

WHAT IS DISEASE

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PRESENTS

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Now, this is going to be a picture of you. So who will volunteer to help us? Won't someone stand up? Oh, that's fine! Suppose we choose this man here and the rest of you may sit down. Just stay still a minute, friend. There now! You can sit down too. And now let's get on with our story, a story about you and your worst enemy.

Now, you have already learned to protect yourself from many of your enemies. For instance, you've learned to wear clothes to protect your body from heat and cold. You've learned to grow fine crops. And you raise pigs and chickens. These things all protect you from the enemy hunger. And if a storm should come, you find shelter in your house. For you've learned to protect yourself from the weather, too.

But even your house won't protect you from your worst enemy. An enemy who may be here in this room right now, hiding in the dark corners, lurking in the most unexpected places. A great unseen enemy, deadly and silent, ready to strike in an instant. Ready to attack you without warning. No, no, no! Wait! It's no use running away. No one can run away from... disease. Yes, that's right: it's disease that is your worst enemy. For disease can be anywhere: in the air you breathe, in the ground you walk on or... Hey, wait! Don't drink that water! Disease can be in water too. Yes, I know: it looks clear and pure. But you see, disease is caused by tiny living creatures. Creatures so small you couldn't possibly see them. This water may be full of them.

But here, let's call on a man who knows all about these little creatures: the doctor. He studies disease every day by using a very wonderful instrument: the microscope. Now, there's nothing mysterious about a microscope. It's just an instrument to make things look bigger than they really are. But suppose we show you how it works.

If you don't mind, Doctor: we'll borrow your glasses. Thank you. And... Oh! Just a minute, Mr. Fly! We're going to look at you through the doctor's glasses. See? These glasses will magnify. That means they will make the fly look bigger than he really is. But let's try a stronger magnifying glass. You see? Now the fly looks even bigger. If we use two strong glasses, the fly grows larger again. And if we use three or even four glasses, the fly begins to look like a monster. Here: let's look at his leg. Why, his leg is covered with hair and so, through our magnifying glasses, we're seeing something we've never seen before. Now, if we take these four glasses, put a tube around them, we have a microscope. Simple, isn't it? And yet, by looking through this instrument, we can actually see the tiny creatures that cause disease.

Alright. Let's try our microscope on some of that water you were going to drink. This little piece of glass has a drop of that water on it and we're going to look at it through the microscope. Come on now, everybody. Watch closely! There: see? The water is full of tiny, living creatures called microbes, the deadly little enemies that cause disease. Now perhaps you wonder how these tiny microbes can harm a big strong person like you? Well, just look at this giant tree, tall and sturdy and strong. You'll think it

will take something mighty big and powerful to hurt this great tree, wouldn't you? But let's get real close. Do you see this little beetle on the trunk? Just watch it.

See? He's boring a hole in the bark. Well, one tiny beetle certainly can't hurt a big tree like this. But suppose we go inside and see what it's doing. Look at that. The beetle's drilled deep into the wood and laid its eggs. And now the eggs have hatched and the young beetles are boring more holes and laying more eggs. Then, there are more beetles and still more, until finally there are thousands of beetles, all eating away at the life of the great tree. Now the tree becomes sick and before long, the tree dies, killed by tiny enemies much smaller than itself.

Now, let's suppose you drank some of this bad water. If we could look inside you, we'd see that the microbes are carried down into your intestines, like this. And now we can watch the little enemies begin their deadly work. At first, there may only be a few of them, but see what is happening. The microbes are growing fat as they eat your body. And as each microbe grows larger, it splits, and becomes two. And these grow and split again. And become two more. Now the microbes multiply by the thousands, just like the beetles in the tree. Soon your body will begin to lose its strength. And before long, you are a very sick man. All because of these tiny microbes in the water you drank.

But remember, it is not only in the water that we find these little killers. No. With our microscope, we can find microbes almost anywhere. Suppose we take a look around your farm.

What's this? You have no latrine? You use the cornfield? Well, remember we said there were microbes in the soil? You see? Here they are: the vicious, deadly killers that live in soil fouled with human waste. But these microbes are not only in the field. They may be right inside your house. Let's go inside and see.

Well, there are some flies on the table. Now you may think that flies are harmless. But let's look at the fly's leg through our microscope. See? It's covered with filth. If we look closer, we see the filth is full of microbes from the field where you left your waste. And when a fly walks across your food, he leaves thousands of these deadly killers behind. But microbes can be found in other places too.

Mmmmm... We see that many people sleep in this room. And one of them is sick. Well, this is where we find microbes in the air. Microbes that came from the sick person's lungs. And now, as the others breathe, they draw into their bodies the disease that is in the air. If we look around, we may find other microbes in this room. This is the anopheles mosquito. Our microscope will show that this anopheles mosquito is full of malaria microbes. And when the mosquito bites you, it will leave many of these microbes in your blood. Then you will have the disease the mosquito carries.

Yes, it's true that disease can be anywhere and you must protect yourself against it. You must fight it. How? By attacking disease before it attacks you. First of all, build yourself a latrine. That way, you'll destroy the breeding place of disease and the flies that carry it. Cover your food so the flies can't get at it. Cover your bed at night: then the mosquito can't reach you and you'll be safe from the disease the mosquito carries.

So we have seen that there are many kinds of microbes. But remember this: they are all living creatures. Therefore, the microbes themselves can be killed. For instance, the microbes we saw in the water can be killed by boiling the water before you drink it. The microbes that live in dirt and filth can be killed with soap and water. So wash yourself regularly.

The sun will kill microbes. Fresh air is your friend too. So let's put windows in your house. And let the sun and fresh air come in and help you. Now that you know what disease is, you must fight it wherever you find it. Protect yourself against it and you will make your life healthy, happy and prosperous.

THE END