

Popular Education and Hygiene Propaganda

Paolo Mantegazza and the scientific pedagogy of his Almanacs

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Abstract

The present paper aims at providing a portrait of Paolo Mantegazza as educator and expert in medical/sexual/public/social hygiene. With the publication of his popular almanacs on hygiene from 1866 onwards, and following the precepts of what we might call the "scientific pedagogy", Mantegazza tried to provide the Italian people with a set of sanitary norms concerning personal hygiene and behavior. His aim was to educate the Italian people by instilling them with good manners, just as Italy had acquired its political unity. In part one, I consider Mantegazza's works in the specific cultural and historical context of the period and take into account the role that the main Italian publishers played in contributing to the cultural unification of the country. In part two, I have tried to solve the ambiguity about the type of public that Mantegazza's pedagogical and hygienic almanacs were addressed to, by quoting from significant passages from Mantegazza's works. In the conclusion, I retrace the connection that Mantegazza made between individual education, domestic education and, on a larger scale, social education, by providing an analysis of Mantegazza's works.

Keywords: Paolo Mantegazza; popular education; Positivism; Scientific Pedagogy; Sex education.

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1. Culture, The Publishing Industry, and Popular Publications on Hygienic and Sanitary Issues after the Italian Unification

The Italian territorial unification that formally began on March 17 1861, was only fully completed in 1870 with the annexation of Rome and Lazio. In the aftermath of this unification, there was a growing need for some sort of cultural and political cohesion to ensure the country's unity. The unification, in fact, went through a process of homogenizing the populace, starting from the individual, then involving the whole social corpus, thus including both the new middle class and the less wealthy and educated classes. The cultural status of the country was characterized by several problematic features: the following are but a few of them (Barbagli, 1974; Vigo, 1993, pp. 37-44, 57): the fiscal inequality; the unequal distribution of wealth; the perpetuation of an economic system that seemed to favor the enrichment of wealthy people and, at the same time, the impoverishment of the poorest sections of society; the economic-productive imbalances between the north, which was technologically more advanced and had a strong industrialization process in progress, and the south, characterized by clerical work and agriculture; the assignment of jobs according to traditional gender based assumptions, which confirmed the natural educational and domestic function of women on the one hand, and on the other, the integration of men into the broader and more profitable sphere of production; last but not least, the low rate of literacy, with a key distinction (unthinkable today) between those who could only read, and those who had also developed some writing skills, though often elementary.

As the former Minister of Education, Ferdinando Martini stated in 1896, when he took up the words of Massimo d'Azeglio, it was necessary to establish a line of continuity between what Italy formally was, that is, a united country, and what its inhabitants were supposed to be; a unified people with a cohesive identity, sharing the same culture, and living in a country where everyone had the same opportunities to access education and to participate in the political and collective life of the nation. As Simonetta Soldani and Gabriele Turi stated, it was necessary to «fare gli italiani» «make Italians» starting from the process of democratizing culture by providing the people with the tools to access that culture. In this regard, the main goals of Italian public education was a socio-cultural renewal and emancipation that aimed to put all students on the same level, and to

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overcome the disadvantages that derived from different social status. Even before an individual commitment, which would have had to start from the bottom, a direct intervention by the top management was necessary (1993, pp. 15-18).

In such a context, making education and educational institutions the vehicle for developing personal and collective identity, and participating in cultural life was crucial. As a result, it is interesting and necessary to investigate those "objects" that are supposed to represent Italy's cultural heritage, as well as the main tools of communication and dissemination, by this I mean, ideas, notions, and practical recommendations for everyday life. These 'objects' are the publications issued in those years: books, specialized magazines, cultural magazines that from the second half of the nineteenth century began to circulate more frequently among the Italian people (Ridolfi, 1997, p. 321).

In this regard, as Ada Gigli Marchetti noticed in her reflections on the period 1880-1895, it seems that active participation in the nation's affairs – probably as a consequence of the 1882 extension of the suffrage – led to a substantial regression of illiteracy, to a higher rate of education and encouraged the achievement of greater cultural, political and, even personal autonomy (1997, pp. 115, 148). As for the objectives of the present paper, book production will be defined as being both scientific, and intended for non-specialists (didactic). Focusing on such literature, this paper will show how the formation of the Italian people was facilitated by education, or better still, by an education that was based on hygienic-sanitary and moral standards. In fact, while the political institutions were trying to build a unitary national identity, on the scientific and cultural side, the second half of the nineteenth century was dominated by what we could call "the positivist ideology." This ideology was borrowed from the ideas of modern philosophers such as Descartes, Diderot, Buffon (Quintili, 2009), and developed under the influence of French thinkers, first among them Cabanis, who rearranged, in a more organic form, the need to consider a human being beyond the ontological and Manichean distinction between the body and the soul. The positivist human sciences considered each individual from the perspective of a never-ending intersection and a bilateral essence of the relationship between the psyche and soma.

Identity and individual health, therefore, were determined by a psycho-physical balance and, over time, we came to the right and proper understanding that it was not really the "somatization" of that element which up to then had been investigated from an exclusively metaphysical perspective: "the soul", was eventually conceptualized as "the

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mind". The most rigid mechanistic and materialist theories, which represented the nation as a body whose (political and social) health was contingent upon keeping a perfect balance between the various organs (the people that formed its varied constitution in harmony with the institutions responsible for maintaining order), were then resumed in the nineteenth century in an even more anthropological-scientist and medical sense.

In short: the constitutionally healthy individual would have been equally responsible for building a healthy domestic household which, in turn, would have been the foundation and the necessary precondition for building a society and a constitutionally healthy state. Therefore, since science had assumed the role of popularizing moral values as well as medical-health, hygiene propaganda acquired the connotations of a real pedagogical mission. These aspects, as we will see later, were only one part of the wider eugenics context within which the regulation and responsibility of sexual life (only legitimate within the confines of marriage) became an essential element of a well-formed national identity and the population's constitution (Loconsole, 2017).

The combination of certain factors such as the extension of suffrage, the process of schooling, the expansion of the publishing industry and the diffusion of an educational propaganda – ranging from works of literature, popular hygienic almanacs to general books containing indications and prescriptions – created the conditions for a book production that was marked by a strong scientific vocation.

