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ART. VI.—THE CLERGY AS TEACHERS OF
SANITATION.

IT has been my earnest endeavour for many years to make the knowledge of sanitation and personal hygiene the birthright of every English man and woman, and having at last succeeded in the first step, I now proceed to the second.

The first step to which I allude consists in stimulating and increasing the teaching of the facts of elementary physiology and the principles of elementary hygiene all over the kingdom, and this has been mainly accomplished by getting this subject introduced into the syllabus of the local examinations of the Universities. I now turn with confidence to the clergy, who, with the warm support of the National Health Society, I would seek to interest in what concerns the body as well as what concerns the soul. This I call the second step.

The need of such knowledge is everywhere painfully apparent. It is calculated that some 200,000 in this country still die needless and premature deaths, to say nothing of some 6,000,000 sick-beds that the knowledge and practice of hygiene would have rendered unnecessary.

We each set out on the journey of life with a certain amount of life force, or, in other words, every man is constructed to live so many years, and months, and days; and it is surely our bounden duty, in the enlightened age in which we live, to see that these years are not cut short by culpable ignorance or carelessness. Only about one in eight die really natural deaths, or, in other words, live out their days. And the premature deaths of at least half the rest are preventable. The spread of hygiene has, however, already greatly lengthened our days. In the eighteenth century it is calculated that every person in this kingdom, on an average, lived for twenty years. By 1860 this period was lengthened to thirty-six years; and now at the present day every man lives on an average for forty-two, and every woman for forty-four years.

This is, however, still very far short of the sanitary ideal. Children are slain by thousands by dirt and ignorance, and our country districts are still a disgrace to sanitation; and the worst feature is that we feel so little ashamed. We can lose 33,000 lives in one year from typhoid fever—an entirely preventable disease—and feel no shame. Before the Christian era, in a country called Greece, it was not so. If a

babe died there the parents were ashamed to bury it in the light of the sun, and stole forth at night to put the body in the grave, whose life had so carelessly slipped through their fingers.

I do not for a moment press this consideration of hygiene upon the clergy for their own sakes, for statistics prove that already this favoured class lives nearly twice as long as an average Englishman. I do not for a moment wish them to take up this subject from a selfish point of view, but solely for others. Their work lies amongst *men*, and *women*, and *children*, and it is well to remember this, for some, indeed, act as if their parishioners were already disembodied spirits and had no bodies at all. Man consists of spirit, soul, and body; and while the welfare of the soul is undoubtedly the first consideration, the improvement of the whole man is surely the province of the clergyman. I am glad to have been able so to press this truth on one of our largest societies for disseminating Christian literature, that they have now begun to circulate plain health tracts for the people, which, while not neglecting the soul, deal in simple terms with the sanitation and hygiene of everyday life. Surely it has been well shown in the earnest address of Rabbi Adler to the Church Sanitary Association, that the Bible itself is a great teacher of sanitation. It speaks of public hygiene; of infectious diseases; of unsanitary dwellings; of dietary laws; of the examination and selection of food; and above all, of cleanliness. I might appeal, too, to that well-known proverb, "Cleanliness is next to godliness," or, in other words, hygiene is next to Christianity. The origin of this proverb is confessedly obscure; it is now believed to be condensed from a sentence in the Mishna: "Outward cleanliness leads to inward purity."

Besides all this, in medical missionaries we have an instance of the marked success of the sound principle of seeking to benefit the whole man, not merely a part of him. In mediæval times this was generally understood. Most monks and nuns had some knowledge of the healing art; but for a long time body and soul have been completely divorced, and are now only by degrees being brought together again.

It must not be supposed from these remarks that I wish in any way to ignore the earnest way in which many of the clergy have already grappled with this question; on the contrary, I would here pay the heartiest tribute to their great earnestness in the cause of temperance, in the cause of education, and in many social questions affecting the general welfare. But is it not obvious how much the temperance enthusiasm must gain from an accurate knowledge of the effects of alcohol on a man's body? What a great advance is possible

from merely going round the school with a kindly smile and patting the pretty children on the head, to grasping some of the more important facts connected with the hygiene of school life! Great suffering and injustice are still inflicted on our school children for want of this knowledge, and there can be no doubt that the influence of an educated eye would do much to relieve this.

Then, again, look with what important events in life a clergyman is necessarily associated! He is connected with the infant and the young mother in the rites of the Church, and has great opportunities of giving helpful counsel at a time when this is greatly needed. He has to do with all marriages; and how much can be done by an enlightened man with regard to this is but little known. Public opinion has yet to be formed in a right direction on this important matter. It must be done gradually and wisely, and there is much in which a clergyman can help in this direction. At death, too, he is always present, and whilst spiritual instructions ever claim the foremost place, he is necessarily cognizant of epidemics and any special diseases that may affect his flock. To ask a clergyman to assist in these matters without having made even a brief study of the subject is simply to ask him to do more harm than good.

But the experience of many years tells us that the leading facts of hygiene are few and simple and well defined, and may readily be mastered by educated minds in a very short period. The clergyman should work with the doctor and with the sanitary officer, to whom, indeed, if we may use such a contradiction in terms, he should be a sort of lay-helper. We thus get unity in variety, all three working for the common good.

Again, consider how much the clergy have to do with buildings of various sorts. Churches are not always sanitary, and a clergyman who understands the elements of hygiene will not poison half his congregation with carbonic oxide, as was done some little time ago in England.

It may be thought in all this that I am seeking to add to the already multifarious labours of the clergy; on the contrary, I am seeking to reduce them. For I have no doubt that they already constantly take an interest and make remarks, more or less wise, upon all the subjects upon which I have spoken, and I am perfectly sure that where more accurate knowledge is possessed such remarks would come much more readily and much more to the purpose, and the labour be really lightened instead of made heavier.

Besides which, they would be able to secure much more efficient help in their Sunday-school teachers and district

visitors, who are ever in connection with their flock. An educated clergyman could give to these many useful hints as to what to say and how to help in their constant intercourse with the people.

And last, but not least, is it nothing to have some knowledge about the laws that regulate our own health? It is true that clergymen live long, but they often work unwisely for the want of such knowledge. Many a sermon would not only be better written, but better preached, if the laws of health were better obeyed. There is a subtle union between mind and body, which we neglect at our peril. The laws of health are imperative, and for first-rate thought there must be first-rate blood. The value of exercise, both for relieving the brain and for cultivating it, requires to be intelligently understood. The clergy know a good deal about the laws of soul health, and they will be astonished, when they come to consider sanitation, to see how many valuable similes arise, and how alike the laws of body and soul are seen to be; for there is not only "natural law in the spiritual world," but a spiritual law in the natural world.

I would appeal, then, finally, to your great body on behalf of the English nation. They are slow to move in any direction, but when they find the clergy in earnest upon the great elementary truths of healthy life, they will confidently follow such leaders; and, curiously enough, on many occasions the clergyman's remarks may be more heeded than the doctor's. The doctor, after all, is not yet a sanitary officer, and the sanitary officer is not yet the trusted adviser of the people (he is often rather regarded as an enemy). The clergyman alone occupies this place, which is rightly his owing to his care for the soul, but which we are convinced he will do nothing but strengthen if he adds to it a little intelligent care for the body.

Finally, let me earnestly point out that, so far from a brief course of hygienic instruction leading to the clergy interfering in matters with which they have no direct concern, the matter *does* concern them, and such instruction would enable them to be intelligently interested in, and to effectually help on, the welfare of their parishioners in a way that would otherwise be impossible.

ALFRED SCHOFIELD.

