

CHAPTER 17: Personal Cleanliness

My DEAR COMRADES,

In the Letter devoted to the consideration of Home, you will remember that I said something about the desirability of a clean house, clean furniture, and, as far as possible, of everything else within its walls being clean. But I only alluded very slightly to the most important item of all, the Cleanliness of the inmates! Perhaps this would be a convenient moment in our discussion of Religion for Every Day to make a remark or two on that subject.

Unhappily, some people do not attach very much importance to a clean body. They will paint their faces, cover themselves with showy garments and with falderals and jewellery, while all the time their bodies are unwashed and otherwise defiled from head to foot. Some Salvationists are not, I am sorry to say, altogether free from blame in this respect, Although they may not pay quite so much attention to the outside of the platter, they are sadly wanting in care for what is far more Important. This should not be. The Apostle Paul is very definite on the subject, not only commanding that the heart should be purified from evil, but distinctly requiring that the body should be "washed with pure water." (Heb.10:22)

Now, a clean body includes and implies the frequent cleansing, from every kind of defilement, of the head and hands and feet and every part of the frame. This kind of purity has many advantages.

1. A clean body is promotive of health. Scientists – that is, men of learning, who have studied the subject – tell us that there are millions of little openings in the human body provided for the purpose of expelling the impurities of the blood, and drinking in the health-promoting properties of the light and air. It is of the highest importance to health, that these little pores, as they are called, should be kept as clean as possible, in order that they may efficiently serve their purpose. Now if all, or a portion, of these millions of little mouths are allowed to be closed by dirt, it can readily be seen that disease of one kind or another will probably be the consequence.

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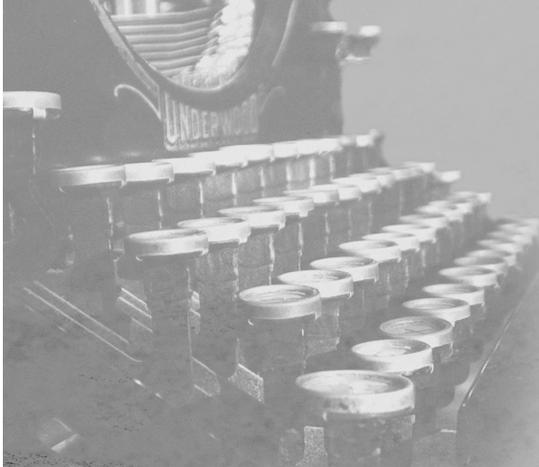
2. A clean body will be agreeable to the people with whom you associate. Dirty faces, fingers, teeth, or the like, will be very distasteful to those around you, especially, if they have any proper notions on the subject; and, as dirt has many ways of making its presence known, it will ordinarily produce sensations of unpleasantness, if not of disgust.

A clean body usually accompanies a pure mind. There will, no doubt, be any number of individuals who have the former without the latter; they will be Cleanliness itself, from top to toe, while at the same time they never knew a pure mind, nor do they care for the pearl of greatest price – a Clean Heart. But although, as a quaint old preacher says, "God has some very dirty children," there will not be many of His people who have purity within, who will not instinctively seek to be clean without.

Cleanliness, in the sense in which I am using the term, is possible to all. I am aware that many who will read this Letter have to earn their daily bread by employments that necessarily begrime their clothes and soil their persons; among such are colliers, foundry men, stokers, some kinds of mill workers, and the like. But dirt which is thus accumulated, may be correctly styled "clean dirt"; and, with ordinary care, such workers can keep themselves as sweet and clean as their Comrades who labour under different conditions. Soap, nowadays, can be had in endless variety at a very low cost, and water is abundant, while the little labour involved in the cleansing is a healthy exercise.

Everybody should have a good wash over in clean water, from top to toe, at least once a week. There need be no difficulty about this with the great majority of our Soldiers. A tub, large enough to sit down in, can be had for a trifle; a kettle full of hot water – rain water is preferable, but if not procurable, a very small piece of washing soda will go far to soften hard water – a flat piece of soap and a good-sized towel are all that is required. It is not necessary uncover the whole body at once. The process should be commenced by washing the upper parts of the body. The cleansing of the lower parts can follow.

If anyone wants to know what can be done, in the way of Cleanliness, with a tub of warm water and the will to be clean, let them go into some of the coal districts, and



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learn what the colliers can do in this respect.

By the same method many of you can take a cold bath every morning. In winter it should not be quite cold.

A Lamp Bath, as described in the Appendix, is a very simple and useful bath, and may be taken once a week, at a trifling cost. It not only serves to open and cleanse the pores, thus promoting the Cleanliness I am advocating, but refreshes and invigorates the whole system.

A Turkish Bath now and then will be found useful to those who can afford it. This kind of bath has grown quite popular of late; and may be had in the evenings, in many of the principal towns, at a low price. But for the promotion of Cleanliness, a good Lamp Bath is almost as useful, is more economical, will occupy less time, and can be taken in your own room, and at the hour that may be found most convenient. The bath can be given as described in the Appendix.