In this regard, Paola Govoni, who has dealt with the pedagogical-hygienic popularization in the broader and more complex framework of Italian positivism, deserves a mention. Referring to the cultural tradition of the so-called self-help literature, initiated by Samuel Smiles' publication, *Self-Help*, which was translated and published in Italian in 1865 by the publisher, Treves of Milan (founded in 1861) with the title, *Chi si aiuta Dio L'aiuta* (which had 73 editions), Paola Govoni focused her attention on two different publications: in 1869, Michele Lessona wrote *Volere è potere*, published by Barbera, it had 14 editions; Paolo Mantegazza wrote, *Le glorie e le gioie del lavoro* (Maisner e C. 1870). Paola Govoni also studied the Milanese publisher, Sonzogno (among others, the author also mentions publishers such as Dumolard, Perino, Loescher and others). All of these publishers were characterized by a popular-educational vocation and in most cases by an affordable production costs; their main goal was to provide the indispensable cultural tools that Italians might use to autonomously exploit their own potential in the

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process of self-education, civilization and, in some aspects, homologation, thus guaranteeing the much demanded cohesion of the new Italians (2011, pp. 110-111; Turnaturi, 2014, pp. 37, 52-53).

The first publisher in post-unification Italy, Treves was particularly engaged in popularized scientific divulgation¹, as he identified, among his audience, both the cultured bourgeoisie, for whom he produced works that satisfied middle-class intellectual needs, and the working class, for whom he produced and published more easily accessible works; among other things, Treves was the first publisher of Edmondo De Amicis (Gigli Marchetti, 1997, p 129). Conversely, the publisher Sonzogno had a more informative / popular approach. His publications were intended for the lower middle-class as well as for the new working class that was born out of the industrialization process. Sonzogno was mainly engaged in the production of the periodic press, as in the case of "Il Bazar" that dealt with hygiene and domestic education, popular novels and women's magazines (ibid., p. 125, Franchini, 1993, pp. 341, 371-73). The publisher Barbèra also followed similar policies, Marchetti defined it as a "patriotic publisher", and in 1866, Barbèra published Massimo D'Azeglio's Memoirs.

From the above-mentioned cultural *milieu*, in which the scientific truth was the dominating force and in which any form of "teleologism" seemed to have given way to the most sincere and experimental observation of facts, positivist science had drawn up a set of norms, for conditioning and limiting human behaviors which were in accordance with naturalistic ideas. The analogy, or better still, the correspondence, between concepts like "natural", "normal" and "morally good" was thus perpetuated. As previously stated, science had now become a bearer of moral as well as scientific values. Thus, the works of Paolo Mantegazza (1831-1910) must be considered in a context where it is difficult to discern the dividing line between political-cultural conditioning and epistemological objectivity.

An eclectic scientist, a physician, an expert and pioneer in medical/sexual/public/social hygiene, anthropologist, psychologist, novelist, and senator of the Kingdom of Italy, Mantegazza was actively involved in the politics of the Pre-unification States, and eventually of Italy. He was a scholar and a popularizer of everything that might concern the psycho-physical health of the individual and the Nation; he was also an activist for safeguarding the Italian population's health; he was constantly engaged in scientific pedagogy and popular education activities. Following in the footsteps of Samuel Smiles, his

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work was predominantly secular. As Paola Govoni wrote «what some of these authors tried to achieve was the development of a moral that was an alternative to the religious one; these men hoped that such a moral, thanks to the new accessibility to education and communication, would soon spread out throughout the country» (2011, p. 124). However, as was the case for several Italian intellectuals, as well as Mantegazza, his faith in science and in scientific and technical progress did not imply his denial of Christian ideals: after all, religion represented a strong social glue, as it was accessible to people of all social classes, particularly poorer ones who were otherwise, for many reasons, excluded from cultural life; thanks to religion, the poorer sections of society could at least feel as though they were an integral part of the largest Christian family. It is also necessary to add that the same ruling classes of the State certainly would not have accepted a radical change in the present cultural order, particularly in regards to the control of sexual life, which was apparently still linked to the precepts of the Holy Scriptures. The Christian, predominantly Catholic, *diktat* could not be changed, especially during the aftermath of the territorial unification, when institutions were trying to guarantee the cohesion and cultural unity of the newborn Italian people. As was noted above, although a secular tendency prevailed within Mantegazza's pedagogical proposal, he used a rhetorical and communicative expedient in the book that he published in 1861 titled, *Il bene ed il male. Libro per tutti (Good and Evil. Book for everyone)*. The book was awarded the Ravizza literary prize on January 15, 1861, and the following was the committee's opinion².

this manuscript [...] is very well written. It deals with the duties towards God, towards our family, towards our homeland and towards ourselves. The book is so full of wonderful ideas, it is so perspicuous and so straightforward, that [by] reading it one realizes [that] it can be considered amongst the most prestigious and brilliant literary works; [...] the book has the rare merit of offering Italy a work that more than any other corresponds to the intimate thought of the program, showing that this author is one of the best talents our country currently has (Mantegazza, 1861)³.

In this book, Mantegazza relying on the universal validity of the moral law and somehow resuming a Kantian discourse⁴, suggests that human beings behave according to the dictates of a good education and love of their neighbors, within a socio-cultural system

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based on the values of mutual respectability. Although the author often proposes examples, describing a series of cases from which the distinction between amoral, immoral and morally good deeds emerge, in *Il bene ed il male*, Mantegazza does not actually propose a type of behavior to his reader, but offers the structure of a formal morality that is universally valid, from which the individual can always deduce the correct way to behave.

Moreover, as mentioned above, in order to involve as many people as possible, Mantegazza, even in his secular mindset, traced back the formal precepts of his book to a religious ideal. These are the words taken from the preface to the first edition:

Creating us, God wrote the moral law in the depths of our heart, so that in this regard our study consists of being able to clearly read what God has written on our conscience. As in every part of the world the heart beats in the same way, in every moral man the consciousness of good and evil is the same. This book [...] helps you to interpret what we have all carved into our soul. [...] I have written such a short book, so that we can always take it with us and so that its size does not frighten us inducing us not to read it. I wrote it in a plain and very simple style, so that every man of sound mind can understand it (Mantegazza, 1861, p. 7)⁵.

