: "'We hear a good deal said about certain crimes against nature, such as pederasty and sodomy, and they meet with the indignant condemnation of all right-minded persons. ... But the query very pertinently arises just here as to whether the use of the condom and defertilizing injections is not equally a crime against nature, and quite as worthy of our detestation and contempt."

On Correcting the Oversexed [*i.e.* any woman who wants coitus other than to become pregnant.] "A female suffering with this affection will sometimes commit the grossest breaches of chastity. Its principal causes are self-abuse and a complete abandonment of the mind to lascivious thoughts. ... Treatment: Cool sitz baths; the cool enema; a spare diet; the application of blisters and other irritants to the sensitive parts of the sexual organs; the removal of the clitoris and nymphse, constitute the most proper treatment. The same measures of treatment are indicated in the cases in which

the disposition to practice self-abuse is uncontrollable by other means."

On Masturbation: Kellogg devotes the longest chapter in his book to his favorite topic, citing case after case of those who have succumbed to the urge and required his "treatments."

"If illicit commerce of the sexes is a heinous sin, self-pollution, or masturbation, is a crime doubly abominable. As a sin against nature, it has no parallel except in sodomy (see Gen. 19:5, Judges 19:22)." [Yet, neither citation mentions masturbation; nor is it mentioned anywhere else in the Bible.]

"The ages at which the habit may be practiced include almost the whole extent of human life. We have seen it in infants of only three or four years, and in old men scarcely less than sixty, in both extremes marked by the most unmistakable and lamentable consequences."

"Parents who have no suspicion of the evil, who think their children the embodiment of purity, will find by careful observation and inquiry, that in numerous instances their supposed virtuous children are old in corruption. Such a revelation has brought dismay into many a family, only too late in some cases."

Kellogg supplements his own rantings with quotes from other so-called authorities, including:

"In my opinion, neither the plague, nor war, nor small-pox, nor similar diseases, have produced results so disastrous to humanity as the pernicious habit of onanism.' — Dr. Adam Clarke."

"The pernicious and debasing practice of masturbation is a more common and extensive evil with youth of both sexes than is usually supposed. ... A great number of the evils which come upon the youth at and after the age of puberty, arise from masturbation, persisted in, so as to waste the vital energies and enervate the physical and mental powers of man.' — *Boston Medical and Surgical Journal*"

According to Kellogg, things or situations that lead to masturbation include:

- Influence of a schoolmate, nurse, or babysitter
- Obscene literature
- Sentimental literature
- [In males] a tight or long foreskin
- Constipation
- Hemorrhoids
- Irritable bladder
- Uncleanliness
- Sleeping on feather beds
- Lying upon the back or upon the abdomen
- Climbing for exercise
- Being spanked or whipped
- Use of stimulants, including tea and coffee
- Tobacco
- Candies
- Spices (especially cinnamon, cloves, and peppermint)
- [And, most magically] parents who have themselves masturbated at any point prior to the child's conception or birth.

On Parental Duty: Kellogg provides concerned parents with clear instructions on detecting sin among their children.

"If a child is noticed to seek a certain secluded spot with considerable regularity, he should be carefully followed and secretly watched, for several days in succession if need be. Many children pursue the practice at night after retiring. If the suspected one is observed to become very quickly quiet after retiring, and when looked at appears to be asleep, the bedclothes should be quickly thrown off under some pretense. If, in the case of a boy, the penis is found in a state of erection, with the hands near the genitals, he may certainly be treated as a masturbator without any error. If he is found in a state of excitement, in connection with the other evidences, with a quickened circulation as indicated by the pulse, or in a state of perspiration, his guilt is certain, even though he may pretend to be asleep; ... If the same course is pursued with girls, under the same circumstances, the clitoris will be found congested, with the other genital organs, which will also be moist from increased secretion. Other conditions will be as nearly as possible the same as those in the boy."

On Remedial Actions: Children may be deterred from masturbating, according to Dr. Kellogg, "by admonishing them of its sinfulness, and portraying in vivid colors its terrible results, if the child is old enough to comprehend such admonitions. In addition to faithful warnings, the attention of the child should be fully occupied by work, study, or pleasant recreation. He should not be left alone at any time, lest he yield to temptation. Work is an excellent remedy; work that will really make him very tired, so that when he goes to bed he will have no disposition to defile himself.

"In younger children, with whom moral considerations will have no particular weight, other devices may be used. Bandaging the parts has been practiced with success. Tying the hands is also successful in some cases; but this will not always succeed, for they will often contrive to continue the habit in other ways, as by working the limbs, or lying upon the abdomen. Covering the organs with a cage has been practiced with entire success."

Helping Little Boys— "A remedy which is almost always successful in small boys is circumcision ... The operation should be performed by a surgeon without administering an anæsthetic, as the brief pain attending the operation will have a salutary effect upon the mind, especially if it be connected with the idea of punishment, as it may well be in some cases. The soreness which continues for several weeks interrupts the practice, and if it had not previously become too firmly fixed, it may be forgotten and not resumed."

Helping Little Girls— "A little girl about ten years of age was brought to us by her father, who came with his daughter to have her broken of the vile habit of self-abuse into which she had fallen, having been taught it by a German servant girl. Having read an early copy of this work, the father had speedily detected the habit, and had adopted every measure which he could devise to break his child of the destructive vice which she had acquired,

but in vain. After applying various other measures without success, it finally became necessary to resort to a surgical operation, by which it is hoped that she was permanently cured, as we have heard nothing to the contrary since.”

Oneill comments: “He never even looked in on the child after the operation. It would seem a common courtesy to follow up on a patient after you’ve cut off her clitoris and labia minora, or perhaps not to cut off her genitals altogether. But it was that or the carbolic acid.”⁴

In Summary

John Harvey Kellogg could well have been the reincarnation of Calvin, or even of the apostle Paul,

except that he wasn’t against all pleasures that life offers, only those involving sexuality. For Kellogg, any sexual activity, sexual thought, or sexual feeling risked being roasted forever on the devil’s spit. Yet, he was a man fascinated with the ways and means of torturing and maiming the genitals of little boys and girls. Whether this sickness of mind came from too deep an immersion in Adventism, or from some terrible trauma in his childhood, is unclear. What is certain, is that Kellogg’s career-long promotion of *The Most Insidious Lies* has earned him a lofty place in the House of Infamy.

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¹ *Plain Facts for Old and Young* (1877) and *Ladies Guide in Health and Disease* (1893). Both are available online at no cost.

² Hefner, Hugh M., *The Playboy Philosophy*, Part III, Installment 17, HMH Publishing Co., Inc., 1963, p.1.

³ _____ p. 5.

⁴ Oneill, *op.cit.*