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# Is There a Doctor in the Lighthouse?

I HAVE heard it said that no home is a home without a Doctor's Book, and certainly, Joy assured me while we were still living the soft life of the mainland, no lightkeeper worth his salt would consider risking the lives of his wife and children by taking up a position at a lighthouse without one.

"I simply wouldn't stir from here without one," Joy declared. "Why—think of the children..."

Written for "The Listener"  
by G. R. GILBERT

"I know," I said. "You like to be able to look everything up and see it put down before you in black and white. I prefer to use my imagination. Well—you go along and buy a Doctor's Book and we'll take it with us."

"We had a beautiful one at home," said Joy wistfully. "It was nearly a foot thick and it was full of pictures. It told you everything."

I remembered the huge volume, as thick as it was long, and designed by loving hands to strike terror into the hearts of young and old. It was a treasure of Joy's father. The family still remembered the occasion when he had developed some minor complaint and found fault with the doctor's opinion—suspecting him, in fact, of not regarding it seriously enough. The following day he had revisited the doctor with the book under one arm, returning triumphant with the news that he had opened the doctor's eyes all right, and shown him the grave errors in his diagnosis. It wasn't until some time later that Joy's mother had gone to see the doctor herself, and then the doctor had advised her to get the book away from father and quietly burn it before he did himself a mischief. But mother couldn't think of parting him from the dear companion of so many years for which she had a sneaking regard herself.

In her admiration for a Doctor's Book Joy was her father's equal, and she wasn't going to be satisfied with anything but the best. For the last week before we embarked for Tiri Tiri and the lighthouse she scoured the Auckland bookshops in a relentless search for the best and biggest. Finally she ran it to earth in a little fancy goods shop in Karangahape Road. A beautiful example of the Family or Home Doctor's Book. One richly illustrated with photographs and meaty colour plates, and replete with little paragraphs in heavy black print to which the eye could leap in an emergency. There were nine hundred and fifty-seven pages and

fifty-two chapters—one for each week of the year it seemed—each chapter divided into innumerable sections and subsections. The book undoubtedly covered every condition in which the human frame could find itself—maladies tropical, sub-tropical, temperate and arctic were covered in full. Men, women and children, and even, in the final section, horses, were dissected with loving care, and their every frailty exposed in simple language.

From the first Joy took to it. In the

week that remained before we left she grew so fond of it that she could scarcely bear to pack it away. And when we arrived at the new home it was the first book to grace the shelves.



"It Told You Everything"

AND I must say, that its possession has been one means of keeping Joy happy and contented in the home. In fact I would advise every husband who has to care for his wife in isolation to invest in a good Doctor's Book, for it is a cheap and never-failing companion for the leisure hours.

Lighthouse life has its own difficulties—unlike city dwellers we have to make all our own entertainment and recreation. We cannot call up Bill or Joe and suggest a round of golf or game of tennis on a Saturday afternoon, there is no pub on the corner, or friends to visit in another suburb. Nor can we fill in the nights with visits to theatres or parties. We did, in fact, bring with us a Spanish guitar that Joy had paid 30 shillings for five years ago, and we made several attempts to fill in our time usefully by becoming expert executants on the instrument with the aid of two little books that explained guitar playing from A to Z. But the strings cut into our fingers, and we were never certain when it was tuned correctly, so we finally gave it to the other assistant-keeper. He discovered that its stem had been warped

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