

Self-Respect, Soap and Water

SOMEBODY said to me the other day, "I wish you would make a talk on cleanliness." "Why should I? We're not classed as a dirty nation," said I, but this met with the retort: "Maybe not, but we could be a lot cleaner!"

In the last twenty years or so, there's only one study of cleanliness of New Zealand children of which I'm aware, so I looked up that study by Dr. Young, of Auckland. Teachers in three schools selected a group of dirty children, and a review of the home life of these dirty ones was made. They lived in a slum area, but that wasn't the reason

for the dirtiness, as 90 per cent of the children living there were clean. The reasons were partly environmental, partly social. The environmental causes were overcrowding, families sharing a small house or even a room, and lack of facilities. Half of the dirty children had no bath in their home, four in each ten homes had no washhouse, and, believe it or not, nine in every ten had no washhand-basin.

Perhaps the dirty children, in these homes with no facilities, could have been kept clean under the one running water tap, if the mothers had been interested. A lot of them weren't, and hence the lack of cleanliness. Social factors came into it. Half of the mothers were away all day, not bothering overmuch about the children's care. Just over a quarter of the children were not living with their own fathers and mothers. In a few homes only, alcohol was the reason for the dirtiness and misery, but in no home did money enter into the picture. There was no shortage of money in any of the dirty homes.

The dirtiness was mainly due to faulty management by parents. This area studied was probably as bad as can be found in New Zealand,



Spencer Digby

THIS is the text of a talk on health broadcast recently from the ZB, YA and YZ stations of the NZBS by DR. H. B. TURBOTT, Deputy - Director - General of Health.

but even in good areas, cleanliness is not always instilled in children as a habit. Result! You find in our country, today, grown-ups who do not have a daily bath, and who are forgetful about washing hands after lavatory visits and before eating food.

It is true that you can be dirty and live to a ripe old age. In fact, I'm sure I hastened an old man's death once by having him removed from his filthy hut to the nearest hospital. He hadn't had a wash for years and years, and he fought against having one. However, the nurses finally removed, and burnt, his smelly clothes, and it took no little soap and water and scrubbing to get his skin clean. Finally they tucked him into bed to rest and enjoy clean linen, but it wasn't to be, for he took a chill and died of pneumonia in a few days. He missed his protective dirt. While he

kept his dirt, he lost all social contact, for nobody would go near him. Forcing the situation didn't do any good in his case, but the modern world has made the choice for cleanliness, and it soon gets around if folk become careless in home or personal hygiene.

Our hair needs washing whenever it's dirty or too oily. Daily brushing with a clean brush helps to keep it clean, and briskly up the scalp circulation. The skin needs daily washing with soap and water. Bathing removes germs, dirt, dead cells, dust and body odours. Body odours are often not perceived by the person himself or herself. The only way to be sure that you are sweet and clean to everybody is to have a daily bath. Even in the few New Zealand homes without baths or showers, it should be possible to have a daily sponge bath. We don't associate the Middle East with cleanliness, but it may surprise you to know that the Koran says, "God loveth the clean." Addison wrote, "Beauty commonly produces love, but cleanliness preserves it."

This talk is a plea for the habit of the daily bath in your home. This is by no means a universal habit in New Zealand—in fact, many homes still have a weekly bath only. You bathe your baby as a routine. Keep the daily bath up for toddler and school child, and it will become a life habit. A dividend bearing habit, for self-respect thrives on soap and water.



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