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EDITORIAL.

THE SANCTITY OF THE BODY.

The care of the body has always been regarded as a primary duty of civilization. We have scant respect for the person who neglects personal cleanliness. We admire those self-respecting persons who, in poverty and distress, take trouble to present a good appearance. For personal appearance is a fair gauge of self-respect, without which no one can secure or retain that of others. Fundamentally, no doubt, most people care for the body as the temple of the indestructible germ of life, although there is a cult which misuses the temporal body in order to lay stress on that which is spiritual.

In infancy, sickness and old age, when attention to the details of personal care are impossible to the individual, this office falls into the hands of others, largely into those of trained nurses. It is a high and honourable one, and they cannot regard as too stringent the duty of keeping the sanctity of the body inviolate. That the majority of nurses realize and discharge this duty faithfully, we know well.

For instance, since refined and educated women have been in responsible charge of hospital and infirmary wards their whole atmosphere has changed. If the public wish to realize this, let them read the late Miss Louisa Twining's description of the Strand Union in 1856, "a most depressing sight, more so than any prison," or of the Islington workhouse, where a poor blind man confided to her the misery he endured from the bad language used around him; then let them visit the bright, cheerful wards of one of our large Poor Law infirmaries to-day, where the patients are kindly and skilfully cared for, and a bad word is practically never heard. A greater object-lesson in the uplifting influence of the trained nurse could not be received.

The respect and consideration shown for the body in life are equally incumbent after death, and in this also trained nurses have shown themselves faithful, and no part of their work has been more appreciated by the relatives of those departed, than their tender care of the dead. For the poor especially appreciate respect for the tired worn out body which in life so often contended bravely against heavy odds. And if not—then at least the dead are entitled to the respect which could not always be felt during life, and as the veil is drawn over the still face, and the kindly earth hides the body from view, we recognize them as symbols of the security of secrets known only to the dead and his Redeemer sure that—

"There is no place where Earth's sorrows
Are more felt than up in heaven,
There is no place where Earth's failings
Have more kindly judgment given.
For the love of God is broader
Than the measure of man's mind,
And the heart of the Eternal
Is most wonderfully kind."

As the humanizing, tender influence of the nurse makes itself felt in the treatment of the dead, so the brutal notices which at one time defaced the walls of hospitals as to the right retained by the institution to perform *post mortem* examinations after death have been we hope for ever abolished, though in the light of a recent statement of the Secretary of the London Hospital that "at some of the London Hospitals *post mortems* are carried out on every patient that dies" and that they "refuse to admit patients to the hospital on any other conditions," it seems that the respect due to the wishes of the dead and their relatives, as well as the legal aspect of the position, need to be impressed on the committees, entirely composed of men, of such hospitals. In our opinion no *post mortem* should be made on a hospital patient without the written consent of the nearest relative.

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