And again, he goes on: «what we must do and not do; what is good and evil; vice and virtue; just and unjust; everything is written in the book of our conscience; and there, we find the foundations of morality that is of all men, of all places, of all times. Conscience is the same at the poles and at the equator [...] and there is only one morality» (ibid., p. 11).

In this sense, Luisa Tasca said that because these books contained moral precepts as part of their aim at cultural leveling, they ended up representing real tools for the transmission and propaganda of Christian virtues (Tasca, 2004, pp. 110-112). If for Tasca such books could be seen as a way of democratizing good manners, as the practice of teaching them coincided with a growing civility among the Italian people, then for Gabriella Turnaturi they were actually characterized by a double and contradictory vocation: one the one hand they were the instruments of homologation and social cohesion, and on the other, a way to ratify the elitist distinction between the good-

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mannered ladies and gentlemen, and the uneducated common people (Turnaturi , 2014).

Most of the books on moral precepts and etiquette that were written in the nineteenth century, especially after the Italian territorial unification, were the expression of the extent to which this moralizing tendency was politically oriented towards a social conservatism. In this context, Mantegazza's works – already defined as being more formal than substantive – were different as they were meant to persuade and offer advice rather than to impose obligations and precepts (Turnaturi, 2014, pp. 34-35).

This argument is valid for *Il bene ed il male* but not for the works that Mantegazza published from 1866 onwards, the hygienic-popular almanacs, as he, at least apparently, intended them for the Italian public as a whole. Due to the aforementioned preoccupation with eugenics and with the idea that both the individual and the nation's moral education needed to pass through a hygienic-sanitary education and a general public control to guarantee that the population remained in good health, these almanacs represented a form of communication for a sort of scientific pedagogy that appeared, in some respects, as a mandatory obligation. They asserted that bad hygiene standards caused the Italian population to have an unhealthy physical constitution making any form of emancipation impossible, and which in turn prevented them from achieving a healthy and strong cultural and national identity⁶.

Therefore, in the following pages I will try to outline a portrait of Paolo Mantegazza as a popular educator trying to understand, firstly, what part of the population was the real target for his pedagogical sanitary works. In doing so, I will follow the methods of investigation proposed by Paolo Sorcinelli (1996, 2009), according to this method, the events connected with everyday life, and specifically the hygienic-sanitary care of Italians in the post-unification period, acquired scientific, but also a pedagogical relevance that revealed the fundamental characteristics and customs of a people in a precise moment of history (Covato, 2018, pp. 13-31).

2. Almanacs and scientific pedagogy: the audience for Paolo Mantegazza

As was said above, from the dawn of the modern age, the human being has been considered in all its psycho-physical complexity. This is true also for the disciplines that were responsible for describing (physiologically) and prescribing (normatively) the

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nature and state of a human being's health. Therefore, it is not unusual that disciplines from the soft sciences and the hard sciences cooperated in these investigations upon humanity. A taxonomic and epistemological distinction did not yet exist between the sciences; such a distinction would gradually be defined during the nineteenth century, particularly, with the advent and the affirmation of the history of science (Ciardi, 2013). The eclectic approach and formation of Mantegazza is based upon the absence of such a distinction, which prior to the nineteenth century determined the use of the term "natural philosopher" to indicate what we are accustomed to call "scientist" today.

This tendency towards multi / interdisciplinary thought is mirrored in the hygienic-popular almanacs, forty volumes of which were written by Mantegazza. Many issues discussed in the almanacs were mostly anticipated in the *Elementi d'igiene* (1864), a book that apparently dealt with different topics: from the *Hygiene of the kitchen* to the *Hygiene of the bowels*, from the *Hygiene of the senses* to the *Hygiene of the nest* etc. As was mentioned above, this type of variety in Mantegazza's works was perfectly in tune with the general trend of multi-disciplinarity that characterized the period. The almanacs were first published by Brigola, and later by Dumolard and, from 1894 onwards, by the Treves Brothers. These publications were accompanied by iconographic and advertising inserts for products that were considered as healthy, and near sections called *Pagine del bene* (Pages of wellness), where the author offered his readers practical advice and recommendations for their daily life. These books were quite short so that even the common reader could take advantage of them without being discouraged by the length of the volume (Govoni, 2011, pp. 235-239).

While studying these almanacs, it is important to understand the type of audience that Mantegazza intended for his works, and the broader context of the genre. The Casati law of 1859 proposed that civic education be included as a fundamental high school discipline (Tasca, 2004, page 123); Mantegazza praised an English pedagogy founded on the imperative «study things more than books» «*studiare più le cose che i libri*» (Mantegazza, 1898, p. 108); according to this idea, a pragmatic teaching in high school was central, and to the necessary detriment of the overabundant transmission of theoretical notions. Following such an idea, Mantegazza intended to address as wide an audience as possible, making no distinction as to social origin. Among other things, this declaration of intent was eventually made explicit, in 1874, when Mantegazza was dealing with the hygiene of the senses and, in particular, of the sense of smell, and he sarcastically wrote:

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«oh, male teachers and female teachers, oh educators and pedagogues, oh planters of the supersensible, oh reformers of the ideal, do not forget the sky; but remember at least three times a day that your pupils have a nose, and that the nose does not distil pearls» (1874, p. 65)⁷.

And again, Mantegazza was firmly convinced that in order to change the structure of Italian education and renew Italian sanitary conditions (enhancing it), a preliminary intervention by the ruling classes was necessary. The dedication of the almanac of 1891 to Professor Luigi Pagliani, the Director of Public Health, is exemplary in this regard: «To pay homage to your work, redeemed from the filth of hygienic ignorance, Italy will prepare you a crown [...] of flowers and of laurels» (Mantegazza, 1891, p. 5). Thanks to Pagliani, «in the previous year (1893) cholera had taken few victims in Italy [...] [and] was sporadic rather than an epidemic» (Mantegazza, 1894, p. 73); in 1898 he also wrote in favor of Professor Giulio Bizzozzero, his former student, and a member of the Superior Council of Health and eventually of the Public Department of Education (Mantegazza, 1898, pp. 33-41); and, last but not least, he also praised the English University of Durham in which a doctorate in hygiene had recently been instituted (ibid., p. 93).

