

THE SICK MIND.

"Can man minister to a mind diseased?" quoted Shakespeare. Assuredly, yes, if taken in the sense which the present-day mental condition shows itself, *i.e.* "nerves"; for what are "nerves" but a *diseased* condition of the nervous system governing the mind?

Now, given the knowledge how to act, this uneasiness can be cured.

So many people forget, in seeking to cure this distressing state, to recognise one important point, and that is—that it is a sick mind. When a person is bodily ill, we do not (most of us who understand nursing), continually keep asking them how they feel—disturbing restful sleep by indiscriminate rousing for food and medicine, fussy attentions, etc.

So, with the sick mind, all over-attention to its hypersensitiveness only tends to accentuate its misery when done in the wrong way. In the same degree as the exhausted body needs rest, so does the mind. In the case of the *body*, bed is the recognised medium for obtaining the physical relaxation so necessary for recuperation, but, it is a mistake to think the exhausted *mind* needs a like medium for rest. So many people go to bed for a "nervous breakdown" only to toss for hours—a prisoner within four walls—the sick mind feeding on its own distorted thoughts—when what it really needs is rest in the form of *distraction*.

Given there is no physical disease, a sick mind properly treated (due account being taken of individual idiosyncrasies) will react on the body and consequent health of the latter.

Having recognised that the mind is sick, don't worry it. Its chances of recovery will be doubled if rested in the right way. So many fret it by making it do things; a sick mind cannot be forced. No one would make a sick body walk at its weakest, why the mind? It does not sleep—why? Usually because you keep *telling* it to! and by so doing keep it awake. Don't bully—bullying weakens still further a weak thing.

If insomnia persists—say to yourself, "Well, don't sleep, I don't mind," and the rest this attitude gives to the sick mind will bring about the desired sleep!

It is the fact of minding which distresses; the over-active brain harping on the one theme, calls for relaxation, the muscles being rendered tense, *i.e.* the body thus reacting on the mind.

Relaxation—Distraction.

Having accepted the fact that a "sick mind" is common to all humanity, varying in intensity according to individual strength where stress of life has proved too much for its daily requirements, we come to causes.

To some it comes as the result of some great emotional strain, others will tell of financial worry, and to a certain percentage of the community, what may be termed a *natural* inclination to worry, will bring about what is termed the "sick mind" or "nerves."

There is also the sick mind or "nerves" generated by definite physical diseases which prolonged physical suffering induces, but that is the legitimate sick mind, the care of which is included in a good nurse's ministrations for her patient.

But there are a large number of people striving

unaided, and oftentimes hopelessly wrong in their methods to cure, who need some beacon that shall lighten a path beset with difficulties—difficulties which, alas, are made individually and explained so well in that short sentence, "I have had so many troubles, some of which I've never had . . ."

These same difficulties are simply the phantom products of an imagination born of a sick mind—just so when the body is fever-stricken and "sees things," so does the sick mind in like manner lose its sense of proportion, the difference being that we can control the sick mind's waywardness at will if we choose, and I think few of us if we knew *how*, would not gladly exercise our wills in this direction; thus the importance of relaxation as a medium of cure.

It matters little the *form* it takes—individual idiosyncrasy should be studied, but *relax*, and by relaxation, Distraction will inevitably follow—the mind becomes rested, and by the rest strengthened and well on the road to its normal condition, which is that of equable poise and balance.

Relaxation may be acquired by simply sitting in a chair and relaxing the whole body, so that the *chair* gets all the body's weight; this is one form and can be practised any time. The mere fact of concentrating the mind on bringing the muscles into a slack state, distracts and therefore *rests* the mind, hitherto working on itself.

Another form: strive to get for yourself that which makes for happiness. Congenial occupation greatly helps. Systematically give yourself this treat and it will *rest* the mind by giving it a change of thought.

The Dream Habit.

There are some types to whom, when afflicted with a "sick mind," it is far harder to relax, and they are the dreamers of life. People who are dreamily inclined, who, possibly from childhood have lived a more or less exclusive and self-centred life—not in a wilfully selfish sense, but they have been surrounded by those unable to understand their individual needs and so, for want of a sympathetic outlet, have gradually encased themselves in a dream world of their own—living in or on their own ideas. To such, when it comes, which it inevitably does, and perchance is felt even more acutely than with the average—the great "something" in their life disturbing the quiet equableness of cloistered thought, it finds them unable to cope with its devastating effects, because of their life established habit of concentration, on a given point. The trouble comes, and the mind from long habit seizes upon it and can think of nothing else—till, the poor victim feels like the proverbial "squirrel in a cage," insomnia ensues, and all the miseries of "nerves."

But this same habit of "concentration" can, in an intelligent being, be converted with a very real power for good, given the owner realises the power of Distraction.

To such, to take up an interest of a quickening nature will shake off the dream habit by action—it matters not the form—only *act* and, if possible, for others—bread "cast" returns and that "return" has to many made life now unimprisoned from the shell of self-concentration worth living!

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