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Editorial.

THE HUMAN ENTITY.

We are slowly learning that the human being is a complex organism, and that we cannot give undue consideration to one of its component parts without prejudice to the whole. We now know that the neglect of the body commonly practised by men and women who desired to cultivate holiness in past ages arose from a mistaken estimate of its dignity, and that it should be cared for and revered as the casket of the soul. On the other hand, to be absorbed in the cult of the body, ignoring the needs of the soul, results in a materialism debasing to the body which it is desired to honour. Further, both in sickness and health, to ignore the influence of the spirit is to neglect a most powerful factor for good and ill.

All nurses know the influence of mental serenity and mental distress on a patient's condition, and a nurse who limits her conception of her professional duty to the needs of the body has a very poor conception of that duty. To place and keep the patient in a suitable mental environment is a most important part of treatment.

We have an illustration of the same fact in the case of foreign missions. To send out missionaries to care for the body alone would be to miss the whole spirit of missionary work. To send them to care alone for the soul, and to regard the needs and the care of the body as too secular to form part of the work of Christian missionaries is a most prejudicial mistake. It is a mistake which most of our foreign missionary societies made for many years. But until the Church of Christ fully realises that deviation from the methods of its Divine Founder—who cared for both body and soul—means loss of power, the work of missions will be impaired.

We are also learning that this truth holds good in relation to another self-sacrificing body of men and women, those commonly described as rescue-workers. Just as the nurse in the Magdalene ward must understand the value of moral influence with her patients, so the rescue-worker who has not studied the physical condition of those whom she desires to raise to a higher moral plane will be deprived of immense influence and may do absolute harm. We have in mind a rescue home where such a fundamental necessity, in dealing with fallen girls, as a bath-room was non-existent, where the bathing arrangements were most perfunctory, where the girls were nevertheless employed in house-work, with the result that vermin were communicated, within our knowledge, to workers in the home. Another more terrible instance of lack of knowledge of physical conditions and dangers was given by the Hon. Albinia Brodrick last week in addressing a meeting of nurses at the Nurses' Lodge. Miss Brodrick mentioned an instance of a girl received into a home who was not suffering from a venereal disease when admitted, but was infected in the home by being put into an infected bed.

The lesson is, that those who would help humanity must study it sympathetically in all its component parts, if they would not detract from the value of their work, and even, through ignorance, inflict injury on those they desire to serve.

It is scarcely possible for those who are working for the betterment of their race in any form to take their work too seriously, to equip themselves for it too thoroughly, or to strive too earnestly for that delicacy of touch which marks the difference between good and bad work when inanimate things are concerned, and which is absolutely essential if success is to be achieved in dealing with sentient beings.

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