However, although it may seem that Mantegazza wanted to address the Italian people as a whole, it is sometimes difficult to understand to what extent the concept of "audience" can be used, as it is sometimes differentiated between an economic criterion, a cognitive criterion (the ability to understand the language of the almanacs), a conceptual criterion, and the universal label of 'belonging to the human race'. In order to deal with this question it will be necessary to have a constant and direct approach to the sources, as it is crucial not to lose the linguistic effectiveness conceived by the author and to cite some of the significant anecdotes that explain Mantegazza's concept of "hygiene".

In the aforementioned dedication to Pagliani, for example, we read: «I want your name to get out of the halls of the Ministries and the laboratories of science, to reach the streets where people move and live. [...] Scientists, who work only for themselves [...] are half men or unconscious instruments of civilization» (Mantegazza, 1831, p. 3). Science, in its application, goes beyond the theoretical formulations that precede its technical implementation and beyond the experimentalism of the laboratories, thus taking on a meaning only insofar as it turns from theory into practice; it becomes a useful tool for

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the improvement of the life and health of an individual (in this case indefinite as universal) as well as of the whole society.

In a passage from *L'Igiene dei sensi* (*The Hygiene of the senses*), for example, we read:

As my almanacs are popular, they are believed by some critics as being destined for only the peasant or the worker; and they are therefore accused of taking care of the rich. Therefore, I have been scolded, because I teach sanitary precepts, which may seem a cruel irony for those who have not much money in their pockets. But it is necessary to repeat here [...] that people are not only made up of workers and peasants, but are made up of all of us; thus, when one writes a popular book, he/she has to get an empirical and average idea of an average people, to which neither the very learned nor the illiterate belong [...] Such a book will be useful if it is made for the average stature of human brains [...] (Mantegazza, 1874, pp. 26-27)⁸.

In this short passage, Mantegazza has condensed the cultural and economic criterion by declaring that he is addressing an average public. The language he uses is not really elementary, and the price of the almanac is accessible to most Italians (yet not to all of them). It seems, therefore, that the hypothesis of a democratization of sanitary knowledge somehow failed.

However, in the almanac dated 1880, Mantegazza attempted to explain the impossible feasibility of having a universally valid hygiene that met the needs of everybody's psycho-physical health, by writing against all those who had accused him of giving a voice to prescriptive exaggerations: «You are all right. Mantegazza exaggerates and necessarily exaggerates; he does so, because he writes for everyone and does not speak to anyone in particular. [...] When I write and try to popularize the safest truths of private hygiene, I have to write for the average man or for the average Italian, who does not exist on paper or in our brains, while Mr. Jones and Mr. Brown do exist [...]» (Mantegazza, 1880, p. 57). Up to this point, hygiene was represented as «a compass, which must look at the port of health» (ibid., p. 60).

From this passage the identification of the addressee seemed to be the psycho-physical constitution of each person, and the individual's ability to adapt the general notions of hygiene that were contained in the almanacs to their own state of health. Yet, further on, this addressee, and by extension the potential readers, are again transformed into a

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cultural criterion, so much so that Mantegazza ends up recognizing an apostolic mission in his activity as a writer of almanacs: «The exaggeration of recommendation – we read in the text – is necessarily spontaneous if the author writes for the people, who are made up of educated, half-educated and ignorant people. The popular writer cannot be effective if he does not have a little apostolic blood in his veins [...] It is the common reader, who must know how to distinguish what is the passion of the apostle and what is the truth of science [...]» (ibidem). In short, to borrow Paola Govoni's expression, the public for Mantegazza's science, seems to have extended to include all the social and cultural strata of the population. Following the idea that the reader had to adapt the hygiene precepts to a particular case, in 1873, Mantegazza wrote «health [...] is not just one for all men [human beings], but rather every man has his own individual health» (Mantegazza, 1873a, p. 45).

Such statements are useful for detecting Mantegazza's unconscious ambiguity in selecting the target audience for his sanitary education. One of the explanatory hypotheses for this could be the general state of backwardness and widespread illiteracy in Italy: factors that, given their distribution and extension on the Italian territory, would have made it difficult, except perhaps for the wealthiest classes, a real process of emancipation and social climbing. To conclude, therefore, it is worth quoting an extensive and significant – and at the same time entertaining and allusive – passage; here Mantegazza succeeds in *leveling*⁹ – following the meaning advanced in De Curtis' most recent study – the Italian people as a whole, equally considering all citizens and somehow eliminating all the so-called caste differences under the aegis of physiology.

You are at the Criminal Court, sitting among the evil and curious people [...]. The king's attorney is speaking, and you are listening to him with religious attention [...]. Your favorite prosecutor is speaking, trying hard to move the public, to cheat the defense attorney, to annihilate the accused; but in vain! Today he does not have the usual energy; he cannot find his usual tirades, and he does not find the adverbs dear to his verbosity [...]. Your disappointment increases; you nervously sway in your chair, you cough and in doing so you would like to cover the vulgarity of the speaker [...] All in vain! The prosecutor this morning is not eloquent; his speech is a solemn fiasco. Do you know why that good man has lost his verbosity today? – I'll tell you in your ear, lest someone hears it. The prosecutor has not yet performed one of the most important

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functions [...]. Do you know why today the professor you have always admired with great enthusiasm is not as deep as usual? Why the singer who moves us cannot get away with the usual notes? Why the newspaper editorial is not as smart and tasty as usual? It is because the professor, the singer, and the journalist have had some secret domestic misfortune, something that always concerns the same daily duty, that deeply worried the above mentioned prosecutor [...] There is no human pride that can resist that humiliation; piles of gold or princely blazons cannot take away from us that humiliation. The ugly women are certainly among the most forgotten creatures of Mother Nature: well they can find some comfort in the idea that even Venus was not allowed to emancipate herself from that daily tribute. The most disheartened proletarians can think that even kings are once a day equal to them (Mantegazza, 1873a, pp. 98-101)¹⁰.

3. From the public to the private: individuality, household and sexuality in the almanacs by Paolo Mantegazza

Mantegazza belongs to the group that we might define as "positivist scientists"; therefore, in his methodology we can detect an experimentalist tendency towards objectivity (although his ideas were rather different from the extreme determinism of his contemporary, and former friend, Cesare Lombroso); yet, his work fits perfectly within that historical-conceptual framework, as it is full of prejudices and normative ideas that, in some way, was bolstered by the scientific evidence of the time. This was the case for the almanacs; the educational normativity that Mantegazza prescribed in his books, as a way to redefine and improve Italian's hygienic-sanitary and moral constitution was actually imbued with old prejudices.

In particular, the reconstruction of this specific part of the Italian history of customs must be seen within a cultural system where good manners and the moral idea of respectability, contrasted with the actual situation where promiscuity and the corruption of customs within the domestic sphere was prevalent (Cantatore, 2015, p. 7, Wanrooij, 1990). In such a context, as Lorenzo Cantatore claims, «the study of human beings [...] especially seen in connection with the environment they live in, also implies a careful analysis of the spaces in which people were born, grew up, and lived [...]. All normative and pedagogical analysis is inspired by a sort of mathematical equation calculating hu-

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manity and residential buildings, and by an idea of [the] hygiene of bodies, of the relative spaces [that] they inhabit and of their social behaviors» (ibid., p. 14). The pedagogical activity of Paolo Mantegazza is to be understood within this social context where hygiene in its broadest sense was in charge of the regulation of customs and social relations. Furthermore – always following what Cantatore says – the almanacs, together with other documents – the heuristic and historical value of which has long been called in to doubt – acquire the status and the scientific dignity of sources that can be consulted to outline a cultural and historical scenario of that specific context.

Therefore, Mantegazza's almanacs acquire a specific function in this socio-cultural context. These almanacs first focus on the fact that the preservation of individual health is directly related to a series of hygiene requirements, which dictate good practices of human behavior. Thus, the almanacs establish the claim to involve the macrocosm of Italian society within a whole reform project. Mantegazza's was driven to see this reform come to fruition. This was evident in the dedication of his twenty-ninth almanac, which was addressed to Emilio Treves, in it Mantegazza wrote: «my best book is my almanac that I have been writing for 29 years, with consistency, patience, and courage; these publications have contributed a little to improve the health of my countrymen, fighting many prejudices and bringing back life many high and precious truths» (Mantegazza, 1894, p. 4).

In this regard, the novel published in 1897 and titled *L'anno 3000* (The year 3000) clearly shows the author's purpose to renew the Italian State's situation, through the perspective of eugenics. The novel, a forerunner of Italian science fiction, is set in a visionary world in which science has solved all the problems of humanity, thanks to the tools offered by hygiene. Almost as a sort of introduction to the novel, in the 1891 almanac we read: «When I find myself unhappy with the present world, when I find men too different from what I would like them to be [...] I can only look back to the past, or forward to the future. The latter is always beautiful, because one can sail with his hopes pushed by that inebriating breeze, which is fantasy» (Mantegazza, 1894, 123).

Moreover, Mantegazza endorses a direct intervention for the promotion of advice concerning hygiene notions, which should begin with the institutions' preliminary activism and then involve every single citizen. However, Mantegazza claimed that hygienic medicine should be based on prevention and not on direct cure. Hygiene is the art from which to achieve good health; it is based on the proverb according to which «the best

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medicine is to need no medicine» (Mantegazza, 1880, page 99). This concept is expressed in an evocative and explanatory passage of the book *L'igiene dei visceri* (The hygiene of the bowels):

We want to put off our death and to have a peaceful death; and this is the goal of the hygiene of the future [...]. [...] Preventive medicine is the future of medicine, and to treat healthy people so that they do not get sick is more useful, and more important, than to cure the sick. [...] preventive medicine is more powerful than curative medicine [...] (Mantegazza, 1873a, pp. 15-18)¹¹.

And yet, the highly educational function that Mantegazza assigned to hygienic-sanitary propaganda is also evident from the fact that, after defining education and hygiene as Siamese sisters, he recognizes, among many, the value of the "Male Institution of Moral Education" ("Istituto maschile di educazione e morale") an institution established in Rimini by Matteo Belisardi. In this 'Istituto' «health and morality [are] welded together so tenaciously that they form only one body» (Mantegazza, 1898, pp. 157-158). Taking care of the health of the body and soul, – which in contrast to the old philosophical tradition, were no longer considered as being separate – meant dealing with the human being as a whole. As Mantegazza wrote in the *Dictionary of Hygiene for Families* (*Dizionario d'igiene per le famiglie*), published in 1881 with the collaboration of Neera, «the true pedagogy is that which is based on the physiology of the brain» (p. 188).

Moreover, within this scientific paradigm that was characterized by the correspondence, or rather, by the bi-laterality of the causal relationship between psychic and physical elements, Mantegazza was fully legitimate in his intention to bring back the analysis carried out on the body to themes traditionally ascribed to moral reflection. For example, from the prescription for the behaviors intended for the care of the viscera and of the senses, Mantegazza ends up indicating a set of behaviors and prescriptions for the maintenance of the social order. Mantegazza's tenacity in pursuing this result was in some way determined by his optimism and his confidence in scientific progress. Among his many passages, an exemplary one in the 1874 almanac refers to the aforementioned correspondence between the internal and external, and to the specific case between the physical body, health and moral education. After providing some recommendations to protect one's hearing, Mantegazza explains how some human behavior can have

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negative repercussions on a person's hearing apparatus and acoustic health in general. Mantegazza expresses his disappointment with the punitive practices of education:

All the admonitions given to children by the hands, are brutal and unworthy of a teacher or a parent who considers himself as a civilized man. [...] So let your hands be clean; do not use them to beat children; no fists and slaps, no hair pulling and ears torn [...]. Many, however, who do not dare to hit, pull children's ears, believing to reduce their anger to the most constitutional form possible [...]. [...] Well, even pulling one's ear is cruel, barbaric and dangerous. The least evil that is done to their students, or their children, is to deform the ear; but if this is repeated several times, it can produce a laceration, an inflammation or other wounds that [...] can lead to long sores and incurable deafness (Mantegazza, 1874, pp. 108-109)¹².

Moreover, as far as the individual was concerned, the moral behavior and education that Mantegazza proposed, were based on sobriety and on the balance between psycho-physical needs and their satisfaction. Since education was understood as "acquired habits", it was necessary to educate the individual so that he/she could self-regulate his/her passions and control, or repress if necessary, his/her own drives. *L'Igiene di Epicuro* (The Hygiene of Epicurus), is an almanac entirely dedicated to the study of "nervous" substances, such as coffee, wine, tobacco, cocaine, etc..., described as «powerful generators of joys [but also] [...] tremendous corrupters» (Mantegazza, 1872, p. 10); «nature has given us these exciting substances to comfort us in our efforts, to spread flowers on the path of our life» (ibid., p. 130). This almanac is structured on the idea of creating a balance between needs, satisfaction and repression. «We do not delete neither wine, nor alcohol, nor tea, nor coffee from the human book; but let us study them in order to distill their joy, strength and morality» (ibid., pp. 7-11). Therefore, before repressing a need, it is first necessary to understand the reality of it, in order to be able to control it and submit it to human needs.

The investigation conducted on nervous substances had already been discussed in the 1866 almanac: the Hygiene of the kitchen (*l'Igiene della cucina*). With words similar to those used in the 1872 almanac, Mantegazza addresses all those who wish to consume such substances by saying: «morality ends where abuse begins; yet, enjoying with sci-

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ence and prudence the good and beautiful things God has created, is wisdom and not corruption» (Mantegazza, 1866, p. 33).

Even for this almanac, as had happened for Pellegrino Artusi's *La scienza in cucina e l'arte di mangiar bene*¹³ (Science in the kitchen and the art of eating well, published in 1891), the examination of eating habits constituted an extremely relevant issue (as shown in the research by Piero Camporesi and Paolo Sorcinelli). Such an issue is important for reconstructing and outlining the distinctive features of post-unification Italy and, as far as Mantegazza was concerned, for the advantages that a good diet would produce on people's health. Consequently, the almanacs are full of advertisements promoting the products that Mantegazza considered to be 'hygienic', and therefore healthy. Among these products we can name the "acqua tutto cedro Tassoni", Fernet-Branca, Vermutte, the Milanese chocolate "Bianchi e compagnia", Chianti wine and also the so-called hygienic perfumeries, and the "Acqua Brumani" which was used to restore "the primitive color to the hair and beard".

The above mentioned almanac titled *Igiene della cucina* (the hygiene of the kitchen) provides advice on the use of raw materials, on the preferred metals for cooking and, in general, on the right sort of "kitchenware"; but from this almanac we can draw an image of women who were strongly grounded by their physiological determination. It was the prototypical female image portrayed by the human sciences of the age. Mantegazza writes: «To defend the kitchen [...] we rely especially on the housewife, the intelligent heart of the woman who prepares food for her loved ones and seasons it with a sauce of good humor and vigilant affection» (ibid., p. 58). And again, in perfect harmony with the widespread conception of women's lower intelligence and lower cultural productivity, we read, as for the consumption of nervous substances, that «men need [such substances] more than women, because men's brain and muscles work more actively» (ibid., p. 34). In the almanac of 1894, Mantegazza also writes that «it seems to be demonstrated that women have less memory than men, perhaps because women use their memory less than men, and because women's intellect is weaker» (Mantegazza, 1894, p. 32). At least in the first part of the statement, this lower status would be justified by the lower education and training possibilities that women had in that society.

After all, although a careful reading of Mantegazza's works might provide us, in some respects, with a pro-emancipation image of a man, already in the definition of "hygiene" that we find in the Dictionary of 1881, we can see how his ideas were actually imbued

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with an almost unconscious sexist prejudice. As Carmela Covato has argued, it is a real "genre introjection" as a prescriptive norm; according to such a norm, it is naturally and scientifically determined that men and women have different competences and different destinations that, in terms of educational practices, have been and must be reproduced and perpetuated (2002a, pp. 123-124; 2002b): «In our society, women should be the first apostles of hygiene by teaching it to the children, and making it a pleasant habit for the young and the adult» (Mantegazza and Neera, 1881, p. 188). While as for science, culture and education, the male prototype was a sexually and economically active and productive individual, the prototypical woman had a passive sexuality linked to the procreative function, and basically was a good housewife, educator, guardian of the kitchen and of home hygiene. A parallelism between individual psycho-physical skills and the place of employment was therefore proposed.

In relation to the domestic environment, seen as the "natural space of women", it is interesting that Neera, a woman, proposed a stereotypical definition, attributing, the cause of corruption and degeneration of morals to the participation of women to a frivolous cultural and social life – a life to be lived and enjoyed outside the domestic walls. This was attributed to women who were «losing their feminine characteristic», discarding «needlework [...] [for] the noisy distractions of the square», and had abandoned their natural place", that is: «four white walls and the company of human beings women will love!» (Mantegazza and Neera, 1881, pp. 96-99)¹⁴.

The house was seen as the first place of individual formation; the hygienic-sanitary protection of the house was seen as the foundation from which to structure the future psycho-physical education of each person. This means that the house was the physical representation of private life that, rather hypocritically, was believed to be the reflection, on a small scale, of the corpus of good manners and moralism that were to be shown in public. The truth is that although such ideas suggest that the domestic hearth was the place of order and good custom, the very fact that there were specific educational precepts based on a system of prohibitions and prescriptions to limit any domestic promiscuity, shows that things were rather different.

Among other things, as Paolo Sorcinelli explains, as early as the end of the eighteenth century, legislators, educators, and medical/sexual hygienists tried to limit what was seen as a widespread moral corruption, by imagining a new structure for private architecture, seeking to specialize the different rooms in the house, to avoid the creation of intercom-

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municating rooms, and to separate the children's rooms from those of their parents. The aim being to prevent children from having early contact or awareness of the affairs of the marital thalamus (2006, p. 33).

Moreover, since the eighteenth century, and especially since 1760, when the Swiss physician Tissot published his much-discussed volume *Onanism, a dissertation on the diseases produced by masturbation*, a real anti masturbation war took place. Condemning masturbation, this war also produced a constant accusatory propaganda against all the so-called deviant expressions of sexuality (ibid., pp. 108-109; Sorcinelli, 1996, pp. 200-202). The control system would become more incisive in the nineteenth century, but in this period, even when scientific and medical language, or religious and bigoted moralism was used, discussions on an intimate sex life was submitted to an almost constant police control. In Italy, this situation was even worse, since the President of the Central Committee of Leagues for Public Morality, Rodolfo Bettazzi, began his campaign to re-educate the Italian people in the virtues of purity and chastity, thus laying the foundation for what we could later define as a cultural heritage that lasted until the discussions on morality and sexuality in Italy during the first half of the twentieth century (Azara, 2018, pp. 33-38).

Paolo Mantegazza's works are to be considered in the context of the nineteenth century: a moment in which diseases, such as tuberculosis and cholera had a strong impact on the intimate sphere, and in which the discourse on sex was considered in the wider cultural framework of the eugenics utopia. Thus, to conclude, it is useful to mention the almanac published in 1877, *l'Igiene del nido* (The hygiene of the nest), an almanac that a few years after its first publication, sold over 100,000 copies. This book included notions that had been addressed in previous almanacs, but which had been difficult for the poorest and less educated people to read, *Fisiologia del piacere*, la *Fisiologia dell'amore* e gli *Elementi d'igiene* (the physiology of pleasure, the physiology of love and the elements of hygiene).

The 1877 almanac was followed by the publication of *l'Igiene dell'amore* (the Hygiene of love). Also in this case, the book was written according to the pedagogical idea of sobriety; thus, the author recommends chastity rather than an exuberant sexual life because it was better for a person to have a moderate rather than an extreme sex drive (Mantegazza, 1877a, pp. 34, 39-40). Mantegazza admonished all parents and educators who tell children that the idea that sexuality is an innate fault or something to be

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ashamed of; he decided to address his educational discourse to everyone, since «the almanac as for its size, and for its price, can and must be read also by the child, even by young girls» (ibid., 6). At least in the nineteenth century, such a stance was of extreme importance.

Mantegazza's reform was innovative, but not exempt from prejudices. If on the one hand talking about sex life meant, at least for women, talking about procreation – and having a discourse about heterosexual intercourse, with no reference to any form of hedonism – on the other hand, for man, it meant talking primarily about sensual pleasure. From a eugenics perspective, and therefore for the protection of the new generations, what really mattered for this proposal of sexual pedagogy was that the psycho-physical hygiene of men and women led to the union of two healthy individuals that would conceive good healthy children without any degenerative defect. That this was a running theme throughout the whole of Mantegazza's production, is also exposed, albeit with dramatic tones, in his 1868 novel. Here Emma, who has contracted cholera, leaves her beloved, William in order to protect future generations and through them the whole society.

One last consideration. Although Mantegazza was against all expressions of sexuality that were not heterosexual and intended for the reproduction of the species, in 1877 he did not hesitate to declare his indulgence towards what he defines as the "Malthusian reticence"; a different form of what was called "the fraud of a generation" or "sperm waste". Nevertheless, he remained a man and a scientist of his time, between innovation and tradition. Thus he also condemned masturbation that might cause «exhaustion of muscular forces [...]. Painful restlessness. Frequent discontent. Memory loss. Very little resistance to study. Shyness [...]. Weakness of sight. Headaches [...]. Weakness of digestion, great voracity, constipation. Weight loss [...]. Night pollutions. Future erotic weakness. [...] Different kinds of paralysis. Idiocy or madness. Absolute impotence. Suicide» (ibid., pp. 28-29). Moreover, to protect those whose dreams evoke impure thoughts, nocturnal pollutions or unhealthy intents, he wrote a concluding with a statement clearly referring to the ancient prejudice of a male active sexuality and a female passive one:

sleep in a hard bed with light blanket. [...] After doing a lot of muscle exercise. In the morning and in the evening, you should use a bidet for one or two minutes. Tie a towel

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around your kidneys, bringing the knot on the back, in order to make the supine position difficult. Avoid aromas, over-stimulating foods, an over-nutritious diet, and over-abundant libations to Bacchus. Avoid, especially in the evening, dances, sensual readings, etc. Do not smoke, or smoke very little. If age and strength and circumstances allow it, hand Adam into Eva's hand. [...] Even some little women [...] very sensitive or very chaste, have strange dreams at night [...]. They should not be dismayed and should not speak of it to a living soul, because they could be responsible for the sins of others (ibid., pp. 30-31).

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1 As for the publishing house Treves and specifically on the transition from “Emilio Treves” to “Fratelli Treves”, see Govoni, 2011, pp. 113-122; Gigli Marchetti, 1997, p. 131.

2 Carlo Ravizza a scholar and professor of Moral Philosophy died in 1848. For Mantegazza’s book, *The Good and the Evil (Il bene ed il male)* he drew inspiration from Ravizza. In his will he left 700 francs a year for a prize, which was to be awarded to those who had published a work on important and complex issues of moral philosophy. Hence the creation of the Ravizza prize was established; it was dissolved in 1940. The prize was awarded to books and publications that, like Mantegazza’s *The Good and the Evil*, had combined issues on moral reflection with those on national identity. As for this issue, see also Chiara Continisio, *Ravizza, Carlo*, in «Dizionario biografico degli italiani», vol. 86, 2016 ([http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/carlo-ravizza_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)/](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/carlo-ravizza_(Dizionario-Biografico)/)) and Ead., *Il pensiero politico di Carlo Ravizza (1811-1848)*, in «Cheiron», 2007, vol. 48, pp. 115-205.

3 Il manoscritto [...] è un’opera assai felicemente ispirata. Essa tratta dei doveri verso Dio, verso la famiglia, verso la patria e verso noi stessi. Il libro è così ricco di splendide idee, è di forme così perspicue e così schiette, da dare alla sua lettura tutto il prestigio delle opere letterarie più accarezzate e geniali [...] può avere il raro merito di offrire all’Italia un’opera che più d’ogni altra corrisponde al pensiero intimo del programma, rivelando nell’autore uno dei più belli ingegni di cui può onorarsi il nostro paese.

4 For Kant it is necessary to produce an autonomous morality according to which good is pursued as an end in itself; that is to say that with good deeds, people should not seek a personal gratification or an advantage of any kind. In contrast, for Mantegazza, the real purpose of a good deed lay precisely in the awareness that good deeds will provide the “benefactor” with a feeling of pleasure, and therefore a narcissistic return.

5 Chi ci ha creati ha scritto la legge morale nel fondo del nostro cuore, sicché a questo riguardo lo studio si riduce tutto quanto nel saper leggere chiaramente ciò che Dio ha scritto sulla nostra coscienza. Così come in ogni parte del mondo il cuore batte in uno stesso modo; così in ogni uomo morale la coscienza del bene e del male è la stessa. Questo libro [...] vi aiuta ad interpretare ciò che tutti abbiamo scolpito nell’anima nostra. [...] Ho fatto questo libro piccino piccino, perché possiamo portarlo sempre con noi e perché la sua mole non ci spaventi e ci suggerisca la tentazione di non leggerlo. L’ho scritto poi in uno stile piano e semplicissimo, volendo che ogni uomo di mente sana lo possa intendere.

6 As for this issue, see Giorgio Cosmacini’s books on the history of Italian healthcare between the nineteenth and the twentieth century . In particular, I recommend Cosmacini, 1996.

7 See also Mantegazza, 1874, pp. 22-23.

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8 I miei almanacchi, perché popolari, son creduti da alcuni critici destinati soltanto al contadino o all'operaio e son quindi accusato di occuparmi dei ricchi e son quindi maltrattato, perché insegno al popolo precetti igienici, che possono sembrare una crudele ironia per chi non abbia molti quattrini in tasca. Ma c'è dunque bisogno di ripetere [...] che il popolo non è fatto di soli operai e di soli contadini, ma è composto di tutti noi; e che quando si scrive un libro *popolare*, convien farsi un'idea empirica e *media* di un popolo *medio*, a cui non appartengono né i dottissimi, né gli analfabeti? [...] Perché sia utile, basta che si attagli alla statura media dei cervelli umani [...].

9 As for the word 'leveling' ('livellare', in Italian) here it is used to denote, finding a physiologic function that enables us to consider all the members of society as equal, despite the different social classes that they might belong to.

10 Siete alla Corte d'Assise, seduto fra il popolo maligno o curioso [...]. Sta parlando il procuratore del re, e voi lo state ascoltando con religiosa attenzione [...]. Il vostro prediletto procuratore parla, si affanna per commuovere il pubblico, per imbrogliare gli avvocati difensori, per annichilire il reo; ma invano! Egli non ha la solita lena; gli vengon meno le sonore filippiche e non trova gli avverbii più cari alla sua facondia [...]. Il vostro avvilito cresce; vi dimenate sulla sedia, tossite e vorreste colla tosse coprire le volgarità dell'oratore [...] Tutto invano! Il procuratore questa mattina non è eloquente; il suo discorso è un fiasco solenne. Sapete voi perché quel brav'uomo ha perduto oggi la sua facondia? – Ve lo dirò nell'orecchio, ma che nessuno ci senta. Il procuratore non ha ancora adempito ad una delle funzioni più importanti [...]. Sapete voi perché oggi il professore che ammirate sempre con entusiasmo è meno profondo del solito, perché la cantante che ci commuove non sa cavare le solite note, perché l'articolo di fondo di un giornale non è come al solito brioso e saporito? Perché il professore, la cantante e il giornalista hanno avuto qualche segreta sventura domestica, ma che riguarda sempre lo stesso dovere quotidiano, che tanto preoccupava il sullodato procuratore. [...] Non vi ha orgoglio umano che resista a quella umiliazione, che cumuli d'oro o blasoni principeschi non possono toglierci. Le donne brutte sono di certo fra le creature più diseredate da madre natura: ebbene si consolino pensando che anche a Venere non fu concesso di emanciparsi dal quotidiano tributo. I proletarii più avviliti pensino che anche i re sono una volta al giorno eguali ad essi.

11 E noi vogliamo morire tardi e morir bene; e questo è l'ideale dell'igiene dell'avvenire [...]. [...] La medicina preventiva è l'avvenire della medicina, e curare i sani perché non si ammalino è cosa più utile, più alta che curare i malati. [...] la medicina di prevenzione è più potente della curativa [...].

12 Tutte quante le ammonizioni, che si danno ai fanciulli per mezzo delle mani, sono brutali e indegne di un maestro o di un genitore che aspiri al battesimo di uomo civile. [...] Siano dunque

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le vostre mani monde di ogni percossa educatrice, monde di pugni e di ceffoni, di tirate di capelli e di strappate d'orecchi [...]. Molti però, che non osano percuotere, tiran le orecchie, credendo di ridurre la loro collera alla forma più costituzionale possibile [...]. [...] Or bene, anche la tirata d'orecchi è crudele, è barbarica, è pericolosa. Il minor male che si faccia ai propri allievi, o ai propri figli, è di deformat l'orecchio; ma se si ripete più volte l'ammonizione, si può produrre una lacerazione, una infiammazione o altri malanni che [...] possono condurre a lunghe piaghe e ad incurabile sordità.

13 As for this aspect see also the book by Piero Camporesi (1970), *Introduzione e note a Pellegrino Artusi, La scienza in cucina e l'arte di mangiar bene*, Torino: Einaudi.

14 On domestic hygiene see also Mantegazza, 1867; Id., 1873a, pp. 104-106; Id., 1894, pp. 57-63, 86, 90 and the dedication to Professor Celeste Clericetti, in the 1874 almanac, pp. 3-6.

Dormire in letto duro e poco coperti. [...] Fare mattina e sera un semicupio freddo della durata di uno o due minuti. Legarsi un asciugamano intorno alle reni, portando il nodo sul dorso, in modo da render difficile la posizione supina. Evitare gli aromi, i cibi troppo eccitanti, la dieta troppo nutriente, le troppo larghe libazioni a Bacco. Evitare, soprattutto alla sera, i balli, le letture sensuali ecc. Non fumar punto o pochissimo. Se l'età e le forze e le circostanze lo consentono, consegnare Adamo in mano di Eva. [...] Anche alcune donnine [...] molto sensibili o molto caste, hanno nella notte strani sogni [...]. Non se ne sgomentino e non ne parlino ad anima viva, perché potrebbero avere la responsabilità di peccati altrui.

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